

Training the Persistently Rebellious Child by Candy Summers

Given what we, as Christian parents, desire to achieve in this life—to raise up our children in the admonition of the Lord so that they may serve alongside us in His Kingdom—it naturally becomes extremely disheartening to face daily struggles with the child who refuses to submit to the hand of God. But herein lies the difficulty. We naturally become disheartened by our trials and tribulations in this life, when in fact we should be overcoming the natural with the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit. If you, too, have a child who tries your patience and your faithfulness as a parent, I would like to encourage you not to lose heart, but to earnestly press on for the safety of your child's soul by seeking God's strength to fulfill the arduous task of training the persistently rebellious child. For God tells us in Isaiah 41:10: Do not fear, for I am with you; do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, surely I will help you, surely I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.

From the moment that I became pregnant with Josiah, a tremendous struggle began beyond anything that I could have ever imagined, starting with four months of confinement to my bed due to complete exhaustion and nausea, followed by appendicitis that occurred when I was seven and a half months along. Miraculously, however, God saved both our lives and even allowed me to carry Josiah full term and deliver him naturally. Yet as soon as he was delivered into this world, nurses and doctors came flying into my hospital room to fight another battle that God, once again, delivered him from as well. However, far from being what I expected after such miraculous deliverances, the struggle continued with a baby who cried and cried until he was old enough to talk, when he then turned to constant whining, complaining, and screaming. Truly, it was difficult at times to feel any joy over the precious gift that God had so miraculously spared for us.

Discontented

Discontented with whatever he received, in spite of the fact that I always offered him an adequate amount of special treats, it mattered not, for he was never satisfied! Whether I offered him two cookies or five, he would always ask for one more. So it was with outings, too. If we went out to the zoo all day, followed by dinner at a restaurant, ending with a trip to Ted Drewes for an ice cream, he would invariably ask to stop to get one more thing, and when we said no, he would act as if we had deprived him of every pleasure in life.

For years I dreaded taking him shopping because even after going over the rules before each store, he would still beg for everything he coveted and touch everything he desired.

No Concern for Others

One time while at my parents' country place that is situated by a small lake, I discovered that Josiah was missing, and as he could not swim yet, I was beside myself wondering if he had fallen in the lake. Consequently, I frantically called for him both outside and inside my parents' small two-room cabin. Did I mention that I was in a panic thinking that we would have to dredge the lake for his body and that my fear was definitely reflected in my voice? So where did we find this boy but under the living room table eating sugar right out of the five-pound bag. This was after I had called for him several times right above where he was sitting. I must admit that I was so thankful that we found him but so mad that he had totally ignored my frantic pleas. Yet God was showing me what self-centeredness really looked like and how putrid that rebellious nature of man really is to God.

Here was a loving parent frantically searching for her lost lamb while he was indulging himself in pure decadence, totally unconcerned for anyone else but himself. Sadly, he rarely ever felt any remorse, no matter how it pained someone else, because he was blind to divine judgment and so, in his mind, escaped all forms of censure. For every man's way is right in his own eyes, but the Lord weighs the hearts (Prov. 21:2).

It should come as no surprise, then, that this selfish attitude carried over when it came to others' possessions as well. One day I walked

into the living room just in time to see Josiah throw a pair of scissors into my silk lampshade. Jumping up and down, he was obviously thrilled to have hit his target until he turned around and saw the expression on my face. Of course, this did not make him feel badly for what he had done; it just made him suspect that he may suffer consequences due to his disobedience to the rule that he was never to throw anything hard or big in the living room.

For those of you who have read my newsletter over the years, you know most certainly that I am not an overly restrictive mother and, in fact, encourage my children to have lots of fun. I do allow running in the house and wrestling in the living room, and I even allow the boys to move furniture in the living room to make their forts for rubber band fights, but I do not let my children throw balls or hard objects in the living room. Tis true, I never actually told him that he couldn't throw scissors, but I just naturally assumed, based on common sense, that he would know not to do that. Boy, was I wrong! However, that episode, and unfortunately many others, taught me not to assume anything with this child and to be very specific with my rules and answers.

Another time he threw his handcuffs into our huge picture window (a very old, wavy glass window), the kind you cannot find anymore, breaking it into a maze of jagged, puzzle-like pieces. From burning holes in tablecloths to destroying precious crystal and jewelry, whether glass or beads went flying, he simply assumed apparent disinterest to the effect it had on its owners. Actually, he has broken so many of our possessions that I have already informed him that he should hand over his paychecks to his father for the first several years of employment to help reimburse us for all the damage we have incurred from his reckless activity.

