

A MOM'S LOOK AT
HEART-ORIENTED DISCIPLINE

“Don't Make Me Count to Three!”



GINGER HUBBARD

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To my parents, Chuck and Bonnie Ferrell

He has given us back the years the locusts ate.
I rise up and call you blessed.

Psalm 37:4

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Preface

Don't make me count to three!"
"You just wait till your daddy gets home!"
"You don't want me to come in there!"
"Do you want a spanking?"

"If you don't straighten up, you're going to get it."

Sound familiar? No matter how you phrase them, these types of statements all have one thing in common: They aid parents in avoiding discipline issues.

All parents want their children to obey, yet many fail to get obedience. Some threaten. Some bribe. Some use "time out." Others simply ignore acts of disobedience. Could it be that parents avoid these issues because they are uncertain of how to handle them?

We mothers can tend to think that after a child's birth the hard part is over. We endured months of morning sickness, were shocked by the changes pregnancy wrought on our bodies, and even survived the life-threatening delivery process itself. What a surprise it was to learn that the hard part was just beginning!

After my child's birth, I read about the stages he was about to go through—the so-called "terrible twos" were just around the corner. I scrambled to stay one step ahead of his development. As avidly as I read "What To Expect During

Pregnancy” books, now I read “How To Raise ‘Em Now That You’ve Got ‘Em” books. As I studied Scripture and read books overflowing with biblical wisdom, it became apparent that I had to link discipline with instruction. I had to learn how to reach past the outward behavior and pull out what was in the hearts of my children. My husband and I had to make a decision about whether to spank or not. And we had to meet the challenge of just what biblical instruction was and how we were to deliver it in the right proportions at the right time. This book is the result of what I learned.

Books on how to discipline your child are a dime a dozen. Some of those books are deeply biblical. But there are few that enlighten the reader as to how to *apply* the scriptures in a practical way to training your child. That is my goal in this book.

—Ginger Hubbard

A Word From the Author

Man! No one ever told me how demanding writing a book could be. They also never told me how it numbs your brain to all other thinking requirements except its own. I believe the slang term for this condition of the brain is “fried.” Recently, I actually waited in line at the bank drive-through, pulled up to the window, and stared blankly at the teller as I said, “I have no idea why I’m here. I’m supposed to be going to the post office.” She looked very concerned as I drove off.

My children have labeled me “spaced out,” and my husband questions why a family of four requires three and half gallons of milk. Yes, writing a book is *that* demanding. Whew, I’m finally finished. Now all that is left is to pray that the book will be used to glorify God, encourage parents, and benefit children.

I am not a parenting expert, and I did not write this book based on my own authority. This book was written on the authority of God’s Word and the expertise of his counsel. I’ve heard many “experts” proclaim that the Bible has very little to say about raising children. Perhaps they have spent too much time earning their degrees and too little time learn-

ing the Scriptures. God's Word has plenty to say to parents if we diligently read it, apply it, and reap its fruits. Truly, God has given us everything we need for life and godliness (2 Pet. 1:3).

“And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ.” (Phil. 1:9–10)

PART

1

Reaching the Heart of Your Child

CHAPTER

1

The High Calling of Motherhood

If I have to answer one more insignificant question, wipe one more runny nose, or bandage one more boo-boo today, I'm going to pull out my hair . . . and maybe also the hair of whoever is standing close by!

"I've had it, kids! I'm going to soak in a hot bubble bath and I would strongly advise against any interruptions. Unless someone is dead or dying, do not knock on this door!"

As I ease down into my vanilla scented-bubbles, I pray, "God, is this really what I'm supposed to be doing? I mean, don't you have something really important for me that requires a little more skill than tying shoes and cutting the crust off sandwiches?"

Let me back up and tell you about myself before I reached this point in my life. I wasn't always bordering on the brink

of insanity. It wasn't too long ago that I really had it all together. I successfully managed a booming and well-respected business, counseled others in organizational skills, and drove a pretty cool automobile that would NOT seat an entire soccer team, and me, comfortably. I enjoyed television shows that were not hosted by singing vegetables or a purple dinosaur. I never found the milk in the pantry, and I never experienced the sheer panic of trying to remember whom I was calling before the voice at the other end said, "Hello?" Yesterday, I placed an order by phone. When the sales lady asked me for my address, I had to put her on hold. I absolutely could not recall my own address. It did finally come to me as I was reaching for the phone book to look it up.

What happened? The stick turned blue. I have traded in Victoria's Secret for the stretchy comfort of Hanes Her Way. I have boxed up my contemporary Christian music—you'll find me rockin' to "Silly Songs with Larry." It's good-bye 20/20 and hello Elmo.

Sometimes I feel like just getting dressed and making it through the day is all I ever accomplish. "Isn't there something more that you wanted me to do today, Lord?" Finally, I hear that still, small voice. I may not have found a cure for cancer or conquered world hunger, but as I soak in my tub, God gently reminds me of what I did accomplish today. I had the privilege of listening to the hopes and dreams of a handsome young man who thinks I'm the greatest woman in the world. He stands just over three feet tall and only gets really excited over Legos and pizza, but he is funny, charming, and never boring.

I also got to see a bright and precious smile illuminate the sweet face of my five-year-old daughter as I took time out to invade Barbie's house with green aliens. As she squealed with delight, my heart melted.

