



Keys to Happy Family Living

Christian Living Series

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Lesson 10 – Dealing with Resistance

"For rebellion is as the sin of divination, and insubordination is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, He has also rejected you from being king" (1 Samuel 15:23, NASB).

In the last lesson, the emphasis was placed upon the importance of love as a foundation for training the child. But every parent soon encounters the child's resistance to training--no matter how lovingly, or tenderly, or compassionately the child is treated. The material in this lesson deals with this problem.

Expect Resistance to Training

The following Bible verses indicate the need for discipline and imply that resistance to training is normal and can be expected: Proverbs 13:24; 15:10; 19:18; 22:15; 29:15; Ephesians 6:4; Hebrews 12:11. If you think your children will be delighted with everything you want them to do, you have an expectation that is unrealistic. If you intend to keep your children smiling all day long, you are tackling a futile venture. If you consider yourself a failure because your children don't like what you want them to do at times, you misunderstand the nature of your children. They want their own way. You can expect resistance.

Your Responsibility

"Train up" your child

A father tells of an incident that arose with his very beautiful daughter. She was offered a contract to become a model. There was only one obstacle in the way. Her dad would have to falsify her age on the contract because she was too young. She came home very happy and enthusiastic about this opportunity.

It would mean two hundred dollars a week for her while she was going to high school. Her mind was made up. However, because of his spiritual wisdom and personal integrity, her father refused to allow her to accept the contract. She argued: "Aren't you

interested in my future? What kind of a dad are you?" She accused him of not loving her and not caring for her welfare. What was he to do? It was a very emotion-packed problem. However, there was a very simple solution. It is not right to lie about anything. He might expect that his daughter would be somewhat less than delighted with his decision. A father can not always expect his children to appreciate his position. However, he must do the right thing.

The Bible does not teach us to humor the desires of our children. It does say, "Train up a child in the way he should go" (Proverbs 22:6). It does not even imply that he will appreciate your training. He may stubbornly resist you every inch of the way. The parent must remember that he is doing the training. Because he is the trainer, he must have some concept of the goals toward which he is working. The day will probably come when the young woman who aspired to be a model will look back on this experience with her dad and say, "I'm glad he did it." That she may not be able to appreciate it now, he can understand. He should be kind and gentle and patient, but firm in his allegiance to what he knows to be right and best. She does not understand now, but some day she will.

We have all gone through periods when we could not have what we wanted and could not understand why. Yet, when we look back through the telescope of the years, discipline and denial make sense. We need not be so concerned with our children's reaction to our discipline. The important thing is our wholesome reaction to their reaction.

Express true love

The mother of a young child asks, "What do you do with a child who won't do what you want her to do?" For example, she tells the child not to eat crackers in the living room. The child takes the crackers and eats them in the living room. If she insists on the child's going back into the kitchen, the child begins to cry and says, "You don't love me." The psychology books say you should be sure your children know you love them. How do you demonstrate your love? By giving in? This child discovered that if, in her sweet little three-and-one-half-year-old style, she looked up at her mother and said, "You don't love me," her mother would take her up in her arms and say: "I do love you. You can eat crackers in the living room." It is no wonder this girl is a neighborhood problem. Her mother says so and everybody agrees with her.

When your child questions your love, do you let him evaluate your affection for him? Who is a better judge of your love, the little child or you? Sometimes a young child may blurt out the truth to a parent who is motivated by resentment and hatred. But if in a tender, gentle way this mother can teach this little child that crackers are to be eaten in the kitchen, not in the living room; if she can demonstrate that whether the child pouts or screams, or throws herself on the floor, nothing will alter mother's genuine affection for her, then she need not fear the child's statement.

We are to "train up a child in the way he should go." This is a foundation block, a key in training children: all of our actions must issue from a wellspring of affection, tenderness, love, kindness, and long-suffering.

Maintain the right spirit

When dealing with children, you must appreciate the fact that they are beset with the universal human weakness common to us all--the tendency to rebel or do wrong. However, you must hold up the standard and be the best example that you can. When you fail to live up to your standard, you should be just as quick to acknowledge it as you are to correct your child. All of us should have as our standard the conformity to Christ's image (2 Corinthians 3:18; Ephesians 4:13). We are all to aim in that direction. Nevertheless, we are subject to the same temptations that our children face, and therefore we should have some appreciation of their deviations.