Yes, we could attribute these incidences to just boyish mishaps, and indeed there are times when they are accidents those do not concern me but most everything that has been broken happened because of disobedience to the rules. And again, once confronted with the reality of his sin, sadly there was never any remorse for his actions. Virtually every issue of wrong was either met with indifference, or if challenged by his siblings (who sincerely try to hold him to God's standards), with intense indignation. Wise in his own eyes, instead of submitting to a higher authority, he confidently absolves himself by inculpating his accuser because he feels aggrieved.

No Fear

Parents who complain that their child climbs up on their refrigerator need to take heart and count their blessings, for I have found mine up on the roof of our house, on the roof of our garage, and on the roof of our parents' house more than once. Truly, not only do we look up for Josiah when he is missing, but his reputation is so far-reaching that now even our friends look to the topmost point of trees to locate him when he cannot be found.

Whenever I read the NO FEAR bumper stickers, I always tell my children that their owners will one day understand the meaning of fear when they stand before God. Clearly, without fear of God, there is no fear of authority or fear for personal safety. I constantly reiterate to my children that they have a responsibility to protect their bodies from harm so that they may serve their Lord wholeheartedly. When one does not possess any regard for God, one does not heed caution. Sadly, Josiah's death-defying climbs truly embody the meaning of the bumper sticker NO FEAR.

Lazy

Of course, when you live for yourself and for your own happiness, not only do you consider yourself impervious to harm, but also by the same token, you consider yourself privileged when it comes to everything else, including work. Consequently, Josiah always had an explanation as to why he could not possibly do whatever it was that he was asked to do and why his brother and sister should do it for him. Of course, we would not allow excuses, but this did not stop him from continually making them. And when he did have something to do, he always felt that he should be given something in return for his labor.

A case in point: at the back of our house, we have a huge wild cherry tree that

sends cherries by the truckload upon our patio each year. So one day Jon gave Josiah the responsibility of sweeping our back steps and upper deck for his sister who lived in the upstairs of our house. That night my sister-in-law came downstairs and told us that Josiah had come up to her apartment and told her that she owed him \$8.75. When she asked him why, he proceeded to point out that he had swept her patio and stairs. She, in turn, pointed out to him that he had not done a very good job sweeping the patio, so she would only give him a dollar. To which he countered with the fact that she had a whopping 22 stairs, each thoroughly swept by him. Now I have lived in this house for 26 years and did not know that we had 22 stairs, but then I have never counted the cost of my labor in sweeping them either. Of course, upon hearing this, not only could he not accept money from his aunt, but also he had to apologize for even asking her for money.

At one of our landscaping jobs, I asked Josiah to help me weed. After just a few minutes of a little haphazard weeding, I heard a kerplunk, which compelled me to turn around just in time to see him throwing hickory nuts towards the owner's garage door, which happened to have glass windows. I did not ask him, but I am pretty sure that those windows were his target. Another time when he was supposed to be bagging leaves, I found him running around our customer's yard with the leaf bag over his head and covering most of his body. On the one hand, it was a hilarious sight, but on the other hand, his lack of regard for my inconvenience in waiting for him to bring a bag to me and his total disregard for fulfilling my command promptly was not a pretty sight to a mother who constantly grieves over her child's lost soul.

Why Did This Child Continue to Be So Rebellious?

Quite frankly, I knew I was in trouble when at the mere age of five, Josiah told me that he wanted a tattoo, an earring, long hair, cigarettes, and a motorcycle. Talk about something that compels you to pray, this pretty well drove me to my knees the moment he told me.

After this rundown of behavior, you might think that we never spanked this child, yet he has received more spankings than our other kids put together. There was a time when I told Jon that I just could not keep spanking him because it just was not working. It is at times like these that I am thankful to have a godly husband who reminds me that scripture is true and that we must continue to be diligent to spank him for his willful disobedience because that is what God requires of us.

Admittedly, there were some days I would find myself shaking my head in disbelief as to how one person could possibly do so many things wrong. Even our other children found it difficult to understand how this child could be so disobedient.

Sadly, Jon and I used to kid each other that Josiah's behavior resulted from the morphine they gave me after my appendicitis. I kid you not, there were many times after witnessing another one of Josiah's outrageous actions, so indisposed to admit to the possibility that a child could conceive of such a plan, that we would turn to each other and say, It's the morphine. None of our other children ever even came close to preparing us for this. And truly, all the drugs the hospital poured into my body to save us possibly could have affected him, but that cannot excuse his behavior or relieve us of our divinely ordained obligation as parents.

You know the child who always touches it one more time, repeats the forbidden word or sentiment one more time, does whatever it is just one more time after you told him not to? Multiply that by several times a day, every day for years. Do you, too, have a child who just wears you down to the point of exasperation? One who does not respond to discipline like all your other children? One who continues to try you to the limit? Do you ever wonder what you did to deserve such behavior?

