



## **The Hard Work of Parenting** by Kiley Garrison

After ten years of parenting, one thing that Michelle and I have learned is that parenting is hard work! Sometimes my prayer is simply, “God, please don’t let me screw up my kids *too* bad.” Ever been there? One area that is always a challenge is discipline. Some days it feels like we overreact and come down too strong. Other days it seems like our kids know just what to do to obtain the proverbial “get out of jail free” card.

I’ve had several conversations with parents over the years who struggle with this very issue. Many times parents find it difficult to create boundaries and follow through with discipline. No parent wants to be the “bad guy” all the time, but there is no question that children and teenagers need clear and unmovable boundaries in order to thrive.

The Bible says in Hebrews 12:11, *“No discipline is enjoyable while it is happening--it's painful! But afterward there will be a peaceful harvest of right living for those who are trained in this way.”* As a parent, I have to remind myself that the ultimate goal of discipline is not to modify my children’s behavior, but rather to help mold a heart that learns to love God and loves others. Then, over time and with God’s help, I will hopefully see “a peaceful harvest of right living.”

Recently I came across this list of things to remember about discipline from *homeword.com*. Perhaps it will help you as it did me.

- 1. Rules without relationship cause rebellion.** If one thinks that discipline is nothing more than a list of rules posted on the refrigerator that line out how everyone is supposed to act, they are greatly mistaken. It is important that time be spent with your child building a relationship, or the discipline will have no effect.
- 2. Look to their interest, not your own.** Don’t hand out a consequence just because your teen made you mad. Hand it out because, if they continue in the inappropriate behavior, the result will be something that is harmful to them, and will take them somewhere they really don’t want to go.
- 3. Discipline means confrontation, even if you don’t like it.** Confrontation is never easy, and is never really that enjoyable. To avoid confrontation is only postponing the inevitable to a time when things will be worse.

**4. Don't be afraid of seeing your child go through the pain of consequences.**

Parents are, at times, too quick to rescue a child from their discomfort, thus keeping them from learning from their mistakes or choices. Your rescuing just might allow them to continue in their plight. There are many words for this: denial, enabling, equipping. Rescuing is usually done with the wrong motive, and invariably the wrong results.

**5. You can't be consistent with everything, so pick your battles wisely.** If I was determined to correct every issue that a child presents, I would spend all my time correcting, and very little time building any relationship at all. Your child is not going to be perfect this side of heaven, and there's plenty of time to correct things along the way, so focus on ten things versus one hundred, and be consistent with just those ten.

Remember, even God had just ten commandments.

**6. Discipline is training.** Discipline is helping your child to get where they want to be and to keep them from a place they don't want to end up. Practice discipline in your own parenting even as you discipline your child, and you'll get them there.

I hope my kids know that I will always walk alongside them no matter what life throws at them. And I pray that I will always have the wisdom and courage to stand in front of them when they start down a path that could potentially lead them in the wrong direction. Parenting is hard work, but somebody's got to do it. Praying for a "peaceful harvest of right living" for my kids and yours!