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## **For the Love of the Family Ministries™**

**Missionaries to America's Forgotten Mission Field, the Family  
Is "Just Do Right" Good Instruction For Children?**

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### **Is "Just Do Right" Good Instruction for Children? By Gary Maldaner**

Has this phrase – "Just do right" become the essence of the Christian life? Is this to be *the* primary goal for every day that we live? Is it God's plan for us that we make all the decisions and live life as we please as long as we always choose to "do right." Sadly, for most Christians today, this is all there is to the Christian life – to learn right and wrong, perform things that are right, and avoid things that are wrong. Yes, it *is* very important to learn from God's Word to clearly identify right and wrong, because the devil will try to deceive us and we *will* be deceived by our own fleshly nature – but to limit the Christian life to these instructions is far from God's plan for each of his children.

The foundation of a successful Christian life is to know and to follow the will of God. There is a great difference between doing right and following the will of God! Peter was doing "right" by being

a fisherman, but he gave up this "right activity" to follow the Lord's will (Mark 1:16-18). We are clearly taught in Jeremiah 10:23 *that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps.* Proverbs 3:5,6 then provides the solution for man's inability. *Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.* There is only one way for God's people to live and this is thoroughly dealt with from Genesis through Revelation – fully yielding to the will of God for every moment of one's life. *I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.* Rom.2:1 *And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.* Luke:23 How does this belief of "just do right" on the part of parents affect the training of children? If we believe that life boils down to "just do right," then we will freely open to children all of the options of "right," and in doing so we will greatly reduce parental direction. Of course, this is easier for us and more pleasant for the children. There is little conflict, because children basically get to do what they want. We ask them what they want for supper (and Mom runs a restaurant, fixing different things for each child from the "right foods" that are in the kitchen), we give children many opportunities to choose right by asking them where they want to go, what they want to do, where they want to sit, etc. In other words, the children in are allowed to direct in many formerly adult decisions by making "right" choices. As well as learning that they can rule over those in authority, children are also learning to choose that which pleases them the most. They are leaning to "have it their way," restricted, of course, to "that which is right." When they grow up they choose from "right" careers (doctor, lawyer, plumber, preacher, businessman, etc.) But, God clearly wants to direct in these things. *That he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God.* 1 Peter 4:2 A preacher is called by God, but so is a Christian plumber in a calling of God. Each has a ministry, but usually with different people. When God is to direct my life, then it is wrong to do a "right thing" when He has not so directed. Although we might think it is right to live just about anywhere, every location is wrong for me except the location to which God clearly directs.

Do children need to learn how to make choices so that they can someday direct their own lives? No – because according to Jeremiah 10:23 this is not possible! But, it is proper to give children some experience in making simple choices, but *only* within the framework of authority. It must be a structured situation with the adults clearly in charge. "Do you want an apple or an orange?" In other words, "You have a choice but the choice is directed by me." And, the adult authority continues – "Even though you can freely choose, I am still in charge and can direct you in how you eat the chosen item."

It is the trend for those in the world around us to abdicate (to children) their role of authority and adult wisdom. Children are often treated as "little adults" rather than those in training to be adults. On several occasions while exhibiting books at a homeschool convention we have seen children being given their "rights." A parent who had previously looked at one of our Bible courses would then bring the child to the table and ask, "Do you think you would like to do this book this year?" The child would then take one quick flip through the book, shake his head, and wander off. How confused these children must be to be placed into a position in which they have no true ability to

function. Children cannot possibly know what they need to study to become useful adults. Although we need not stifle their interests, it is likely that the things that are the most difficult and least liked and those things that are the most needed as a part of their training! Are children equipped to make good choices about what they should study to become adults who are useful in God's service? As highly as we may think of our own children they are still children, and have no ability to direct in their own training. A child knows nothing about being an adult and therefore cannot make choices about what he needs for the future. God has given children to parents for *the parents* to direct them in *all their paths* (Prov. 3:5,6) until such a time when they leave our authority and He becomes their Guide. *Wilt thou not from this time cry unto me, My father, thou art the guide of my youth?* Jer. 3:4 Much of childhood may consist of providing forceful direction to our children. As *the king's heart is in the hand of the LORD, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will* (Prov. 21:1), so the child's heart and life must be directed by the parents. Children are not born with the desire or ability to willingly submit to authority! *The wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies.* Ps. 58:3 The "terrible twos" reveal the raw, unbridled heart, and although most soon learn to outwardly conform to some degree, the vast majority continue into adulthood, in their hearts, with the attitude of, "I will....", "I want...." and "I won't..." Humble submission to authority is the most important goal that parents must attempt to achieve in the first eighteen years of life.