My mother always told me that I was a compliant child who longed to please my father and her, most often going out of my way to make them happy. When spoken to, I obeyed immediately and happily. Obviously, I had three other children who were pretty

compliant as well. Jon, too, (so I'm told) was a very compliant and lovely child. So how was it possible that two such compliant children could produce such a noncompliant child? Where did this child come from? And in particular, where would he end up if he continued on this course?

In two particularly revealing moments when Josiah was very young, God clearly showed me where this child was going apart from Him as I looked down to see my own son actually suck water up from a dirty puddle on the street. Worse still was the time when I questioned the children as to who gave Josiah gum and, to my horror, discovered that no one in my family had given him any. Who would think that one day I would have a child drink from the gutter and chew another person's discarded gum? Yet it was this revelation that the total depravity of man's heart propels him towards all that is filthy in the sight of God that compelled me to bring this child to the Lord's banquet table daily, in hopes that God would redeem him and set him free from the power of his sin nature.

I Had Not Been Faithful to My Child's Soul

But you know what, it became obvious to me, over time, that indeed much of Josiah's problem was due to the fact that I had become too busy with other responsibilities, which prevented me from being faithful to my child's soul in diligently training him like I had been with my other children. Because quite frankly, struggling with his forceful will day in and day out, every hour of each day, just wore me out. Consequently, I would find myself repeating my responses to him. Consider this scenario. While I am busy taking care of important business, Josiah asks if he can paint. I say no. He questions again, "I can't paint?" Absorbed in what I am doing, I explain to him why he can't paint now. He then explains to me why this is an excellent time for him to paint. I then remind him that he is supposed to answer with a "Yes, ma'am." And he answers with, "So I cannot paint now?" To which I am forced to respond with, "No, you cannot" or give him a look that tells him he better not ask again. In a million years, I would never have guessed that I would have engaged in a ridiculous conversation with a disobedient child to appease his rebellious nature. And the sad part about it is that sometimes I would give in just from sheer exhaustion because I had been through this same struggle many times already in the day. And if I did not give in, he almost always came back to me later and asked the same question. You know why? Because I had taken on so many additional responsibilities within homeschooling leadership that I was not being diligent with the child whom God had entrusted into my care. As I look back on those times of compromise and negligence, I shudder to think that I faltered in my steadfast disposition and fell so far from my extraordinary convictions that family comes first before anything else.

Homeschoolers would be on the phone desperately needing my help while my child would be asking me to watch a movie. "Can I watch a movie, Mom? Can I?" Finally, I would mouth to my children to put in a movie for him just to let me finish the conversation, when I should have stopped the conversation and directed him back to the activity he was to complete. I did not want to inconvenience the caller, so instead I allowed my child's rebellion to flourish, when my first priority should have been to make sure that my child was being obedient and productively occupied. Shame on me!

So was I responsible for Josiah's disobedience? I will say that Josiah was certainly bent more towards self-indulgence and rebellion than any of my other children. And, unfortunately, by the time he arrived, our responsibilities had increased tenfold, which came as a hardship since I was not the same dynamic, energetic person I had been before the appendicitis, coupled with the increased debilitation and pain from the Lyme disease. But you know what? To a great extent, I am responsible for Josiah and will stand before God one day and give an account of my negligence, for God tells us in Proverbs 29:15 that "the rod and reproof give wisdom, but a child who gets his own way brings shame to his

