



Teaching the Way of Love

Parenting With the Heart of Christ

For all parents,
especially those
with small children.

"...since parents have conferred life on their children, they have a most solemn obligation to educate their offspring. Hence, parents must be acknowledged as the first and foremost educators of their children. Their role as educators is so decisive that scarcely anything can compensate for their failure in it."

~Familiaris Consortio #36



The American culture tends to look at authority with a skeptical eye. Those

who don't have authority appear envious of those who do have it, and those who do have authority are considered destined to abuse those without it. Fortunately, the Catholic Church teaches that God intends authority to be a force for goodness rather than a method of control and suppression. That is the definition that this segment will break open.

God is the source of all goodness. The sole purpose of His authority is our good. Thus, God's authority forms us in goodness. When we obey God and submit to His authority, we accept the gift of His goodness and love. Our obedience makes us better persons.

Likewise, God intends human authority to result in the formation of goodness. In the case of parenting, God desires that moms and dads help their children attain what is truly good for them, especially when they are too ignorant or too weak to choose the authentic good on their own initiative.

It is for this reason that the Catholic Church calls parents the primary educators of their children. This means that parents are the first people from whom children learn about true goodness. Because of the intimate nature of the family, parents are constantly teaching their children, even when they are not aware of doing so. They teach and form their children in what is best for them long before they enter school or begin to be influenced by friends. Parents are the most important influences on their children's lives because their authority is greater than that of any other person.

Some parents are afraid to use authority with their children because they are afraid of stifling their children's freedom or of appearing abusive. This could indeed happen if authority is only about power and control. However, parental authority should reflect God's authority which is all about his concern for our good. Just as we need God's authority to direct us, children need the authority of their parents. Without parental guidance, children will struggle to achieve true goodness in their lives.

Many benefits result from parental authority that is aligned with God's will. First, children who live in homes where goodness is expected perceive their parents as being reasonable and fair. This means that the children are more likely to comply with requests. Secondly, children who feel goodness and love through the loving responses of their parents are more likely to freely choose to follow their parent's expectations. Thus, they achieve greater self-discipline and control. Finally, children raised in just and charitable homes learn how to balance individual rights with the common good. These children become more respectful and community – minded.

Social science lends scientific evidence to the Catholic definition of authority. Through secular research, four common parenting styles have been identified. These four styles reflect all the possible combinations of two important elements of authority; responsiveness and demandedness. Of the four combinations, only one has been shown to lead to goodness. Let's take a look at these styles and learn how parental response and demands form the basis for true authority.

From the DVD (WATCH THE CLIP THAT CORRESPONDS WITH THIS SEGMENT.)

God has given you the _____ to lead your children to goodness.

Parents lead children to goodness when they _____ in love and _____ goodness.

The parenting style that best leads to goodness is called _____ parenting.

The two distinct characteristics of this parenting style are:

The end result of authority is to nurture goodness within your children's _____.

