

COVENANT KEEPERS

"Dedicated To Strengthening Marriages Through Biblical Principles"

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Frustration in Parenting

Parenting can be a very frustrating experience for both parent and child. Scripture acknowledges this fact when Paul declared, "*Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged*" (Col. 3:21). The word *provoke* in this passage means to irritate, exasperate, or make resentful. The obvious question is how can you parent in such a way that you do not exasperate and frustrate your child? If you exasperate your child by your parenting style, this will also bring added frustration to you.

Children may frustrate their parents with their stubbornness, rebellion, lack of respect, and their constant need. These simply wear-out an adult and many times puts stress on their marriage. There is plenty of frustration to go around! However, parenting is a God-ordained calling and responsibility, so there is a God-ordained plan for how to handle these frustrations.

How can you keep from frustrating yourself as a parent?

1. Don't create your own problems. What do I mean by this statement? There are plenty of difficulties in parenting even when you do everything right, in the best of circumstances to the best of your ability. Living in a fallen world with the added clash of both the parent's and child's sin natures

brings the potential for serious conflict and struggle. If you also add disobedience of a parent to God's explicit commands, this is like throwing gasoline on the fire of the problems in your family. Therefore, if you want to eliminate as much frustration as possible, you must seek to please God by obeying His clear commands concerning your own life and the way you parent your children. This will bring you the greatest opportunity to experience the best outcome that God has ordained for you and your family. God's best in this fallen world will never be perfect, but you will walk in peace before Him knowing that you are pursuing the best for your family. Reading this article only demonstrates you already have this desire.

How do you determine what is good and acceptable before God regarding your parenting? Paul answers this question when he states, "*I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God*" (Rom. 12:1-2). If you want what is good and acceptable for your family, then present and surrender yourself to Him. Don't be persuaded by the ideals and values of this world, but allow God's Word to transform and

renew your mind with His truth. Then you will know what is acceptable and pleasing to Him. As you walk in the will of God, you will be confident that you are pursuing God's best for yourself and your family.



Remember, God has a Solution!

One example of a parent creating division with his own son is Saul and Jonathan. Saul became so angry and frustrated with his son Jonathan and said to him, "*You son of a perverse, rebellious woman! Do I not know that you have chosen the son of Jesse to your own shame and to the shame of your mother's nakedness?*" (1 Samuel 20:30). What caused this outburst of anger? Saul knew that God had departed from him and realized that David was a threat to his authority as king. He also knew that Jonathan was supporting David. Saul wanted to kill David, but Jonathan wanted to protect him. Saul obviously created his own problem with Jonathan simply because he was resisting God. Therefore, be sure you are not creating your own frustrations by resisting the will of God in your life or family.

"She is your companion and your wife by covenant" Mal. 2:14

2. Periodically reevaluate.

Because your family is growing and changing, you must also grow and change in your parenting. You must periodically reevaluate your plan and how you are implementing that plan with your children. Reexamining your personal life, your marriage, and your parenting methods is true wisdom for any parent that wants to prevent frustration in their family. Reassessing is a necessity because over time children mature and need less supervision. Sometimes children fall into bad habits, and you must again change with the need. This is why God constantly warned the Children of Israel to give some personal thought to their heart and actions when He said, “*Consider your ways*” (Haggai 1:5). Or as Jeremiah asked, “*Let us search out and examine our ways, and turn back to the LORD*” (Lam. 3:40). We all need to do this self-examination on a regular basis.

3. Learn as much as you can.

One of the great causes of frustration in parenting is the ignorance of what you are doing. Parents ask me questions quite often that reveal their lack of understanding of some of the most important goals or methods of parenting. If this is you, I want to encourage you to read as much as you can about the subject of parenting. God spoke through the Prophet Hosea and said, “*My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge*” (Hos. 4:6). I can attest to you that this is a true statement. I have seen marriages and families torn apart by a simple lack of knowledge of how to resolve the issues between themselves and their children. Don’t let this be you!

4. Control your flesh. Another way that parents frustrate themselves is their inability and sometimes their unwillingness to control their own fleshly nature. If you are exploding in anger at your children, being harshly critical of them, or swearing and belittling them, let me assure you that you are shooting yourself in both feet! You are controlled by your sin nature and will do more harm than good in your children’s lives.