mother. **</p><p>Take the Necessary Time to Train Your Child</p><p>**Certainly, the more children one has, the less time there is for each one. But who orders our days? Is it not our responsibility to take the time necessary to train up the child in the way he should go? And indeed, once I became more faithful and let other things go to attend to all of Josiah's needs before others, I began seeing many positive changes take place in his behavior. He became so much more thoughtful and more humble when he sinned, even confessing things I knew nothing about. He is becoming a better worker, often going out of his way to make things easier for me by picking up my heavy loads and opening the door for me. He even asks what he can do to help. He also shows compassion when one of us gets hurts and always tries to go with Jon if none of the other children are running an errand with him because he doesn't want him to be alone or, on the other hand, he will stay home with me if both of the other children are going with Jon because he does not want me to be home alone. He shares foods with me that he knows I love, even when he would really like to eat them all himself. He even asks me if I think he is getting better. And he most recently said to me, **I was just thinking. Whatever will I do when you are dead and gone?** But most important is the fact that Josiah is actually reading his Bible every day because he enjoys reading it. Praise God!
It is these daily victories that fill my heart with hope for the future and deep gratitude to my Father who has answered my prayers for strength to be faithful to Josiah and for God to touch his heart. Each of these actions reveal a glimmer of hope and are truly a gift of great delight, knowing that my child is being transformed from a self-centered life to one that is sacrificial. He may not take up his cross daily and follow the Lord, but at least he doesn't turn away in abhorrence at the thought of carrying it, and he even takes it up occasionally. For this, I am deeply grateful and give God great praise.</p><p>Encouragement and Direction</p><p>So what advice can I give to parents who are dealing with a rebellious child? In the face of your seemingly endless battles over your child's will, in the light of what I have learned, I urge you to be diligent and consistent and, with ardent determination, tenaciously devote yourself to your child's soul. Although God's course is much at variance with the present philosophy of this world and despite the fierce opposition you may face both from the world and from within your child, I urge you to be courageous and remain true to your convictions to raise your precious child according to God's principles. And thankfully, I can assure you that your faith in God's design will eventually reap rich dividends, as daily victories turn into life-transforming habits.
**It was so easy for me to be faithful with my other children, but when it came to the child who tested my faithfulness every hour of each day, it became difficult to remain steadfast, and at times I became fainthearted and faltered. Yet despite my failure, God faithfully continued to renew my strength as I diligently prayed for Him to gird me up. So let me encourage you to pray each day for the strength needed to stand in the gap for your child, so that you are able to show him the way to the straight and narrow path that God requires of each of His children. Therefore, remain steadfast for the well-being of your child's soul, knowing that it is the Lord's will for you.
And indeed, knowing it is the Lord's will for you is first and foremost the most important understanding you must grasp. Therefore, I encourage you to seek God's Word so that you understand what God requires of you as a parent. **For I have chosen him, so that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing righteousness and justice, so that the Lord may bring upon Abraham what He has spoken about him (Gen. 18:19). These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up (Deut. 6:6,7).

◆Remember the day you stood before the Lord your God at Horeb, when the Lord said to me,
◆Assemble the people to Me, that I may let them hear My words so they may learn to fear Me all the days they live on the earth, and that they may teach their children◆◆ (Deut. 4:10).
◆Train up a child in the way he should go, even when he is old he will not depart from it◆ (Prov. 22:6).
◆◆Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord◆ (Eph. 6:4).
◆ Also know for certain the seriousness of rebellion, for the world will try to convince you that it is really nothing but a part of growing up and that this, too, shall pass, when in fact that bit of advice is nothing more than a lie straight from the enemy who is the epitome of rebellion himself. So impress upon your child what God thinks of rebellion. ◆For rebellion is as the sin of divination, and insubordination is as iniquity and idolatry◆ (1 Sam. 15:23). ◆But the wicked will be cut off from the land ◆◆ (Prov. 2:22). ◆He who neglects discipline despises himself, but he who listens to reproof acquires understanding◆ (Prov. 15:32).
◆◆The righteous will never be shaken, but the wicked will not dwell in the land◆ (Prov. 10:30). ◆He who turns away his ear from listening to the law, even his prayer is an abomination◆ (Prov. 28:9). ◆Then they will call on me, but I will not answer; they will seek me diligently but they will not find me, because they hated knowledge and did not choose the fear of the Lord◆ (Prov. 1:28,29). ◆He who strikes his father or his mother shall surely be put to death◆. He who curses his father or his mother shall surely be put to death◆ (Ex. 21:15,17). ◆If any man has a stubborn and rebellious son who will not obey his father or his mother, and when they chastise him, he will not even listen to them, then his father and mother shall seize him, and bring him out to the elders of his city at the gateway of his home town. They shall say to the elders of his city, ◆This son of ours is stubborn and rebellious, he will not obey us, he is a glutton and a drunkard.◆ Then all the men of his city shall stone him to death; so you shall remove the evil from your midst, and all Israel will hear of it and fear◆ (Deut. 21:18-21). See also Lev. 20:9; Deut. 28; Is. 42:22-25; Jer. 19:1-11; Eze. 20:21; and Eph. 2:3.
◆◆Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance? But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who will render to each person according to his deeds: to those who by perseverance in doing good seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life; but to those who are selfishly ambitious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, wrath and indignation◆ (Rom. 2:4-8).
◆Then look at the consequences that came to those who rebelled and disobeyed God◆s Word. See Gen. 3:6-24; Gen. 19:15-26; Num. 16:3-50; Deut. 1:26-46; 1 Sam. 2:12-4:18; 1 Sam. 15; Jonah 1-2; and Jer. 36:20-32.
◆Show your child that it is God who commands them to obey their parents.
◆Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honor your father and mother (which is the first commandment with a promise), so that it may be well with you, and that you may live long on the earth◆ (Eph. 6:1-3). ◆Children, be obedient to your parents in all things, for this is well-pleasing to the Lord◆ (Col. 3:20). ◆My son, observe the commandment of your father and do not forsake the teaching of your mother; bind them continually on your heart; tie them around your neck. When you walk about, they will guide you; when you sleep, they will watch over you; and when you awake, they will talk to you. For the commandment is a lamp and the teaching is light; and reproofs for discipline are the way of life◆ (Prov. 6:20-23). ◆Every person is to be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God. Therefore whoever resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God; and they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves◆

