

# Selective Subjection

## I DON'T HAVE TO OBEY YOU

One very irritating habit of some children is their tendency toward selective subjection. Have you ever attempted to correct a child, only to be impudently told, "You are not my Mother, you can't tell me what to do?" (Most likely, the mother can't tell him what to do either.) That response demonstrates that regardless of the child's obedience to his parents, down inside he is totally rebellious. He is not under authority.

If the child perceived some devious intent on the part of the adult and was resisting abduction or something akin to it, such boldness would be in order. But don't delude yourself into being proud of your child's actions as if it was loyalty or caution. It is rebellion, which is as the *"sin of witchcraft."* Even when another child, out of regard for the right, cautions his fellow mate, there should be subjection.

There is by nature in every child an innate awareness of common duty to the "good of being" in general. This unwritten code is expressed when one small child says to another, "You ought not do that." The conscience that is not yet seared is constantly appealing for conformity to this innate standard. When a child rebels against the just rebukes of his peers, he is not just rebelling against his peers, but against the "rule of law" in general. No, the child is not conscious (neither are most adults) of a "rule of law." He may not even know what the word "rebellion" means, but he is nonetheless functioning exactly as an adult functions when in a state of rebellion. The child is violating his own conscience. He is suffering guilt. He is building a barrier of pride, self-love, and will become self-loathing. A child encouraged or permitted to thus continue is destined to moral destruction.

## THE OLDER SISTER

My two youngest daughters, when nine- and eleven years old, were entertaining some children we were keeping. A two-year old girl picked up an item that was off limits. Her older sister, fourteen, told her she couldn't play with it and proceeded to take it away. The child threw a screaming fit. (That was her normal approach in paying back her parents—they considered such behavior normal).

My nine-year-old, amazed at this bizarre behavior, came and told her mother. Deb, upon investigating, found the little girl was mad at her big sister whom she considered to have no jurisdiction over her behavior. The fourteen-year-old admitted she was not allowed to discipline her little sister. My wife immediately set up a training session. She took the forbidden object and placed it back on the floor in front of the child. You may say, "But that is tempting the child!" Did not God do the same for Adam and Eve?

The child immediately stopped crying, in triumph looked at her sister and reached for the object. Deb said, "No, you can't have it." When the child grabbed it anyway, Deb, saying "No," spat her hand with a little switch and left the object within inches of the child's grasp. With the object not being placed out of her reach, she assumed it was still within limits. When she again reached, she received a spat and a calm command. After one or two more times the child learned her lesson.

Deb then handed the object to the older sister and told her to place it in front of the child and tell her "No." As the fourteen-year-old extended the object to the child, she reached out, only to jerk her hand back when told "No." The forbidden object was then left on the floor in the middle of the play-room where, without touching it, she played around it the rest of the day. The little girl who had previously made everyone miserable by her demands was cheerful and congenial the rest of the day.

## KEEPING REBELLION ALIVE

To allow your child a time of rebellion and self-will, whether it be around the other parent, grandparents, older brother or sister, baby sitter or peers, is to allow rebellion and self-will to stay alive. The seeds of rebellion will always be there to come to fruition when the external pressures are lessened. You may be controlling their outward actions, but you are not building character.

In a family submitted to the light of God, the children should be in such general submission to the understood principle of conduct that they are submissive to give and receive rebuke from one another. In the church, we are all accountable to one another. It should be so in the home. Furthermore, the older children will be more responsible when given responsibility with the younger children. And what a load it takes off the mother! The younger children are always allowed a court of appeal. If the older child abuses his or her authority, it is a grave offense. The younger children soon learn that to make an unfounded claim against the older child's discipline is to receive double discipline. The responsibility given to the older child is valuable training. It also lessens tensions, since the older child is not left helpless in the presence of an unrestrained little brother or sister.

## **BLESSED MOTHER, HAVE MERCY**

A number of times I have observed the difficult situation where one parent (usually the less sentimental father) is firm in training for obedience, but the other (usually the mother) gives-in to sympathy and is slack to demand instant obedience. During the day while the father is away, the mother begs, nags, threatens, and after a while becomes sufficiently angry to impress upon the children the need to yield temporary compliance.

The father comes home from work and is soon confronted with the rebellion and disobedience of his children. When he spansks the children, they wail cries of injustice. The emotionally weak mother so suffers from seeing her babies "abused" by this "stranger" invading their domain that, in front of the children, she steps in to challenge his judgments. The children soon learn how to play the mother's emotions against the father's "justice." As the mother becomes more and more critical of the father and protective of the children, the children become liars and learn to manipulate the contentious adults.

The father sees that he is losing control and bears down harder on the children. The mother, attempting to provide a balance, becomes even more slack; and the gulf between them widens. The children are the big losers.

One parent should NEVER correct or question the other's judgment in the presence of the children. It is better for your child if you support an occasional injustice than to destroy the authority base through your open division. We see this manifested when a child that is being disciplined by the father begins to plead for his mother. When a child runs to the mother, the mother should take up the discipline as forcefully as the father. If a father is attempting to make a child eat his oats, and the child cries for his mother, then the mother should respond by spanking him for whining for her and for not eating his oats. He will then be glad to be dealing only with the father.

We broke this tendency to selective subjection early. When one of us would be spanking a child and he cried for the other, then the other parent would come over and contribute to the spanking. Two or three times of that and a child decides that one is enough.

After a child has been spanked, he should not be allowed to flee to the other parent for sympathy. It is important that he find his solace in the one who did the spanking. When God chastens us, it is to draw us to himself, not to cause us to turn to another.

Mother, if you think the father is too forceful in his discipline, there is something you can do. While he is away demand, expect, train for and discipline to receive instant and complete obedience from your children. When the father comes home the house will be peaceful and well ordered. The children will always obey their father, giving him no need to discipline them.