

# *Shaping the Next Generation*

**August 19, 2018**

## **Parent/Child Blessing (Julie)**

### **Video: Mommy Losing It**

#### **Introduction**

How many of you have every used one or more of those strategies when working with kids? If you didn't raise your hand, you are probably lying!! I love the bribing, I mean reward strategy. I remember using the "M&M bribe" during the potty training years with my kids. "Abby, If you go potty in the big toilet, Daddy's going to give you some M&Ms and we both know how much you like M&Ms!!" Sometimes

that worked and sometimes it didn't. Often times I wanted to pull my hair out when I couldn't get our kids to do what I wanted them to do but sometimes I hit the jackpot and one of our strategies worked out great. I've learned a long time ago that I can't take any credit for the way my kids turned out because it's by the grace of God that they are what they are.

We all know that working with kids at any age is a combination of art and science and guesswork and a whole lot of prayer. Probably more guesswork and prayer than anything else. Now that I'm a grandparent, I see this playing out with my adult children who

are just now having kids. They don't know what they are doing any more than I did at their age. They guess at what to do and then they consult Google and then they pray and when all else fails, they might call mom or dad. Let's face it. Raising kids, regardless of whether you're a baby boomer, gen x, or gen y, is hard work and challenge. Now before you tune me out because you aren't a parent, I want you to know that what I'm talking about today applies to ANYONE who has any influence on kids anywhere...whether you are a teacher, foster parent, parent or grandparent, aunt or uncle, volunteer in Adventureland and Student Ministry or whatever. The

truth is we are all called to influence the next generation through their various phases of development. In fact, if you've been at NHCC for any time at all, you've probably noticed our "Phases" wall across from the Adventureland check-in station. The "Phases" wall breaks down the development of a child's life into four distinct phases.

**>SLIDE: Phase 1: Preschool**

This age group is motivated by safety, so we need to embrace their physical needs.

**>SLIDE: Phase 2: Elementary**

This age group is motivated by fun, so we must to engage their interests.

**>SLIDE: Phase 3: Middle School**

This age group is motivated by acceptance, so we need to affirm their personal journey.

**>SLIDE: Phase 4: High school**

This age group is motivated by freedom, so we must mobilize their potential.

Each of these phases is unique and different and carries with it a unique set of challenges. If you'd like to know more about each of the various phases in a child's development, visit our Info

Center just to the right of the NHCC  
cafe in the Commons. We have all sorts  
of articles and information to help you  
learn how to work with children of all  
ages.

Today we want to talk about how to  
shape and influence children along that  
entire spectrum of development: from  
preschool to high school. And if you  
want to successfully work with kids of  
all ages, then you have to learn to  
adapt your “style of authority” at each  
phase. So if you are ready to grow and  
learn how to effectively shape the next  
generation, then this message is for  
you!

## **Authority Defined**

Let's begin by discussing authority. One of the questions we constantly hear around here at NHCC is "how do you influence or exercise authority over children, especially if you are trying to raise godly children?" This question comes up over and over again in different forms from parents or from people who lead kids in our various ministries. Parents and teachers and volunteers want to know "how do I work with kids as they grow through the various phases of their lives?" It's a challenging question to answer because there are so many competing philosophies on how to work with young children today. In fact, Google

offers us a thousand answers to the question. But if we want to understand the biblical perspective, then we must first learn how to properly apply the concept of authority. So let's begin with a simple definition. What is authority? Very simply,

**>SLIDE: Authority is the right to define limits, rules, and consequences.**

It's the right to demand and expect obedience to those limits and rules and to enforce those consequences.

And, according to the Bible that right first and foremost belongs to the parents.

**>SLIDE: Children, obey your parents; this is the right thing to do because God has placed them in authority over you. Honor your father and mother. Ephesians 6:1 (TLB)**

If you're a parent, you are the God appointed authority in the life of your children. In a very real sense, you have been placed in your child's life by God to be a "benevolent dictator" over them. That's right. You are to oversee their lives in a firm but gracious manner.

Now, a lot of people react to this idea of authority in one of two extremes:

they either shy away from accepting that role (because the very idea of telling anyone what they must do or must not do is dead set against our cultural love affair with "tolerance"), or they overdo it and become heavy handed and domineering. And both of those extremes come with very negative consequences not only for the child but also the parents. If parents are too hands off or too demanding, they're going to be totally frustrated and their kids are going to be exasperated as well.. But if you understand and properly apply this concept, you will dramatically increase the probability of seeing your children

develop the way God (and you) want them to.

