



from the desk of

Randy Moerbe

They are all different...

...but yet are all the same.

⁶ Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it. **Proverbs 22:6 (NIV)**

and

²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, **Romans 3:23 (NIV)**

Many years ago, a Board of Parish Education member from my church in Omaha gave me the following “proof” for original sin:

“You never have to teach a child how to be bad.”

Children aren’t born innocent. We believe, along with King David, that we are born in sin.ⁱ If we are honest, a quick look at our own childhoods only further illustrate this fact. None of us had to be taught how to misbehave.

At the end of January, I had some comments on the Proverb above - mostly dealing with the differing temperaments of children. In this and subsequent blogs I’m dealing more with *situations* that demand “training.”

All children at times disobey. The root cause of disobedience can often be found in “I want this done my way.” (Like the first sin of Adam and Eve maybe?)

The child refuses to eat the otherwise perfectly fine green beans - and would rather gag than even trying one. At first, they balk at going to bed - and even when you think you “won,” here they come out of the bed or rock the crib screaming. When old enough to do chores sometimes more energy is spent in avoiding than in doing them. School projects or even basic homework get put off despite our best warnings. The teen retreats into their own world of ear buds and social media far enough that you

wonder if they are even part of your family anymore. Perhaps they consider curfew more of a suggestion than a rule.

What's a parent to do?

In an article for Focus on the Family entitled "Why Do Kids Misbehave,"ⁱⁱ authors Michael Anderson and Timothy Johanson suggest that the reason children and youth (even ourselves if we extend this concept) misbehave is that there is some sort of payoff for them. In their article, they state:

In most situations, the reason a child engages in — and continues to engage in — any of these behaviors is not very complex. There is a payoff for the child, some reward for the negative behavior. In other words, the behavior works.

This ends up being true no matter what the age of the child. Your child won't come the first time you call them? Because they really know that you aren't getting serious about having them stop playing or whatever until the third or fourth time you call - so they can just keep going on with whatever they wanted to do in the first place.

They learn that if they whine enough you'll "reward" that behavior by letting them have what they were whining about - or they learn that there really won't be any consequences if they behave in a certain way. We even bail them out. Late with a school project that they procrastinated on? We're up until midnight, making trips to Walgreens or CVS for poster board or construction paper.

As a society, we get bad enough at this as there are patterns of parenting with names for them. *Helicopter Parents* are those who hover over the child's every step, making sure that there won't be any consequences that might be a mark against them (or is it our own ego getting in the way, so that this doesn't reflect badly on us?) One further step are the so-called *Lawnmower Parents* that try to totally smooth the way for their children. (Hint - going on that first job interview *with* your child isn't a good idea!).

Guess what? These approaches just don't prepare children for real life. A quote I came across some time ago, referring to a what a young person will learn in their first job, is that "they aren't nearly so special as their momma led them to believe."

There are consequences to behavior. That's just a part of life. Imagine if we had speed limits - but knew that no one was enforcing them? How would that work out? Or that we knew that the officer wouldn't really give us a ticket until the third or fourth time we're clocked at 15 MPH over the speed limit. That's just not reality.

If we are to consider that one of the major goals (if not *the* major goal) of successful parenting is to have the child prepared to function well in

society (in addition, of course, to our Christian goal of them having a strong faith and Christian walk).

In coming weeks, I'll get more into the practical - some suggested do's and don'ts of the discipline of raising children - and suggest to you that parents must really discipline themselves to consistently follow through.

It's something all our children need - and as we'll see something that must be handled case by case in ways that are unique to the child.

Need further ideas with specific needs? I'm only an email away! (dcerandy@blcbcs.org).

DCE Randy

ⁱ **Psalm 51:5 (NIV)**

⁵ Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me.

ⁱⁱ <http://www.focusonthefamily.com/parenting/effective-biblical-discipline/why-kids-misbehave/why-kids-misbehave>