(Rom. 13:1,2). ♦Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you♦ (Heb. 13:17).
♦Next read about the blessings to those who obey. ♦Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be prolonged in the land which the Lord your God gives you♦ (Ex. 20:12). ♦He who listens to me shall live securely and will be at ease from the dread of evil♦ (Prov. 1:33). ♦And whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do the things that are pleasing in His sight♦ (1 John 3:22). See 1 John 5:14,15; Prov. 2:21; Ex. 19:5; Ps. 1:3; Heb. 11:8; Acts 7:3-8; Num. 14:24; Josh. 14:6-14; Dan. 1:8-21; and 2 Kings 18:1-7.
♦From here, among the first steps required to alter your course is to ascertain what prevents or obstructs you from being totally devoted to your child♦s training. If your heart becomes divided because of increased activities, stop that which is unnecessary and minister to your child. If it is due to increased responsibilities that are beyond your control, determine to evaluate each day in the light of your first priorities specifically expressed in God♦s Word and take the necessary steps to fulfill your most important responsibility, first to your husband, and then to your child♦s training.
♦Parents Must Work Together for Their Child♦s Soul♦Nothing can replace the divine role God ordained for husbands and wives in becoming one in vision and purpose for fulfilling God♦s purpose for families to reconstruct the fallen church and each nation. Therefore, since God entrusts parents with such a great responsibility, it is imperative to operate according to His divine design of working as one, or the very underpinnings of a godly household will be undermined by the internal conflict that exists from disunity creating a plethora of problems for the entire family. Especially important, then, is to understand what the Word says and to make it the only resource for your course of action.
♦Jon and I are in agreement as to what is right and wrong behavior because we have looked to scripture for truth and not to our own thinking or feelings, making certain that what we require of our children is what God requires of them and not something we ourselves have conjured. When you make God♦s Word the authority in your home, a clear, definite path exists, bringing clarity to every situation, along with a liberating peace and calm.
♦The Father Is the Head and Priest of His Home♦It is quite clear and conclusively demonstrated throughout scripture that the father is the major catalyst (a person acting as the stimulus in bringing about or hastening a result) in bringing about any substantial degree of change because he is the head of the family and ultimately responsible for the well being of his charge. It is obvious, then, that the child must be accountable to his father, and in practical terms, this requires daily accountability. So when Jon arrives home from work after he and I have had a chance to be alone and talk, he then takes Josiah in his care and asks him to give an account of his actions and words throughout the day. In return, he praises, rebukes, exhorts, and disciplines him accordingly and then prays with him, helping Josiah look to God for help and victory, knowing that anything attempted on human strength is certain to fail, but that all things are possible with God♦s help.
♦To reinforce this point that we must be diligent to pray with this child, of equal importance is to continually pray for this child as well. I cannot tell you how much concern and grief I have over Josiah♦s eternal future so, with loving tenderness for this child♦s soul, I do plead with my heavenly Father day and night to make this child His and create in him a willingness to be obedient so that we abide in eternity together because, apart from God♦s holy presence, willing obedience is impossible.
♦Study God♦s Word Daily♦Read the Bible to these children every day, being diligent to fill their minds with the wonderful Word of God. For we are all slaves to sin, but God tells us in John 8:31,32: ♦So Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, ♦If you continue in

