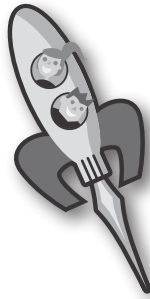


Parenting

Is Rocket Science



Beth Brown

Publishing Designs, Inc.
Huntsville, Alabama

Dedication

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Printed in the United States

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Brown, Beth, 1957-
Parenting is rocket science / Beth Brown.
p. cm.
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 0-929540-09-3 (alk. paper)
1. Parenting—Religious aspects—Christianity. 2. Child rearing—Religious aspects—Christianity. I. Title.
BV4529.B696 2006
248.8'45—dc22

2006000734

This book is lovingly dedicated to some of the most special people in my world. To my precious parents, Sherman and Vivienne Garner, thank you for giving me the best you had to give. Thank you for modeling consistent devotion to God and teaching me the joy of service in the Kingdom. Thank you for giving me a strong appreciation for the generations of faithful Christians that have strengthened our family. When God picked out my parents, I'm glad He chose you!

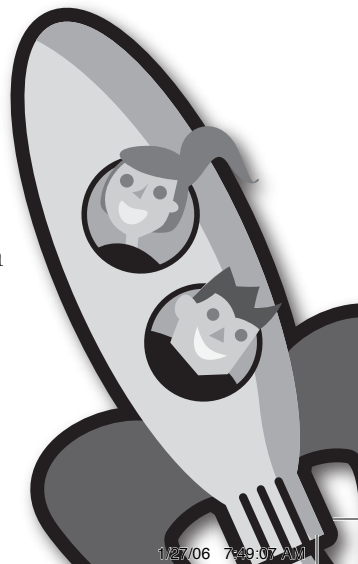
To my wonderful in-laws, Herman and Lois Brown. Thank you for all you have taught me through the years. Thank you most of all for the phenomenal job you did wiring my wonderful husband, Eldon. You did a marvelous job preparing him to be the godly husband and father that our home needed.

To my dear husband, Eldon. Thank you for being so committed to being the husband I needed and the daddy that our girls needed. Being a wife and a mother has been a joy and a privilege because of your love and leadership.

To our precious daughters, Amy and Barbara. Wiring your rockets has been the best adventure a parent could ask for. When we look back at the parenting years, we can smile at the love, joy, and laughter you brought to our home. Daddy and I are incredibly proud of the godly ladies you have become. We look forward to watching you become wives and mothers some day. Take the best from what we have given you and use it in your new homes. Be wise enough to recognize our mistakes and choose better patterns for your own homes. May God bless you richly as you fly with the Kingdom Fleet and as you prepare to wire your own rockets. You will be wonderful wives and mothers.

To Bill and Fredde Path and family, thanks for letting me be part of your lives during a very special year. Thank you for all you taught me and for letting me be part of your family. Your godly influence will always be a part of my life.

To Pam O'Neal, thanks for your love and friendship. Thank you for the wisdom you have shared with me through the years. You are always a blessing to me.



Special thanks to Lynn McDaniel Giddens, Ray Boynton, Lamar Pen-
nick, and Steve Raab for being willing to read portions of this book and for
making very valuable suggestions.

To all the young parents who have allowed me to have their children
in my Bible classes. I've learned a lot about parenting from watching you.
I have great hope for the next generation because of some of the wonder-
ful things I see happening in your homes.

To all the elders and their wives who have modeled for us the best way
to do "family." Thank you for your example, your love, and your leader-
ship. You have been a blessing to our family and we are grateful.

To all of the parents who have allowed us to keep their children
through the years, and to all the little ones who have been in our home.
Thank you for the love, the laughter, the sweet conversations, and the
adventures along the way. You have enriched our lives and we will always
love you for it.

Beth Brown
January 2006

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Introduction

New Baby Syndrome

Kevin stood quietly by the window enjoying the sunrise. In his arms he held the most precious creature he had ever seen. Little Katie was only one month old, and already she had her daddy wrapped securely around her little finger. Andrea, Katie's mom, was enjoying a chance to sleep a little longer before time to nurse this little girl with the amazing appetite.

