



AVOIDING THE PITFALLS OF PARENTING

SECRETS OF A HAPPY HOME

By Nancy Reimann



The Bible tells us that “children are a gift from the Lord” (Psalm 127:3, NLT). But these bundles of joy can add strain to a marriage. When new parents are plunged into a world of dirty diapers, runny noses, sleepless nights, and additional financial responsibility, the pressure can rise. Those temper tantrums that accompany toddlerhood are enough to push parents over the edge. Teenage trouble has a way of making mom and dad feel as if they’re on opposite ends of a tug-of-war.

Mom, you may struggle to balance the roles of both mommy and wife. Spit-up on your blouse, a young one banging on the bathroom door, or a teenager slamming the bedroom door just aren’t conducive to a romantic evening. Dad, you probably feel neglected when your lover lights up when she sees her toddler walk in the room (instead of you) and falls asleep before you come to bed.

Different parenting styles can also add tension to the relationship. Disagreements about rules, responsibilities, and discipline are common. Even toddlers recognize which parent is more lenient. Divisive patterns that are established early are difficult to reverse. So, how can you avoid the pitfalls of parenting?



FOCUS ON YOUR SPOUSE. While parenting is an important job, your marriage is the *most* important relationship in your family. Enlist friends and family to help with childcare so you can have time alone for date nights and even weekend getaways. You don't need a big budget: Quality time over coffee or a night at a nearby campground aren't costly, but are incredibly valuable.

ESTABLISH HEALTHY BOUNDARIES. Children thrive when boundaries are well-defined and clearly communicated by both parents. Discuss your roles, responsibilities, and responses before conflict arises. For instance, don't wait until after your daughter has received an invitation to prom to decide the appropriate age to date. Have frequent family meetings where accomplishments are recognized, rules are clarified, and issues are addressed. The old-fashioned dinner table provides a valuable avenue of communication for your family.

SHARE RESPONSIBILITY. Clearly communicate expectations about childcare and chores. Will one person change *all* the diapers? Who folds the laundry? Which parent reminds children to make their beds? Who handles daily devotions with the children? Passive parenting is dangerous; don't relinquish your God-given responsibility to anyone—even your spouse.

PRESENT A UNITED FRONT. Children are adept at maneuvering their parents against each other to get their way. Resolve as a couple to avoid undermining one another's authority. Don't disagree in front of your children about discipline, parenting style, or decisions you've made or will make. Discuss any differences in private, using quiet voices and common respect.

Many couples center their homes around the kids. But the rewards of keeping family relationships in order are tremendous. A stable home, where the mother and father love each other and put each other first, is a beautiful reflection of Christ and His church. What a wonderful gift to give your children—and yourselves.