

A Precious Child

By: Sally Hohnberger

"Father, You have given us this precious child to raise. I feel so honored but oh so unprepared for this work. How do we nurture him in the ways of heaven? How do we teach him about You? How do we train his will so that he will serve You and not Satan? We see so many precious children that are left to come up like weeds in the garden. They fall to the wayside far from God and cause their parents so much grief in their youth. We don't want that for our son, Lord." And there, in the calm of my thoughts the Lord answered the plea of my soul.

"Sally, Satan is prince of this world. He claims all children when the parents are not watchful, or prayerful in directing the children to God so they may be empowered to obey heaven's ways. At the parent's neglect Satan snatches the infant or child's heart by first suggesting his selfish thoughts, then pressing his selfish feelings upon them to confirm the thoughts, and the infant or child yields to it. All temptations begin in your thoughts. The child has a selfish cry, and a selfish disposition, showing that Satan is their lord and not God!"

"Lord, does that mean I can know that Satan is leading my child's thoughts when he

has this selfish disposition? Wow! Satan truly takes control of every mind that is not decidedly under the control of the Spirit of God. We truly are not warring against flesh and blood in parenting but against powers and principalities! (Eph. 6:12) Then failing to communicate with You and to take Your directions is why our corrections and disciplines often fail?"

"Yes, exactly! But Sally, you must know that Satan works the parent as well as the child in these cases. He will suggest lying thoughts to you. He will try to make you think that the infant can't possibly understand a correction as an infant or toddler. He wants you to do nothing. Thus he gains a three-year head start on molding your child's thoughts, habits and will after his way. Too many parents fall for this lie and Satan works with but little restraint."

"Lord, I've fallen into this trap as well! I thought infants were too young to understand correction. Yet I read about Elizabeth in Luke 1, where she was six months pregnant with John the Baptist. I wondered how the child John could leap with understanding at the announcement that Mary was carrying the Christ child. How can

this be?"

"Sally, my cousin, John, didn't have any advantage that you cannot give to your baby," Jesus said tenderly. "Babies understand much more than people give them credit for. They are formulating the whole basis of their language, even multiple languages for some, developing habits, and problem solving techniques that will go with them for the rest of their life. It's a key time for their developing mind. When you surround your child with the influence of the Holy Spirit, and teach them to know the voice of My Spirit, and yield to it, you can undo, and over ride all that Satan is attempting to do. You have the privilege of letting the indwelling Christ evict Satan even this young. I too am speaking to their thoughts. **Before the age of reason**, they can choose to be happy and obey heaven's voice instead. You are God's tool to train them to obey God and right instead of self and Satan." (Rom 6:19)

"You mean I'm suppose to train them to obedience now? Lord, You're going to have to teach me how."

"I will help you in the management of your children. I love to help Mothers! They can bring their infants, children, teens or adult children to Me and I will bless them with my Holy Spirit, and inspire them, in the way of right. I will instruct and empower all who will cooperate with Me. In Me is the way of escape from every selfish way! If your child is not under the control of the My Spirit he is automatically under the control of the Spirit of Satan."

In writing this article I'm writing with twenty years of experience expressing what God was beginning to teaching me then. When my boys were very young I didn't know or understand the importance of these principles. I, like you, learned on the job. I had only a thimbleful of knowledge and a thimbleful of faith yet these principles worked for me and they will work for you too. May these illustrations help you see what God desires to do for and through you.

My son was only two years old and we were at a store. He was acting selfishly there and I denied his desires. He whined, fussed and pouted until I checked out our purchases. As I was putting him into his car seat, his selfishness

exploded. He cried and vehemently refused to let me buckle him in. I felt so helpless, not knowing what to do.

Amid the frustration and tumult a new thought entered my mind, "Would you like Me to help you?" I was young in the faith, but sensed this was God and responded with a timid "yes."

"Then put him in My hands."

"How, Lord? I've never done this before."

"Be mind and will for him, Sally. You can direct his choices aright."

"Okay Lord, You may have him, his will, his mind, and his heart. Everything is Yours." I prayed.

"Good Sally. Now tell Matthew he can't behave this way, that he must choose to do right trusting Jesus. He must choose against his flesh, his emotions and his self to do that."