My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free. ♦♦ ♦All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work♦ (2 Tim. 3:16,17). Also read Proverbs Chapter 2.
♦It is of utmost importance that fathers do most of the reading and teaching of God♦s Word, as is their responsibility as the priest of their own home. However, if your husband is not a believer or if he is negligent in fulfilling his duty, you must be the one to take this responsibility until your husband♦s heart is transformed. ♦For I am mindful of the sincere faith within you, which first dwelt in your grandmother Lois, and your mother Eunice, and I am sure that it is in you as well♦ (2 Tim. 1:5). ♦You, however, continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned them; and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus♦ (2 Tim. 3:14,15).
♦On the other hand, many fathers desire to fulfill their duty but do not even know how to begin teaching God♦s Word to their children because they themselves did not have a role model to emulate. If this is the case, we encourage you to give them the Bible studies that we put out in the CHEF emails each month which Jon and I prepare for our fathers at our own church. This way they will have everything prepared for them in a concise, chronological lesson, which is broken down in simple, easy-to-use daily lessons. Please email taco44@sbcglobal.net if you would like to be added to this email list.
♦And since these children have such difficulty discerning right from wrong, it must be the Bible they spend most of their time reading, for it is only the solid Word of God that trains the senses to discern good from evil. ♦For everyone who partakes only of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is an infant. But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil♦ (Heb. 5:13,14). In truth, the Word gives us biblical templates by which we can measure each action and word to determine if it measures according to God♦s plumb line.
♦In fulfilling this responsibility, you must take a further precaution to make certain that your child is listening to what you are reading because a child involved in self-centered thinking does not make room for thoughts other than what interests him, unless compelled to do so. To illustrate this point, recently after reading an entire story on prudence, I asked Josiah to give me a definition of prudence. His answer of ♦It♦s evil?♦ revealed that his mind was once again on things that he wanted to think about, so I started requesting that he reread lessons he ignores, followed by further questioning until he understands the point of the lesson. Knowing these consequences has definitely improved his concentration when I read to him.
♦In addition to the Bible, read character-building books to them about men whom they can emulate. Be sure to point out the sinfulness of rebellion in ungodly men and the admirable traits in godly men because rebellious children often prefer the bad guys, making light of their bad behavior.</p><p>Teach Gratitude</p><p>♦When your child complains or shows ingratitude, point out all the things for which he should be thankful and then have him transform his complaint into one of praise. Teach him the verses that speak against complaining and then the verses that encourage him to be thankful and praise God. ♦Many, O Lord my God, are the wonders which You have done, and Your thoughts toward us; there is none to compare with You. If I would declare and speak of them, they would be too numerous to count♦ (Ps. 40:5). ♦Rejoice always; pray without ceasing; in everything give thanks; for this is God♦s will for you in Christ Jesus♦ (1 Thes. 5:16-18). See Num. 11-21; Rom. 9:19-20; 2 Tim. 3:2; Prov. 15:13; Phil. 2:14; Phil. 4:6; Col. 4:2; and Job 5:8-27. Reiterate time and time again God♦s attributes of omnipresence, omnipotence,

omniscience, and complete sovereignty.

Once your husband and you have established the sin nature of your child, determine the course necessary to bring him into alignment with God's Word.

Discipline in Love for Your Child's Soul

Be diligent to discipline your child, but do it in love for your child's soul and not in anger from sheer frustration, making certain that you possess the right attitude of desiring his repentance before the Lord. We do not punish our children for accidents or childish mistakes, only for sins. Whenever Josiah sins, we ask him to go into the bedroom and wait for us. Then we talk with him so he understands what he has done wrong and then give him three good swats on the bottom—never in anger, always in love for his soul, to bring him to an understanding of his sin towards God. We then require that he ask God to forgive him for what he has done against Him.

Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child; the rod of discipline will remove it far from him (Prov. 22:15).

All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness (Heb. 12:11).

But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons (Heb. 12:8).

We always ask Josiah, If you cannot obey a father whom you see, how will you ever be able to obey a God whom you cannot see?

Practice Obedient Behavior

Practice makes perfect, so we have Josiah practice obedience. Whenever we read about one of God's children who responds to God with total submission, we always make a point of emphasizing and practicing his quick responses. When God called to Abraham or to Samuel, he immediately responded with, Here I am.

So we had Josiah practice by calling him from another room and having him run in to us, responding to our call with, Here I am.

As time elapsed, sometimes Josiah would become lax and fall into his old careless pattern, so we would just have him practice again.

When I was a child, my own father always required that I come to him immediately after he called me and that I obeyed him both quickly and cheerfully regardless of how I felt about his request. I cannot adequately express how much this has helped me obey God throughout my own life. Careful training when we are young makes serving God so much easier when we become older.

Take the time to do whatever is necessary to alter the wrong course. Even as a baby, Josiah did not like to be cuddled and would squirm his little body away from us. With all our children, I have always carried and cuddled them all day long, no matter what I was doing. So I naturally did this, but we also kept Josiah in bed with us for four years, cuddling him next to our bodies both night and day. Thankfully, he now loves to be cuddled.

Another case in point is that he did not want to hold hands with anyone, for any reason, so holding hands with him was like holding a limp rag. I actually had to teach him how to grasp my hand and hold on, followed by continual practice.

Do not allow your child to quarrel with you under any circumstances. Not only is this an abomination to the Lord, but also it hinders your child from learning restraint. Remember, if he is complaining to you about what you have said, he is actually raising his fist to God who placed you over him, which has been confirmed in previous scriptures that I have listed.

