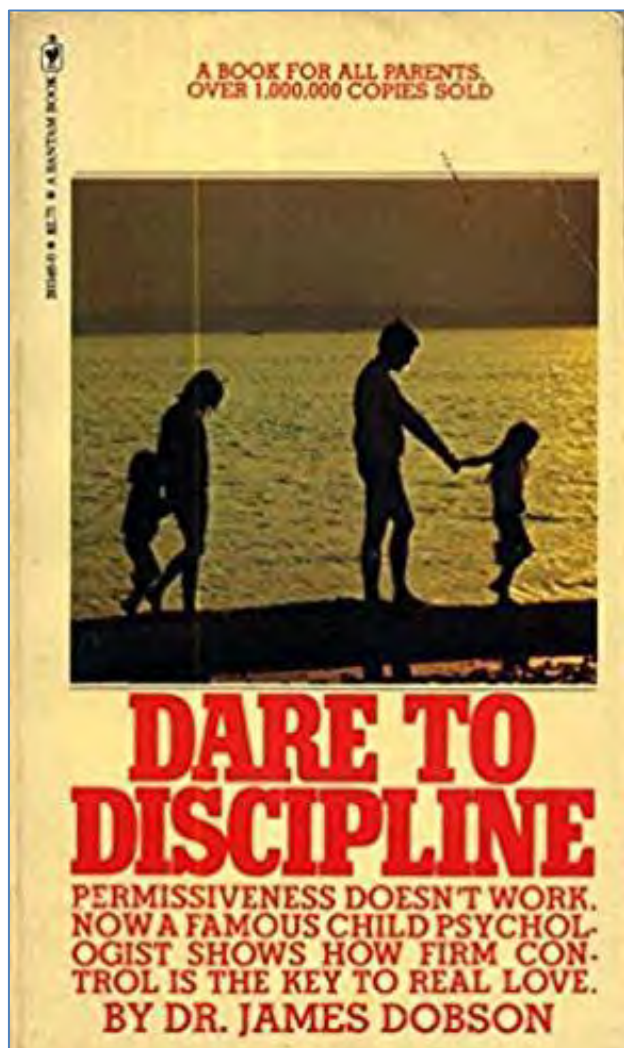


Dare to Discipline By Dr. James Dobson

Jennifer Hager
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How does a child develop into a heavenly, responsible adult? The Divine Principle defines a wonderful image of maturity, plus a clear set of guidelines in its explanation of spiritual laws and how they operate. Our True Parents have done their best to direct us along our unique paths toward perfection. But in spite of all this help, we know that it takes great effort to realize one simple gem of truth. We have had to be reborn and now face the lifelong task of re-growing-up.

Through the Blessings our True Parents give us an opportunity that no generation has ever had the mission of raising children without original sin. What kind of adults will they become? How will they develop their own understanding of truth and a deep, two-way bond with God? Will they be able and eager to pick up the providential mission of building heaven on this earth?

Of course, we learn how to parent through experience. But unfortunately, we are bound to learn some things at the expense of our children, through our mistakes. In the "tender years" of these children we cannot afford to make too many. We desperately want to raise these children well from God's point of view. So the posture we assume as parents and the philosophy by which we direct our actions are critical.

In this light I would like to introduce Dr. James Dobson, Christian and psychologist with years of

experience in teaching, writing, counseling. He has published close to a dozen books which are favorites in the religious bookstores. In Dr. Dobson's book *Dare to Discipline*, he addresses the great need for a balance of love and discipline in the home and in the classroom. He decries the permissive attitudes which deny a child a secure relationship with authority and frustrate him in his search for meaning. By the term "permissive" Dobson refers to "the absence of effective parental authority, resulting in lack of boundaries for the child... and the general confusion that occurs in the absence of adult leadership." Principle teaches us that the most central and precious relationship upon which a person builds his self-worth and self-image is the vertical bond with parents and ultimately, with God. As Dr. Dobson puts it, "it is through loving control that parents express personal worth to a child". Dobson feels as we do, that "... we must not depend on hope and luck to fashion the critical attitudes we value in our children... Children thrive best in an atmosphere of genuine love, undergirded by reasonable, consistent discipline."