I did have a few minutes of well-appreciated privacy, as I was able to sit on the potty without someone banging on the door. I actually jotted this rare event down in my journal under “miracles.” I got to read a couple of great classics. Out loud. Move over Dickens, we have the works of Dr. Seuss. I was also able to dust, organize, clean, counsel, and cook. I kissed away the boo-boos and washed away the tears. I praised, rebuked, encouraged, hugged, and tested my patience, all before noon.

Yes, my greatest accomplishment today was nurturing the two precious children that God has entrusted to my care.

Now let’s talk about my greatest challenge today . . . and every day. It is raising these two precious children in the ways of the Lord. God does have an important job for me, and it does require much skill. It is my calling, my priority, my struggle, and my goal. I will rise to the occasion and accept the task at hand. I will love, nurture, and train my children the way that God has called me to do.

Moms, we need to be reminded of the awesome responsibility that God has given us. When we respond to the high calling of motherhood with passion, the rewards are far greater than any we could ever gain outside of that calling. The joys of motherhood are rare and beautiful treasures that can be easily missed if we don’t seize the opportunity to grab them.

Being a mom is more than being cook, chauffeur, maid, counselor, doctor, referee, disciplinarian, etc. (just to name a few). It’s about molding character, building confidence, nurturing, training, and guiding. There is nothing like the influence that a mother has on her child. A mother’s influence has enormous potential to shape the person a child becomes, for good or ill.

Listen to what Thomas Edison said about his mom: “My mother was the making of me. She was so true, so sure of

me; and I felt that I had someone to live for, someone I must not disappoint.”¹

Abe Lincoln described his mother as the person chiefly responsible for all he was or ever hoped to become.²

George Washington said, “My mother was the most beautiful woman I ever saw. All that I am I owe to my mother. I attribute all my success in life to the moral, intellectual, and physical education I received from her.”³

Wow! What an honor! These children have certainly risen up and called their mothers blessed. How did these women do it? One thing is for sure. The mothers of these great men knew how to reach the hearts of their children. They knew the importance of God’s Word in training and nurturing their little boys. They understood biblical discipline and they faithfully instructed their children in the ways of the Lord. And you can bet they never counted to three!

You probably purchased this book because you, too, desire to train your children in accordance with God’s Word. You desire to be the best mom you can be. You desire for your children to rise up and call you blessed. Good news, Mom: God’s Word is full of instructions for you. Let us explore those instructions together.

A Word of Warning

As we begin our journey together, I want to caution you. God’s Word never returns void. This means that as you learn to apply God’s Word in training your children, you will eventually begin to see the fruit. You will witness successes in your parenting. Your children will begin to change, and you will enjoy those changes. This is where a new temptation raises its ugly head. Be careful not to let pride enter your

heart. Pride is so wicked that it is listed as one of the things that God hates (Prov. 8:13).

I can remember the sin of pride first entering my life at age five when my parents bought me a Karaoke machine for Christmas. I would stand in front of the mirror in my footed pajamas for hours watching myself sing. I thought I was hot stuff. By the time I was six, I was gathering small crowds at family reunions, school, and local playgrounds, singing “Delta Dawn” to anyone who would listen. I believe God knew that my ability to sing well would put me at risk of complete conceit. So, today, I can tell you with great confidence that I can’t sing a lick. Well, actually, I sound pretty decent in the shower, but then again everyone sounds decent in the shower.

Proverbs 16:18 warns, “Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall.” I didn’t learn my lesson as a child, even after God left me unable to carry a tune. God didn’t give up on me, though. He continuously has to remind me of my rebellious tendency to be proud, and he often humbles me. One particular lesson stands out. I learned humility well one Friday afternoon in the Winn Dixie Grocery Store about three years ago.

Normally, I do my grocery shopping in the morning while the store is not so crowded. But for whatever reason, I found myself waiting in the checkout line at 6:00 p.m. on Friday with my two children. The place was packed. There were cashiers at all 10 registers and six or seven carts in every line. In the line next to me, the very last line, waited a mother and her two small children. They were about the same ages as my children, three and five. Mini refrigerators filled with various drinks were strategically located at the end of each check out counter.

The five-year-old began to beg mom for a coke (Let the games begin!).

Mom gave a firm, “No.” The boy began to walk over to the refrigerator.

Mom said (loudly), “You better not open that door!” The boy opened the door.

“You better not pull a drink out of there, mister!” The boy grabbed a coke.

“If you open that coke you are going to get it!” The boy unscrewed the cap, tossed it on the floor, and took a big swig.

Mom was screaming now, having completely lost it. “You just wait until we get home and your daddy hears about this! You kids never listen to me. I’ve had it up to here with you both!”

No one was able to decipher the exact location of “here” but we kept listening anyway. It’s not that we were being nosy. It’s just that there is nothing else to do while waiting in line, so this scene had the full attention of every customer. Now, in order for all these people to watch the scene unfold, they had to look past me and my children, who on this particular day were behaving well. Enter pride. Rather than having compassion for this poor mom and the struggles she was having with her children, I smugly thought, “You won’t see *my* kids acting like that.”

And then it happened. My three-year-old daughter, Alex, was standing right behind me when all of a sudden she blurted out the most horrible three words imaginable. It was as if she had grabbed one of the microphones from a check-out counter and yelled into it with all her might. Waving her hands frantically in front of her face, in a BOOMING voice, she screams, “Mama! You pooted!” My entire body froze. Time stood still. To this day, I do not know which was worse—the second she blurted it out or the minute it took for everyone to realize it was true.

I am a living testimony of Proverbs 11:2a, “When pride comes, then comes disgrace.” Dear Mom, as you experience success in your parenting, please do not become prideful. Par in a grocery store!