Their first month with this sweet baby had been a roller coaster of emotions. Kevin and Andrea loved children and knew they wanted to have at least two of their own. They felt prepared for parenthood until the moment in the delivery room when the nurse laid that red, wrinkled, adorable angel in Kevin's arms so she could help the doctor finish caring for Andrea. Kevin was holding a tiny baby for the first time. The ones he had handled before were bigger and a lot more durable. He was glad a nurse was close by.

The first week at home was fine. Andrea's mom and dad had flown in from Texas to help out until Andrea felt able to take over. With two very experienced parents and two rookies willing and eager to learn, caring for one small baby wasn't too difficult. The 4-to-1 ratio gave Kevin and Andrea a real edge. Andrea's mom seemed to sense what Katie needed and handled her very comfortably. Andrea's dad loved babies, and he thoroughly enjoyed holding the newest addition to their family. Katie was never more content than when she was snuggled up with her grandpa. Andrea had often gone to sleep that first week to the comforting sounds of her daddy quietly singing a restless Katie back to sleep as he walked the living room floor.

As soon as Kevin and Andrea bade farewell to Andrea's parents, a sense of panic came over them. What if something happened with Katie that they didn't know how to handle? Andrea had always been very stable emotionally, but since Katie's birth, she cried spontaneously and without provocation. Kevin had been patient and understanding, but Andrea's new emotional displays

worried him. He wondered how long it would be before his easy-going wife was back on an even keel, emotionally. He had to go back to work next week and he wasn't sure Andrea was physically or emotionally ready to be alone with a baby all day.

Now that Kevin and Andrea were on their own with Katie, life became much more complex. They were determined to excel in parenting, but feelings of insecurity often overwhelmed them. They didn't always know what to do when Katie cried. How could they know what that new bundle of life was trying to communicate? They hadn't learned yet which kind of crying meant she was hungry, which one meant she was in desperate need of a new diaper, and which one meant she was cold or lonely or bored. They were often frustrated because they felt they should be doing a much better job of parenting.

Many young parents have experienced what Kevin and Andrea were feeling. Parenting, for many folks, is something they felt prepared for until the moment they were "thrown into the deep end of the pool" and forced to survive this new career.

One reason for the roller coaster of emotions is that most of us have spent quite a bit of time preparing for our careers. Parenting is a unique career, and like Kevin and Andrea, most of us didn't have a lot of training before being handed that cute little bundle of energy. Even those who have had a lot of experience with children, and those who have read books to prepare for parenting can feel as if they are drowning while adjusting to this new career. Being "on call" twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week can be overwhelming as well as exhausting. Add to that the fact that the precious little one doesn't speak adult language. Babies come equipped with a marvelous assortment of grunts, grimaces, and fascinating facial expressions; but they are not on the same page, linguistically, with their poor, sleep-deprived parents. As a bonus, just so parents don't oversleep, babies are equipped with an earsplitting wail that is sure to make frazzled nerve endings run for cover.

When Kevin and Andrea gave Katie her first bath after Grandma left, they noticed that something was missing. There wasn't a label from the Manufacturer stamped on that child with an 800 number to call or a web site to ac-



cess when technical difficulties were encountered. They would have been a lot more secure if that kind of technical assistance had been available.

Now you know the reason for the book you are reading: to provide some technical assistance for the job at hand. Don't think for a minute, however, that this book will replace the most important book in your library, the Bible. This book is intended to pull important concepts from God's Word and help you apply those ideas to the job God has given you.

The Analogy

Launch Pad	A Christian home
Rocket	A precious child, created in the image of God
Chief Engineers	The parents to whom God has entrusted one of His special creations. Their assignment is to spend eighteen to twenty years "wiring" the rocket so it is fit for the Kingdom Fleet.
Assistant Engineers	Those who help wire the rocket: teachers, baby sitters, daycare workers, scout leaders, coaches, friends.
Launch Date	When the child will leave home to become an independent adult.
Mission Specialist	God, the Creator of Heaven and Earth, the Designer of each of the rockets that we must wire.
Kingdom Fleet	The body of Christ; the church the Lord established.
Wiring Diagrams or Schematics	The pattern used to wire the rocket.
Devil's Diagram	Satan's counterfeit wisdom that proposes to sabotage the rocket.
Master's Schematics	Complete written wiring and testing instructions as recorded in the Word of God.
Warnings	Special instructions from the Mission Specialist to help us avoid technical difficulties.

