



ANDREA JOHNSON/Editor

The Perfect Parent

When our youngest child was four, we could hardly wait to get to the Badlands in South Dakota. Incredible scenery, buffalo, and rocks perfect for children to climb – unless

you have a child that ignores boundaries. After hiking with the rest of the family to our favorite spot, our littlest angel took off on a dead run, ignoring loose rocks, drop-offs, and warnings to slow down. Finally, my husband literally screamed for her to stop, which she did, right at the edge of an enormous precipice. No longer interested in hiking I took my precious daughter by the hand, carefully descended to level ground, and tried to stop shaking.

Little did I know that incident was a foreshadowing of things to come. This child not only pushed our boundaries, but would eventually totally annihilate them. Any parent who has endured the heartache of a child who rejects their teachings can empathize. And it seems there are many of us. When I solicited authors to write for this issue I received the same answer more than once: "We would love to help you out but we just don't feel we would be good examples. Our children are not all where we would like them to be at this time."

These responses came from people I know to be good moms and dads, godly Christians, upstanding citizens. The reality is as parents we simply cannot accept too much credit or take too much blame when it comes to our children. They have their own free will. A wise person once told me, "Even Jesus had His Judas, and Jesus was the perfect 'parent.'"

Children raised in the same family will react differently. One will follow after God with all her heart. Another will run as fast as he can in the

opposite direction. That being said, there are some general rules parents can follow to increase our chances of success:

- Assure your child you are "for" her, not against her. You are on the same team.
- Let natural consequences take their place in the discipline process. If a child spills milk, teach him to clean it up. If she goes over on her texting, make her pay the bill, even if she has to get a job or do extra chores.
- Acknowledge your child's life stages. Don't treat a teenager like a small child. Listen attentively when he "processes out loud," and ask thoughtful – not badgering – questions. Allow him to make his own decisions when possible.
- Don't flip out or ignore her when she tries to talk to you or she will find someone else in whom she can confide. That person may not have her best interests in mind.
- Make sure your child knows your standards and beliefs, and the reasons behind them. Encourage his relationship with the Lord. It is much easier to trust my kids when I know they listen to God.
- Model right behavior. Couch potatoes tend to raise couch potatoes.
- Most importantly, "pray without ceasing." God can speak to your children when they won't listen to you.

Nothing compares to the heartache of a teenager who walks away from the Lord and tramples our morals underground. Yet this I know: Those who sow in tears WILL reap with joy. Our little prodigal has been bought with the blood of Jesus Christ. She belongs to Him and she will come back to Him. We will fight for her on our knees until that day.



Andrea Johnson,
Managing Editor

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