It is not unusual to go through some rough waters during the course of any day. Especially is this true in families where parents hold standards that are different from those of the majority of people. These standards may be challenged with all the vehemence of a youthful heart, just as parents challenged standards when they were young. But be careful that your training has a compassionate heart at its base. When your children challenge your standards and you must discipline them, be sure your spirit is what it should be. How do you show your love for a child? By training him in the way he should go.

Do not lower your standards

A boy who took a Red Cross swimming course failed in the final examination. The instructor naturally refused to give him a certificate. The boy went home sad and tearful because he had flunked the course. This touched the dad, who wanted to spare his son grief. Thinking he was doing the boy a favor, the father used his influence to get his son a certificate through a friend. As a result, the boy was given a Red Cross emblem to sew on his bathing suit. Some time later, while swimming with other boys who wore the same emblem, but who had passed the course, he dived into some deep water; and trying but failing to keep up with the other boys, he was drowned. Did his dad really do him a favor? Was this an expression of love? Was it the proper reaction to the boy?

At a popular restaurant a sign posted at the entrance read, "No shoes, no shirt, no service." A group not wearing shoes approached the hostess, turned on all their youthful charm, and used all their persuasive power to get in without shoes. The hostess finally yielded. Did she do them a favor? A sign that says, "No shoes, no shirt, no service," means nothing if people don't enforce it. An unenforced law is a farce. What did these youths learn? They found out that if you turn on enough charm, use plenty of persuasion, and apply the right kind of pressure, you can sometimes have what you want. They found that, for a time, there seems to be a way to get around the law. Is it fair to the youngsters to allow them to lower the standard? It is an unfortunate lesson for them to learn.

When you get something you are not supposed to have, you do not enjoy it. Your own conscience judges that you have no right to it; nevertheless, it is natural to want to violate standards, to cross limits. These examples illustrate this resistance to training. It is normal and can be expected.

Sin Is the Root of Resistance

What is sin?

The Bible tells us that "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). What is sin? This is a word that many people dislike. At this point it will be helpful to review Lesson 4. Sin is selfishness. This includes bitterness, stubbornness, rebellion, anger, wrath, malice, hostility, and disobedience to parents. As we look upon our tender little ones, they seem clean and pure and innocent. We wish they were as innocent as they look, but we know that in their hearts lies the potential for all kinds of sin.

Children are sinners

No one yet has presented the problem of a child who never disobeys. Did you ever hear of a child like that? To rebel is normal. It is part of human nature. Every time you give birth to a child you bring a rebel, a sinner, into the world. You may not like this, and the fact may make you feel uncomfortable. You wish it were not true, and many cannot believe it is. Both the Bible and experience, however, tell us that it is true. The minute you set a limit, your child will tend to want to break it. This is as normal as breathing. This applies not only to children. All of us have the tendency to rebellion.

Parents are sinners

One of the biggest battles in counseling with tense, anxious, frustrated Christians is that of convincing them that they have sinned. "Are we not finished with sin when we are saved?" they ask. What is it that causes two Christians to have violent differences? It is sin (1 Corinthians 3:3). Transgression of the law in any detail is sin. The Bible tells us that "whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one point, he has become guilty of all" (James 2:10). If we could only realize the subtlety of sin! If only as Christian adults we could grasp the truth that when we have said or felt or thought or desired something that is out of line with the revealed will of God, this is displeasing to God and is sin! If we would maintain a constant spirit of repentance, we could save ourselves the frustrations of many a tense, anxious day and many a sleepless night. The next time you find yourself wrought up or trying to control your tongue from saying something that you know is not right, be honest with yourself. Be honest with God. Get off by yourself in a quiet place and confess and repent.

Degrees of rebellion may vary

In training children, we find that they all tend to be rebellious. It is true that there are different degrees of rebellion. The first child may be easygoing. A second child may be a violent rebel. The third child may be a silent rebel. These are all different degrees of the manifestation of sin. Anyone who has two children will tell you how different one is from the other. You wonder how your training could produce such variations. Anyone

who has three will tell you how different each of them is from the other two! There is not necessarily anything wrong with you or your training. It is just that people are different, and we rebel in different ways and degrees. Some of us can do wrong in the most gracious way.

