

BEAUTIFUL SAVIOR LUTHERAN SCHOOL PRESENTS:

PEARLS OF LOVE AND LOGIC

Special Thoughts on Raising Kids

Who Owns the Problem?

There are practical benefits to figuring out who really owns every problem. Psychiatrist, Foster W. Cline, M.D, once commented, "Parents who have trouble figuring out who has the problem keep child therapists in bread and butter." When parents do not figure out who has the problem, they raise an irresponsible child.

There is a useful concept called "units of concern." Every problem has a given number of units of concern. And you can bet nobody wants to carry those units of concern around - least of all the child causing the problem! Most kids would rather have teachers and parents carry units of concern. If the parent insists on worrying about whether a child does his homework, for example, then the child is free to drop that concern.

When parents carry their kids' concerns, it works about as well as trying to solve another nation's concerns. Let us suppose that on the television news this evening we see a green Martian. With antennas waving and yellow eyes bulging, the Martian might declare, "Earthlings, you are a very warlike species. You could wipe each other out! From now on, we are not going to let you hurt each other. We're going to step in! The missiles of any nation being fired at another nation will immediately be destroyed. We are doing this because we love you!" Can you imagine the response? You bet. Within fifteen minutes, the U.S.

and Russia would both be shooting at the Martians, who would end up saying, "Well, we were only trying to help." It never helps to take on someone else's problem. It just doesn't work.

Tote up your problems - Understanding who has the problem is important. The list of problems that kids directly cause parents is very short. Mainly it covers:

- How the child relates to the parents
- How the child does chores
- What life support systems the child requires from the parent (bread and butter, room and board).

On the other hand, the list of problems that children need to solve for themselves is very long: getting to school on time, getting to school at all, dropping out of school, being hassled by friends, hassling friends harassing teachers, being harassed by teachers and more. Frankly, it's an unending list. Parents who get involved in their kids' problems can keep themselves busy for a lifetime.

In summary, if everyone figured out, "Who really has this problem?" most problems between nations would be solved quickly. Most battles on the home-front would also be solved quickly. Would we be bored!

Solving my children's problems meets my own needs. Then I feel like a good parent. Allowing them to find their own solutions meets their needs. Then they learn to problem solve.