

What Is the Role of a Parent?

- A parent is a mother or father, with responsibilities as provider and protector, teacher and trainer, defender and discipler of a child.
- To parent means to physically rear, emotionally nurture, and spiritually nourish a child.
- The protective role of parents is seen in Hebrews 11:23 ... “By faith Moses’ parents hid him for three months after he was born.”
- Parents are teachers who can exert a powerful influence on the life of their child.

*“Listen, my son, to your father’s instruction
and do not forsake your mother’s teaching.”*
(Proverbs 1:8)

A Biblical Checklist for Parenting

- Do you regard your children as a blessing? (Psalm 127:3)
- Do you and your spouse approach parenting with common goals and actions? (Amos 3:3)
- Do you take every opportunity to teach your children spiritual truths? (Deuteronomy 6:6–7)
- Do you clearly instruct your children by doing what is ethically right and just? (Ephesians 6:4)
- Do you plan ahead to protect your children from danger? (Hebrews 11:23)
- Do you provide for your children’s material needs? (2 Corinthians 12:14)
- Do you effectively discipline your children? (Proverbs 29:17)
- Do you deserve the respect and pride of your children? (Proverbs 17:6)

*“Discipline your children, and they will give you peace;
they will bring you the delights you desire.”*
(Proverbs 29:17)

Parent Traps

Treasure-seeking parents

- Prioritizing possessions and money
- People pleasing for popularity and recognition
- Pushing for prominence and status
- Preferring pleasure and travel

Rejecting parents

- Lacking eye contact
- Lacking physical touch
- Lacking focused attention
- Lacking quality and quantity time

Absentee parents

- Choosing workaholic lifestyles
- Choosing careers over family
- Choosing unnecessary childcare
- Choosing excessive time with friends

Power-hungry parents

- Displaying behavioral extremes (passively manipulative or forcefully controlling)
- Unwilling to admit mistakes
- Feeling possessive of the child or of the other parent
- Competing with other parents through their children

Spiritually-stymied parents

- Differing in theological beliefs, goals, and expectations
- Serving God to the detriment of family
- Misunderstanding the character of God
- Failing to practice faith in front of family or live with integrity

*“Keep me free from the trap that is set for me,
for you are my refuge.”*
(Psalm 31:4)

Key Verse to Memorize

*“Start children off on the way they should go,
and even when they are old they will not turn from it.”*
(Proverbs 22:6)

Key Passage to Read

1 Thessalonians 2:7–12

The Don'ts of Discipline

- **Don't** feel guilty when you discipline your child. You are loving your child well when you hold the line on limits.
- **Don't** be afraid of losing your child's love. By obeying God's will, you will earn your child's respect.
- **Don't** view structure and limits as punishment. You are establishing beneficial boundaries.
- **Don't** try to manipulate your child with fear or guilt. See discipline as a positive step to put your child back on a correction course.
- **Don't** embarrass your child in front of others. Remember to praise in public and correct in private.
- **Don't** belittle your child with sarcasm. Speak the truth in love and discipline with compassion.
- **Don't** compare your child with others. See your child as a unique creation of God.
- **Don't** discipline your child in anger. Wait for your anger to pass as you pray for wisdom in order to discipline appropriately.
- **Don't** use your hand for correction. Use a neutral object—not a father's belt or a mother's brush—but an object, such as a paddle.

*“Whoever spares the rod hates their children,
but the one who loves their children
is careful to discipline them.”*
(Proverbs 13:24)

The Dos of Discipline

- **Do** mold the will without breaking the spirit. (Colossians 3:21)
- **Do** communicate your expectations clearly. (1 Thessalonians 4:1)
- **Do** establish negative repercussions for misbehavior. (Proverbs 19:18)
- **Do** consider spanking when a young child defies your authority. (Proverbs 23:13–14)
- **Do** encourage and develop responsibility. (Proverbs 17:25)
- **Do** assign beneficial chores. (Proverbs 14:23)
- **Do** reward positive behavior. (1 Thessalonians 5:11)
- **Do** maintain consistency. (Proverbs 24:3–4)

*“A rod and a reprimand impart wisdom,
but a child left undisciplined disgraces his mother.”*
(Proverbs 29:15)

Letting Go

- **Let go** of seeing your child as an extension of yourself.
- **Let go** of your desire to possess your child.
- **Let go** of looking to your child to meet your needs.
- **Let go** of trying to relive your life through your child.
- **Let go** of the inclination to control your child.
- **Let go** of your expectations for your child.
- **Let go** of jumping in to save your child from failure.
- **Let go** of seeking harmony at all times.
- **Let go** of your need to be appreciated.
- **Let go** of parenthood as your primary identity.

*“Children are a heritage from the LORD,
offspring a reward from him.
Like arrows in the hands of a warrior
are children born in one's youth.”*
(Psalm 127:3–4)

Parents of Prodigals

Receive the compassion of God.

*“Because of the LORD's great love we are not consumed, for his
compassions never fail”* (Lamentations 3:22).

Examine your emotions.

*“Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my
anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and
lead me in the way everlasting”* (Psalm 139:23–24).

Leave the past in the past.

*“Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am
doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive
it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the
wasteland”* (Isaiah 43:18–19).

Entrust the future to God.

*“That is why I am suffering as I am. Yet this is no cause for
shame, because I know whom I have believed, and am convinced
that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him until that
day”* (2 Timothy 1:12).

Acknowledge your need for the Lord.

*“I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but
Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by
faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me”*
(Galatians 2:20).

Seek to build a new relationship with your child.

"Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you"
(Colossians 3:13).

Exchange your pain for God's peace.

"You will keep in perfect peace those whose minds are steadfast, because they trust in you. Trust in the LORD forever, for the LORD, the LORD himself, is the Rock eternal" (Isaiah 26:3–4).

Questions and Answers

"My son is rebellious and is getting into trouble. Since he won't listen to me, should I give up trying to tell him what is right?"

No. Even if your son continues to make choices that are wrong, as a parent you are responsible for communicating what is right. You are not accountable for your son's wrong decisions, but you are accountable for your own right parenting. If you won't try to teach your son what is right, who will?

*"The teaching of the wise is a fountain of life,
turning a person from the snares of death."*
(Proverbs 13:14)

"My 19-year-old son is a college sophomore and wants to do things that I feel are wrong for him. Do I have the right to say 'No'?"

If your son is financially supporting himself—earning his own living, buying his own food, paying his own rent, fueling his own car, and providing his own schooling—then he has earned the right to make his own decisions. However, if your son is not living autonomously, then he has not earned the right to make autonomous decisions. In that case, he is still under your authority and needs to respect your right to maintain house rules and make decisions regarding his activities.

If he says, "That's not fair," simply explain that whoever assumes the responsibility has the authority. At any time should he shift all the responsibility to his shoulders, he will then have the right to make his own decisions.

*"Let everyone be subject
to the governing authorities,
for there is no authority except
that which God has established.
The authorities that exist
have been established by God."*
(Romans 13:1)

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