If you want to eliminate as much frustration as possible, you must seek to please God by obeying His clear commands concerning your own life and the way you parent your children.

Paul taught that self-control is evidence of being filled with the Holy Spirit, and walking in the Spirit. “*The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control*” (Gal. 5:22-23). This means that if you are out of control, the Spirit is not in control of you. This only assures you that your experience as a parent will only be frustrating.

How can you keep from frustrating your children?

Let me explain some ways that you can irritate, exasperate, and make your children resentful.

1. Don’t go to extremes. When you go to extremes you push children over the edge emotionally, and you are pushing them away from you. Let me give you some examples of the extremes I’m referring to.

Over protecting vs. no boundaries. One family I counseled had two sets of children with a long time

period in between. The first two children born into this family were treated very harshly with strong abusive language where everything was controlled. The second two children born into this family had no discipline and were allowed to do whatever they wanted; because the parents thought the first two didn’t turn out so well, so they decided to try a different approach. Both sets of children were very troubled adults that struggled greatly with interpersonal relationships and their own marriages.

Over-protecting is a fear-based extreme that will result in your child growing up with unrealistic anxieties. In addition, without God’s intervention in their own lives, these children will pass these fears on to their own children, and the cycle continues. There is no foolproof plan that will ever completely protect your child from all harm. You are not God. You must realize only He is God, and your children’s divine Protector (Ps. 46:10).

When you have a “no boundaries” parenting style and allow your children to find their own way in life without any direction or discipline from you, it shows a lack of love for your child. Why do I say this? Because Solomon declares, “*For whom the LORD loves He corrects, just as a father the son in whom he delights*” (Prov. 3:12).

Over-discipline vs. under-discipline or no rules.

Another extreme parents fall into is going overboard with rules or having no rules at all! These two extremes simply exasperate your children. Why? Over-discipline creates constant guilt because your children will constantly fail to keep all your rules. Remember,

God had only ten basic rules! On the other hand, the lack of discipline communicates to your child that you are not concerned about how they turn out. One is based in a desire to control, and the other many times results from laziness.

There is no foolproof plan that will ever completely protect your child from all harm.

One thing is sure about these extremes that I have found that I want to pass on to you. The more outgoing a child is the more quickly you will see their frustration and resistance to your extremes. However, the more reserved your child is the longer you can get away with your extremes. But, the damage is still being done.

2. Inconsistent discipline. When your rules change with each new day, or because of the mood you happen to be in at that moment, this results in children becoming frustrated. Why? They never know what you want or will do if they don't meet your expectations. One day they get severely disciplined for some infraction and the next day you let it slide. Children require the stability of your consistent and faithful word. God wants you to be faithful and consistent as He is. God says, "*I am the Lord, I do not change*" (Mal. 3:6). Jesus said, "*Let your yes be yes and your no, no*" (Matt. 5:37). Give clear limits and boundaries based in love and then be consistent to discipline their direct disobedience (Prov. 22:15).

3. Disciplining for the wrong reasons. What are some wrong reasons for disciplining your child?

When they have an accident and spill their milk at the dinner table, or when they misunderstand what you have asked of them, or when they did not hear or know what you have set as a rule (Gen. 20:1-7). To discipline in these situations would be unfair and wrong.

However, the right reasons to discipline your child are when they are purposefully defiant, knowingly disobedient to your directions, or intentionally rebellious. It is correct to discipline under these circumstances. They are the same reasons God gives for His discipline of His children (Jer. 5:32; 25; Neh. 9:26; 2 Tim. 3:2).

4. Constant fault-finding.

Constant fault-finding with your child is an extreme that must be avoided. Why? This exasperates and frustrates your child because they believe they are never good enough in your eyes. Praise and rewards communicate just the opposite. Giving your child a "*well done,*" is sometimes all the reward they need. Remember, no child does everything wrong! So, point out what they are doing right regularly. God uses reward as a motivation for His children to obey. Therefore, please read these verses of Scripture and follow His example: Prov. 12:25; Ps. 72:15; 1 Cor. 3:8.