When there are many words, transgression is unavoidable, but he who restrains his lips is wise (Prov. 10:19).

He who restrains his words has knowledge, and he who has a cool spirit is a man of understanding (Prov. 17:27).

God's Plan for Your Child's Life

Be careful not to say things like: You are the most disobedient child I have ever met. Why can't you be like your other brothers and sisters? This is counterproductive. We should not want any of our children to be like anyone else except Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour. Therefore, we must constantly point our children to God's Word, giving them the truth about what God requires, so that they do not become men pleasers, but desire only to please God. Turn your

exasperated thoughts into prayers of supplication and so speak forth positive direction for rectifying the disobedient action.

Continually reiterate to your child that God has a special purpose for his life, whereby he needs to learn to obey so he will be able to carry out the important job God has for him. To Josiah, I would often retell the story of my appendix rupturing and how God not only spared my life, but also his as well, pointing out that God has a special purpose for his life. Excerpts from Ps. 139: You know when I sit down and when I rise up For You formed my inward parts; You wove me in my mother's womb. I will give thanks to You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; wonderful are Your works, and my soul knows it very well. In Your book were all written the days that were ordained for me How precious also are Your thoughts to me, O God! How vast is the sum of them! If I should count them, they would outnumber the sand.

Be Tender and Complimentary

Be tender towards these children, for not only do they need an example of tenderness, but also they need a loving parent who will patiently and steadfastly guide them into the righteous path. Tenderly love them and require that same tenderness in return in the manner in which they speak to you and treat you. Periodically, purchase them special gifts that exemplify tenderness. I personally love to purchase sweet little animals and sweet, tender books for Josiah.

Look for ways to praise your child. It may seem incredible, but when dealing with some children, it can be almost impossible to find anything worthy of praise. Therefore, when I found the slightest something, I praised him personally and then praised him again in front of his father and siblings.

Because of the amount of disciplining that rebellious children require, it is necessary for them to understand that there are things that you appreciate about them. To point out and emphasize their commendable traits and accomplishments, write these below or around their picture mounted on posterboard. Some of the things we listed were: Tenderhearted towards Mama; Very protective of family; Makes sure everyone is together; An excellent reader; Plays alone very well; An excellent drawer; Very imaginative; Possesses an excellent vocabulary; Great conversationalist. On another sheet of paper, list the things that the child needs to work on, but list them positively, so that these can be placed around his picture as well, once he shows improvement in these areas. For example: Respectful. Loving and kind. Grateful. Cheerful. Helpful. Hard worker. Diligent.

Individual Time with Parents

Spend individual time with this child every day. It is so important for these children to have a lot of one-on-one time with both parents. I love to do school and fun projects with Josiah, and he loves them in return. Besides schooling and fun projects, I always try to play a game with him and read several books to him every day, regardless of my schedule. And because I did not want him to miss out on anything that I had done with my other children, I made a list of all the fun things I had done with them and planned them into my schedule each week.

Jon, too, makes time to work and play with Josiah and, from time to time, he does special projects just with him. He also takes him to the store with him and is now taking him on jobs, giving him things that he can accomplish. At first, Josiah did not want to go on lawn and landscaping jobs and ended up complaining and then playing more than anything, but now he seems to enjoy the sense of family cooperation and camaraderie. Children need to feel as if they benefit the family. All our children work just as Jon and I work to benefit the entire family. So even if a child does not like to work, he is still required to do his job quickly and without complaining. And if a job is not done properly, he is required to do it over. Refrain from doing the job yourself because it will save you time. These children need a patient, diligent hand to guide them through each task.

See 2 Thes. 3:10; Rom. 12:10,11; Prov. 10:4,5; Prov. 10:26; Prov. 12:11-24; Prov. 13:4; Prov. 15:19; Prov. 19:15; Prov. 20:4; Prov. 21:25; Prov.

24:32-34; Luke 13:6-9; Matt. 25:14-30; Col. 3:22-24; Heb. 6:10-12; Gen. 39-41; Deut. 24:19; Prov. 22:9; Prov. 28:27; Ps. 37:25,26; Ps. 41:1-3; Ps. 112:5-9; and Luke 6:38.

Give Specific Direction for Each Day

◆ These children need specific direction, so give them checklists of responsibilities to be done each day. The following is an example of Josiah's list: Brush teeth. Vacuum house. Sweep kitchen. Sweep back porch. Pick up your things. Ask Daddy, Mama, Sonia and Jedidiah if there is something that you can do to help them. Clean bathroom sink. Additional responsibilities are then interspersed among each week: Water plants. Scrub bathtub. Sweep patio. Brush dogs.

