



## **I Want Happiness Now!**

*By Dr. Henry Brandt with Phil Landrum*

### **LESSON 11: BUILDING SELF-RESPECT AS A PARENT**

#### **MANAGING YOUR ATTITUDE TOWARD YOUR CHILDREN**

If your marriage partner is more intimately involved in your life than anyone else, your children run a close second. If marriage keeps you up to date on your spiritual condition, so will your children.

You will either reveal or conceal your spirit around your children. If there is anger, wrath, or malice in your heart, children will likely bring it out of you in the form of abusive actions (words or worse) on your part. Child abuse is becoming a major problem in this nation—so much so, that many communities are setting up free clinics in an attempt to help abusive parents.

With your children in mind, consider this Bible verse:

*Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor; not lagging behind in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord (Romans 12:10-11).*

The demands of a child will keep you constantly aware of your spirit, your diligence, and your sincerity.

#### **A TWENTY-YEAR PROCESS**

*Train up a child in the way he should go, even when he is old he will not depart from it (Proverbs 22:6).*

Guiding children *is* a long, hard, demanding responsibility. But so is any rewarding job. Extending the energy to interact with one another is part of living. Parenthood is a twenty-year-long haul, and it becomes the most demanding when children are in their late teens.

## **PARENTHOOD IS A PARTNERSHIP**

Guiding children requires that parents set limits for their children, which notably demands working together to set limits, but also to administer them.

Thus, parenthood is a continuous, ongoing test of the marriage partnership. Not only must limits be set, but as a child or children grow older, they need to be adjusted. All of this requires good will and cooperation between parents.

## **PARENTHOOD TAKES ENERGY**

Interacting with people is tiring. There are good days and there are bad days. One day you have happy children. Another day it seems they are grumpy all day long.

Take a referee as an example of expending energy. He keeps the game going smoothly. He is expected to call the plays according to the limits, to be impartial, consistent, and cool-headed. His job can be tough or easy on any given day. It depends on the mood of the players, their skill, the importance of the game, even the weather. Some days there are few close calls and few penalties. Other days, there can be some debatable, close calls and many penalties.

He rises to the demands of the game. He is in on every play. The game requires more or less of his effort, but the limits don't change. And refereeing doesn't interfere with his personal fulfillment. It's part of it. He doesn't bemoan the fact that he isn't a spectator. He relishes the job.

Like refereeing, guiding children can be a tough job or an easy job on any given day. It depends on the mood of the children, who they are with, importance of the problems that come up, even the weather.

Some days all goes smoothly. No one is stepping over the limits or challenging the calls. Other days you blow the whistle constantly and are called upon to make some debatable decisions.

Guiding children isn't something that interferes with your personal life—it's part of life. The wholehearted parent doesn't bemoan the job. He or she relishes it.

Half the battle in parenthood is accepting the task and the never-ending surprises and frustrations that keep coming up.

## **CONFIDENT EXPECTATION**

Setting limits and dealing with the inevitable resistance from the children to some of the limits is a real test of the marriage. There is either cooperation or competition over

setting the limits and how to supervise them. The term *confident expectation* assumes that you are doing or requiring something you believe is worthwhile and in the best interests of your child. If you are, you will have enough conviction to see it through.

If parents are competitors rather than partners, they will likely have two sets of limits—one set when mother is home alone, another set when father is home alone.

The result? Bedlam. Or withdrawal of one of the parents from the discipline process.

The children will begin to play one parent against the other. One parent can hardly be *confidently expectant* when defying or contradicting the other parent.

You will either enjoy the job or it will irritate you. You either cooperate with your partner or you compete. You either diligently rise to the demands of the job, or you neglect it.

## **IT ALL WORKS TOGETHER**

You build your own self-respect or self-love as you cooperate with your partner in setting limits and administering them...as you remain loyal, cooperative, submissive, and committed unto death to do all in your power to guide your children into becoming wholesome, happy, contributing adults.

Again...the key to maintaining such a spirit demands a higher commitment:

*As unto the Lord!*

NOTE: The material in this chapter is adapted from the book, *I Want to Enjoy My Children* (Zondervan), by the same authors.

## **Review Questions**

1. If your marriage partner is more intimately involved in your life than anyone else, your \_\_\_\_\_ run a close second.
2. Guiding children requires that parents set \_\_\_\_\_. This also requires an attitude of \_\_\_\_\_ between you and your spouse.
3. What is half the battle in parenthood?
4. What is the result when parents don't cooperate in setting limits and have two sets of rules for the children?

5. It is important that you remain loyal, cooperative, submissive, and committed unto death to do all in your power to guide your children into becoming wholesome, happy, contributing adults. What is the key to maintaining this spirit?

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