5. Harsh and disrespectful. You must remember that you are called to speak to your children in a manner that will build them up, not tear them down. You are degrading your child if you call them stupid, dumb, a loser, a slob, or a klutz. A believer should not speak in such a harsh and disrespectful way. How would you feel if an adult said that to you? These statements also cut at the core of a child's perception of

themselves, and will always have a detrimental effect in their lives. These words will cause them to harbor resentment in their hearts toward you. Your children will listen to how you speak to others, and will know that you speak differently to your friends. Read these passages and learn how you should speak: Prov. 15:1; Eph. 4:29; 31; Prov. 12:18.

When your rules change with each new day, or because of the mood you happen to be in at that moment, this results in children becoming frustrated.

In addition, it may not be *what you say*, but the *way* you speak that hurts them (your disgust, anger, silence, or sarcastic attitude). If you want your children to speak respectfully to you, then you must speak respectfully to them.

6. Physical abuse. If you punch, kick, shove, slap, or beat your child, you are actually breaking their spirit and provoking them to resentment and wrath toward you. These actions are not what the Bible calls discipline. In fact, this is physical abuse due to your lack of self-control. You cannot justify your actions with the proverb that commands you to "*Beat with the rod*" (Prov. 23:13). The Hebrew word for *beat* means, "*to lightly strike.*" Discipline should always be motivated by love, and done in a respectful and controlled manner. This is how God corrects you (Prov. 3:11-12; Rev. 3:19).

7. Refusing to humble yourself. If you fail to treat your children respectfully, become abusive, are inconsistent, fail to control your anger, or you go to extremes, you are required as a believer to

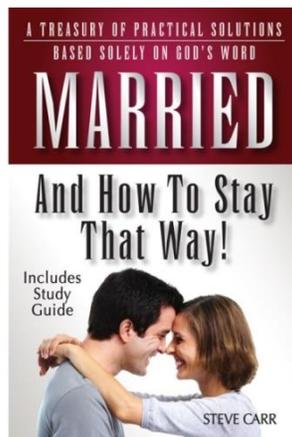
humble yourself and ask your child to forgive you. Just because you are a parent does not let you off the hook from being a Christian. Your child must be viewed as any other Christian you might sin against. Refusing to ask your child for forgiveness when you have failed in your responsibility will only cause your child to lose respect for you which also frustrates them. When you do ask for their forgiveness you are teaching them by example. You are modeling the importance of reconciliation and how they should act in their future family (Matt. 18:15; Luke 17:3-4; Matt. 5:23-24).

The bottom line in parenting! In all that you do, you must be guided by biblical commands and principles. You must also allow your life to be ruled by God's love and fairness. To walk in love and fairness you must be filled with the power of the Holy Spirit. He will work in you that which is well pleasing in His sight (Heb. 13:20-21). Being guided by His Spirit in this way will surely keep you from ever provoking your child to wrath.

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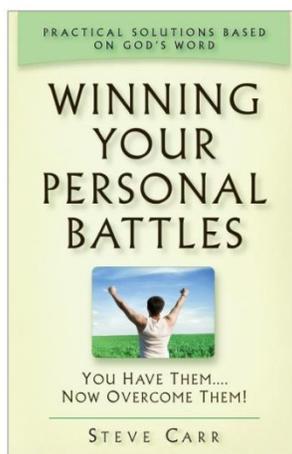
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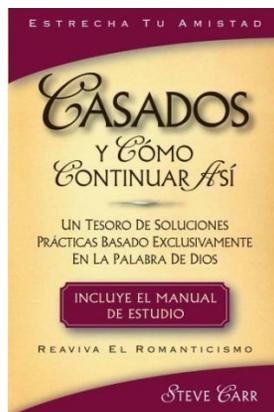


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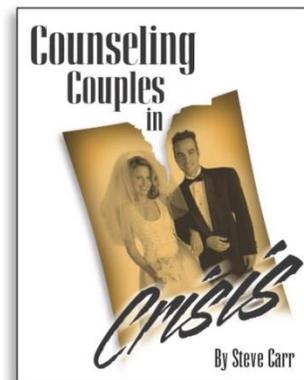


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