

Teaching the Way of Love

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How Can You Run an Ordered Household?

“Why is our life so full of chaos?” That’s the question my wife and I found ourselves discussing with friends while eating out with them. They are parents of children ranging in age from preschool to college. Our children are both in high school. The answer seemed pretty obvious at first. Our lives are chaotic because we are typical, busy families. On the other hand, all four of us know that order is important for our families. The members of our families face chaos all day at school and work. We all need space and time that is ordered and peaceful. Children especially thrive in a family environment that is predictable, where they feel safe, and where they know the parents are in control. Accepting the chaos as “normal” isn’t an option. But how can we run an ordered household in a crazy, busy world? The breakthrough came from our friend, the father of five. He said, “When it comes down to it, I guess we just have to lay down the law.”



To understand why this insight is so correct, we can reflect on how our Heavenly Father manages the human family. Genesis tells us that God’s first act of Creation was to bring light to the darkness and to separate the “waters above” from the “waters below” by creating the dome of the sky. In the Hebrew understanding of the cosmos, darkness and water represent chaos. God’s first act of creation was to bring order to the chaos by establishing His Divine Law. This understanding of creation brings new meaning to the story of Noah and the flood. Fallen from Original Sin, people preferred to live without God’s law. So when God flooded the world, He was actually giving people what they wanted. He removed His law from Creation. Without His Law, chaos reigns. Darkness and water reclaim Creation in the flood. God’s message is clear. Law provides order. Without order, we drown in the chaos.

If you want to give your family the gift of order, you need to provide them with the family law. Assigning chores makes the roles in your household clear and shows each family member that he or she makes an important contribution. Set routines for homework and meals bring predictability and stability to otherwise chaotic daily schedules. While teenagers can rail against

rules and restrictions, having clear expectations about things like drugs, alcohol, sex, curfew, and safety can actually free young people from the anxiety of facing decisions about these things on their own or in the face of peer pressure.

When God revealed the moral law to Moses, the Hebrew people acted very differently from the people in Noah's time. The Hebrews struggled to follow God's law perfectly, but they didn't treat it like a set of irrational restrictions. In fact, they celebrated it. Proclamations like Psalm 147 declare the goodness of God's law: "He has not done this for any other nation; of [His] laws they know nothing. Hallelujah!" The Hebrew people recognize that God's law is a gift. It teaches how to love Him. It leads us to the truth about God and ourselves. It also leads us to true goodness. God's law brings order into our lives.

Your children don't need to see your laws as a gift. That doesn't make them any less so. Parental authority exercised in love leads your children to the truth about God and themselves, leads them to authentic goodness, teaches them how to love, and brings order into their lives. That's a gift. The laws that you create for your family lead them to thrive.

Lay down the law for your children. If they are too busy, put limits on how involved they can be. Make your expectations about drugs, alcohol, sex, curfew, or safe driving explicit. Don't assume your children know what you expect. Require your children to eat, do chores, and attend Holy Mass as a family. Give your children the gift of laws that bring order to their lives.

*This newsletter series is brought to you by Alice Heinzen and Jeff Arrowood, creators of **Teaching the Way of Love**. **Teaching the Way of Love** is designed to help you become a faithful, joyful and confident parent. Visit www.twl4parents.com for more strategies on how to become the best parent you can be. Consider becoming an annual member of the **Teaching the Way of Love** program. Members receive practical and timely parenting resources. Go to twl4parents.com/membership for more information.*



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