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Singapore Newsletter

Dear GFI Family

We focus on rules, schedules, and obedience in this issue. Are rules good? Do we really need to have so many rules. Can't we just enjoy our children? Am I too legalistic? Too restricting? Am I robbing my child of life!

God gave us rules. Read what Oswald Chambers says God will do when we choose to obey His rules. Elisabeth Elliot assures you that do not be afraid to squeeze our children into our own mould, or we may be in danger of allowing the world squeeze us into its mould. Read through my illustration of room with furniture to explain about teaching rules. Then finally hear from Dr Francis A. Schaeffer what he has to say about absolutes!

Dorcas Li

GFI Singapore Conference

Keynote Speakers:

Gary & Anne Marie Ezzo

8-9 Nov 2007

Mark down the dates

Details will be available on website later

GFA National Family Camping Conference

Camp Wattle Grove, Perth,

Western Australia

Apr 5 to 9, 2007

A\$195/person

Children programme avail.

www.gfi.org.au

The Law and the Gospel

"For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all." James 2:10

The moral law does not consider us as weak human beings at all, it takes no account of our heredity and infirmities, it demands that we be absolutely moral. The moral law never alters, either for the noblest or for the weakest, it is eternally and abidingly the same. The moral law ordained by God does not make itself weak to the weak, it does not palliate our shortcomings, it remains absolute for all time and eternity. If we do not realize this, it is because we are less than alive; immediately we are alive, life becomes a tragedy. "I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died." When we realize this, then the Spirit of God convicts us of sin. Until a man gets there and sees that there is no hope, the Cross of Jesus Christ is a farce to him. Conviction of sin always brings a fearful binding sense of the law, it makes a man hopeless—"sold under sin." I, a guilty sinner, can never get right with God, it is impossible. There is only one way in which I can get right with God because of my obedience—which of us could ever obey God to absolute perfection!

We only realize the power of the moral law when it comes with an "if". God never coerces us. In one mood we wish He would make us do the thing, and in another mood we wish He would leave us alone. Whenever God's will is in the ascendant, all compulsion is gone. When we choose deliberately to obey Him, then He will tax the remotest star and the last grain of sand to assist us with all His almighty power.

"My Utmost for His Highest" by Oswald Chambers

**Key Principle:
Chapter 9
Principles of Obedience**

Children will rise to the level of expectation of their parents. Many parents expect little and receive exactly that.

Rules

The foundation stones on which the discipline of a Christian home is laid are three things: sacrificial authority, trust, and love. Because parents bear this sacrificial authority, because they carry the responsibility of their children's trust, and because they love God and love their children for His sake, they must establish rules or, as modern parlance prefers, 'guidelines.'

In many of England's tiny back gardens one sees espaliers—trees or shrubs which have been trained flat against a wall giving a two-dimensional effect. While this is drastically contrary to the direction they would have grown if left to themselves, they take up little space and produce beautiful flowers or fruit.

If you say 'our Father' to the One who judges every man impartially on the record of his deeds, you must stand in awe of him while you live out your time on earth
(1 Peter 1:17 NEB)

As the gardener who espaliers the tree cooperates with God, so parents cooperate with Him in training children in the way they *should* go, not in the way they would naturally go. Jesus used the metaphor of the vine to teach about our union with Him, a union meant to result in our bearing fruit which will glorify God.

'My Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful' (John 15:1-2 NIV).

It is difficult to resist the pressures of our 'have it your way' society, and even earnest Christian parents sometimes feel uncertain about the wisdom of drawing up so much as the briefest list of rules. Won't it make children rebel? Isn't it legalistic? What if we can't enforce them?

In our fear that we squeeze children into our own mould, we are in danger of allowing the world to squeeze us into its mould—something Paul sternly warned the Roman Christians to watch out for. God bestows on parents a very great trust. They are in charge of the 'vineyard' which is the family. We may look upon rules laid down for children as the stakes and ties which keep the vine from rank growth and enable it to produce the best fruit, while the pruning might represent the parents' chastening. Jesus says, "If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing." This 'remaining' is not a vague feeling of religiosity. Jesus makes it clear that it means obedience. Union with Him is impossible without harmony with His will. 'Why do you call me Lord,' Jesus asked, 'and do not the things that I say?'

The gardener loves his garden, knows each flower and shrub and tree, understands its special qualities and needs, and gives it tender care. Parents are given the delicate task of training an imperfect and highly impressionable child who is not their 'property' but is entrusted to them for a time, that they may curb the natural tendencies which are useless or destructive, and guide him instead to God.