An example of gracious rebellion was observed in a nursery school. A little boy was there who had been told not to climb up on a table. He did so anyway. One of the women was about to scold him and take him down. He saw her coming, stretched out his arms, with a big smile wrapped his little arms around her, and before she could say anything, he said, "I'm sorry." She was about to say, "Get off the table!" Instead, she very gently put him down on the floor. She had no more than turned her back when he climbed on the table again. This child was just as rebellious as the child who might defiantly climb on the table. The diplomatic boy was just as wrong as a disagreeable child would have been--both disobedient.

Over and over, wherever there are children in this world, parents ask: "What am I going to do with my child? He won't listen!" Of course, he won't listen. A little child is rebellious and tends to do what he wants to do. Some children will be pleasant about it, and some will be objectionable about it. Either response manifests the same principle--man tends to rebel. Do you see how you can be far out of line and be very sweet about it? This is just as disobedient as being unpleasant. If you put two or more children together to play and leave them alone without any adult supervision, it will not be long before there is a conflict. Conflict among people in every age group is just as normal as breathing.

The Cure for Resistance

You should be rearing your children with the consciousness that they need a Saviour and that they need a Keeper. They must find the power of God that will enable them to live right. You can control your children with stares, threats, promises, rewards, and many other techniques. The only effective control, however, is that of the child's being motivated by a love for God--not only by a love for you or a fear of you.

A mother, speaking of a son who had gotten into some trouble, said: "I am so glad he didn't tell me about these terrible things he has done until I returned from my trip. It would have spoiled my vacation." This mother was as serious as she could be. She did not realize that her boy needed a better reason for being good than that of keeping his mother from fretting. She had told him that her happiness depended upon his behaving himself.

You must have a much better reason than this for asking your children to conform. If you use the threat of your own unhappiness, you deny the very essence of being and living as a Christian. And what is meant by that? Just this: no matter how cantankerous your children are and no matter how upsetting the affairs of your life may be, your peace of mind in Christ should be independent of circumstances.

You should teach your children these things, and they will learn them best by seeing a demonstration (Philippians 4:5-7). These are not just beautiful words. Peace, comfort,

consolation, and joy should be your daily experience by faith in God through the Lord Jesus Christ. The resistance to your training should develop these qualities in you.

Study Assignment for Lesson 10

1. Look up and study all the Scripture used or mentioned in the text.
2. How should we expect children to act? Give examples.
3. How should rebellion be handled? What is the importance of the parent's attitude?
4. What is the relationship of the problem of sin to rearing children?
5. Show how rebellion can be manifested in different ways.
6. What is the solution to the control of a child's rebellious ways?

PERSONAL EVALUATION TEST 5

Check Up on Yourself as a Parent

Answer the following "Yes," "No," or "Sometimes"

- _____ 1. Am I seeking to make disciples of my children?
- _____ 2. Am I a good example to my children?
- _____ 3. Do I chasten my children in a fit of temper?
- _____ 4. Am I sarcastic to my children?
- _____ 5. When I say no, do I mean NO?
- _____ 6. Do I get angry when my children resist me?
- _____ 7. Do all my actions toward my children stem from affection, kindness and longsuffering?
- _____ 8. Do I express my love to my children by training them in the way they should go?
- _____ 9. Do I turn the cold shoulder to my children to keep them in line?

_____ 10. Do I constantly change my standards?

Visit <http://biblicalcounselinginsights.com/keys-to-happy-family-living-series/answers/> for the answers to these questions.

Self-Check Test 10

Are you making progress?

In the space provided, mark the following statements "True" or "False."

- _____ 1. All parents can expect resistance from their children.
- _____ 2. A parent must have some concept of the goals toward which he is working in training his children.
- _____ 3. When a child questions his parents' love, the child's challenge should be accepted at its face value.
- _____ 4. The spirit in which discipline is administered is an important factor, especially when children challenge parental standards.
- _____ 5. An unenforced law is a farce.
- _____ 6. It is only small children who have the tendency toward rebellion.
- _____ 7. All children react alike to training and discipline.
- _____ 8. Conflict among people in every age group is just as normal as breathing.
- _____ 9. Threats, promises, and rewards guarantee that a child will be properly motivated to obey.
- _____ 10. Resistance to parental training should develop high qualities in parents.

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