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Act Like a Parent!

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Act Like a Parent!

Isabel Carr complained that her problems began the day she decided to become an obedient wife. "I figured that a Christian woman ought to be subject to her husband," she said.

And what had ten years of obedience produced? Her husband, Glenn, bowled four nights every week. He paid little attention to the children, even missing their son Dan's high school graduation because Glenn stayed too long on the golf course. Three months ago, admitting he was growing fond of his secretary, Glenn moved out. He had not contributed a dime to the family since.

Isabel would have said nothing to anyone except that Dan was now giving her trouble. He was verbally abusive, refused to pay board even though he had a job, and stayed out late every night. His girlfriend had taken him completely away from the church.

"My 11-year-old boy and 8-year-old girl won't mind me either," Mrs. Carr complained.

"Mrs. Carr," I said. "You have confused obedience with negligence. In taking refuge in what you term obedience to your husband, you have neglected your children. By doing nothing, you have encouraged Dan to follow in his father's footsteps."

I advised her to make Dan pay a fair board each week or live elsewhere, and also to set rules for the younger children.

"If children are going to obey, they must have limits," I said. "And someone must see that they are enforced." That is what is described in Proverbs 22:6, "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it."

With encouragement from me over a period of week, Isabel Carr established some standards for her household. The children griped at first, but they are tending to accept them. Even Dan is beginning to respect his mother.

Had Mrs. Carr been more objective, she would have seen herself as negligent and careless while cooperating with an equally negligent and careless husband.

I assured her that if her husband returned home, it was right for her to demand that he support his family with his money and time. Both partners should carry out their expected responsibilities.

Glenn Carr has not returned home, but the rest of the family is progressing. They are proof that a family can be saved provided even one parent starts acting like a parent.

[Dr. Henry Brandt shares insights from various counseling sessions with parents. The names and certain details in these true case histories have been changed to protect each person's identity and privacy.]