

Styles of Parenting / God, our Father

Child: Hey, Mom. Do you know where my new calculator is?

Mother: Do you mean the one I just bought you last week to replace the one you lost a month ago?

Child: Yeah, that one. I gotta have it for class tomorrow.

Mother: I don't know. I guess you'll just have to buy a new one.

Child: With what?

Tammy: Being a parent brings new surprises almost every day!

Carol: Oh yes. Surprises and challenges!

Tammy: Hi this is Tammy

Carol: And I'm Carol. Welcome to Women of Hope.

Tammy: Today we will be talking about parenting. Hey, Carol, isn't it hard to have a good, loving, positive relationship with your children all the time?

Carol: Oh it sure is – and I don't think it's possible **all** the time. But there is a **lot** you can do to work towards that – **if** you know how. I love to watch you with your children...you seem to all have such a good time together.

Tammy: We really do! We are friends really. We have a lot of fun when we're together. But of course there are times when the kids get out of hand and I need to discipline them.

Carol: I know, Tammy. I've watched you. I've even seen you explaining to your son why you had to discipline him.

Tammy: That's right – it's very important for the children to understand what they've done wrong and know why they are being disciplined isn't it?

Carol: I agree, but I don't always find it easy now that my son is a teenager. At this age they all like to challenge authority don't they?

Tammy: Oh yes, that's coming soon for me too! To be a parent is hard enough but to be the parent of a teenager is even harder. But, it can also be a lot of fun if you know how to work with your children rather than against your children!

Carol, you have raised two children and I know you have had your challenges along the way. Could you share some advice?

Carol: I'd love to. Having raised two children I know it is not an easy task. It can be difficult work! But it can also be very rewarding. How do we show love to our children through their growing up years? – not only when they are obedient and loving, but also when they are not. How do we as parents raise them up to be good people? These are all good questions, and I'm sure you've asked them at times if you're a parent!

Sometimes I asked myself what kind of mother I should be or would like to be. I wonder if you do that too.

We are all different, and so are our parenting styles. The way we act, as parents, will be influenced

by our own parents and our own personality. Often we treat our children exactly as our parents treated us, don't we? We will also be influenced by what we learn from the people around us, and the stresses we face in life. Our style of parenting will also be influenced by our children's personality and behavior. I'm sure you would agree that an easy-going child, who does as we ask him to, will be easy to handle. But a rebellious child, now they will need much firmer control.

So let's look today at four different styles of parenting and how each of these may affect our children.

The first is, '*Authoritarian*' or '*Dominant*' parenting:

This parent has all the power. Decisions are made for the child, without discussion or explanation. '*Dominant*' parenting is cold and firm.

I'm sure you've seen or experienced this kind of parenting...always demanding perfection from the child. The parents just tell the child to obey the rules but do not explain or discuss them at all.

Children from this type of parenting are often not sure how to respond in social situations...they look to others to decide what's right. They find it hard to make their own decisions, as they have not been allowed to choose by themselves. They lose the desire to be curious about things and find it hard to be spontaneous.

Those who demand so much perfection from their children, will, unfortunately – often find that their children will become rebellious as they grow up.

The second style of parenting is '*Indifferent*' or '*Neglectful*' parenting:

Life is centered on the parent. They are more concerned with themselves than their child. The parents are generally not involved in their child's life, but will provide their basic needs. They do not spend time talking to their child or showing that they care.

At home when they are busy doing something for themselves, they do not listen to what their child has to say or show interest in their little stories, or their hurts or their joys. These parents may forget that their children are the most important and precious possessions they have!

One of the main reasons why children are being neglected today is that both parents work everyday to make ends meet, and leave their children with other people.

And millions of children around the world are raised without one or both of their parents because of divorce.

The result of neglect is that many children spend hours and hours watching television. Studies show that the average time spent watching TV in countries across the world ranges from 2 ½ hours a day to 8 hours every day. This is not good for our children is it? TV keeps them quiet, but takes them to a fantasy world which has nothing to do with reality. They miss out on exercise, fun and family time.

Neglectful parenting is not consistent and the child doesn't know how to behave or what to expect. These children will often grow up feeling resentment against their parents.

The third is '*Permissive*' or '*Easy-going*' parenting:

This style of parenting allows children to have a lot of power. Boundaries are not set or enforced. '*Permissive*' parenting is warm and soft. Parents are nurturing and accepting, but not demanding.

These parents are very easy on their children, as anything goes. The children are not given rules to live by, they are given no responsibilities, and they are not taught respect. Without these boundaries, children can feel insecure and unsafe.

The parents will do anything the child asks them to do. They are afraid that the child will not love them if they use any kind of discipline. The children are rarely, if ever, punished.

These children are generally immature and often unhappy. But we do find that many as they grow up will continue to have a close and loving relationship with their parents.

The fourth style is '*Authoritative*' or '*Loving and Firm*' parenting:

These parents set clear boundaries and children are allowed some power within those boundaries. This parenting is warm and firm and will develop a loving and strong relationship with the child. The child is encouraged to make some decisions for him or herself.

The parents spend time working out solutions with the child. For example, when the child is home late for dinner again, the parent may say, "You are late again, how can we work this out together?" Or, when the child wants to go out with friends; the parent may say, "You say all the girls will be there. I would like to know first, what you are planning to do together."

This parent will always explain the reason when there is a need to discipline a child, and will always be ready to forgive. The children can develop self-esteem and independence. They are encouraged to form their own opinions. These children are likely to be successful and able to express themselves. They are often happy with themselves, and generous with others.

As you can see there are different approaches to parenting...which do you think sounds the best?

Our research shows that the 'loving and firm' approach appears to have the best outcomes for our young people.

