
Principle 3 : Use appropriate “thinking” questions to transfer responsibilities and enhance communication in the family cont’d – differing viewpoints

As our children grow, our children’s response to our thinking questions may surface differing viewpoints and disagreements may result (usually after 14, depending on parenting styles). If we have practised choice training in the early years, such disagreements will be delayed and less intense. Differences could be on choice of clothes, music, movies, books or magazines, time spent on computer or friends. Some differences should be accepted while others need to be worked on. It is a good opportunity to review why such differences arise.

Some (not all) differences arise mainly because:

1. Parents do not walk their talk
2. Daddy and mummy have different virtues
3. There were hurts caused by parents that affected our children’s hearing / learning
4. Virtues were somehow not communicated
5. Good parental influences within the family were not strong enough to overcome the undesirable influences of the society

1. **Walking our talk.** If we ask that they not watch certain movies or read certain books, are we watching movies or reading books that are related to what they are ‘banned’ from? It is what they perceive as ‘related’ that counts!

2. **Husband and wife having different virtues.** Mum says it is not good to watch movie ‘A’ but dad brushes it off and says it’s OK. Guess which standard our kids will take? It is back to the basic - the husband and wife relationship.

3. **Hurt.** When our children are hurt by us (intentional or not) and that was not cleared, even if we were walking our talk, they may simply ignore our counsel. It could also be caused by parental neglect – being too protective or too indulgent, not allowing them to fail or being too critical. It is vital that we prayerfully consider what these hurt may be and ask for their forgiveness (another good topic), especially when our children hit 14 and above. Forgiveness is the key to improving all relationships.

4. **Virtues not communicated.** Saying “No” may work in the early years but once they grow, if their hearts are not right, they will not follow. Elevating virtues then becomes important. Not stop at “that is wrong” but emphasize “what is right”. Then they will not only avoid doing wrong but will know what ‘right’ to do.

5. **Influences.** This basically sums up the whole thing. If due to the above points or the environment, desirable parental influences are weaker than what is impacting our children, differences will emerge. In all our imperfection, we may still have to “draw the line or boundary”.

We can calmly and firmly explain what the boundaries are and why we believe so. Of course if they ‘rebel’ or refuse to listen, we will need to review which of the first 4 points is causing blockage before addressing boundaries. We may even need to change our lifestyles in order to spend more time with them! For example, in the area of unlimited computer usage, many times we found that it is simply because of a lack of parental presence. The presence is not simply to supervise but also create opportunity to do enjoyable things together, improving relationships.

There will be occasions when we will leave boundary decisions to them! (We have to assess the risk of course) and patiently wait and watch. Be ready to pick them up when necessary.

We need to constantly think of things we can do together with them that interest them and develop an interest according to their uniqueness, building good memories. When family members does things together, the draw of other distractions though present, can be minimized.

It is a wonderful opportunity to direct them to what the Bible says about self-control (which is essentially what it is) and memorise good versus, like “Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable--if anything is excellent or praiseworthy--think about such things.” ^{Phil 4:8} or “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.” ^{Gal 5:22-23} It can become a fun family activity, especially when they do it better than the parents!