But, before I can explain this, I need to explain something about the nature of authority. When most people hear the word authority, they tend to only think in terms of someone taking charge and being in control. But in reality, authority can be expressed not only as control; but also as influence.

Both control and influence are types of authority. Let me explain the difference.

**>SLIDE: Control oriented authority says, "You must do what I say simply**

**because I have the authority to tell you what to do.”**

And if you don't do as I say, I have the right and the power to bring about a set of consequences that you will find unpleasant." People obey this kind of authority because they want to avoid those consequences; they want to avoid getting in trouble.

Now the other type of authority is Influence Authority.

**>SLIDE: Influence oriented authority says, "Let me suggest a course of action to you, because I have more**

**life experience and wisdom than you do.”**

If you don't do as I say, most likely, not I, but life will bring about a set of consequences that you will find unpleasant." People listen to this kind of authority because they trust the wisdom and credibility of the one who gives it and they want to avoid messing up their lives.

Now, with that understanding, we also need to understand that parental authority should include both of these, not just one. This is basically what the Apostle Paul once described in Ephesians 6:

**>SLIDE: Fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath: but instead bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.**

**Ephesians 6:4 (NKJV)**

In the Greek text, the word translated for nurture carries with it the idea of generalized training in life skills, while the word for admonition implies correction and discipline. So, Paul is saying "parents make sure your kids get a healthy combination of both.

Make sure your kids receive admonishment 'do this or else' (which is control) and also, nurture 'here's

how life works and what you need to know' (which is influence)."

By the way, notice that Paul also says that when authority is expressed in this way, you will avoid "provoking your children to wrath" or unnecessarily frustrating them or making them angry at you.

So the big question before us then is this: When do you use one or the other? When should you try to control your children and when should you try to influence them?

The basic principle for when to use control vs. influence is this:

**>SLIDE: Younger children are most effectively shaped by loving control. Older children are most effectively shaped by the influence of wisdom.**

You see, younger children (primarily preschool and elementary age) need loving control. Older children (primarily middle school and high school) need influence of wisdom.

**SLIDE: Control vs. Influence slide**

You see, as a child gets older, you have to change your parenting style to match the needs of the child. You move from

control to influence. That's the general principle; now, let's break it down.

When your kids are young, primarily what they need from you as an authority is to be "the boss of them." That doesn't mean you don't love them. It doesn't mean you don't play with them and enjoy them. It doesn't mean you don't try to talk to them in ways that influence them or fill them with wisdom. You do all that stuff, but you must never forget that in those early years, what children need most is direction and discipline and quite often, immediate discipline. For example, we never tried to "reason with" our sons Joel or Kyle to go to bed

at the proper time when they were preschoolers. Nor did we allow Abby or Cory decide for themselves if they wanted to go to school or not when they were elementary age. We tried to graciously dictate their choices at that young age through loving control.

But when our kids got older into middle school and high school, they needed something different. They needed for us to be primarily influential counselors. That doesn't mean that we didn't sometimes need to draw the line or enforce some kind of punishment in response to something that they did wrong. We did ground them and took away certain privileges like time on

their video games or the laptop. You do those things, but you never forget that what they need most at that stage of life is someone whose wisdom they can trust because you have proven yourself wise in the years when you expressed your authority through loving control.

### **Under Control**

Ok, so how does all this work? Here are four things to apply when you child is younger if you are going to exercise loving control over them.

**>SLIDE: 1. Lay out clear rules and, boundaries.**

For example ... "Don't touch the stove."  
"Bedtime is at 8:30. We're going to set  
a buzzer and when it goes off, it's  
bedtime." "Do your homework as soon  
as you get home from school today."  
"Don't take your sister's things without  
asking." "This is your bed. This is  
mommy and daddy's bed. We sleep in  
them separately."

By the way, if you can't verbalize it,  
they can't obey it. Don't ever assume  
that a child automatically knows what  
is expected. They can't read your mind.  
If you discipline a kid who doesn't  
know or understand the rules, then  
you've made a mistake as a parent and  
you need to go to that child, even if

he's a three year old, and say, "mommy (or daddy) messed up on this. We were not clear and I'm sorry for disciplining you about that."

