

Extreme Parenting

The world in which we live is characterized by extremes. In the physical world, some extremes are natural. Summers can be extremely hot, winters extremely cold. Canyons can be exceptionally deep, while mountains can be exceedingly high. Some people are extreme, too. Sometimes, the human extremes are okay, others, not so much. One example of the latter is extreme parenting. By that, we mean some parents are extremely permissive, while others are extremely tyrannical. The Bible warns against both.

When God first spoke to Samuel, He expressed to him His rejection of Eli's house in these words: *"For I have told him that I will judge his house for ever for the iniquity which he knoweth; because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not"* (1 Sam. 3:13). The consequences of Eli's parenting were that his sons knew not the Lord (1 Sam. 2:12), they abused the people and the sacrifices (1 Sam. 2:13-16), and they committed fornication with the women that assembled at the door of the tabernacle (1 Sam. 2:22). There are parents today who assign no boundaries of behavior for their children, as a result, they turn out vile like Eli's sons.

At the other extreme, there are parents who have no patience at all with their children. This type of parent has no self-control, resulting in a form of correction which can only be described as: if yelling at the child does not work, scream a little louder. Paul warned against this extreme in Ephesians 6:4: *"And ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."* This kind of approach to child rearing will initially cause them to be exasperated and discouraged. Ultimately, the tyrannical approach may produce the same kind of adult that Eli's no restraint approach did with Hophni and Phinehas.

There are good parents today who set the proper boundaries for their children, and who use a patient and loving approach in correcting and disciplining their offspring. Unfortunately, there are far too many whose parenting techniques fit into one of the two categories above. When relatives, friends, or even strangers observe the children brought up in either of those two ways, they question why they are such uncontrollable youngsters. The answer is, they are reflecting the extreme parenting styles of their out-of-control mommas and daddies.

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