I was distraught. "Lord, that won't work! He's so passionate right now." Experience was telling me that no reasoning would do any good here. "Besides Lord, I'm embarrassed, this is a parking lot. What if someone sees me wrestling with my child like this?"

"Sally, trust Me! Remember the Bible says, .Taste and see that the Lord is good.. I am your Helper in trouble." "OK," I said resignedly, "I'll try." And I did, but it didn't work. "Lord, he didn't settle down one bit. What do I do now?"(Acts 9:6 KJV)

"Tell him, he has chosen a spanking for disobeying." Jesus was calm, but firm.

"But Lord that won't work! It inflames him when he is like this. I've done this many times and was I ever sorry I did! Can spankings be good? And what if someone sees me?"

"Satan is against spanking because itrestrains the child from his service, if it's done rightly. I'm not against spanking. Didn't I spank Israel for disobedience, as a motivation to choose right and discover My redeeming grace? Giving a spanking without harshness and anger, when you are surrendered to Me will be different than when you did it in self, in harshness without Me. Spanking is a simple motivational tool to choose to change. Done in Me it can work good, but never apart from Me. Why don't you at least try?" (Prov13:24)

I struggled with this thought while physically restraining my squirming son. I surrendered my irritation and my anger, as best I knew, and proceeded to do as God instructed me. "Son, you have chosen a spanking. I'm

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sorry you did that. I don't want to spank you, but you have given me no other choice." I administered the spanking, for the first time without harshness and anger, through Christ redeeming me. Then I appealed to Matthew lovingly but firmly, "Son, you must give your selfishness to Jesus and He will change your heart and feelings. Now let me buckle you in this car seat."

I was expecting World War II at this point, but instead he settled down quickly following the spanking. He opened his eyes and when he saw the love in my eyes, he calmly let me buckle him in. I looked at my son in awe! Never had I seen such a miraculous transformation of his disposition in his life! As I drove away, I frequently looked in my rear view mirror to see if this miracle was real or imaginary! It was real. "Lord, what did I do right? I don't know what it is, but I want to do this again and again!"

Friends, all I did was respond to the help God was offering me. How? I surrendered to the impression, chose to cooperate and then followed through while remaining in the Spirit, trusting that Jesus would work a miracle in my heart as well as my son's. God loves to temper my son's disposition and make him mild and gentle by His Holy Spirit. Why should it surprise me that God answered my prayer?

In contrast to **self-directed** punishments, where I made all the decisions, God was trying to teach me to be **God-directed** and have Divine wisdom and the power to enable my child and me to do right. Up to this point I had been doing what I saw as right in my own eyes and will power and it was mostly hardship and failure after failure, trying to bring my strong-willed son to surrender. Unfortunately I was letting Satan have my precious child because I did not understand how to bring him to Christ, or how to teach him to take God's hand and be redeemed from self ruling over him. In my message, "Bringing Our Habits to Christ" I share more details on this practicality should you like to hear more.

In learning to be God-directed, correcting my son, God fought Satan on the inside, while we cooperated on the outside and Satan had to leave. How simply Divine this is! Jesus does want to deliver our children and He is able. He

will instruct all who will listen for His voice.

As time went on and I learned to cooperate more and more with the Lord in parenting, I found I could apply the new principles I was learning in many situations. For instance while baby-sitting one day I crossed a child's will. While I was holding him, he got angry and threw himself back so hard I almost dropped him on the floor. "Lord, what do I do?"

"Sally, this is just a temper tantrum," God assured me. "Don't let it happen but once, for if you do, he, (the child and Satan) will gain his desired object. He will use crying and throwing himself back more vehemently next time, so you surrender again to his will and way." "Okay Lord," I said timidly. "Now let me think. First . I must put the child's will, heart and mind into Your hands. It's all yours, Lord. Then . I must call forth his will to surrender to us . then You will perform the miracle and disposition change by Thy grace as he surrenders." So I said, "No Danny, you can't behave this way! This way only hurts you. I love you too much to let you disobey. Jesus will put happiness into your heart when you choose to obey. Now lets pray," but the child only bristled, unwilling to pray.