**>SLIDE 2. Explain the reason for your rules, even when kids are young.**

For example, "Don't touch the stove. It's dangerous and could hurt you. Bedtime is at 8:30 because you get grumpy if you don't get enough sleep. You sleep in your bed and mommy and daddy sleep in their bed because, well, everyone will be much, much happier in the long run if we keep it that way. You'll understand later."

Explain it, but don't expect them to agree with you or to completely understand you. Remember, little kids aren't primarily motivated by wisdom. Be willing to talk about these things but do not argue about your rules and expectations. When all is said and done, one thing should be clear: The parents make the decisions not the children.

**>SLIDE: 3. Spell out the positive and negative consequences.**

Things like ... "if you clean your room you can go outside to play (positive consequence). If you're mean to Johnny

again, he's going to have to go home and you'll play by yourself (negative consequence). If you talk back to your mother again, you'll have to go to your room for a time out."

The key is to "make the punishment fit the crime" as the saying goes. Don't go overboard, because it doesn't take severe consequences to get the job done with kids under 10 years old.

Of course, that raises the issue of spanking. Most people would consider it a severe consequence. Isn't that going overboard? If it's done in anger, yes, it's overboard because the Bible says ...

**>SLIDE: Man's anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires. James 1:20(NIV)**

It doesn't produce godliness which, again, is our goal as parents if we're also Christians.

If you get angry and spank your kids just because they make you mad, then you're just a bully who can get away with it because you're bigger and stronger. That's not "authority expressed as loving control." That's out of bounds.

On the other hand, the Bible does say an occasional swat on the rear end can work wonders.

**>SLIDE: Do not withhold discipline from a child, if you punish him with the rod [i.e. paddle], he will not die. Punish him with the rod and save his soul from death. Proverbs 23:13 14 (NIV)**

Now, don't hear what I'm not saying. As a parent, you don't have to spank your child. And it shouldn't be your first or most common disciplinary action. But there are times when a spanking (not a beating) is the most appropriate and effective tool,

especially when you have previously promised it as a negative consequence. If you promise it, you have to follow through ... which leads to the final principle:

**>SLIDE: 4. You have to follow through on your promises, especially the negative ones, which are the hardest.**

Young kids need to have their parents draw a line in the sand and say, "If you step over this, there will be consequences." If you promise a consequence good or bad you'd better deliver or you will not be taken seriously in the future.

As I said, there's a whole lot more that we could talk about on this but I just want to encourage you especially if you are a younger parent with younger children. Do not, do not, do not be afraid to exercise control during the preschool and elementary stages of your child's life.

## **Under the Influence**

But let's move on and talk about older kids and how this concept of authority applies especially to middle school and high school age kids.

I want to start out by telling you that this part of the strategy is even more challenging than the one we just talked

about, and it's the one that took me the longest to grasp. In fact, I didn't learn how to apply the "influence based" style of parenting until I was in counseling after our second son went through a long period of teenage rebellion. Before our son rebelled, I just assumed that we were supposed to use the "loving control" style through every phase of our child's development. Boy was I wrong and unfortunately, my first two kids, Joel and Kyle, suffered the most as a result of my ignorance. But thankfully after much counseling, all my kids, especially Abby and Cory, were the beneficiaries of my enlightenment. It was in counseling that Norma and I were taught the

techniques associated with the “influence of wisdom” style of authority. As a result of the counseling and the changes we made in our parenting, all of our children were benefited especially as they got older.

Therefore, let’s remember that the principle for the second half of childhood states the kids must primarily experience the influence of wisdom in the middle school and high school years. They increasingly need this kind of authority later in their development because as parents we have more experience and wisdom than our children and we can help them be successful and become a contributing

member of society as they listen to our instruction and counsel.

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King Solomon, who wrote most of the book of Proverbs in order to influence his kids with wisdom, put it this way.

**>SLIDE: Listen, my child, to the instruction from your father, and do not forsake the teaching from your mother, for they will be like an elegant garland on your head, and like pendants around your neck.**

**Proverbs 1:8 9 (NET)**

That's a very different kind of authority compared to loving control. So, what exactly does that look like in

everyday life? When do you start transitioning from one form of authority to the other? Well, let's take them one at a time.

As for the transition, that's dependent on the personality and maturity level of the child. You just have to know your kids and ask the Lord for guidance on how you start doing this. Within the same family it will be different from one child to the next which is what we discovered with our kids.

So let's talk what it looks like in everyday life to apply the principles of influence based authority.