◆ To counter self-centeredness, give your child service projects to help him get his mind off himself so that he can begin to think of others' needs. Although we encourage Josiah to look for ways to help each of us, we also give him specific tasks that he can perform, not only for our own family, but also for extended family members, elderly friends, and neighbors.

Allow Only That Which Is Edifying

◆ Require these children to rephrase their demanding requests and their unkind responses. When one of our children asks Josiah to do something, his natural tendency has been to defiantly refuse. And although this is totally unacceptable, so is a smart aleck yes. So we often ask him to rephrase his responses and change his demands into humble requests like, ◆ Yes, Sonia, I would be happy to help you, especially since you do so much for me all the time, ◆ and ◆ Jedidiah, will you please give me a glass of water? ◆ Practice turns into habits.

◆◆ Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear. Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tender-hearted; forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you ◆ (Eph. 4:29-32). See Ps. 64; Prov. 8:13; Prov. 15:4,23; Prov. 16:24; Prov. 18:21; Matt. 12:37; Acts 20:35; Rom. 1:28-32; Rom. 12:10,11; Phil. 2:14; James 1:26; James 3:8-12; 1 Pet. 3:8-12; Ps. 141:3; Gen. 4:5,8-12; Num. 35:20-28; Ps. 5:5,6; Ps. 37:8,9; Prov. 6:17; Prov. 14:29; Prov. 16:32; Prov. 19:11,19; Prov. 22:24,25; Matt. 5:21,22; and 1 John 3:14-16.

◆ Utilize role-playing to help your child practice proper responses and manners.

Special Time with Siblings

◆ Have your other children spend special time with this child each day. With Sonia, it comes naturally that she and Josiah talk and play so much more together because they share the same room. They cuddle and talk and play often. And by the way, this has really helped to shape Josiah's attitude by having Sonia as a constant companion. I shudder to think of what Josiah would have been like if he was always in a room by himself. In 900 square feet of living space, he does not have a chance to be by himself, which is one of the blessings of living in a small house.

◆ Jedidiah, however, is off with Jon putting in a man's workday most days, and he quite frankly does not have the same patience with his unruly brother as Sonia does, so I requested that Jedidiah do two things with Josiah each day. Now you must realize that we are constantly doing things together as a family, so Jedidiah and Josiah are together all the time. But this is not the same as doing something for his younger brother. This has really helped their relationship and helped Jedidiah, as well, to learn to have patience with younger children who aren't always so pleasant and fun to be around.

◆ Also encourage your other children to look for things that they, too, can praise in this child. Help them by giving suggestions and by pointing out things as they happen.

Wisely Choose Your Child's Companions

◆ Carefully discern the character of your child's companions, for rebellious children are drawn to other rebellious children like themselves, so allowing alliances with those of the same self-centered nature is

deadly. Therefore, it is extremely important to inoculate your children from the spiritually deadening influence of other rebellious individuals. Instead, choose companions for them that exemplify behavior that you want them to emulate. Our neighbor child, who is also very rebellious and ungrateful, constantly comes over to our house to play with Josiah. After realizing the effect this neighbor was having on him, Jon limited their play to once in a great while for only short periods of time. Remember that God tells us that bad company corrupts good morals. And indeed, Josiah's behavior was so much better once this influence was removed that I had to praise God.

◆◆He who walks with wise men will be wise, but the companion of fools will suffer harm◆ (Prov. 13:20). ◆Leave the presence of a fool, or you will not discern words of knowledge◆ (Prov. 14:7). ◆Do not be deceived: ◆Bad company corrupts good morals◆◆ (1 Cor. 15:33). See Ps. 1:1; Prov. 1:10,15; Prov. 4:14,15; Prov. 12:26; Prov. 22:24,25; Josh. 23:12,13; Rom. 12:2; Rom. 16:17; 2 Cor. 6:14-18; and Eph. 5:5-12.

◆Emphasize the importance of what God tells each of us in 1 John 3:18: ◆Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth.◆

◆In conclusion, remember that our greatest joy is in knowing that our children are walking with the Lord. ◆I have no greater joy than this, to hear of my children walking in the truth◆ (3 John 1:4). ◆Just as you know how we were exhorting and encouraging and imploring each one of you as a father would his own children, so that you would walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory◆ (1 Thes. 2:11,12). So be consistent in encouraging and imploring your child to walk in a manner worthy of God.

◆God has given each of our children to us for a purpose because He is sovereign over all things. Let us, therefore, give thanks for each of them and beseech God to gird us for the task at hand.

◆◆For this reason ◆ we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might, for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience; joyously giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in Light◆ (Col. 1:9-12).

◆◆For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; and that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God. Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen◆ (Eph. 3:14-21).