God in His mercy told his people what to do and what not to do. My parents made rules for us, 'stakes' and 'ties' to help us live a peaceful and fruitful life. The keeping of these rules was our early training in that renunciation and death to self which will never be easy for any of us so long as we live in this mortal body, yet that very renunciation is the route to freedom and fulfilment. The obedient child is the happiest child.

Discipline comes from the word "disciple." When a father disciplines his children, he is making disciples of them.
Gary Ezzo

"The Shaping of A Christian Family" by Elisabeth Elliot

Churches Running GFI Programmes in Oct 2006

Infant Way <i>Every Nation Church • FCBC • GFI • His Sanctuary</i>	Toddler Way <i>FCBC • GFI • His Sanctuary</i>	Middle Years Way <i>NA</i>
Adolescent Way <i>Church of Singapore • Covenant EFC • Emmanuel Evangelical Free Church</i>		Innocent Way <i>NA</i>
Virtuous Way <i>Bread of Life • Bethesda Frankel Estate Church • City Missions Church • Covenant EFC • FCBC • Holy Spirit Church • Overseas Christian Mission Fellowship</i>		
<i>If you have a GFI group running in your church and is not listed above, do email dorcasi@gfi-singapore.org</i>		

Should I teach my child rules?

One of the very common questions that I am asked when teaching classes is “Would my child become so dependent on rules that he is unable to function without rules?” or “Would rules make my child become very robotic and unimaginative?”. Rules...are they good?

When a child enters into this world, he is like entering into a dark room. In this room there is furniture which your child is unable to see because he is still young. You being older and wiser, know that there is furniture. The child must know about the furniture otherwise he will knock into the furniture and get hurt. In this world there are rules that your child must know about and which he has yet to learn. God puts a young infant into a family with parents, who are older and wiser and who are aware of such rules as they have learnt them. Parents are there to tell the child where the furniture is, to tell them the rules.

If there is a huge wooden chest that is in the path of your child, unless you tell your child, he will bang into it and get hurt. Then based on our unique character and make-up, each parent may opt to overcome the wooden chest differently. You can choose to teach your child to climb over it. Or you can choose to teach him go around it. Or you may even choose to teach him to blast the wooden chest into pieces so that your child can walk through. Whatever your choice of approach, one thing remains—you must tell your child that there is a wooden chest; there are rules in this world.

When we fail to teach our children about rules and that he must obey them, it would be like allowing our child to believe that the dark room has no furniture. With this believe the child would naturally assume that he is safe to run all over the room, without any restrain. The child will end up getting hurt and confused.

We succeed as parents when we are able to teach our children so that they become skilled in manoeuvring through the room without knocking into furniture, without breaking rules. The brightest child would be the one who is able to re-arrange the furniture such that the lay-out is to his liking. Even then the furniture would still remain; the rules would still be there.

Dorcasi Li

Scheduling Children's Days

Children function better with a routine and schedule to govern their days. Have you noticed what happens to children left to themselves for too long? They quarrel and bicker. They become bored. They get into mischief. Although some might say children are happiest when they are free to do whatever they please with their time, this is not the case. Little ones are more peaceful, content, and obedient when their days are planned and routine, including regular changes of activity.

“Managers of Their Homes” by Steven & Teri Maxwell

Middle Years Q&A

I was revising with my child with her school work to prepare for her exams. I had to get her lunch and so told her that she must not peep at the answers at the back. I managed to get the lunch ready faster than usual and came back just in time to see her looking at the answers at the back. I confronted her and realised she was trying to lie her way out. Very good lies she gave, that caused me to even doubt myself. However that day I was very certain in my spirit that she has cheated. I punished her and sent her to her room. Later while I was marking her Chinese work, I realised that she had also copied her answers. I confronted her and begin to check through many of the events in the week that I had suspicion that she had lied and cheated. She finally confessed to everything and I almost fainted. I ran to my room and broke down. I feel that I am a total failure. My child lies and cheats and even steals money from the money tin in the house. I did not want to cut out the answers from the assessment books or lock up my money because I want to train her to be able to overcome the temptations. I have taught her over and over again. I have done bible studies with her. Made her memorise scriptures. She is able to give me perfect answers as to why it is wrong to steal, cheat or lie. But yet over and over again she does it. What can I do?

