

Christian Parenting:
**Moms and Dads are not as alone
as they might believe!**

I. Becoming / Being a Parent

A. Why do human beings procreate?

1. Self-replication = my offspring is my possession!
2. Self-indulgence (accidental pregnancy) = my offspring is a burden!
3. God's invitation to populate = this child is a gift from God for the world.

B. Healing "possession" / "burden" thinking:

1. Conscious focus on the true uniqueness of life
= I am a caretaker until this child becomes adult and independent.
2. Conscious focus on the graces of parenthood
= this is an opportunity for personal growth and closeness to God.

C. To *cooperate* with God's plan = He is the model parent!

1. To create and renew
2. To guide and protect
3. To correct and compliment
4. To give freedom and invite back

II. Parental Methodology

(Once we know our children are under our care but not ours to keep . . .)

A. Establish personal values

1. God and Faith
2. Family and Society
3. Personal

B. Establish life goals based on values

1. Value = God — Goal = Heaven
2. Value = Family / Society — Goal = cooperative, productive member
3. Value = Self — Goal = personal integrity

C. Visualize the means to the goal

(Parents wanting to get their child to Heaven)

1. Education = give the necessary knowledge
2. Formation = teach how to think, reason, make decisions
3. Empower = trust and *entrust* with life

D. Live and be an example of the values and means to the goals

(Example is the best teacher; share all of your life!)

1. Be honest about successes and mistakes
(however, be careful not to dishearten!)
2. Discuss life experiences; verbal reflection about events/experiences educates, forms, and empowers

E. Provide the “context” of your child’s life

(best setting to achieve the means and goals established)

1. Channel and direct the child’s efforts
2. Continually verbalize the goals and methods to achieve them
3. Provide and maintain appropriate boundaries
4. Be in the world (awareness) but not about the world (submission).

III. Boundaries

This may sound restrictive, but it is actually necessary for proper development. Without boundaries, *anything* is possible; so, no vision and no direction for life. Boundaries channel growth in the right direction.

A. The two fundamental human needs are: (1) relationship / love; and (2) security / safety. Boundaries define (qualify) relationships and create parameters for security.

B. Young people need clear definitions of relationships:

1. God (Church) – Person

2. Parent – Child

3. Brother – Sister

4. Friend – Friend

5. Boyfriend – Girlfriend

— each of these relationships has unique expectations: what behavior is respectful and acceptable; what behavior is disrespectful and unacceptable.

— parents, as caretakers, have a obligation to question their child(ren)'s association with others who do not live by the same values or who have weak boundaries.

C. Young people need clear ideas about what is right and wrong for the sake of their physical, emotional, and spiritual security. *Remember:* Rules protect; restrictions are for safety!

1. Responsibilities (obligations, accountability, curfew, etc.)

2. Freedoms (benefits, privileges, etc.)

** There are positive and negative consequences for our choices; all people, especially the young, need to experience those consequences.
Parents "protecting" their children from the consequences of their choices are actually doing harm to the development of their children.

D. Young people necessarily test boundaries. Knowingly or without thought, they push or complain. But parents who stand firm are helping their children to adopt personal safe-guards for later in life.

** Inside and outside the family, parents need to help each other maintain the same standards and rules for the sake of proper development.

IV. “Contract Parenting” = one method of child-formation

(This is a “consequence” model for the parent-child relationship.)

- A. Because there are consequences for all human choices, and by nature we want to experience positive consequences, parents can use this to help their children learn to make right choices and avoid wrong choices.
- B. Parents establish expectations for their child(ren)’s behavior, what is right and what is wrong.
 - 1. Behavior that is expected earns positive consequences attractive to the child.
 - 2. Behavior that is inappropriate earns negative consequences which the child would want to avoid.
 - 3. Once the list of expectations and consequences is drawn up, discussion with the child takes place so that an understanding is reached between parent(s) and child(ren). Then the “contract” is signed and all parties are now obliged to the agreement.
 - 4. The child charts his/her behavior to accrue the positive consequences desired. Parents supplement the chart to make sure all known behavior receives the appropriate consequence.

Example: Assistance with household chores may gain the child television privileges. Failure to help will cause the loss of privileges. The amount of chores and the amount of privilege is known to everyone according to the “contract.” [Even St. Paul told the Christian community: “if anyone is unwilling to work, neither should that one eat.” 2 Thess 3:10]

V. Conclusion

No matter what you want or what you do for your children, they are still exposed to a world much bigger than your influence. Temptations abound. Your guidance as they develop is to help them face the world on their own, but you can never control every element of their lives.

Call upon God constantly! Call upon family and friends whom you trust just as frequently. Do the best you can because you are always just “planting seeds.” Your children are not yours; they belong to God and live in a challenging world.