



THE ROCK AND THE HARD SPOT OF PARENTING

balancing control and support

Most parents are caught between a rock and a hard spot.

On the one hand parents are told to be tender, loving and encouraging. On the other hand parents are told to be firm, disciplined and instructive. It is the age old balancing act between friendship and leadership.

Does the exercise of one diminish the other? If the parent develops friendship with his or her child will leadership authority suffer? And, if the parent maintains his or her role of authority will the nurturing bond suffer?

The Bible tells parents to love, accept, and forgive unconditionally. It also tells parents to drive foolishness far from children. We are taught to "bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord." We are also told "do not provoke your children to wrath."

So, where's the balance? How do we accomplish both without sacrificing one or the other?

The Bible has the practical answers. And, as usual, the truth of the Bible is supported by common sense research. So, before looking closer at what the Bible says about this balancing act, let's look first at an interesting study from researchers at the University of Minnesota.

The researchers wanted to know what impact four different parenting styles had on certain outcomes in children. In their research, they found that SUPPORT and CONTROL were the two most telling indicators of parental influence. They defined SUPPORT as "the ability to make the child feel loved." They defined CONTROL as "the ability of parents to manage a child's behavior." Sound familiar? It should. These are the two ends of our balancing act -- friendship and leadership, nurture and discipline.

According to the University of Minnesota research, Support and Control combine in various ways to produce four distinct parenting styles. The findings of this research are important. They describe perfectly what the Bible has taught for thousands of years. Consider then the four styles...



tender
loving
encouraging
firm
disciplined
instructive

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	High Support		
	Permissive	Authoritative	
Low Control			High Control
	Neglectful	Authoritarian	
	Low Support		

As you can see the different combinations of Support and Control produce four parenting styles. High Support plus Low Control creates the Permissive Style. Low Control plus Low Support creates the Neglectful Style. Low Support plus High Control creates the Authoritarian Style. High Control plus High Support creates the Authoritative Style.

The urgent question before the researchers was "How do these different styles impact children?" They chose four areas to probe. These areas are best summarized with questions:

1. Which Parenting Style is most effective in helping children develop self-worth and happiness?
2. Which Parenting Style is most effective in helping children develop healthy respect for appropriate authority (how well do children engage parents, teachers, policemen and others in authority)?
3. Which Parenting Style is most effective in helping children accept their parents' religious and moral world views?
4. Which Parenting Style is most effective in developing children who identify with and become involved with drugs, crime, truancy and other attitudes and behaviors contrary to their parents wishes?

The findings were profound, yet simple: profound for their implications; simple for their common sense and correlation to biblical truth. Here they are:

	Self-Worth	Conformity To Authority	Religiosity	Identification with Wrong Behavior
Authoritative	1	1	1	4
Permissive	2	2	2	3
Neglectful	3	3	3	2
Authoritarian	4	4	4	1

It's not too difficult to see that the Authoritative Parenting Style (High Support/High Control) is most effective in helping children develop appropriately. It's also not difficult to see that the Authoritarian Parenting Style (High Control/Low Support) is the least effective in helping children develop appropriately and the most effective in producing rebellion. The Permissive and Neglectful Parenting Style, while somewhat better than the Authoritarian, were also less effective in their ability to help children develop appropriately. In fact, the research findings indicated that while the Permissive Parenting Style rated third behind Neglectful and Authoritarian respectively in fostering rebellion, it was a very close third.

One Parenting Style stood out among the rest -- Authoritative. This makes sense. The Authoritative Style balances both Support and Control. It is the Parenting Style that offers lots of love and lots of appropriate discipline.

Once again, this makes perfect biblical sense, because loving and raising children requires both nourishment and discipline, both support and control. In fact, two myths about nourishment and discipline should be dispelled. Nourishment does not imply permissiveness and discipline does not imply brutality. For example, consider the following Bible passage...

Ephesians 6:4	Nourishment	Discipline
	"do not exasperate your children"	"bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord"

While we are to help our children develop disciplined, moral, ethical, godly lives, we are not given permission to brow-beat them into submission. The word exasperate literally means to provoke to anger or wrath. The over-bearing use of authority coupled with unnecessary rules and constant correction will not only exasperate a child, but it will break his or her spirit also (Colossians 3:21).

Consider, too, the following Proverbs:

Proverb	Principle
15:23 "A man finds joy in giving an apt reply; and how good is a timely word!"	Facts without sensitivity are destructive Wisdom imparted gracefully enhances communication and understanding.
29:11 "A fool gives full vent to his anger, but a wise man keeps himself under control."	Never attack or humiliate another's character. Gaining control of our emotions protects the well-being of others.
29:15 "The rod of correction imparts wisdom but a child left to himself disgraces his mother."	Discipline promotes wisdom while permissiveness fosters rebellion.

Finally, our plan of action must be one of consistency. By following the next four points of application we may increase our consistency in our pursuit of parenting excellence.

1. Be humble: if we are wrong, we should admit it.
2. Be patient: nourishment and support demand it; discipline and control need it.
3. Be self-controlled: modeling is just as important as verbal instruction.
4. Be accountable: without on-going learning and continual friendship we stand alone.





