

BEAUTIFUL SAVIOR LUTHERAN SCHOOL PRESENTS:

PEARLS OF LOVE AND LOGIC

Special Thoughts on Raising Kids

Don't Shoot the Teacher!

Some children are pre-conditioned to be underachievers before they ever enter a school. The teachers and parents of these children often spend years of frustration trying to get these youngsters to achieve their potential. They are often faced with discouragement and disappointment as they watch bright children who seem to want to achieve, but just can't seem to put out the effort necessary for success. It is almost as if these children have learned to avoid the very things they need in order to be successful learners.

It is so easy to blame the school. However, there are many learning related problems that do not start in the school, and cannot be cured by having more discipline, more understanding teachers, or more time spent teaching the basics.

Consider the following situation in which one parent had to struggle for everything she got as a youngster. As an adult she is dedicated to making sure her child does not have to experience the same pain. At the same time, her husband believes it is best for children to earn what they get. This provides the potential for a family pattern that can create an underachieving child.

The child in this family soon learns how to get what he wants. "Daddy, I need some more money. My allowance ran out." Father will answer, "That's sad. You'll have to wait until Saturday for your regular allowance."

The youngster goes to Mother with, "Mom, look how mean Daddy is!" Mother, who is dedicated to making sure the child experiences no pain, finds herself saying, "Now, now. Don't worry. Daddy's just tired and doesn't understand. I'll get you some money, but be sure you don't tell Daddy."

Mother is hoping to show that she is a loving friend. The sad truth is that the foundation for underachievement has just been laid. Yes, the child may see Mother as loving;

but a devastating lesson has just been learned: you get what you want through manipulation, not through effort.

This attitude may be firmly in place by the time the child goes to school. You can guess what the youngster thinks when the teacher says, "Here is some schoolwork to do, it will take some effort." This poor child thinks, "No! Effort is not the way you get what you want. There is an easier way."

It will not be long before this student tries to defend poor grades by saying, "Look how mean the teacher is. She just doesn't understand." This seems so sincere that, before long, the student has manipulated both parents into joining with him or her against the school and the teacher. The child now has more power than either the parents or the teacher.

It is not unusual for parents in this situation to be confused, first blaming the school, then blaming the child and then blaming themselves; all with no success in getting the child to live up to his/her potential. Attempted interventions include daily reports from the teacher, more homework, rewards, punishment, school conferences, labels such as "learning disabled," and special education classes to explain away the problem.

None of these will work because they are not at the root of this youngster's problem. The problem will be solved when the parents discover that they need to have a consistent set of expectations for the child: "We both want the best for you and we both know that it will come from effort, not from manipulating one of us against the other."

Kids Need Consistent Messages About Effort