

WHAT WOULD MOMMY THINK?

By: Karin Litchfield

"Take my yoke upon you and learn of Me...."

Has God ever had to hit you over the head with a two by four to get your attention before? I'm thankful He is willing to go to such measures to get me on the right path, but it isn't exactly my method of choice! A true believer in Christ always has his ear tuned upward. Listening for the Spirit's guidance and instruction throughout the day. This is what we want to train our children to do. And it starts with how they are trained to respond to us as parents.

It is best to start when they are around a year of age. As babies, we can teach them our approval or disapproval by the tone of our voice, and begin to teach them what "no" means, but when they start moving around is a great time to go beyond that and begin to teach them to initiate attentiveness to us even before we say anything! Too often we see toddlers who crawl or walk around their own homes or other homes with no apparent conscience getting into this or that. Unknowingly the parents have trained them that anything is fair game for their little hands unless mom/dad gets up and moves the object or them. They are trained to think, "I can do what I want unless someone stops me". But, in reality, they actually can be trained to think, "What would Mommy think?" before touching. This discipline gives them great training in understanding that their will and their desires are not to be the ruling factor in their lives. If we wait until they are much older, self indulgent habits are more ingrained in them than is easy to remove. Not only will they be less sensitive to the Spirit, but as older children/teens, they will wait for you to hit them over the head with a 2X4 before they stop doing an undesirable activity!

It is tempting when your youngster starts to scoot around to be so fascinated by their new accomplishment that you're not bothered by how they are getting into your stuff. Beware! You could be missing the most opportune time to train them to be attentive to your desires for them. This is the time to cement into them the meaning of "no" and "don't touch". Designate certain toys or objects which are always acceptable to touch and everything else is a "no" or "don't touch". When they reach for a basket of magazines on the floor, don't move them or the basket, just say "No!". If they don't voluntarily move their hand, then give them a swat on the hand. Some parents use their own hand to swat and some a small flexible switch. This pattern is continued until the child withdraws his hand voluntarily. The swat needs to be sharp enough to sting and be a deterrent, but not hard enough to bruise. When the child is reaching for a toy or a touchable item, look at them, smile, and say, "Yes, you can play with that !" When you are at a friend's house to visit, immediately let your child know what IS touchable and can be played with. Then everything else, stick with a solid "no". Don't let them wander around the friend's house unrestrained. Make sure they understand what area/room they are allowed to be in then say, "No" when they try to head out of it with the same consequences as touching things if they don't obey. Yes, this does require that you supervise your mobile child nearly all the time whether home or away to train them for awhile. Some children take a number of swats and quite firm ones to get the point. Others fall into broken hearted crying after a slight tap. Don't worry, they'll be fine! Don't feel guilty or give them a pity party. Matter of factly assure them that you love them, but they had better not touch that again, give them a loving rub on the back and go back to your business. Gently, but firmly, help lift them out of their own pity party!

If this is consistently practiced, you'll notice a neat pattern developing. When they come to something they don't know whether they can touch or not, they will look at you to see just by

the look on your face if it's going to be okay. This is the kind of attentiveness we are looking for. Not only does it display a sensitivity to authority, but it also exhibits a basic form of self-denial. Tremendous skills for their future with relationships on earth and God's purposes for them in the Kingdom.

The benefits to this training is a great foundation for years to come. As you consistently apply these principles in their younger years in a number of areas then they will have habits of not just doing what they want to do! Two by fours in life may not be completely avoidable, but most of them can be if we all learn to listen with sensitivity.