Our world is filled with all kinds of books for “dummies.” Parenting isn’t a job for dummies. Many of the skills parents need to develop are learned and refined “on the job.” The goal of this book is to help parents look at themselves, not as dummies, but as competent, capable rocket scientists who can do the job that has been given to them. Because it is easier to accomplish a task when one has a clear mental image of the assignment, we are going to explore the analogy that *Parenting Is Rocket Science*.

Where Do We Start?

Via the launch pad, parents will return one of two things to the Father: a wise and capable servant of the Lord or a foolish, immature, incompetent nincompoop. Many parents have an unclear view of the job assignment. They either fail to recognize the goal for this mission, or they are so busy trying to survive the day-to-day challenges of parenting that they have lost sight of the goal. Parents who are operating from the Devil’s Diagram will succeed in rearing foolish, immature, and worldly children who are unfit for the Kingdom Fleet.

Many parents act more like frogs than engineers. They hop from diagram to diagram in total confusion. The wiring in the rockets entrusted to them is very sloppy and doesn’t work well. They ignore warnings and struggle with technical difficulties.

Parents who are really focused on the goal and are operating from the Master’s Schematics are training faithful, capable servants who will be ready for their launch date and will be properly prepared for the Kingdom Fleet.

If you find yourself and your family in the wrong area and want to get back to the launch site, don’t give up. The Creator we serve is a Mission Specialist when it comes to fresh starts.

Talk to the Creator and ask forgiveness for losing site of the launch date. Ask for help in tearing out the wiring you have messed up and for help in wiring correctly. Pray daily and ask the Creator to lay straight paths in front of you and help fix the loose wiring you have left behind. If your children have already been launched and aren’t flying well, ask the Lord to help you show them how to get their wiring redone.

The Bible provides guidance and strength for your task by providing the Master’s Schematics for the job at hand.



Master’s Schematics

- » “Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature; for he is a liar, and the father of lies” (John 8:44).
- » “His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence” (2 Peter 1:3).
- » “Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, handling accurately the word of truth” (2 Timothy 2:15).
- » “Have nothing to do with worldly fables fit only for old women. On the other hand, discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness” (1 Timothy 4:7).
- » “See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ” (Colossians 2:8).

Drill for Skills



Making Connections

- | | |
|---------------------------|---------------------------------|
| _____ Launch Pad | a. child |
| _____ Rocket | b. those who assist in wiring |
| _____ Chief Engineers | c. God |
| _____ Assistant Engineers | d. the Church of Christ |
| _____ Launch Date | e. worldly wisdom |
| _____ Mission Specialist | f. Word of God |
| _____ Kingdom Fleet | g. Christian home |
| _____ Devil’s Diagram | h. parents |
| _____ Master’s Schematics | i. date when child leaves home. |



Troubleshooting

1. Why do new parents sometimes feel overwhelmed?
2. How much preparation did you have for the job of parenting?
3. As a new parent, what did you find most difficult?
4. What have you learned “on the job” that you wish you had known ahead of time?
5. What is the most important job that parents have to accomplish?
6. Why should parents have the launch date firmly in mind?
7. How can an engineer train himself to recognize the Devil’s Diagram just by listening?
8. How can a busy engineer become more familiar with the Master’s Schematics?

