

February 10, 2011

Dr. Ray Guarendi spoke for the Parent Network of Catholic High Schools at Incarnate Word Academy. He is a very open, down to earth, genuine man. He speaks freely about his experiences with his wife and ten adopted children. He is a father, practicing psychologist, radio host and author. His books include *You're a Better Parent Than You Think* (1985), *Back to the Family* (1991), *Discipline That Lasts a Lifetime* (2003), *Good Discipline Great Teens* (2007) and *What Catholics Really Believe* (2010). He is an energetic speaker who uses storytelling, jokes, and movement to get his point across.

Summary of the Talk

“Experts” are undermining parents’ natural instincts. The purpose of discipline is to establish morals, character and compassion in your child. Discipline without love is harsh. Love without discipline is child abuse. If you don’t discipline, the world will discipline your child and potentially crush him.

We are in trouble as a society as psychological correctness is replacing MORAL correctness. The question to ask is not, “Is it normal?” The true question is, “Is it right? Is it good for my child?” As a parent, you must ask yourself, what will I allow based on my moral code?

We as parents have lost our authority: that quite confident, God-given authority. As a situation arises with your child, ask yourself, “What would my mother (father) have done?” This is not to say that our parents had all the answers, they made mistakes too. But, that generation held to that perception of quiet of authority. You didn’t want to test it to see what would happen, because you knew something would happen. Our kids experience is that nothing will happen.

The role of the husband is to protect his wife. The husband should not allow a child to speak disrespectfully to his wife. He needs to step in and take charge to protect his wife from the verbal abuse. He needs to use his authority to set consequences for negative behavior. Look at your child and think how your boss, friends or co-workers would respond if you spoke the way some teenagers speak to their parents. It is eye-opening to think about times when a child is speaking to a parent as an adult and not as the child. Parents will sit and take the verbal abuse. Why?

Kids want you to think you are “messing up their lives.” You are the adult and the parent and you have to do what you believe is best for the child in the long run. What kind of person do you want him to be at 25? Do not fall for your kids comparing themselves to anyone else. This is your kid and therefore, you are responsible for his moral growth and character development.

How to change behavior? Here is an example of what you can say to stop bad behavior and sting the steps to be in charge of your own home. “Sorry, new house rules...if you speak disrespectfully (arguing, in content, tone, or body language), you will be disciplined. I will not tolerate your disrespect.” Then, if the child is disrespectful, say

the consequence for the behavior (decide what it is and have it ready ahead of time), step back and don't say anything else. Do not let the child get out of the consequence you have stated. Your child may be resistant to this at first or even for a long time, but you need to be firm, in a quiet manner, enforce your consequence, adding to it if the child continues to protest. They get nothing until the "work" is completed.

During this process, you may need to take away everything that the child believes is his/her entitlement. Our kids have the false impression that TV, cell phone, ipod, stereo, car, or any of many other privileges are rights. Look at all the things your child takes for granted and use those items as your leverage. You may have to resort to total blackout: complete cessation of ALL privileges.

The cultural freedoms are incredible. Too much is given, too early and too easily. You need to reassess where you are with each of your children continuously. All privileges: friends, phones, electronics, social networks (etc...) need to be monitored and restricted. Friends are not the absolute good. You need to assess what a friend brings to your child's life.

If your goal is to raise a moral, God-seeking child, you need to be vigilant and loving. You need to be there to discipline consistently and kindly. Kids are hard work. Kids make mistakes. Kids learn, try and fail, just as each of us do before our Father in Heaven. Parents need to believe in their God-given authority and use it. If you have authority, you don't have to use it as often, but if you don't have it, you will constantly be chasing it. Use it. The world needs more God loving kids with morals, character, and compassion.