

## EXASPERATING YOUR KIDS

- 1. Smothering overprotection.** Some parents exasperate their kids by never letting them do anything, fencing them in too much, always assuming they can't be trusted. You're gonna release them someday, why not make it a gradual process?
- 2. Spoiling with too much freedom.** This is the opposite. Kids do want boundaries, even though they might not say it. Studies prove that kids given too much freedom over time begin to feel insecure and unloved. I know I'll take heat for this, but my wife and I are appalled at some Christian parents who just drop their middle schoolers off at the mall on a Friday night with a bunch of money and tell them to have fun, watch movies, whatever. I know overprotection is bad. But some protection is beneficial.
- 3. Playing favorites.** This is a sure-fire way to exasperate a child: Give one special treatment or constantly compare one with his sibling. That's a recipe for resentment. Ask Jacob.
- 4. Pressuring them to achieve.** Setting unrealistic goals for them and then withdrawing approval when they fail will kill a kid.
- 5. Being overly critical.** We discourage our kids when we always focus on what they do wrong and never notice what they do right. Try this and see how it changes the climate in your home. Ready? Catch 'em doing something right, then do handstands. Remember, what gets rewarded gets repeated.
- 6. Reversing roles.** I've encountered some families where I wondered who the parent was and who the child was. Kids really do want their parents to act like parents.
- 7. Expressing conditional love.** Some parents express love and affection as a reward for achievement and withdraw love and affection as punishment for failure to achieve. That has devastating effects. "That's how my daddy treated me?" Did you like it?
- 8. Vicariously living through them.** You know how this works: you never made the team, so, doggone it, your son is going to be a star! He's gonna fulfil all your unfulfilled dreams. That's a lot of pressure to be under. I played tennis for years and love tennis. I've had to deal with the reality that my oldest son hasn't shown any interest. So I've taken an interest in soccer, which he loves.
- 9. Making them feel unwanted.** Do your kids feel like more of an intrusion or a blessing?
- 10. Excessive discipline.** Sometimes it's good to wait a few minutes to clear your head before doling out discipline. I heard of a parent who grounded their kid for the whole summer because he got some C's. Can't do anything for 3 months? The discipline needs to fit the offense.
- 11. Inconsistent discipline.** Kids can get confused and frustrated when the deal keeps changing. "Last time you looked the other way. This time I get grounded. What's the deal?" Years ago Fred Donelson gave us this parenting advice: Parent like God does: Have few rules, clearly communicated, and consistently enforced. If you have 756 rules, it's hard to be consistent.
- 12. Failing to adapt your parenting style to their current stage of development.**
- 13. Rules without a relationship.** This one might be the cause of more exasperation than any of the others. One man put it this way: rules without a relationship leads to rebellion.