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Setting Reasonable Limits for Kids

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Setting Reasonable Limits for Kids

“But Mommy, I don’t want to.” Or maybe, it’s “No, Daddy, I won’t.” Sound familiar? These responses are the “cries of resistance” to major principles parents need to set down concerning their families. These principles are called limits.

When you think about living and working together as a family, setting limits is vital. Children need limits – limits that are fair, reasonable, and as few as possible. The limits of your family need to be clearly communicated and enforced.

It may sound complex. But the only really complex part of living with limits in your family is for you and your partner to agree on what the limits are going to be, realizing and accepting that when you set down limits, you’ll experience resistance.

Your child may cry, beg, or even yell, thinking if they do it long enough, you’ll give in. That’s normal. It’s just human nature to want to do things your own way, and you can see that tendency full blown and very obvious in little children.

The Bible tells us that *“All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way”* (Isaiah 53:6 KJV).

How do you handle it when your child resists your limits? You don’t lecture them, or raise your voice to them, or give in to them. Help them, without doing the job for them. Be persistent, consistent, and firm, but be gentle.

Trying to get them to want to keep your limits isn’t your job, even though many modern psychologists say it is. And it isn’t your job to help them decide what limits they want to keep, or to explain to them why you want them to do what you ask. It is your job to decide what, in your considered judgment, is in the best interest of your children, and what are the reasonable limits that have to be carried out.

Keep in mind your responsibility isn’t to keep your children happy. Your primary task is to *“Train up a child in the way he should go”* (Proverbs 22:6 KJV). The training of our children involves reasonable, firm boundaries set down in love. Loving limits give children a sense of security.

Children need good humored parents who are on the same page and who love their children and believe in them enough to give them whatever help they need to do what is best for them. That’s security, and that’s follow through.

Take a step . . .

Ask yourself, "Are my children experiencing fair and reasonable limits?" What changes need to occur within your family? Ask God to help you set practical limits for your children that will help them to be all that God has created them to be.