

## CHILDREN – Part 2

### Training Tips continued...

1. **Be Prepared** - Raising a child is hard work. Prepare activities and duties for the child to do before the time, as there will be times when you will become ill, tired, busy, and won't be able to instruct your child on what to do. With proper planning, the child will know exactly what to do and when. Consistent communication is important for this to be effective. *Isaiah 41:10*
2. **Do the Work at Home** - Don't train for the first time when you are out. Expecting a child to be still in church, requires hours of training at home. A trip to the grocery store or restaurant is pleasant and fruitful when your child already knows how to behave. Work on these things at home, at the dinner table, and in the car. Set up trial runs and teach them what you expect. You can sit with the child in your lap while talking at home. That way you can stop and instruct even let them cry without disturbing others and the habit will be formed. *Deuteronomy 11: 18-19*
3. **Make Time for Your Kids** - It's often difficult for parents and children to get together for a family meal, let alone spend quality time together. But there is probably nothing children would like more. Get up 10 minutes earlier in the morning so you can eat breakfast with your child or leave the dishes in the sink and take a walk after dinner. Children who aren't getting the attention they want from their parents often act out or misbehave because they're sure to be noticed that way. Many parents find it rewarding to schedule together time with their children. Create a "special night" each week to be together and let your children help decide how to spend the time. Look for other ways to connect — put a note or something special where they'll find it.

Adolescents seem to need less undivided attention from their parents than younger kids. Because there are fewer windows of opportunity for parents and teens to get together, parents should do their best to be available when their teen does express a desire to talk or participate in family activities. Attending concerts, games, and other events with your teen communicates caring and lets you get to know more about your child and his or her friends in important ways.

Don't feel guilty if you're a working parent. It is the many little things you do — making popcorn, window shopping — that is what they'll remember.

4. **Be a Good Role Model** - Young children learn a lot about how to act by watching their parents. The younger they are, the more cues they take from you. Before you lash out or blow your top in front of your child, think about this: Is that how you want your child to behave when angry? Be aware that you're constantly being watched by your children.  
Model the traits you wish to see in your kids: respect, friendliness, honesty, kindness, and tolerance. Exhibit unselfish behavior. Do things for other people without expecting a reward. Express thanks and offer compliments. Above all, treat your children the way you expect other people to treat you.
5. **Make Communication a Priority** - You can't expect kids to do everything simply because you, as a parent, "say so." They want and deserve explanations as much as adults do. If we don't take the time to explain,

kids will begin to wonder about our values and motives and whether they have any basis. Parents who reason with their kids allow them to understand and learn in a nonjudgmental way.

Make your expectations clear. If there is a problem, describe it, express your feelings, and invite your child to work on a solution with you. Be sure to include consequences. Make suggestions and offer choices. Be open to your child's suggestions as well. Negotiate. Kids who participate in decisions are more motivated to carry them out.

6. **Be Flexible and Willing to Adjust Your Parenting Style** - If you often feel "let down" by your child's behavior, perhaps you have unrealistic expectations. Parents who think in "shoulds" (for example, "My kid **should** be potty-trained by now") might find it helpful to read up on the matter or to talk to other parents or child development specialists.

Kids' environments have an effect on their behavior, so you might be able to change that behavior by changing the environment. If you find yourself constantly saying "no" to your 2-year-old, look for ways to alter your surroundings so that fewer things are off-limits. This will cause less frustration for both of you.

As your child changes, you'll gradually have to change your parenting style. Chances are, what works with your child now won't work as well in a year or two.

Teens tend to look less to their parents and more to their peers for role models. But continue to provide guidance, encouragement, and appropriate discipline while allowing your teen to earn more independence. And seize every available moment to make a connection!

7. **Show That Your Love Is Unconditional** - As a parent, you're responsible for correcting and guiding your kids. But how you express your corrective guidance makes all the difference in how a child receives it.

When you have to confront your child, avoid blaming, criticizing, or fault-finding, which undermines self-esteem and can lead to resentment. Instead, strive to nurture and encourage, even when disciplining your kids. Make sure they know that although you want and expect better next time, your love is there no matter what. *1 Corinthians 13:4-7*

8. **Know Your Own Needs and Limitations as a Parent** - Face it — you are an imperfect parent. You have strengths and weaknesses as a family leader. Recognize your abilities — "I am loving and dedicated." Vow to work on your weaknesses — "I need to be more consistent with discipline." Try to have realistic expectations for yourself, your spouse, and your kids. You don't have to have all the answers — be forgiving of yourself.

And try to make parenting manageable. Focus on the areas that need the most attention rather than trying to address everything all at once. Admit it when you're burned out. Take time out from parenting to do things that will make you happy as a person (or as a couple).

Focusing on your needs does not make you selfish. It simply means you care about your own well-being, which is another important value to model for your children.