**>SLIDE:**

- 1. Focus on empowering your child, not controlling them.**
- 2. Acknowledge their problems and offer empathy.**
- 3. Relinquish control and allow your children to solve their own problems.**
- 4. Offer suggestions or choices if they are interested.**
- 5. Allow natural consequences to provide the discipline. (as much as possible)**

In general, influence based authority works like this: when your child has a problem, you don't come in like a helicopter to rescue the child, nor do you act like a drill sergeant and whip

them into shape. Helicopter parents create kids who are entitled, dependent and irresponsible. Drill sergeant parents create kids who are rebellious, resentful and legalistic. On the contrary, you focus on empowerment. You let them solve their own problems and make their own decisions. This is the best way to prepare them for life outside the home.

Let's take the issue of money for example. When our kids were teenagers, we carved out money from our budget and turned it entirely over to them to manage. We calculated an amount they would need for the month and said to them, "This money will buy

your school lunches, pay for your gas, give you some money for clothes and school activities and there's even some money for you to spend as you wish on movies, video games or whatever." We were trying to teach them how to manage money at an early age to help set them up later in life.

Now you can just about imagine what happened during the first couple months of implementing this new money management strategy with our kids. Some of the stories are downright comical. I could write several SNL skits based on what they said.

Here's one such response we got from them about two-thirds the way through the month when they would come to us with a money problem. They would say,

“I'm out of lunch money.”

Now at this point, most of us parents would naturally feel sorry for the child and we sure don't want them to starve now, would we? But this is the exact moment when you must resist the temptation to swoop in and rescue your children because “life” is about to teach them a very important lesson and you don't want to interfere with the process. So what do you do? You relinquish control. In other words. You

don't try to solve the problem. You put the problem back into the child's lap and offer empathy.

You say something like this:

“I'm sorry to hear that. I bet that sucks.”

At this point, you are simply trying to help your child understand that you are aware of what's happening and you feel for them and empathize with them.

Immediately following your empathetic response, your kids are most likely going to give you a sob story because they don't want to own their own problems, they want YOU to. So a typical kid might say something like

this: “There’s no way I can get through the rest of the month. I don’t have enough money. How am I going to eat at school? Can’t you give me at least \$10? (This is the point when you find out if your child has a future in drama or acting!) Now they might even add, “You are so mean!” (The old guilt tactic!)

But it’s at this point you transfer control back to them. You say, “What do you think you’re going to do about it?” You are trying to keep from owning the problem. As a child grows, they need to own their own problems and learn how to work them out without an adult always fixing things for them.

Next, you offer suggestions or choices if they are interested.

“Would you like to hear what other kids/people have tried?” You are trying to coach them if they are willing to listen. You can offer a variety of choices. You could say, “Well, you could go on a fast during lunch time. Or you could sell some of your video games to get some lunch money. Or you could make your own lunch. You choose.”

Now at this point, there’s no guarantee that they will like any of your suggestions or act on them. Instead, they might say stubbornly, “Just forget

about it.” or “I hate you!” or “I’m going to ask mom because she’ll understand my situation.”

It’s at this time, when they make the wrong choice, you have to release them into the Lord’s hands. You can come back to them later and simply ask them, “how’s that working for you?” or “I hope it works out. I’ll be praying for you.” By doing so, you are giving your child permission to either solve or not solve their problem. But have no fear. If the child is fortunate enough to make a poor choice, he/she will have an opportunity to learn an important life lesson through “the school of hard knocks”.

This what it looks like to exercise authority through the influence of wisdom. It teaches your children how to make decisions for themselves and to accept the consequences of their decisions...good or bad. And by the way, would you like to know how the lunch money story ended with our kids? It wasn't long before they said, "Hey mom, where's the bread and the peanut butter and jelly. I need to make my lunch." And that's when you smile to yourself and say, "I think they are starting to grow up now!"

## **Conclusion**

So let's wrap this up. At some point, our kids are going to grow up and leave us. And the greatest influence we will have on them is what we did for their heart and how we taught them to make decisions for themselves. And it all starts with loving control over them in their preschool and elementary years and ends with us relinquishing control in the later years and letting them fly solo for themselves. And don't forget, if we do this well, we prepare them for life and help them grow up to become responsible, mature adults. Let's pray.

## **Closing Song: When You Come Back Down**

# **Influencer Blessing and Closing Comments (Clay)**