

## Discovering how to train

By Maria Houston

*Before I had a child I found this verse very comforting. It seemed like a slam dunk promise. All I had to do was train my child and everything would fall into place. My single friends and I would sit in Starbucks sipping overpriced coffee and pontificate about our child-rearing practices. Parenting seemed simple to us. Overly simple.*

*Six years ago, when our daughter came into our lives, she turned our world upside down. Staring at her newborn face we suddenly felt overwhelmed and unprepared. The task seemed too great.*

*I shared my new fears with my own mother. She assured me that if we paid attention to our child, she would show us how to parent. Mom warned me that many parents fail to know their child intimately, resulting in a tragic outcome. I needed to study my child so I could become the mother she needed. To know how to train her we must know her.*

My mother was right. The more I studied my daughter the more I could predict how she would behave and how I could guide her choices. I learned early on that when I gave my strong-willed child a direct command it turned into a battle. But if I tapped into her imagination the task was completed.

I discovered that setting the expectation in advance had an almost 100% success rate, and providing a firm reason for a rule satisfied her inner negotiator. I learned her sense of humor would be the key to ending most tantrums, putting an end to the argument while unifying us in the process. The more I knew her, the more she trusted me, and the more she trusted me, the more I was able to train her.

I noticed that while I was studying my child I was also delighting in her. After all, isn't that what our Father does with us? He created us, knows us, and delights in His creation. He enjoys us and wants to spend time with us. It is through our trust in the Father that He is able to train us.

I laugh when I look back at my previous notions of parenting. I had no idea what I was getting myself into when we began this journey. However, I am humbled by the difficult task of parenting and in awe that the Lord would allow me to embark on such a noble adventure.