"Lord, what should I do now?"

"Take him for a grizzly run. It will get the grizzlies (fight) out of him. I'm with you. I'll attend your efforts."

"A grizzly run," I exclaimed! "I'll have to run with him because he's so young, and I don't want to do that!"

"Sally, you must surrender your heart. I have to deliver you from self first! Trust Me! This is the best and fastest way for a true surrender of this child's heart and will."

I ran with Danny around the house . 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 times. As I chose to cooperate, my feelings changed too. Danny, looked like he was willing to obey, but after we knelt he still wouldn't pray. "Now what do I do, Lord?" I said, forlornly. "Don't loose courage Sally. Trust by faith, not by sight. Do you think a spanking would help his disposition or another grizzly run?"

Danny's pout spoke volumes and I sensed in my heart that a spanking would be best. I prayerfully administered Danny's spanking without harshness or anger. I hugged

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and assured the little fellow that he must choose to do right and in so doing, he would be very happy. This time there was no resistance to kneel or to repeat the prayer clearly after me. I tipped his head gently up towards me and smiled at him. He smiled the sweetest smile back at me. He was free! **Free from the inside out.** When Jesus comes in Satan must leave. What a joy to see Jesus enthroned in his heart! (Prov 29:15)

If you want the right behavior from your child, take him to Jesus. Show him how to take Jesus' hand, to hear His voice and to follow Him. If you gain the heart in this way, then you will gain the behavior you desire, Divinely. If your child chooses not to cooperate, begin with mild measures to motivate right choices and be willing under God to go to firmer measures until he chooses to do the right. For the parent, **remaining in Jesus is the key to success.** It's the key to successfully raising your precious child for God's kingdom!

As time went on God exercised me into greater and greater firmness to balance out my too soft approach. I clearly saw the love in the firmer methods done consistently in Christ. Under Christ's guidance the obedience I desired from my boys became a joy to all and the potential parental conflicts were drastically reduced. Yet I still needed further balancing.

My boys were eleven and thirteen. I found the teen years to be a joy and not the curse I was warned they'd be. The boys were recognizing the voice of God to their own consciences and had begun a nice consistency in true surrender to a personal Saviour directing them. Yet even with that, there were still character weaknesses not yet overcome.

"Lord, I'm frustrated in foolishness in one son and slothfulness in the other. I'm tired of giving consequences, which are all negative motivations to show them, 'the way of the transgressor is hard.' Prov. 13:15. Can't parenting be pleasant using blessings bestowed successfully and not just blessings removed?"

"Yes Sally!" The Lord responded to my heart. "Heaven's way promotes a balance of love and mercy as well as correction and consequences. Every child needs both positive and negative incentives to do right. Children need to know their loved by encouraging words, by nurturing attitudes and by positive incentives on one hand and loving administering of consequences of uncooperativeness on the other. Let's consider a **blessings bestowed program** to balance out the blessings

removed program."

God didn't impress me with the solution on the spot. My frustration drove me to call a family counsel for a solution to my dilemma. The family talked over the need for change, what my weaknesses were in parenting, considered a multitude of solutions. Input came from all members of the family. God inspired this conversation and out of it came delightful ideas for positive incentives. We all came away encouraged with a privilege jar incentive to encourage right responses in their weak areas and it worked amazingly well. Another time a positive incentive chart came out of the family counsel that also worked wonderful reforms.

Over the years God has added other unique ideas of nurturing on the positive side as an alternative to negative consequences. I've recorded thirteen alternatives to spanking that is available entitled, "Discipline Ideas" should you like some idea kindlers. We can do great harm to our children by over-management and requiring blind submission as much as we can by under-management. Let God lead you and inspire you how to direct your child in a balanced fashion of both love and firmness.

The surest way to raise your child for the kingdom is to place yourself in the constant dependent relationship with Jesus, sustained by continual communication with Him. Will you do this for your precious child?

Power for Living



Power to become the sons of God. —John 1:12

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Empowered Living Ministries

9550 High Mesa Road, Olathe, CO 81425

970-615-0046

Email: office@empoweredlivingministries.org

Web: www.EmpoweredLivingMInistries.org