

## Teacher's Corner~

# Raising a Responsible Child

C.J. LOVE LAND

“CONSCIENTIOUS,” “principled,” “accountable,” “honorable” and “trustworthy” are among the adjectives that describe the word *responsible*. In our roles as parent and teacher, raising responsible children is of utmost importance. The endless stream of people in responsible positions getting caught in illegal or inappropriate behavior gives testimony to the sad state of affairs: reporters falsifying facts in newspaper and magazine articles; a former government official stealing documents; politicians taking bribes; the list goes on. Sadly, holding a responsible position does not make the one who holds that position responsible.

### Where Do we Begin?

Some reasons given for the usefulness of Proverbs are listed at the beginning of chapter 1: “To receive instruction in wise behavior; To give prudence to the naive..., To the youth knowledge and discretion; A wise man will hear and increase in understanding...”

The words of verse 7 always met students as they came into my classroom. The verse was printed in large black letters and attached to the wall where it could be easily seen: *The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; Fools despise wisdom and instruction.* Those words profoundly summed up my role as a teacher, as well as a parent. Training young children to fear the Lord was the first step in gaining true knowledge. Parents must begin

at the beginning. Upon bringing that newborn home from the hospital, a schedule is instituted. This is the start of teaching responsibility. Don't wait until baby is six months or a year old. Establish order from the start. Our heavenly Father is not a God of chaos. He created an orderly world. It is man who injects chaos and disorderliness into the peaceful creation and then wonders why children behave badly.



### Who's in Charge?

First-time mothers often read all the recommended parenting books

before that first child arrives. I must confess that the good information I gleaned went kaput when we brought home our first son. He had his days and nights mixed up, sleeping during most of the day and awake all night. After a few days of this misery, I finally came to my senses and established a schedule. Both baby and I began to enjoy our time together. I decided that I would keep this little creature after all. It was a simple example of what results when parents fail to take charge and permit their children to establish the rules, etc. Neither is happy.

Take charge and model good parenting to your child. Many parents have not observed good parenting skills from their own parents, and they are now modeling poor parenting to their children. The vicious cycle will continue. How can we expect children to learn responsibility when parents shirk theirs? The joy of parenthood is enhanced tremendously when we perform our parental role as God has commanded. *Unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain who build it...* (Ps. 127:1) reminds us that our work accounts for nothing if God does not bless our labors. Raising responsible children who will be a blessing in our old age will not occur if we fail to be obedient to the word of God. Children are instructed to *Hear my son, your father's instruction and do not forsake your mother's teaching...* (Pr. 1: 8).

Parents and children are commanded to obey the word of God. Parents are to live righteous lives and teach righteousness to their children, who are to righteously obey. When our children willingly obey us, they are exhibiting their love for us and ultimately their love for God. *If you love Me you will keep My commandments* (John 14:15).

### Basic Training for Responsible Children

My lather did not want his children to grow up spoiled, so he went out of his way to teach us a strong work ethic, and he made sure we had ample opportunity to learn responsibility. We pulled weeds on our acre plus property when we were little. One summer when I was probably 12 or 13, I was given the job of painting the utility shed. It had once housed the generator that provided electricity for the home when it was first built in the late 1800s. We used it for storing lawn equipment, and it was roomy enough to use as a playhouse. It took me all summer to paint that building, but I did complete the job and received my father's approval. There were times when I wanted to quit, but I did not want to disappoint my father nor myself.

Mother had help taking care of our home, but my sister and I still were taught to do household chores. I learned to iron when I was quite young, beginning with my father's handkerchiefs, then graduated to more complicated pieces as I grew older. I learned how to plan a dinner and prepare it once a week. Mother did not want us going out into the world not knowing how to do the basics. Spring cleaning was a major production at our home, lasting a week. My sister and I were expected to arise early each day and work alongside Mother and Ruth our housekeeper. My brother escaped



this chore as he was learning other responsibilities, but he still knows how to cook and clean.

My sons learned how to do laundry, clean, and cook when they were young. Why do mothers and fathers think that they must be slaves to their children? This thinking is unfair to child and parent. When I home schooled, I had a schedule and stuck to it. We may not have been leaving our home for school, but I insisted that school begin at 8:30 AM. The boys had to make beds, eat breakfast, and dress before class. They learned many things other than what was in school books. They cleaned their bathroom each week, laundered and ironed their own clothes, helped in the kitchen, and did yard work. They scrubbed our large deck and stained it. Today, they are responsible young men. My daughter-in-law appreciates the fact that her husband knows how to do things, especially cook.

### Don't Raise Tyrants

A neighbor once asked me how I got my son to clean the bathroom. This was after my oldest had come outside when the two of us mothers were working in our yards and told me he was finished cleaning. I had just sent him inside for the third time after another failed inspection to "do it right" when my neighbor

asked her question. I simply said that I told him to do it. She was amazed, because she was the mother of three children who ruled her; she did everything for them. She had two teenage girls who expected their mother to be at their every beck and call. They spoke to her disrespectfully, made demands, and often refused to obey. Her children are neither a joy nor a blessing.

### Bad Behavior Leads to Consequences

The hardest lesson I ever had to learn was that one's word is his bond, if you say that you will perform a task, then there should be no doubt that it will be done. I belonged to a cooking club when I was in elementary school. Members took turns taking lemonade or a juice to drink with whatever we cooked. Our leader was a wonderful lady who patiently guided us in our culinary pursuits. I was too sleepy one Saturday morning to go to the class, so I stayed in bed. It was my turn to take the beverage. Sunday after church, my father drove me to the club leader's apartment building. The stairs to her apartment seemed to go on forever. I thought my father was taking my failure to follow through way too seriously. The club leader couldn't have been more gracious in accepting my apology. That very valuable lesson made quite an impression on me. Too many times children are not held accountable for their bad behavior or irresponsibility. "Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, each according to his conduct," declares the Lord God. "Repent and turn away from all your transgressions, so that iniquity may not become a stumbling block to you" (Ezek. 18:30). Love your children—teach them to be responsible Christians and they will be a blessing to you in your old age. 🌱