Mutual Respect

Dare to Discipline begins by discussing how to teach respect and responsibility to children. "The most

vital objective of disciplining a child is to gain and maintain his respect." And the book reminds us that respect can only "operate on a two-way-street." Therefore, parents must clearly identify what the rules are. Children derive security from knowing where the boundaries are. Leave no doubt in the child's mind about what kind of behavior is acceptable and what is not.

Although a trusting, responsiveness is innate in a child, so too is the insatiable desire to question and explore. Certainly, we can expect episodes of confrontation between ourselves and our children. When a youngster acts in a resistant way it is important that the parent seek to understand what's going on inside the child's mind. Sometimes a child rebels to directly buck authority and then Dr. Dobson suggests that we "give him good reason to regret it." But other times, Dobson cautions, a child's antagonism arises from feelings of rejection, disappointment or frustration. We must carefully deal with those feelings, not only concerning ourselves with the disagreeable behavior.

"The most successful parents are those who have the skill to get behind the eyes of the child, seeing what he sees, thinking what he thinks, feeling what he feels." In any case, parental response should be quick and decisive. "Who is going to win? Who has the most courage? Who is in charge here? If you do not answer these questions conclusively for the child, he will precipitate other battles designed to ask them again and again. It is the ultimate paradox of childhood that a youngster wants to be controlled, but he insists that his parents earn the right to control him."



Positive Challenge

Chapter Two is devoted to "the miracle tools;" psychological techniques which aid the parent in leading the child to greater levels of responsibility. All of the suggestions are constructive; some of them offer ways to help your child develop his freewill and self-esteem. Dr. Dobson strongly favors a reward system as incentive for children. He cites the famous Law of Reinforcement from behavioral psychology: "Behavior which achieves desirable consequences will recur." The book applies this law in several cases, explaining how youngsters can earn desirable goals, meanwhile developing their own self-discipline and good habits.

For instance, with a 4-6 year-old, you could make a small chart of daily tasks which you and he could check off every evening, awarding a penny for each task successfully completed. Then the parent could help the child to manage the money, planning special treats or outings with the savings. In such a system, we've helped the child in building responsible behavior plus there are side benefits: "... the child learns to count. He is taught to give to worthy causes. He begins to understand the concept of saving. He learns to restrict and control his emotional impulses. And finally, he is taught the meaning of money and how to spend it wisely." When countered by those who call this method bribery, Dobson asks, "How are you going to get your five-year-old to perform the behaviors listed on the chart? The most frequently used substitutes are nagging, complaining, begging, screaming, threatening and punishing." Dobson feels that rewards need not be material things, but that "verbal reinforcement should permeate the entire parent-child relationship." He spends several pages at the end of the chapter (and each chapter) in relevant questions and answers, followed by a summary of the content.

Of course we know that we are created to function according to spiritual laws. Everything we embrace in the realm of psychology is only a subset under the heading of "spirituality,"

Dare to Discipline does not go into the influences of the spirit world on our children's lives. But the

author skillfully presents strategies for healthy parent-child growth from the behavioral psychologist's point of view. An operative understanding of simple psychological principles can be very helpful.

At School

One section of the book talks about discipline in the classroom. Dr. Dobson points out that: "... adherence to a standard is an important element of discipline. It is a great mistake to require nothing of children -- to place no demands on their behavior." Significant learning in the classroom can only take place within an atmosphere of order and cooperation. James Dobson beautifully explains how a teacher can win the respect of students and exercise the kind of control which allows for deep student-teacher relationships.

