

BEAUTIFUL SAVIOR LUTHERAN SCHOOL PRESENTS: PEARLS OF LOVE AND LOGIC

Special Thoughts on Raising Kids

Learning Life's Lessons

John and Paul are young students in elementary school, and they are neighbors. One night, after each of them misbehaved, their parents sent them to their rooms. For Paul, being sent to his room was a **punishment**. For John, it was a **consequence**. What's the difference? Both sets of parents did exactly the same thing.

The difference between consequences and punishment involves attitudes and feelings. Paul's parents led him to feel punished by sending him to his room with anger. His parents implied "Go up there and learn your lesson!" or, "Go up to your room and feel bad!" And you can bet that when Paul sat in his room, his head was filled with angry thoughts toward his parents. Worse yet, he was developing a poor self-image.

On the other hand, when John's parents said, "go to your room," they spoke without anger. Their implied message was: "We don't want to be around you, but you might enjoy yourself." They might have said, without sarcasm, "Go keep yourself happy company."

There are many examples of consequences. An elementary school child who had neglected his homework recently had to go to school early to get the work done; he had to take the junior high bus, which arrived at 6:30 a.m., instead of his regular 8:15 a.m. bus. Another child recently brought home a note from her teacher, who wrote, "No heavy thinking needed," meaning the child had a good day at school and could watch TV at home.

One child who regularly forgot his trumpet practice came home and discovered that the instrument had been sold. Recently a parent relying on consequences reminded her child that she was causing an "energy drain" that could be replaced when the child did extra chores around the house. The child ruefully stated, "there's one thing I never want to do, and that's cause my mom an energy drain!"

So, we see that consequences are not designed to make a child feel sad, bad, inadequate, or wrong. Consequences are designed to make the parent feel better! In summary, the major differences between consequences and punishment include:

- Consequences make children think about their actions rather than how bad they feel about themselves or others.
- When experiencing consequences, children who get mad almost always get mad at themselves. (That's good!)
- Luckily, consequences often occur naturally. Parents do not always have to artfully impose them. Almost every action brings its own reward (or naturally occurring consequence).

Long-time school principal Jim Fay states it simply: "Punishment hurts the child from the outside in, while consequences help the child realistically hurt from the inside out!"

***CONSEQUENCES (Inside-Out Hurts)
are more helpful than
PUNISHMENTS (Outside-In Hurts)***