

Sunday, November 3, 2013

# Fundamentals of Parenting (3)

## Balanced Parenting

There are two popular approaches in Parenting: One tends to be strict and firm while the other is permissive and lax. Many parents find themselves torn between the two approaches in raising their children. Which of the two approaches is more suitable for me?

**First**, we should not raise our children with firmness that lacks love, or love that lacks firmness, both complement each other. Firmness without love loses its value as it becomes a set of dry rules, and painful constraints placed on the children by their parents. Likewise, love without firmness also loses its value as it leads the children to be careless and spoiled. I can go to the length of saying that children may disrespect the love of their parents if it is not girdle with teachings, values, and principles.

**Second**, taking one extreme in raising our children - either the extreme of love with no firmness or firmness without love- is a dangerous approach. Both extremes have a destructive effect on the development of children. Overly strict approach produces low self-esteem and lack of confidence, inability to make decisions, and a personality that harbors deep anger and bitterness. This leads to resentment and contempt, rejection for all rules and even divine commandments as they seem to be freedom-limiting. In contrast, permissiveness produces careless and irresponsible individuals who are unwilling to strive either spiritually or academically and professionally. This becomes an obstacle to one's success in life in general. **Therefore, we need a balanced approach between firmness and permissiveness.**



**Third**, how do we achieve this balance between the two approaches? This needs, before anything, wisdom from God. We need to seek this wisdom from God incessantly *who gives to all liberally and without reproach*. According to Dr. James Dobson, this matter requires us to realize that no matter how flawless our parenting approach might be, it will not produce perfect children. In fact children will always be children, they will have their flaws, mistakes, and childish behavior which is part of their nature and part of the process of growing and developing. Many parents want their children to be perfect and ideal beings elevated above making mistakes, therefore, they become strict with their children, do not accept their flaws, and don't help them learn from their mistakes. Very often the victim of this strict approach is the first child. Through raising the first child, parents realize that he is only a child, so they rectify their approach with the rest of the children.

**Fourth**, we should not forget that at one point, we were children ourselves, and even after growing up, we still have our own flows. Dr. Dobson adds that the goal of parenting is to lead our children to maturity as though we are shaping raw material, until they become mature, responsible, and God-fearing adults. The process of leading our children to maturity takes about twenty years, full of successes and failures, sometimes progress and sometimes regression. At some stages when our children reach early teens, it may seem to us that they have forsaken the spiritual and moral values we taught them. However, later when they reach the age of twenty, this maturity starts to emerge again as buds grow in plants. Parenting is one of the most enriching experiences in life, though it we watch our children reach maturity at the end of childhood and teenage periods. Of course this maturity doesn't happen by itself, it depends on whether the foundation that we laid down in childhood is sound and strong and built on the teachings of Christ and the biblical commandments.

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