Now there is one last style of parenting that I need to mention, one that is not acceptable – '*Abusive parenting*':

Abusive parents hurt their children. This includes emotional, physical or sexual abuse and neglect. Abusive parenting causes lasting damage. It is never okay and needs to be stopped.

As I finish – here's a question...what do we do if we, as parents, have different styles of parenting? This can be very difficult can't it? We need to talk about it together. It's important for us as parents to try to work together. Our children need us to be consistent.

It's very confusing to the child if for example, one parent is 'dominant' and gives punishment without explaining why, and the other is 'warm and loving' and talks with the child about the reason for punishment. It's challenging to change your parenting style but it will help your children to grow into independent, caring adults.

Tammy: Thank you so much, Carol for sharing your heart for parents and children. You've given us a lot of things to think about today. Thinking about the way we were raised and the way we parent our own children. You know Carol, this makes me think about my own parents. They were easy, warm loving parents and disciplined us from time to time.

Carol: Oh, my father was definitely a dominant parent. That affected me as a person. I grew up as a rebellious child, with very low self-esteem, loud and demanding.

Tammy: That's hard to believe now, Carol, look at you! You are so happy and self confident today!!

Carol: Well I can thank God for the changes he's made in my life. And we look forward shortly to hearing more about how our father, God, can change us.

Tammy: It is very comforting to know that God loves us for who we are and that we can have God with us every day and in everything we do. We have Ros here today to share something more about God, our father. Welcome, Ros.

Ros: Thank you. I love to be here with you.

Many years ago when my eldest child was a toddler, he would say, "Mummy, I need a biscuit" (you might call it a 'cookie'). His little voice was very hard to resist, and I would usually give him one! Of course I knew he didn't really need one; he just wanted it because it tasted good.

Now my son is grown up, and he has a little toddler of his own. He is teaching her to ask very nicely for things. If she says, "I want some grapes," he reminds her to say, "Daddy, please can I have some grapes." Then he can't resist her sweet request either!

As I watch this relationship between a loving father and his little girl, my son and my granddaughter, my heart is warmed, and I think of the loving relationship I have with my heavenly father, God.

We often imagine God being far away, don't we? Out of our reach, untouchable, not concerned about our needs. But all through the Bible, from beginning to end, God is spoken of as our 'father'. God's word says, (Psalm 103:13) 'The Lord is like a father to his children, tender and compassionate to those who fear him.'

How does a father respond to his child? Does he listen when his child asks him something? Does he want the best for his child? Jesus told a story to his followers one day to help them understand who God the father is. Then he said, (Luke 11:11) "You fathers—if your children ask for a fish, do you give them a snake instead? Or if they ask for an egg, do you give them a scorpion? Of course not! And that's just how God is – he wants to give us what he knows is best for us. And he does not want to trick us or punish us.

God's word tells me that he cares for me as a father cares for his children. He says: (Jeremiah 29:11) "For I know the plans I have for you. Plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." Life without hope is not real life is it? I wonder what you might be going through right now and you feel that there is no hope left? God, who made you, wants you to come to him. He wants to be your father and he wants to listen to you as you tell him what you need. He says (v12) "when you pray I will listen"!

Not only will God our father listen as he promised, but if we look for him we will find him. He says, (v13) "You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart." If we really want to find the true God, we will find him. (v14) "I will be found by you," says the Lord, and I will bring you back from captivity."

I wonder what might be holding you in captivity. Is it physical captivity – a prison? Do you need God's promise for hope and a future right where you are, with high walls around you? Is it emotional captivity? Do you need to know that you are a valuable person in God's sight? You are! Is it spiritual captivity? Have you come to believe that the true God does not want this kind of relationship with you? He does, and you are valuable? He has plans for you, to prosper you and not to harm you. He is a loving father. He will listen to you and you will find him.

How do we know that God is a loving father? Well, God sent his son, Jesus, to this earth to show us himself. Jesus showed great love and compassion for those who were hurting. He healed the sick, and provided for the poor.

And just as a father wants his children to be with him, God, our father wants us to go to be with him when our life on this earth is finished.

Let's take a little look, into the Bible, at Jesus talking with some of his followers. He had just told them that he was going away to prepare a place for them. (John 14:1-9) Imagine we are sitting, listening in:

Jesus said, "Don't let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God, and trust also in me. There is more than enough room in my Father's home... When everything is ready, I will come and get you, so that you will always be with me where I am. And you know the way to where I am going."

"No, we don't know, Lord," Thomas said. "We have no idea where you are going, so how can we know the way?"

Jesus told him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me. ...Philip said, "Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied."

Jesus replied, "Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and yet you still don't know who I am? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father."

Jesus came not only to show us who the father is, but to give his life to pay for our sin - the wrong things we do. If you put your trust in Jesus and what he has done for you, you can also be God's child. And do you know that your father, God, knows exactly what you need even before you ask him? How wonderful!!

How are you feeling today? What troubles are you going through? Does your life sometimes feel too hard for you? Jesus loves you with a father's love. He says, (Matthew 11:28) "Come to me all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens and I will give you rest."

Let's pray to this loving father.

Dear father, thank you for loving me and sending Jesus to take the punishment for the wrong things I have done. Thank you for forgiving me, and making me your child. In Jesus' name, Amen

Tammy: We hope that you prayed with us today, and that you will have many years ahead as a child of your father, God. And as Ros said, you can talk with God anytime too, as you pray to him, and share your joys and struggles. He's always listening to you.

I'm glad we could be together once again. The time goes so quickly during our visit with you. Don't forget you can visit our website at TWRWomenofHope.org. Or visit our Facebook page. I hope we'll hear from you. Have a great week filled with God's blessings.