

 **LIVING ON THE EDGE™**
helping Christians live like Christians

Field Kit for Parenting

INCLUDING:

- 7 KEYS FOR BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS WITH YOUR KIDS
- HOW TO IDENTIFY YOUR PARENTING STYLE
- 5 CHARACTERISTICS OF BIBLICAL DISCIPLINE

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7 KEYS FOR BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS WITH YOUR KIDS

“For you know that we dealt with each of you as a father deals with his own children, encouraging, comforting and urging you to live lives worthy of God, who calls you into His kingdom and glory.” 1 Thessalonians 2:11-12 (NIV)

KEY 1

View your parenting role as a stewardship from God.

Children are a gift from God, a sacred stewardship temporarily entrusted to parents for the purpose of raising godly offspring to fulfill God’s agenda for His world.

KEY 2

Determine positive, clear-cut objectives.

Children need parents who have a vision for their character, which is much deeper than achievements or career. Help your kids discover God’s dream for their lives!

KEY 3

Set a Godly example.

Your children are always learning. Your actions are more important than your words because kids “watch” more than they “listen.” Practice what you preach because more is “caught” than “taught.”

KEY 4

Love unconditionally.

No child is perfect! Parental disappointment is natural ... and even beneficial. An appropriate expression of disappointment lets your child know they have done something wrong. Condemnation is disappointment without grace. Condemnation seeks to increase guilt and shame, and it pushes your child further away. Make a commitment to love them unconditionally, even when they make mistakes and poor choices.

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KEY
5

Pay attention.

When your kids are talking to you, stop what you are doing and make eye contact. This communicates your value for them.

KEY
6

Create memories.

Have fun - schedule meaningful time with your kids. Remember, quantity time is quality time.

KEY
7

Apologize.

Nobody is perfect, and it doesn't do your family any good to pretend otherwise. Godly parenting requires constant repair and ongoing maintenance. Say "I'm sorry" and "please forgive me" when you've made a mistake. It's never too late to restore a relationship!

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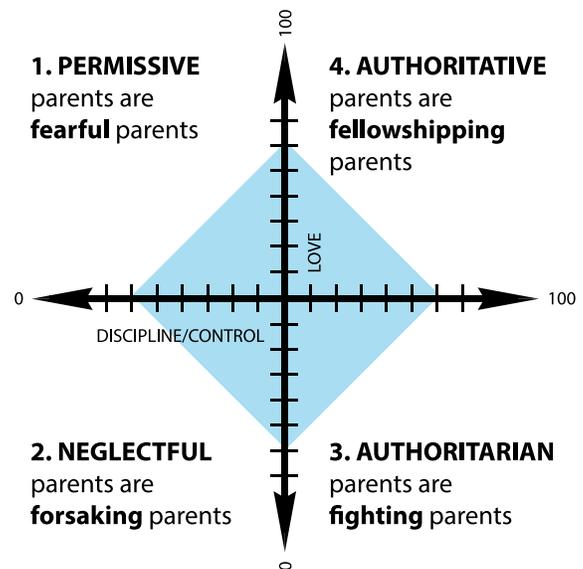
HOW TO IDENTIFY YOUR PARENTING STYLE

There's not a responsible parent on the planet who hasn't struggled with getting a child to obey, and it can be a challenging (and sometimes excruciating) experience. God's Word has much to say about how we as parents can meet that challenge. It shows us how to provide the kind of discipline that helps our children fulfill their responsibility. If the most important thing for our children to learn is to obey, what do we do when they won't?

FOUR PARENTING STYLES

First, it's important to understand how your parenting approach may be contributing to the problem, especially in a culture that has made *discipline* a dirty word. To speak of a parent disciplining a child today evokes images of unreasonable anger and brutal beatings. That's not biblical discipline. Two case studies — one sociological and the other biblical — show us what appropriate, Godly discipline is all about.

Sociologist Reuben Hill conducted a study of thousands of teens and parents in Minnesota. Hill put all of his research on a grid with an x-axis, a y-axis, and four quadrants. The horizontal axis measured how much discipline or control parents exercised in their relationship with their child. The vertical axis measured love. Hill found that different parenting styles produced different responses among children. (*Reuben Hill's research as presented by Dr. Richard Meier in a seminar on parenting, Minirth Meier Clinic, Dallas, Texas, 1988.*)



1. THE PERMISSIVE PARENT

The upper left quadrant represents parents who are **high in love but low in discipline**. These parents are generally fearful, afraid of messing up and damaging their children's psyche, so they never set firm boundaries. The study revealed that permissive parents tend to produce children with feelings of insecurity, low self-esteem, and inferiority. Although these kids feel loved, they are never sure of their limits and therefore very unsure of themselves.

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2. THE NEGLECTFUL PARENT

The lower left quadrant represents parents who are **low in love and low in discipline**. This is the worst of all four combinations because they do not show any kind of care. The parents' neglect may not necessarily be intentional — they may simply be in the midst of their own traumas and chaos, like an addiction or an abusive situation. They don't purposely desire to neglect their kids, but they don't know how to deal with their own issues adequately and don't have the tools to be healthy parents. Their children tend to grow up with little or no lasting relationship with their parents and develop deep emotional scars.

3. THE AUTHORITARIAN PARENT

The lower right quadrant represents parents who are **low in love and high in discipline**. These parents have high expectations and control. Communication between parent and child generally involves arguing and fighting, especially when the child is old enough to fight back. This kind of parent isn't content just to win the war; they have to win every battle too. The abundance of control can lead to a child developing a strong sense of safety. Authoritarian parents squeeze their kids until the kids can't wait to leave home, and as soon as they do, they tend to act out because they feel provoked to rebellion.

