Parenting God’s Way

Day 4:

**Love and Authority**

The foundation of successful parenting can be summed up in these two qualities:

* *Unconditional Love*
* *Fair, honest authority*

While you won’t express these qualities perfectly at all times, if you make them your goal each day, you can expect that God will help you work toward them. He’s promised that as you grow in your Christian walk, the fruit of the Holy Spirit will become more and more evident in your life (Gal. 5:22-23). Be encouraged that in God’s power, divine qualities such as love, patience, gentleness, and self-control are within your reach. Invite the Holy Spirit to invade your heart, mature you in Him, and give you the power to express these traits toward your family—especially in those times when you find it most difficult.

For example, when your children exhibit unwanted behavior, try to separate their actions from who they are—treasured gifts from the Lord. Seek to lovingly accept them, even when making clear their behavior is unacceptable. If you remind yourself your children are entrusted to you by God, then their behavior will be less able to sway you from expressing unconditional love for them. When you find yourself struggling, spend a few moments dwelling on your own flaws, weaknesses, and mistakes. Then, recall how God has always forgiven, accepted, and supported you throughout your life. This line of thought will bring humility to your heart and enable you to be more loving and accepting of your children in every circumstance.

It may seem impossible to reconcile expressions of unconditional love with the exercise of authority, but keep in mind that fair, honest authority is an important aspect of God’s own love for all of His children: “The Lord disciplines the one He loves, and He chastises every son whom he receives” (Heb. 12:6, ESV).

In His authority, God has steered you with a hand that may have felt painful and unfair in the moment, just as your discipline of your children will at times feel painful and unfair to them. In these situations, try to be compassionate with your children in their hurt and anger without relenting in the discipline that you know is best for them. Ask God to help you express your authority fairly and honestly. Fair authority is wise and provides justice for everyone involved—not just one’s own children. Honest authority is transparent; it makes clear which rules have been transgressed and why the discipline is needed.

Unconditional love and fair, honest authority on your part will help your children to feel safe, cared for, and cherished. With constant encouragement, despite their failures, anger under discipline will diminish, and their love and respect for you will grow. As you support and nurture them in all their efforts at life, they will gain confidence and advance steadily. Unconditional love will allow an irreplaceable peace to take root in their hearts and stay with them throughout life. And when you provide them with fair and clear authority, informed by godly wisdom (James 1:5) and expressed in love, they will learn to embrace the paths of righteousness, avoid the pitfalls, and grow strong in the ways of the Lord.

**Scripture:**

Galatians 5:22-23 But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against these things!

Hebrews 12:6 For the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes each one he accepts as his child.

James 1:5 If you need wisdom, ask our generous God, and he will give it to you. He will not rebuke you for asking.