

Preacher's Pen points

The Right to Say, "No!"



As parents it is important to know that there are times when we should say "no" to our children. The OT provides two excellent examples of parents who should have done a better job putting up resistance to their children's bad behavior.

Two Biblical Examples

Eli's two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, lost their lives not only because of their wicked deeds, but because of the indulging attitude of their father. He knew of their sinful behavior, yet *"he did not rebuke them"* (1 Sam. 3:13).

Likewise, Adonijah son of king David, committed the consummate action of rebellion in Israel. He sought to become king of Israel in defiance of his father's clear directive. The prophet of God reveals that David's permissiveness was an underlying reason for the young man's selfishness: *And his father had never crossed him at any time by asking, "Why have you done so?"* (1 Kg. 1:6)

What these examples teach us is that it is essential as parents that we exercise the right to say "no" when the situation calls for it. May I suggest a few common-sense guidelines to help in knowing when to say "no".

The Life-saving "No"

It should go without saying that no parent who truly loved a child would allow them to engage in high risk behaviors or to participate in activities where there was a risk of injury. Yet parents are often persuaded by their children into allowing them to engage in activities where there is a relative high risk of personal injury or even death.

The Moral "No"

"But Mom, everybody is doing it!", the young

people sometimes say. Maybe so; but the parent has the responsibility to evaluate the prospects for sin against God in the activities of their children. It means that children may not be allowed to go places where there will be alcohol or drug use or where there would be temptations to promiscuity. It means that children may not be allowed to go to movies that advocate immorality or play video games that promote desensitization to life.

The Priority "No"

Sometimes children ask to do things when the activity itself is not wrong, but the timing is not appropriate. For example, involvement in school functions and recreational sports can add enjoyment to a child's life. But such things should be worked around spiritual values and opportunities. If our children can't consistently make it to Bible study and worship because of secular activities, then there is a priority problem that needs attention by the parents.

The Challenging "No"

As parents we should never push our children beyond their potential, resulting in exasperation and rebellion. However it is equally important to urge them to be the best they can be. Letting our children settle for mediocrity in school work or in other areas of life trains them to settle for "second best" and not live up to their full potential. Sometimes it is wise to challenge them by saying, "You can do better!"

No child who has been trained by parents who knew how to say "no" in these ways will ever regret it. In fact, this kind of loving discipline will make them appreciate their parents more and more as they mature. —Johnny Felker