



Teaching the Way of Love

Parenting With the Heart of Christ

For all parents,
especially those
with small children.



All members of the family, each according to his or her own gift, have the grace and responsibility of building day by day the communion of persons, making the family a school of deeper humanity.

~Familiaris Consortio #21

As the authority of the family, parents have been given the task of leading their children to goodness. When parents

offer guidance and their children choose to follow their direction it is very fulfilling. But, it can also be very difficult because children are capable of making poor judgments, and even of choosing evil instead of goodness. Just like parents, children have a fallen nature that often results in sinful actions.

Parents shouldn't let the harsh reality of sin lower their expectations for their children. Yes, children will sin no matter how hard parents try to avoid it. But that doesn't mean that their efforts are in vain. Parents should expect their children to be good, *especially* when there is a weakness in resolve and a tendency to make poor judgments.

Standards for behavior lead children towards goodness and away from sinful tendencies. Just as guardrails on highways frame the road bed and prevent drivers from going in the ditch, standards for behavior safely frame the path children take each and every day. Standards direct children towards a predetermined outcome and set the course to arrive at the desired outcome. Creating good standards is the practical application of parental authority.

Remember that authentic authority does not mean exercising power for the sake of controlling others and limiting their freedom. True authority leads to goodness. And, what is truly good should ultimately lead to the fullness of freedom. After all, God gave us freedom so that we could freely choose the goodness He has in store for us. Standards train children to choose God's goodness for themselves.

We cannot expect children to understand or utilize personal freedom because it is an abstract concept. Children are concrete thinkers. That is precisely the reason why it is so important for parents to create specific behavioral standards. A child may not be able to grasp the concept of "respect each other's property." However, a child can understand the behavioral standard of "always ask permission before entering someone's bedroom." As this standard becomes a habit in the child, it will mature into the general concept of respect for other's property and privacy.

Standards of behavior shape the character of children positively rather than negatively. They help parents focus on what they want to see, rather than on what they don't want to see. In other words, standards are a way to parent pro-actively rather than re-actively.

Setting standards of behavior benefits the entire family. Research on child outcomes clearly shows that setting standards for correct behavior leads to better outcomes for kids. Reasonable standards hold a family together. When family members know what is expected, they can count on each other and demonstrate the virtue of temperance. When family members share the same standards, they experience fairness and become more just. When family members integrate the same standards into their lives, they develop a clearer understanding of right and wrong that leads to prudence. And, when problems do arise, clear standards of behavior make it easier to face the conflicts and find workable and just solutions. Developing, communicating and enforcing clear standards will lead to family goodness and love.

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

Parents are expected to teach by _____ and _____ standards of behavior that are based on the _____.

The necessary steps for expectation of good behavior are:

1. _____ rules that are age appropriate.
2. _____ out your expectations. Be specific.
3. Determine _____.
4. _____ your expectations through a family _____.
5. _____ the standards.

Take the _____ to establish behaviors. Present a _____ front. Communicate _____. Make changes as _____. Maintain an _____ demeanor. Love the child. Correct the _____. _____ for heavenly assistance.

Continue the Discussion

Read and reflect on the following questions and examples.

1. If you take an honest look at your parenting, can you say that you typically parent with the goal of affecting your children's hearts or do you parent with the goal of getting immediate desired behavior?
2. How have most of the standards in your family been established; proactively (setting the standard before it is needed) or reactively (something happens and then you establish a rule)? Which is better?
3. Why should some standards be negotiable? Why should some standards be non-negotiable? Give examples.
4. Why should children know both the negative as well as the positive consequences of following the standards set by their parents?
5. What are some practical ways to monitor your child's ability to follow the standards you set?

Make a Plan

Parents are encouraged to remember that they are raising an adult, not a child. In order to guide children towards adulthood, standards of behavior need to be established. The activity that follows guides you through the development of criterion in areas that are common in Christian families. For your convenience, the areas have been subdivided into age groups. First, review the informational questions in each category. Secondly, write the expectations you require in your own words, including the positive and negative consequences of meeting each expectation. Finally, share these standards with your family. Determine when and how you will implement this standard in your home. Be as specific as possible as you write.

Step One: Review the areas where standards are needed.

<p>Age of Innocence Toddler until Puberty</p> <p>As soon as your child is old enough to take on responsibilities, set standards in the following areas.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. MANNERS: Do you expect your children to say “please”, “thank you”, “you are welcome”, etc? Are your children expected to wait without interruption? How should your children address adults? 2. MAINTENANCE OF AN ORDERLY HOME: What chores will each child be responsible for? Will children contribute to general cleaning? What is their responsibility to laundry? Will they do some of the lawn work? 3. NOTICE OF LOCATION: Do you always know where your children are, who they are with, and what they are doing? 4. MEDIA: What programming can be viewed? What websites are allowable and which aren't? How much time can be spent using internet, TV, iPods, cell phone, games? 5. PRACTICE OF THE FAITH: Do you go to Mass each week with your children? Do your children pray each day? 6. FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT: Will your child get an allowance? What can your child purchase without consultation? Will your child be expected to save money? Will your child be expected to give money to the Church?
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<p>Adolescence</p> <p>When your child enters middle school, set standards in the following areas while maintaining standards from the Age of Innocence. It may be necessary to revisit standards set when the child was younger and revise them to be age appropriate</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. CURFEW: Will there be one? Will it be flexible depending on the activity or the age of the youth? Will a phone call be required if there is a change of plans? 2. ALCOHOL AND DRUGS: Do your children know that the use of alcohol and drugs is not allowed? Do they know how to handle situations where drugs and alcohol are present? 3. DRIVING: If a youth is a licensed driver, what are the rules for the use of the car? Who pays for insurance, gas, upkeep, etc.? If friends drive, what are your expectations: seatbelt usage? Number of youth in the car? How far away from home can he or she go? Do you share the cost of the gas? 4. BOUNDARIES: Do your children clear planned activities or dates with you? Do they know the guidelines on dating and activities? 5. PHYSICAL SELF-CONTROL: Have your children made a firm decision on what physical boundaries they will follow? Remember, boundaries that respect each person include never taking your clothes off, never putting your hands under anyone else's clothes and never lying down together. 6. MEDIA: What rules are there for chat rooms, instant messaging, texting? How much time can be spent using internet, TV, iPod, cell phone, etc? 7. PARENTAL ROLE: Do your children know that any activity they attend must be supervised by a trusted adult?
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Step Two: After reviewing the standards on the previous page, write out your expectations below. Be as specific as possible. If possible add the date by which you want this expectation shared with your family. Remember to determine which expectations are negotiable (can change) and which are non-negotiable (do not change). For additional information on what to expect, refer to the [What Can I Expect?](http://www.twl4parents.com) resource on the Parent's Place website at www.twl4parents.com.

My Specific Expectations	
Manners Date:	
Home Maintenance Date:	
Notice of Location Date:	
Media Date:	
Faith Practice Date:	
Financial Management Date:	
Curfew Date:	
Alcohol and Drug Use Date:	
Driving Date:	
Boundaries Date:	
Physical Self Control Date:	
Parental Involvement Date:	

Step Three: Share Your Expectations. Now that you have written your standards, write down how you will share these expectations with your family. Here are some questions to help you plan your family meeting.

What time of day is the best for my family to meet?

What day of the week will be the best for my family to meet?

How long will it take to talk about our family expectations?

Can this information be shared in just one meeting or will we need more than one meeting?

Would it be helpful to meet with everyone together at first and then have one-on-one discussions with each child separately?

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