This is *training*, a fulfillment of Proverbs 22:1 – *Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.* Later in the lives of our children our hope is that following the authority of the Lord will be *willing* rather than forced. *And he said, Blessed be the LORD God of my master Abraham, who hath not left destitute my master of his mercy and his truth: I being in the way, the LORD led me to the house of my master's brethren.* Gen. 24:27 Abraham's servant was stating that his desire had been to stay in God's will every step of the trip – and by following each step of God's direction we see his desire accomplished – *the Lord led me to the house of my master's brethren.*

We must listen carefully to the language of our children. Most children will not willfully and openly defy authority, but they will often "test the waters." When they find something to say that they think will cause the one in authority to make some changes, you can be sure that they will make much use of these words! A child who says, "I'm bored" should only be allowed to say this once. This is a veiled attempt to get the adult to respond by changing the original plans to something the child wants to do. (Since you are the one who has given him this "boring" task, you should jump to his service and withdraw your "poor" command). A child who says, "Do I have to?" should discover that this is a statement that is not to be said again. Never allow your children to enter into a "wrestling match" to see who will come out on top and get his will. "I don't like to do that" should have a response similar to, "You may not like to do that, but that is what you must do." Children should not be allowed to make bargains – *"If I do that, can I..."* Your answer must be a firm "NO." Please do what I have told you to do and then you are welcome to make a further request, but we won't bargain for privileges! Early in life children can learn who is in charge, and learn not to "test the waters," but this can only be accomplished when adults are willing to mentally screen the child's conversations that they have with us.

We must also guard our own language when dealing with our children. To say "Get your schoolwork finished, O.K.?" is never the way *a parent* should speak to a child. Although it sounds harmless and seems to be "less offensive" to our tender-hearted little one, we must think of the future. Since you have given a command that requires the child's approval, there may come a day when it may not be O.K.! As a parent, always keep a scriptural relationship of parent to child. The parent, training and guiding the child in the place of the Lord, must not allow the child to usurp his authority. If we in any way seek our child's approval of our direction in his life, it won't be long before he may take the opportunity to say (in nicer words, of course), "No, it's not O.K." Train children early in life to ask permission for everything. This establishes your authority in all areas – clothing, T.V. viewing, friends, diet, habits, reading material, etc. Many parents allow children to tell them what they are going to do – followed by "O.K.?" This may appear to be harmless, but the more quick-thinking child may take the opportunity to push his small amount of authority further. Notice the likely progression as we move into the early teenage years– "I'm going to Dave's house, O.K.?" "I'm going to Dave's house." "I'm going out." "I'm going." A small erosion of authority is taken advantage of and by the end of the progression you have lost the authority over your child.

When you move to a new location and rent or buy a place to live, you settle in the first day with a thankful heart but a willingness to move on as soon as the Lord so directs. When you start out on a trip, cannot the Lord direct in His way and in His timing? Do we not want our children to also respond to our direction in like manner? "You've let me play, but I am always ready and willing for you to direct me toward another activity or job."

Children are not little adults! They are not even to be on an equal footing with adults. They are inexperienced, naive, need protection, have foolishness bound in them, and *like adults*, have no resource in the mind to successfully direct their lives. Jer 10:23 *O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps.* If it is not a human capability to successfully direct one's life then we should not misguide children and allow them to think they have this ability!

### **A Few More Basic Ideas**

- Don't allow the young child who kicks to get out of your arms to have his way. He must learn to allow himself to be held until the adult is ready to release him. This is an important stage of recognizing just who is in charge!
- Parents should decide what foods children eat for meals and even determine the amounts of these foods. Too many children are grossly overweight because "loving Mom" allows him to choose one stalk of asparagus and as many plate fulls of macaroni and cheese as he can hold.
- Keep the family together until you are ready to "disband." Children should not run from the table if they finish eating 10 minutes before others. They should also learn to patiently wait while you are talking to them, rather than beginning to walk off before you are finished.
- Children should not be allowed to choose a church! It is not unusual today for parents look for a

church where there are activities for the children. Children will choose a church from the reference of a heart that is bound with foolishness. (Prov. 22:15) Children allowed to do so will grow up with a desire for entertainment in the church and to have their "ears tickled." Church is to be a place for serious training in doctrine and standards. The church is not an entertainment center or a retirement center. It is a place where battle plans are formatted and instituted. *For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears;* 2 Tim. 4:3

Parents are to be the ones who decide what is to be eaten, where the child goes, what the child wears, how the child spends his money, - parents are to be a distinct authority figure in all areas of the child's life - a parallel situation to the adult life when the Christian is to be in complete submission to the Lord's commands and the Lord's will for his life.

Proper words or Attitude Prelude to trouble:

**Left- Child**  
Where should I sit?  
What should I do?  
What should I eat?  
What should I wear?  
Can I go out and play?  
Should I eat this?

**Right- Parental Defeat**  
Where do *you* want to sit?  
What do *you* want to do?  
What do *you* want to eat?  
What do *you* want to wear?  
Do you want to go out and play?  
Do you want to eat this?

It should be of no surprise when in later years the child comes up with, "I don't want to do that!" "You can't make me." "I don't have to do that" "It's not my job, my turn, etc." Isaiah 3:12 *As for my people, children are their oppressors, and women rule over them. O my people, they which lead thee cause thee to err, and destroy the way of thy paths.*

*oppressors* - To drive, taskmaster, ruler, lord over, exact demanding pressure, overpower, load with unreasonable impositions, to treat with unjust severity, rigor, or hardships; force to perform unreasonable services.

Col 3:20 *Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord.* Eph 6:2 *Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise;)*

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