WHO WILL LOVE THE CHILDREN building inescapable esteem

when it comes
to children,
we dare not
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pursuit
for expertise

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A public speaker once presented a lecture which he called “Ten Commandments for Shaping Children.” Then he had his first child. So, he modified his lecture. It became, “Seven Principles for Helping Children.” Two years passed and he had yet another child. Once again he edited his lecture. It was reduced to “Three Suggestions About Children.” Finally, after his household rumbled with four children, he left the speaking business completely.

Sound familiar? Well, not to worry, this gentleman’s discoveries are not so unusual.

Yet, while most of us realize that the more we learn, the more we find out how little we really know, we still need answers and solutions. And, when it comes to children, we dare not give up our pursuit for expertise. The children — ours, as well as others — need us to be our very best. For in the end, if we do not reach the children, someone will. If we’re fortunate, that someone will prove helpful and reliable. If we’re unfortunate, that someone may prove him or herself to be inadequate at best, dangerous in general, or lethal at worst.

Therefore, we need to be people who understand the needs of the next generation and people who know how to meet those needs. One need in particular that we must understand concerns how children and teens see themselves. In a recent round table discussion with junior high students only two out of fifteen did not raise their hands when the group was asked, “Do you feel you are below 5 if attractiveness can be measured from 1 to 10?” This is a not so unusual indicator of how poorly many young people feel about themselves. As the conversation continued, one young lady said, “Too often girls our age run into sexual affairs because they just want to feel loved or, if not loved, at least not rejected.” This is a not so unusual indicator of the poor choices many young people make simply based on how they feel about themselves.

Helping children and young people see themselves as God sees them may be one of the best lines of defense we can establish. Doing so requires more than cute little actions. It requires understanding and wisdom. It requires knowledge and the ability to apply that knowledge. We must do more than create cute little slogans like “Kid’s First,” or “Participate In the Lives of America’s Youth.” We must answer the question, “Who Will Love the Children?” We must become their first and foremost advocates. We must be people who not only want to reach children and young people, but people who can reach children and young people.

What follows is an attempt to move us in that direction. There is nothing original about it. The basic truth in the following information comes from the Bible. The way it is organized is similar to many other presentations found in Christian books on adolescent development and personal identity and in Christian counseling courses found at many Christian colleges and in many Christian seminars. In the end, this writer is not sure who should get first credit for the organization of these truths, but believes all will agree that God alone deserves credit and honor for the principles themselves. So let’s turn our attention on two fundamental issues important to everyone...

Two Basic Needs

Meaning: everyone needs meaning in their lives; they need a sense of personal identity; they need significance; they need to know that everything is not empty, futile, or pointless

Acceptance: everyone needs a sense of respect and love; they need the real presence of functional relationships; they need love; they need to feel as though they belong with others no matter what

Two ways of Meeting These Basic Needs

The Popular Method

Parents, peers and popular culture tend to utilize three distinct categories to instill children with a sense of meaning and acceptance.

Appearance

Answers the question
“How do I look compared to others?”

Raises the questions
“Am I valuable?”
“Am I favorable?”

Status

Answers the question
“How respected am I compared to others?”

Raises the question
“Am I important?”

Performance

Answers the question
“How do I do compared to others?”

Raises the question
“Am I adequate?”

The Biblical Method

The Bible tells us God chooses three entirely different categories to instill his children with a sense of meaning and acceptance.

Worthiness

Answers the question
“How do I look to God?”

So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.
Genesis 1:26,27

Belongingness

Answers the question
“How valuable am I to God?”

What is man that you are mindful of him... You made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory... Psalm 8:4a,5

Competence

Answers the question
“How able does God think I am?”

You made him ruler over the works of your hands; you put everything under his feet. Psalm 8:6

How Do We Help Children Escape the Popular Method and Develop According to the Biblical Method?

1. We cannot give away what we do not possess. Therefore, we first need to consider two simple questions...
 - A. Where do I stand with Jesus Christ?
 - B. Am I prepared to lead my children to Jesus Christ?
2. Once we've settled these issues, we can consider helping children and young people by following some simple Dos and Don'ts...

Dos and Don'ts

Do

Worthiness

Praise Effort
Compliment Individuality
Affirm Strengths

Belongingness

Spend Lots of Time Together
Create Comfortable Environment
Develop Family and Team Concept

Competence

Discover Gifts, Talents, Niches
Affirm Sincere Effort and Success
Affirm Steps to Achievement
Offer Training and Mentoring

Don't Do

Appearance

Praise Perfection
Compliment Physical Appearance
Affirm Unearned Victory

Status

Spend "Quality" Time Together
Create Environmental Pretense
Develop Self-Centered Egos

Performance

Insist on Predetermined Expectations
Affirm First Place
Affirm Achievements Only
Offer Your Own Dreams

