

Let's address some Q & A in the next few issues.

Q. What if my child uses foul language or is rude towards parents or others?

A. One of the main cause for verbal rudeness (or freedom) is that children receive signals from parents that their behavior is acceptable. What is our attitude towards rude languages used or rude attitudes? Do we feel that they are still young and thus it is acceptable? Perhaps it could be that the warnings or punishments are not effective or that parental actions are absent. Regardless of circumstances or age, being rude or using a disrespectful tone of voice or 'look' should not be tolerated in our homes. The use of foul languages is the same way. Whether they pick them up from the television or from school (or sometimes parents), we need to let them know that those are not desirable. If we start this process from young (even toddlers) and be consistently strict with them, they will generally develop a more respectful attitude. It is never too late to start teaching verbal politeness. Of course parents should explain that we don't like others to be rude to us and therefore we should not treat others the same way (^{Matt 7:12} So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you). It is also important for parents to quarrel behind closed doors or away from the children as that is where they sometimes pick up undesirable languages and attitudes.

Q. What if children lie?

A. Lying usually takes place because of pride or fear. Yet, unless we have evidence or reason to believe, especially with older children, confrontation is usually not effective. When there is evidence, calmly (try) tell them how we know it is a lie and ask them for the truth. Punishment is still recommended even if they own up because it is something that should not become a habit, though the 'sentence' can be reduced. In the absence of evidence, continue to observe without acting. We could create opportunities to share about lying and why it is wrong and what consequences it may have – like maybe watch "Pinocchio" together and have a family discussion after that! Lots of patience and observation is necessary to wait for the right moment for teaching. Remember it entails pride and fear, so these should be included in our teaching to our children too. Sharing with the older children our moments of failure because of pride or fear and how we avoided such mistakes again would not only help teach values but improve communication with them. It does not have to be too detailed but enough to give them the message that knowing our mistakes and correcting them is the right thing to do. The opposite of lie is truth, so we must remember to encourage truthfulness when opportunity arises – that would include parental examples, like volunteering to pay for adult movie prices for our grown children if sales people incorrectly issue children tickets.

Q. When should we stop using the cane?

A. Generally we find that by the time a child reaches mid-primary (about 10 years old), caning is less effective. At this age, they are able to reason better and if they do not comprehend why they are being punished, caning could lead to more frustrations, anger and hurt. Besides explaining what it is they did wrong, other forms of instructions need to be employed. Suspension of privileges is one way (eg. no play time / not allowed to do what they like). Another approach is to request them to think through what was not desired and have them write down the wrong attitude or character and the correct attitude or character. A growing child desires to be treated respectfully just like an adult. Parents' main responsibility is to try and reach their heart with a firm yet gentle spirit. In the process of guiding them, we may even watch at a distance and allow them to fail under our watchful eye. Children need to accept the consequences of their wrong doing, and they need also to know that their parents are there to lift them up when they are down in the growing years.