

PARENT INSPIRATION

Teaching Christian Values

Right and Wrong

How do we know what is right and what is wrong? Sometimes it's difficult to know, especially when the world around us believes any behavior is all right. If we aren't clear, our kids will get a confusing message. Consult God's Word (see [Learn More](#)). Find the principle that applies for today. Be willing to live by God's answer, even though it may seem different and difficult. God's Spirit will guide you.

Setting appropriate limits teaches right and wrong. Limits make boundaries within which children can feel safe and loved. Limits can also feel oppressive. How you set and enforce the limits makes the difference. When **setting limits**, ask yourself: Is it necessary? Is it reasonable? Is it OK for my child's age?

Is it enforceable?

If all the answers are yes, go ahead. The limit will contribute to your child's growth. If even one answer is no, STOP. The next step is **enforcing the limit** set.

- **Be clear.** Help your child understand the limit and its reasons.
- **Be predictable.** Don't pass one day and punish the next. This is very confusing to children.
- **Be confident and firm.** You - not your child - are in charge.
- **Be loving.** Love is the key to your child's heart. Loving and firm should go hand in hand.
- **Be reasonable.** An exception might be appropriate.

Children need very clear right and wrong values messages. *How* you teach is the key to helping them make the values messages their own. Your goal is internalized values - your kid thinks they are her own. Give your values messages enough importance so your child feels uncomfortable with the way she was acting.

This is where temperament comes in. With a very sensitive kid, you can get the message across by just looking him in the eye and speaking with a little emphasis. He'll remember and internalize the message. If you yell and punish severely, your message gets lost in his hurt feelings. He feels resentful and doesn't learn anything.

With "tough" kids, you will need to be much firmer. They don't pay attention unless you are very firm and impose consequences they don't like. Then they'll begin to think about your message and internalize it.

Knowing your child is very important. How you teach also includes love, accountability, support, and grace.

- **Love.** Be loving and caring all the time. Smile, hug, kiss, compliment. Speak lovingly. Be sure she gets the message: You will love her, no matter what, just like God does.
- **Accountability.** Your child must be held accountable for his actions - accountable to you, to God, to his teachers and other persons in authority. Accountability helps all of us grow.
- **Support.** Kids need to feel supported - you are on their side. Listen carefully, respond to her feelings, help with a difficult job, practice batting, go to games and recitals, respect likes and dislikes. Make your home a place where the hurts of life can be healed.
- **Grace.** Be sure your kids don't have to earn your love. Give it freely, even when they are "difficult." Pray for God's love so you can pass it on. Forgive and forget. Every day can be a new start.

If you teach with love, accountability, support, and grace, your children will experience God's love through you. They will learn God's values and will want to follow His way.

REFLECT

There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death. Proverbs 14:12

There is no right way to do a wrong thing.

Today is the first day of the rest of your life.

FAMILY ACTIVITIES

- **Love.** Give five minutes for each person to find an object he or she could use to show love to someone else. Each person demonstrates how to show love with their object.
- **Support.** Place names of family members in a small sack. Ask the youngest child to draw a name. Put a paper crown on the winner's head. Then each family member tells something special about that person.

LEARN MORE

- Read the Bible together: Exodus 20:3-17; Matthew 22:34-40; 1 Corinthians 13; Matthew 5-7; Romans 12; and Proverbs
- *Easy Obedience* by Kay Kuzma
- *10 Christian Values Every Kid Should Know: A How-to Guide for Families* by Donna Habenicht. See chapter 6 for more ideas.



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