First of all, you must accept that these are the areas that your child is weak in. By that it means that you must acknowledge that your child will have a higher tendency to fall when tempted in these areas compared to other children or compared to yourself. The way you live out this acceptance is by choosing not to use the method of putting your child to these temptations and expecting her to overcome. Instead choose to help her develop strategy to 'flee from temptation.' Work with your child to:

- a) Pray daily to the Lord to help her in these weaknesses. Ask for wisdom to know and discern the temptation when it arise and then to have the strength to run.
- b) Walk through with your child, as many situations as you can that your child will be/had been tempted to sin. Then ask her what she thinks she can do to 'flee'. Example: the temptation to cheat and peep at the answers. Decide to cut out the answer pages. Then whenever she has to do that assessment book, she is to bring the answer pages to you for safe keeping. Retrieving from you only when she needs to mark and promptly returning it thereafter. Discuss this with your child so that there will be ownership. Tell her you are there to help her succeed. Guide your child to accept this as her strategy.
- c) To accept that your child is not you. That just because you, as a child, were able to resist the temptation and not peep at answers, to obey mom not to take money from the family money tin, that your child then must also be able to do like wise. She is not you but a unique being that the Lord has created.
- d) To accept that a child that has the habit of using lies to get out of trouble will more often choose to lie when asked "Tell me the truth. I promise not to punish you if you tell me the truth." Especially right after they have been caught doing something that is wrong. Nor to ask "Why did you do it?" When we are sure of the facts, instead of asking above questions, simply state the facts:

"You have done this....."

"You know that this is wrong because I have taught you before, yes?"

"What is the right thing to do instead?"

"How do you make it right?"

*Let us serve God with
thankfulness in the ways
which please him, but
always with reverence and
holy fear. For it is perfectly
true that our God is a
burning fire*

(Hebrew 12:28-29)

Finally, here is the secret to power parenting, the weapon that can lay all these disobedient issues to rest. Many parents have confirmed what I am about to say. The level of peace, contentment and harmony within our homes goes in direct tandem to our spending time with the Lord, reading and memorising His words. Often parents, when struggling with children's attitudes, would look for a system of discipline to kick in and to solve all these heart issues. Somehow we fail to connect our lack of time spent in His Word with the daily struggles we are having. How humbling! We somehow believe that things are simply just too chaotic to devote much time to His Word. If we could just get our house in order, then we would be able to have more time to spend doing those "spiritual" things. But who has time when things are so crazy? We forgot to connect that we need to straighten out our priorities. Seek Him first. Seems so silly because most of us have read this verse so many times.

Am not afraid to have absolutes, not afraid to live by rules

What will unify and give meaning to everything there is? Jean-Paul Sartre (1905–), the French existential philosopher, emphasized this problem in our own generation. His concept was that a finite point is absurd if it has no infinite reference point. This concept is most easily understood in the area of morals. If there is no absolute moral standard, then one cannot say in a final sense that anything is right or wrong. By absolute we mean that which always applies, that which provides a final or ultimate standard. There must be an absolute if there are to be morals, and there must be an absolute if there are to be real values. If there is no absolute beyond man's ideas, then there is no final appeal judge between individuals and groups whose moral judgements conflict. We are merely left with conflicting opinions.

But it is not only that we need absolutes in morals and values; we need absolutes if our existence is to have meaning—my existence, your existence, Man's existence. Even more profoundly, we must have absolutes if we are to have a solid epistemology (a theory of knowing—how we know, or how we know we know). How can we be sure that we think we know of the world outside ourselves really corresponds to what is there? And in all these layers, each more profound than the other, unless there is an absolute these things are lost to us: morals, values, the meaning of existence (including the meaning of man), and a basis for knowing.

“How Should We Then Live?” by Francis A. Schaeffer

Help your child (and yourself!) to memorise the 10 Commandments with these actions.

<i>Love and obey God</i>	<i>Hug self, nod head, and point up</i>
<i>Worship God</i>	<i>Fold hands in prayer</i>
<i>Keep God's Name Holy</i>	<i>Raise arms out and upward, and up</i>
<i>Keep God's Day Holy</i>	<i>Cross arms on chest and bow</i>
<i>Obey mommy & daddy</i>	<i>Stand tall and nod yes</i>
<i>Must not kill</i>	<i>Shake head no and spread arms from waist with palms down</i>
<i>Daddy & mommy must love each other</i>	<i>Hug self</i>
<i>Must not steal</i>	<i>Shake head no and shake finger</i>
<i>Must always tell the truth</i>	<i>Nod head and point to lips</i>
<i>Must not want everything we see</i>	<i>Shake head no and point to eyes</i>

Extracted from “School of Tomorrow” Pre-school curriculum