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COMMUNICATION AS BOTH CONTENT AND CONTEXT

it's not just what you say, but how you say it, too

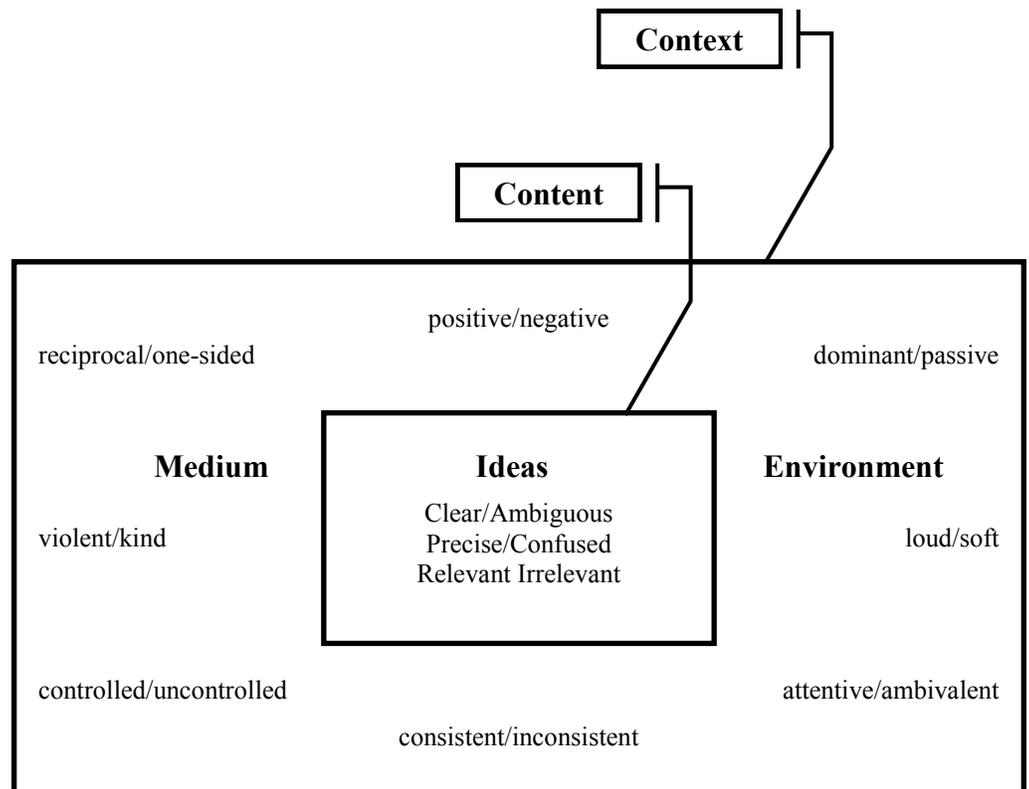
Did he say what I think he said?

Is that what she really meant or was she implying something else?

Such is the confusion created by “communication background noise.” What is said is sometimes not what is heard, because communication involves much more than the simple transfer of words from speaker to listener. In fact, communication involves both the content of ideas as well as the context through which ideas are transmitted.

Content is the message. Context is the medium. Together they form the process and product of communication. They are inseparable. Neither is more important than the other in the exchange of information.

The following diagram may help to illustrate the interdependence between the content and context of communication.



Both modern research and God’s word indicate that both factors are necessary for quality communication. In fact, the Apostle Paul taught both aspects while writing to the Church in Ephesus. We can learn from his inspired writing that simply speaking our minds may not solve anything. Instead, we must give careful attention to the entire manner in which we attempt to communicate our thoughts and feelings.

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Ephesians 4:25-27,29-32

Scripture	Principles
25) Therefore.....speak truthfully to his neighbor each of you must put off falsehood and for we are all members of one body	I. Communication must always be truthful. Why? Because deceit destroys relationships.
26) In your anger do not sin do not let the sun go down while you are still angry	II. Communication must be delivered with emotional self-control. Why? Because Satan will use emotional panic to his advantage.
27) and do not give the devil a foothold	
29) Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs that it may benefit those who listen	III. Communication must always be constructive. Why? Because constructive communication helps others, while destructive communication only hinders them.
30) And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption	IV. Communication must be influenced by our desire to please God. Why? Because we owe our very salvation to Him.
31) Get rid of all bitterness rage and anger brawling and slander along with every form of malice	V. Communication must never be violent or abusive.
32) Be kind.....to one another and compassionate forgiving each other just as in Christ God forgave you	VI. Communication must be influenced by our desire to be Christlike. Why? Because we have received from Jesus far more than we can ever give to others.

What would it be like if we

always communicated truthfully?

always communicated with emotional self-control?

always communicated constructively?

always communicated from a desire to please God?

always communicated without hostility?

always communicated in a Christlike fashion?

It would be peaceful. Our relationships would be less stressful. Our past would be worth remembering. Our future would be more hopeful.

It would be dynamic. Our personal development would never grow stale. We would seldom regress from loss of friendships or other relationships. Others would mature by following our communication patterns.

It would be like a piece of heaven. Others would appreciate us. We would appreciate ourselves.

However, no one — except the Lord — communicates perfectly. So we must accept the reality of our tendency toward communication blunders. We must also accept it in others. But that should be as far as we go. After that we should pursue excellence

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