Dobson brings up ideas expressed in A.S. Neill's *Summerhill*. In contrast with Dobson's philosophy, Neill advocates the elimination of all authority. This permissive viewpoint, put in Dobson's words, reads as follows: "God is dead; immorality is wonderful, nudity is noble; irresponsibility is groovy, disrespect and irreverence are fashionable; unpopular laws are to be disobeyed; violence is an acceptable vehicle for bringing change; authority is evil; everyone over thirty is stupid; pleasure is paramount; diligence is distasteful."

This sounds extreme, but we have definitely seen the diffusion of these attitudes in our society. Dr. Dobson gives strong guidelines to high school and college administrators in hopes to reconstruct the authority of the school.



Difficulties in Learning

There are various barriers to learning that children experience. Some youngsters are "late bloomers." Many 6-year-olds are not quite ready to perform all the neurological functions required for reading. For those unfortunate youngsters who are not yet able but find themselves in the first grade anyway, they quickly fall behind the other children and often develop a poor self-image which haunts and hinders the rest of their education. Even though the late bloomer does catch up with his peers in terms of ability, "once a child begins to think of himself as stupid, incapable, ignorant and foolish, the concept is not easily eliminated." Dr. Dobson suggests a "simple screening test could be utilized" to examine a 5 or 6-year-old for "educational readiness."

The slow learners are "those children having intelligence quotients between 70 and 90. These students comprise nearly one-fourth of the children in a typical school." There are usually no special ed classes for these children. They rarely have the thrill of excelling in any academic task, and they are often socially rejected by other children. Sadly, Dobson notes that the slow learner "often has the least sympathy from his teachers... The slow learner gradually develops a crushing image of failure that distorts his self-concept and damages his ego." Dr. Dobson asks that teachers try to give this child an easier academic target and grade him more upon his effort. At all costs, we must teach the slow learner to read. This may require a one-to-one situation. We can praise the child's best and help him to build on his successes.

A so-called "under-achiever" has the intellectual ability, but for some reason he is not applying himself. It has been estimated that "seventy-five percent of all students go into an academic slump sometime between the seventh and the tenth grades." Parents of this child can either become consistently involved in the child's schoolwork, or outline a system of immediate reinforcement which offers some worthwhile rewards. Dr. Dobson gives several fresh suggestions for dealing with this common problem.



Foundation of morality

One of the most significant chapters in *Dare to Discipline* is entitled "Discipline in Morality." Dr. Dobson believes that sexual energy definitely affects the unity which holds a society together. "When a man is devoted to one woman and one family, he is motivated to build, save, protect, plan and prosper on their behalf." Dobson describes the sweeping sexual revolution "which has still not reached its peak." Guidelines for parents are difficult, but the best approach "begins in early childhood and extends through the years, according to a policy of openness, frankness and honesty." One-to-one question and response situations are best.

As Unificationists, we're serious about instilling in our children an understanding of marriage as an eternal commitment. Teaching young people a pure and unselfish standard of relationship is a monumental job. Dr. Dobson offers ideas about when to explain what in a child's development. "Parents should plan to end their instructional program immediately before their child enters puberty;" and then serve as ready resource persons during adolescence.

Beyond teaching loyalty to parents, Dobson says that "children should be taught ultimate loyalty to *God*." In this area we are extremely lucky, because we can teach our children God's beautiful ideal of the four-position foundation and the fall of man.

Dare to Discipline also contains a chapter all about drug abuse; types of drugs, symptoms to look for and several case histories. The book ends with helpful hints for mothers, as primary care-givers, and a list of some of the biblical underpinnings for Dr. Dobson's outlook on parenthood. Dobson asks each mother to seek divine guidance: "The concepts of marriage and parenthood were not human inventions. God, in His infinite wisdom, created and ordained the family as the basic unit of procreation and companionship. The solutions to the problems of modern parenthood can be found through the power of prayer and personal appeal to the Great Creator."

Dare to Discipline encompasses a wide range of concerns that involve all of us as parents of a new and heavenly generation. I recommend it as an informative and helpful guide. *Dare to Discipline* can be found in the religion section of most bookstores. It is well worth the reading.

