

Sunday, November 24, 2013

# Fundamentals of Parenting (6)

## Showing respect to Adults

In his book titled “The New Dare to Discipline”, Dr. James Dobson tells a story: “I once dealt with a mother of a rebellious thirteen-year-old who snubbed every hint of parental authority. He would not come home until at least two o’clock in the morning, and deliberately disobeyed every request she made of him. Assuming that her lack of control was long standing difficulty, I asked if she could tell me the history of this problem. She clearly remembered when it all started: Her son was less than three at the time. She carried him to his room and placed him in his crib, and he spit in her face.

She explained the importance of not spitting on mommy’s face, but was interrupted by another moist missile. This mother had been told that all confrontations could be resolved by love, understanding, and discussion. So she wiped her face and began again, at which point she was hit with another well-aimed blast. Growing increasingly frustrated, she shook him... but not hard enough to disrupt his aim with the next wad.

What could she do then? Her philosophy offered no honorable solution to this embarrassing challenge. Finally, she rushed from the room in utter exasperation, and her little conqueror spat on the back of the door as it shut. She lost; he won! This exasperated mother told me she never had the upper hand with her child after that night!”

Dr. Dobson often refers to toddlers as the worst adversaries of rules. As young as they are, they try to defy all rules while waiting to see if their parents would draw the line. If the parents don’t clearly draw a line, the result would be similar to the previous story where the child was out of control. The lack of respect doesn’t show its danger on the children and the family unity until the adolescence period of children. As we saw in the above story, the problem started in the early years of childhood, but it became more serious during adolescence.

Regarding showing respect to adults, especially parents, I would like to make some important remarks:

- Showing respect to adults is a great value which is necessary for the proper spiritual, social and practical growth of our children.
- We should show our children that this value is important to them, and that it is not a burden placed on their shoulders for us to maintain control over them. This should also be clear to us as parents.
- Showing respect to adults is a basic component in properly raising children. It is not related to specific culture whether Western or Eastern, Egyptian or American. When we address this topic, it is not addressed from our eastern cultural view point, but rather from the teachings of the Bible as well as the experience of those who preceded us. This is evident in that we cited a distinguished child development and family counseling expert, Dr. James Dobson, who is clearly an American scholar and expert.
- If children don’t learn to respect adults and parents, how do we expect them to receive Christian principles from adults? Perhaps this is why all Christian principles and human values are subject to debate, questioning, and maybe rejection by children.
- If children don’t learn to respect adults and parents as the source of their life values, how would they accept the presence of God and submit to Him as the Father and Creator of all humanity?
- Lastly, I would like to emphasize on the need for balanced parenting as we mentioned in previous articles. Love that spoils and is void of respect is not a true love (As we learned from the story at the beginning of this article). Moreover, respect without love becomes an authoritarian approach that the children will confront, reject, and defy sooner or later.

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