

Parenting Decisions

Written by Cynthia Brewer

Parenting is full of difficult decisions, some of which have to be made quickly. Many of those decisions relate to the discipline and training of our children. As we see their behavior, we have to decide how to react to it. Praise, rebuke, reward, punishment, teaching, explaining—all of these are things we do as we raise our children.

Sometimes I fall into a trap of just trying to get through the day. As long as no one is bleeding and the house is still standing, then we're doing alright! But I realize that is not really parenting. There are a lot of people who can feed and dress a child, but that does not mean they are good parents!

Sometimes I need to step back and remind myself about the big picture, the long term goals I have as a parent. I have to focus on more than just the immediate situation and think about what I really need to be teaching my children. I am not just trying to survive—I want more than that! What qualities do I need to develop in my kids? A few that come to mind are self-control, responsibility, politeness, compassion...think the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22-23. These qualities should be the basis for the small decisions I make throughout each day—I should be improving them in myself, and teaching them to my kids.

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Just the other day, my 4-year-old picked up a box of Froot Loops, spilled some on the floor, set the box down (he just wanted to see the pictures on the back of the box), and left the room. Now, the quickest, easiest solution would be to just pick up the cereal and throw it away myself. I could clean up his mess and move on to other things. But, what would he learn from that? He certainly would not learn to clean up after himself and take responsibility for his own messes. So, I called him back to the kitchen and told him to pick up the cereal he spilled. It took him a few minutes, and I had to step over it a couple of times, but he got the job done. And I made a small step toward a long term goal of teaching my kids responsibility.

I remember one of my children asking me for something, and when I said “no” he began to cry and jump up and down. Well, that is about as far into a “tantrum” as any of our children gets, because we just don’t tolerate it. I could have just given in and changed my answer to keep him happy. I could have just left the room and let him throw his fit. But quite frankly, those are the easy ways out. Those solutions would not help me reach my long term goal of teaching my children to have self-control, to be obedient, and to act wisely. Throwing a fit is rebellious and foolish. “Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child; The rod of correction will drive it far from him” (Proverbs 22:15). Will spanking solve the problem of rebellion and foolishness in a child? Many people say it won’t, but the inspired wise man says it will. On this occasion, a few swats to the backside put a stop to the fit, and I made a small step toward my goal of teaching obedience and self-control.

Just a note about teaching self-control—this quality is fundamental to being righteous. When children are allowed to have their way, get everything they want, say whatever they want, and do whatever they want, they do not learn self-control. We must help our children learn to control their emotions (particularly anger), their words, and their actions.

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When we make decisions about parenting and training our children, we need to think long term. The small battles are important, and they all build toward our main goals—to raise children who are independent, productive, responsible, respectful, and most of all, godly. I think about what I want my kids to be like when they grow up, and I base that on what I believe God wants them to be. Then I remind myself to look past the spilled Froot Loops and make decisions that will *train* my children.

This article originally posted on the author's blog: [More Muffins, Please](#) .