

1. **Let it be stated first that Christian parents are ultimately cast upon the grace of God.** Good men, like Samuel, may not see their children walking in righteousness (1 Samuel 8:1f). Good Hezekiah's Manasseh was extremely vile and hurtful before repenting at last. Conversely, many are the bad men whose sons were graciously snatched out of the fire and made sons of God.
2. **Parenting is a joy, a great blessing.** Children are a blessing (Psalm 127.5, 128.4). They are fun; they are friends; they are fellowship; they are helpers; they are memories. God expects us to want children. It is the normal thing. It is normal for the wife to be a mother, a keeper at home (Titus 2.5).
3. **But parenting is also a challenge with responsibilities.** David was a great musician, warrior, and statesman, but he was not a great father and suffered much for it. For example, David never pained (crossed) Adonijah (1 Kings 1.6), and thus the pain fell back on him. David suffered for it. The Bible teaches children are a blessing (Psalm 127). That is a general truth, but it is not always so. Adonijah and Absalom were not blessings. Hophni and Phineas were not blessing to old Eli. Some children would be better not born (Mark 14:21).
4. **The child's self-will must be broken.** You may teach the child many things, but if you have not broken his self-will, you have failed him. It is indeed possible to convince him that it is not worth it to do that disobedience again. "The rod and reproof give wisdom, but a child who gets his *own way* brings shame to his mother" (Proverbs 29:15). Long crying after a spanking is just a tempter tantrum. His self-will was not broken. Your spanking was only provocative, not humbling. There are things that a child may do that are cute, but sometimes it is nevertheless sinful or arrogant. Don't reinforce it with a smile. Don't reinforce it by telling others in front of

him. It only puffs him up in pride – the main obstacle in his ever entering the kingdom of God.

5. **Reprove firmly; mean what you say. Don't destroy your authority.** The child needs to see his parents as companions, but also there needs to be some fear. Parents can miss it here. Wanting so much to be best friends, they lose the respect of their child. There are times when a wrong and the resulting discipline should produce some fear. The parent must never be out of control, but nevertheless, the parent may wrongly represent God if there is not some anger manifested. Don't forget that wrath is an attribute of God. Eli reproved his sons (1 Samuel 2:23), but it was way too light for the sin, and God counted it as nothing (3.13). Eli was himself judged for it. Parents can give away their authority. Never say no if you don't mean it. Don't give a command, even a little one, if you are not willing to back it up. And parents can give a command in such a tone that the child senses there are options. The command should rather carry the tone that there are no options, not even delayed obedience. Delayed obedience is yet disobedience. It leaves the child in charge – 'I will do it, but I will do it when *I* want.' Parents can easily give away their authority by failing right here. No need to wonder why the 16 year old does not respect or obey. It all began years ago in little things. And, while there is need for discretion, remember the children are in your house and you are the head. Don't center your lives around them. Parents can be paralyzed by baby's nap time, and on and on it goes. Pick your battles. Generally, the battle should be fought and won at home in private and you won't have so much trouble in public. In public, cut as much slack as you can without compromise.
6. **Reprove with kindness; nobly, not cheaply** (Psa 141.5). Do not gouge. Do not be sarcastic. Do not humiliate them. Do not wound their spirit (Proverbs 15.4). Do not lose their heart. It must be personal and loving, though firm.

7. **Beware of hypocrisy (Luke 12:1).** Be an example (1 Peter 5.3). Hypocrisy is a most obvious and grievous offence to a child and breeds resentment and disrespect. Often the reason parents can't hold the line is because they know they themselves aren't there. Be very careful to make things right with them. Admit your sin, your error. It is a must before God and man (Proverbs 28:13).
8. **Don't exasperate the children (Colossians 3.21).** Beware of talking too long and making them wait. It is hard enough for an adult to have to wait, let alone a child. Do not have long devotionals and burn everyone out, especially while the meal is getting cold. "Do not be excessively righteous and do not be overly wise. Why should you ruin yourself? (Ecclesiastes 7:16)
9. **Teach the children to be tough,** to endure hardship without complaints and even taking it cheerfully (2 Tim 2.3). Whining is no option. Show them – immediately – that temper tantrums are not worth it. Teach them to eat the food in front of them. Teach them early the glory of "acting like men."
10. **Instill a spirit of discipline (2 Tim. 1.7 NAS).** Don't allow the children to lie in bed in the morning. It creates a lazy, depressing spirit for them and for everyone, rather than a "spirit of discipline". If they have trouble getting enough sleep, they can learn the discipline of going to bed earlier. As much as possible, have an ordered household. Having set meals times will help the economy of the household. If they miss breakfast, they miss breakfast. Don't reinforce their sloppiness.
11. **Teach them to be hard workers.** Rebekah was chosen because she volunteered to carry water and ran for it (Genuine. 24.20). If possible, develop a home industry. That is much more instructive and productive than sports and computer games. Life is more a workplace and a battleground, than a playground. Teach them responsibility. Let them plan and

save up for their own education. It will be rewarding and fulfilling.

12. **Let the child be needed and feel needed** (2 Tim 4.11). It is hurtful to let the child feel he is dispensable. Sure, it might be easier for you to do it yourself rather than train the child, but in the end, it is worth it. In previous generations, the family had to pull together to make a go of it. There was no time or place for follies. Include the children in decisions. After all, it will affect them. And they might indeed have some input.
13. **Do all you can together as a family.** It won't be long and it will be all over. They will be gone. Many of the memories will be gone. Do what you can to have meals together (as in Acts 2:46). It is such an opportunity to share spiritual things. Look at each meal as a communion meal, a love feast, where burdens, concerns, joys, hopes, plans, and truths are shared. Let everyone read a common or scheduled chapter in the morning on his own before breakfast. It yields good discussion at the table – ‘What did you get?’ And note, teens are still part of the family too. Sure it's humbling for them, but good. That's the way they will want it when they have teens.
14. **Father and mother must show deep unity.** Haughtiness on father's part is repulsive. Insubordination on mother's part is very hurtful to the child – ‘If mother shows rebellion, why shouldn't I?’ Demons see it too. They go together, as it is written, "For rebellion is as the sin of divination, and insubordination is as iniquity and idolatry" (1 Samuel 15:23). But unity in the Lord brings a blessing – “There the Lord commands the blessing” (Psalm 133.3).
15. **Ultimately, be intent on teaching them to fear God,** to center their lives around the Lord Jesus, to realize that it is Him with whom they have to do, Psa 34.11. Teach them there is a heaven to gain, a hell to shun, a Savior to claim, a race to run. They must make it to heaven at all costs.