4. THE AUTHORITATIVE PARENT

The upper right quadrant represents the best combination for healthy parenting: **high in love and high in discipline**. This kind of parent is compassionate yet firm. They have clear boundaries but are also very loving. These kinds of parents respect and honor their children without compromising his or her disciplinary needs. The result is a child high in self-esteem and equipped with good coping skills. This secular sociological study found that the parent who balances love and discipline, without compromising either, produces well-adjusted kids who maintain a positive relationship with their parents.

All of us want to be in quadrant four, and probably most of us think we are. But take a moment to consider: ***If you had to pick a quadrant other than number four to represent your worst moments as a parent, which would it be?***

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FIVE CHARACTERISTICS OF BIBLICAL DISCIPLINE

“Discipline” can be a really vague concept, and it seems like everyone has their own opinion. But here’s the good news: God’s Word is pretty specific about this subject. Let’s take a look at what God says through the writer of Hebrews.

⁴ In your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. ⁵ And have you completely forgotten this word of encouragement that addresses you as a father addresses his son? It says, “My son, do not make light of the Lord’s discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, ⁶ because the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and he chastens everyone he accepts as his son.” ⁷ Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as his children. For what children are not disciplined by their father? ⁸ If you are not disciplined—and everyone undergoes discipline—then you are not legitimate, not true sons and daughters at all. ⁹ Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of spirits and live! ¹⁰ They disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, in order that we may share in his holiness. ¹¹ No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.” (Hebrews 12:4-11)

In this passage, we can discern five distinct characteristics of God’s kind of discipline.

1. The necessity of discipline: to deter destruction (v. 4).

The context of verse 4 is this idea that haphazard living leads to destruction. The message is clear: ***Disciplined lives reap rewards.***

Discipline is about watching your child to see the direction in which they are going so that you can help them avoid harm.

Many parents are afraid of making their children mad. I remember the first time one of mine stuck out his lip and said, “I don’t love you anymore.” My first thought was, “Boy, I don’t ever want to be that hard on him again.” That’s a lot of power to give a five-year-old, isn’t it? A better response is to grit your teeth and bear the anger of your child, because it’s better to make him frown than let him rush toward destruction. That frown won’t last forever. Destruction, however, just might.

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Do you see how, from this perspective, discipline — even when it's painful — is actually an expression of love? It always seeks the child's best interest. A mature parent can withstand the anger of their child and say, "That's okay, you don't need to love me right now. You'll love me for it in a few years." It hurts temporarily, but to compromise your child's welfare from fear of losing his love will hurt a lot worse later on.

2. The means of discipline: actions and words (v. 5).

In the Proverbs 3:11 passage that is quoted in Hebrews, two different Hebrew words are used: *yasar* (discipline), which involves God's actions; and *yakach* (rebuke), which refers to God's words. Hebrews 12:5 tells us not to make light of God's actions and not to lose heart at His words of rebuke. *Yasar* refers to disciplinary actions; *yakach* refers to corrective words.

As parents, that's exactly how we are to discipline. ***We bring both words and actions, warnings and consequences, into our children's situations in order to keep them on track.***

3. The motive in discipline: to express love (vv. 6-9).

We often think that we're expressing love when we repeatedly say, "I'll give you another chance." What we're really doing, though, is neglecting to set boundaries that let our children know they're in a safety zone where they can feel secure. One of the most powerful ways to love your child is to be consistent in your discipline. And that's really hard. We're inclined to do whatever we can to maintain a friendship with our kids when discipline is actually much more important.

I tend to do discipline well for a few weeks, and then find it more convenient to make compromises. Kids pick up on that in an instant. Try listening to them sometime when they aren't aware that a parent can hear them. Their conversation often sounds something like this:

"I got grounded last night."

"Oh no. How long?"

"They said two weeks, but it'll probably just be three or four days."

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Where did they get that idea? ***Children are diligent students of parental behavior.*** They usually know when they can get away with things. Over time, they learn your breaking points and where you are prone to compromise. They aren't consciously taking notes, of course. They've been taught very well by experience.

4. The goal of discipline: to teach obedience (v. 9).

When you teach your children godly submission, you're teaching them to do the right thing for the right reason. You want them to get beyond the point where they say "I've got to" and get them to the point of obeying out of love and trust. Their discipline will be primarily external in the beginning, but eventually it should become internal — so integrated into their personality that it's self-discipline rather than imposed discipline. The way you regulate how they speak and act toward other people needs to become a part of who they are so that when you remove the regulations, the behavior remains.

5. The result of discipline: short-term pain and long-term gain (vv. 10-11).

The reason we don't like to discipline our kids is because it involves short-term pain. We're sympathetic to their feelings, and we never enjoy hurting them. Verse 11 acknowledges the pain, saying all discipline — not some or even most, but all — seems not to be pleasant, but painful. But there's a process involved. Those who have been trained by it yield the fruit of righteousness.

Someone advised me long ago not to ask myself whether my child liked the discipline I was imposing but to ask whether he would love me when he looked back on the situation years later. That helped me tremendously, especially when one of them would say, "What do you mean I'm grounded? I really can't go? I hate you. You're the worst parent in the world." I even overheard one of my kids, only mildly joking, telling his friends, "It's like my dad chains me to the bedpost. I never get to go anywhere." I would have to remind myself that he was reaping the consequences we had decided on and spelled out up front, and his disobedience produced the expected results. I didn't give in, and my kids came back to me later and said, "Thanks, Dad."