



training by requiring obedience. Remember, it is not just **children** you are training but the **adults** they will become.

- Teach your children to be respectful to adults, to speak to them with respect (in the south in the US, that means “Yes, sir” and “Yes, ma’am”!), to obey them, to be helpful, etc.

- Teach them to be aware of what others are doing, and of conversations in progress — not to barge in with interruptions, conscious only of themselves and of what is on their minds.

- Train them to get along with siblings. Competition and fighting are a growing problem in schools, largely because children are not being taught as they should be in the home, that physical violence is absolutely not allowed.

- Teach them to be mannerly at the table, to put food into their mouths instead of sucking it in, to chew with their mouths shut, to stay at the table. Children who are allowed to wander unchecked with food and drink in their own homes will naturally do the same elsewhere — not good.

- Teach them to be conscious of what they are doing — to look behind themselves and **see** the trail of disarray they may be leaving. Train them to **see**, to pick up after themselves, and to keep their toys and their rooms tidy. It

is impossible for one person — the mother — to keep a house straight if the children are continually pulling out stuff and leaving it wherever they abandon it. Training in disorderliness in childhood will likely result in a disorderly adult, a trial to the unfortunate husband or wife who marries that adult.

- Teach them that God is ultimately the One they must obey, and that parental training is part of their spiritual training. Weak Christians, hypocritical parents, are the strongest training for children in disrespect and disobedience to God. Realize, parents, that you stand before your children as “in God’s stead” (2 Corinthians 5:20). They are immortal treasures, given into your hands. They come into the world as helpless little souls, so guide them carefully in truth.

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**Training a Child  
 in Disobedience?  
 or  
 “in the way he should go”?**  
**Betty Burton Choate**





# Training a Child in Disobedience? OR “in the Way he should go”?

Betty Burton Choate

Little Jody’s mother was saying, “No, don’t do that!” for the fourth time, but her words again fell on deaf ears. Nothing even registered. Without hesitation Jody walked on, did what she had been forbidden to do, and totally ignored her mother. This time Mother rushed behind Jody and half-heartedly swatted her Pullup-protected seat, saying, “I told you not to do that.” Jody was not in the least intimidated by the swat, nor was her mind changed about obeying her mother. In fact, she paid as little attention as she had the previous times she had been told, “NO!” Those times, both she and her mother had conveniently ignored her disobedience.

**Thus, an innocent child is being trained in the dangerous game of disobedience to authority.** Whether she will temper herself with

better judgment as she grows older (amazingly, some do), or whether she will develop into an angry, rebellious teenager, or whether she will eventually break enough rules that she will suffer from indiscipline all her life, no one can say at this point. But *she is being trained*, day by day. Her parents and society may feel that the lack of discipline is loving and humane, but actually she is being deprived of the vital protective boundaries she needs in order to grow up to be a secure, well-balanced, law-abiding citizen, and an obedient child of God. When God said to parents, “*Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it*” (Proverbs 22:6), these were the **product instructions for the users**. We ignore them to everyone’s peril.

Unruly, defiant, and rebellious children wear heavily on everybody’s nerves — their own, as well as their parents, and any other unfortunate person who happens to be in the house. Children are often quicker to figure out situations than parents. They learn what works, what bends parents, what they can get away with, and just how long they have to persist in order to wear down the parents’ will. As a result, some children spend an inordinate amount of their

time in prolonged bouts of anger, or whining and crying, until they get to do what they want. A happy home? Hardly!

## Punishment

Do you realize that children also recognize that they can punish their parents? When they don’t get their way, they seem to be able to whine and cry and throw temper tantrums endlessly — but a child who is sent to a room alone will stop crying almost immediately, because he has no audience on which to inflict the pain of his tears.

The atmosphere of the home does not have to be this negative picture. Parents not only have the **authority** to change it, but they have the **responsibility** before God. What did the verse in Proverbs say? “**Train.**” Let me suggest some areas in which parents need to teach their small children by words, training them by example, and molding them by insisting on obedience. The result will be true happiness in the home.

## Training “in the way he should go...”

● Children are not born with an awareness of mannerliness. This is part of the work of parents. And to train children in being mannerly, you must be *vigilant* — **pay attention to what they are doing!** Again, instruct them verbally, mold them by example, and enforce the