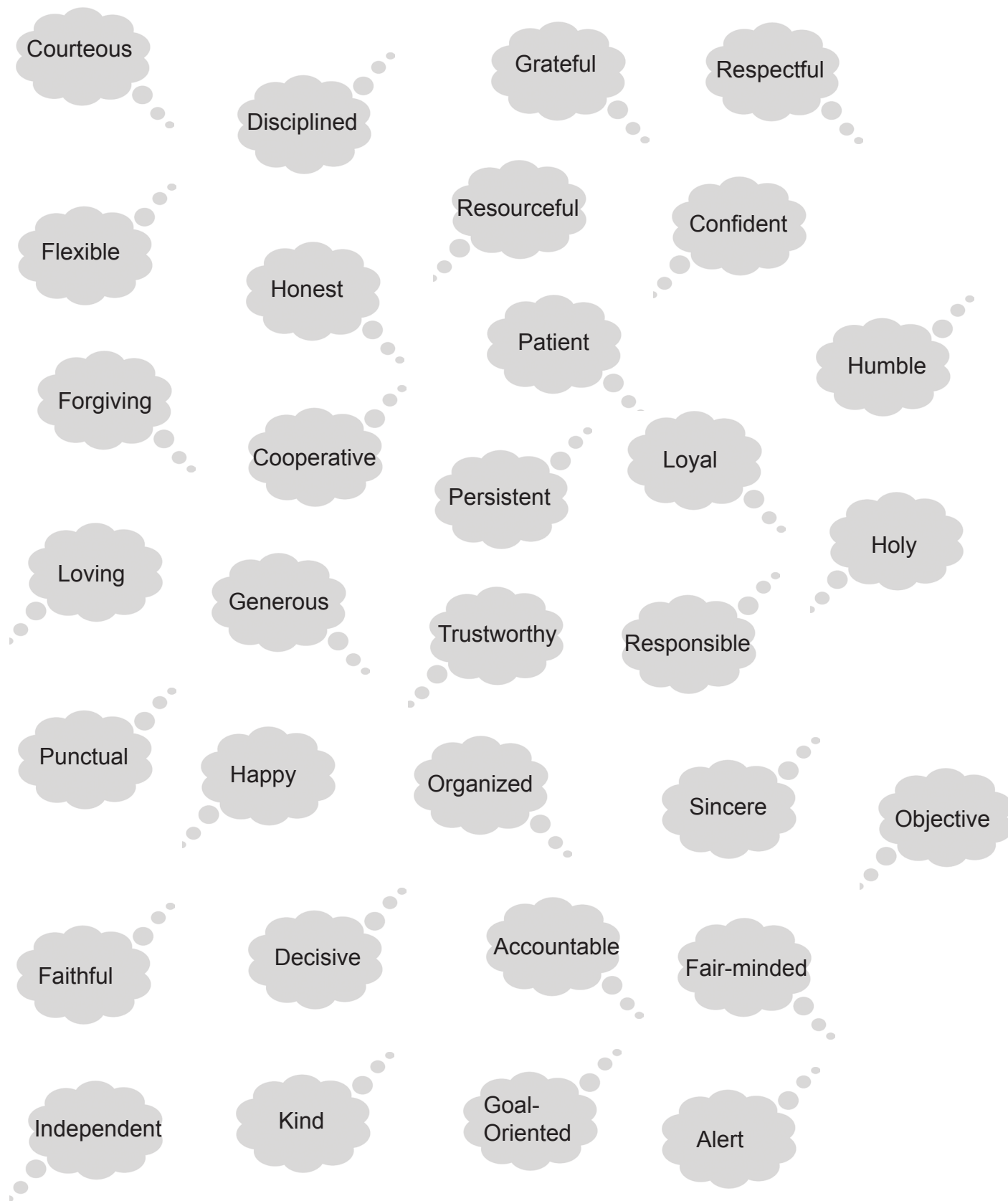
Continue the Discussion

Read and reflect on the following questions and examples.

1. Parents are considered the primary educators of their children. Think back to when you were a child. What were some of the first lessons about life that you learned from your parents?
2. What demands did your parents make of you when you were a child?
3. How responsive were your parents to you when you were a child?
4. How does your parenting style mimic or differ from that of your parents?
5. How well does your current parenting style reflect an authoritative style of parenting?

Make a Plan

During the introduction of **Teaching the Way of Love; The ABCs of Parenting**, you were asked to think about your children as young adults and identify characteristics through which others might see goodness in them. Below is a list of common characteristics that most parents want their adult children to demonstrate. Read the list and then circle up to ten qualities that you would like your child to easily demonstrate as an adult:



The example set by a parent heavily influences the goodness that a child will demonstrate. Put another way, your goodness is “caught” by your children. Review the entire list of characteristics below – this time thinking about your ability to demonstrate goodness through each characteristic. How often would your friends and close acquaintances say they see these characteristics in you? Circle the answer that applies.

Characteristic	<i>How often do others see me demonstrating this characteristic?</i>			
Courteous	Never	Sometime	Most of the time	All of the time
Disciplined	Never	Sometime	Most of the time	All of the time
Grateful	Never	Sometime	Most of the time	All of the time
Respectful	Never	Sometime	Most of the time	All of the time
Flexible	Never	Sometime	Most of the time	All of the time
Honest	Never	Sometime	Most of the time	All of the time
Resourceful	Never	Sometime	Most of the time	All of the time
Confident	Never	Sometime	Most of the time	All of the time
Forgiving	Never	Sometime	Most of the time	All of the time
Patient	Never	Sometime	Most of the time	All of the time
Humble	Never	Sometime	Most of the time	All of the time
Cooperative	Never	Sometime	Most of the time	All of the time
Persistent	Never	Sometime	Most of the time	All of the time
Loyal	Never	Sometime	Most of the time	All of the time
Holy	Never	Sometime	Most of the time	All of the time
Loving	Never	Sometime	Most of the time	All of the time
Generous	Never	Sometime	Most of the time	All of the time
Trustworthy	Never	Sometime	Most of the time	All of the time
Responsible	Never	Sometime	Most of the time	All of the time
Punctual	Never	Sometime	Most of the time	All of the time
Happy	Never	Sometime	Most of the time	All of the time
Organized	Never	Sometime	Most of the time	All of the time
Sincere	Never	Sometime	Most of the time	All of the time
Faithful	Never	Sometime	Most of the time	All of the time
Decisive	Never	Sometime	Most of the time	All of the time
Accountable	Never	Sometime	Most of the time	All of the time
Fair-Minded	Never	Sometime	Most of the time	All of the time
Objective	Never	Sometime	Most of the time	All of the time
Independent	Never	Sometime	Most of the time	All of the time
Kind	Never	Sometime	Most of the time	All of the time
Goal-Oriented	Never	Sometime	Most of the time	All of the time
Alert	Never	Sometime	Most of the time	All of the time

All are called to holiness: Be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.
Mt 5:48

Imprimatur: †Most Rev. William P. Callahan, OFM Conv.
Bishop of LaCrosse
14 December 2011

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