Section

1 Rocket Science 101



1

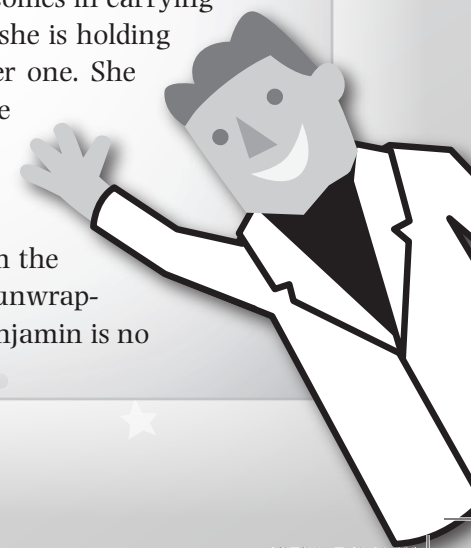
Parenting with Confidence

One of the most important things a Chief Engineer must learn is how to act with confidence, even when humiliation, fear, or frustration has completely stymied the few confident feelings that were available.

Retrieving “Pulpiteer” Benjamin

Joan and Paul have been married for five years. Joan taught school until Benjamin was born two years ago. Now they have three-week-old Bonnie and she is adorable. Today, Joan is looking forward to going to worship with her family for the first time since Bonnie’s arrival. She can’t wait to hear all the “ooh’s” and “aah’s” as people see Bonnie for the first time. Just as they are walking out the door, Paul’s pager goes off. He must go to work but hopes to meet the family at church shortly. Paul hurries to help get the little ones into their car seats and makes sure Joan has what she needs.

Joan loves the little congregation where they worship. They have a new building and are making do with folding chairs until they can afford to buy pews. As Joan comes in carrying Bonnie and the diaper bag in one hand, she is holding on to a bouncy Benjamin with the other one. She had hoped to sit near the back in case she had to go out with the baby. As she looks around, she realizes the only seats available are up front. As she’s getting settled, she hears a few little giggles coming from the people sitting near her. She looks up from unwrapping Bonnie’s blanket to discover that Benjamin is no



longer sitting beside her. He is on the stage where the preacher and song leader are getting ready to begin the worship services.

Joan is aware that every eye in the building is trained on her little family and the drama that is unfolding. She is very embarrassed but she has to handle this. She quietly motions for Benjamin to come to her. He shakes his little head and stands his ground. Joan snaps her fingers and says sternly, "Benjamin Allen Smith, you come here!" Benjamin stomps his little foot and says, "Not gonna!"

Thankfully, the cradle roll teacher, Mrs. Hopkins, is seated behind Joan. She puts her hand on Joan's shoulder and whispers, "Let me have the baby."

In front of the entire congregation, Joan goes up to retrieve Benjamin, who decides to make a dash for freedom. He gets almost all the way to the other side of the stage before his mom can grab him. Down the aisle they go with every eye trained on them. Joan wouldn't mind

if the earth broke open to swallow both of them.

However, there is more embarrassment to come before it's over. It's too cold to take Benjamin outside to spank him, so Joan has to make do with the ladies' restroom. Joan knows that ceramic tile amplifies sound, and she is sure that every ear in the congregation is tuned in to what is happening in the restroom.

However, with Benjamin under control, Joan picks him up and carries him all the way back down the aisle. As she sits down on the metal folding chair, Benjamin's shoe accidentally hits the chair with a loud "clang," and a song book falls to the floor. Joan slinks down in her chair, physically and emotionally drained. She tries in vain to concentrate on the worship instead of on her humiliation.

Embarrassment over incidents like this one is normal. However, Joan can rest assured that she did the right thing. She acted with confidence and did what was best for her child, regardless of her own feelings. Almost

Joan is aware that every eye in the building is trained on her little family and the drama that is unfolding. She is very embarrassed but she has to handle this.

any experienced engineer would sympathize with Joan. Most of us have "been there, done that." One benefit to having children is that they do improve one's humility.

The Source of Confidence

One of the most important services a Chief Engineer can provide for the rockets in his charge is to be a confident parent. Engineers who recognize that the skills they are using were given to them by the Creator will look to Him for guidance and instruction. That "God-confidence" as opposed to "self-confidence" will provide strength and wisdom for each day's wiring projects. When parents are confident, a child is more secure and emotionally stable. Confident parents encounter fewer technical difficulties when they are wiring their rockets.

For a person who was reared in a strong Christian home with a mom and dad who loved each other, who rarely fought, and who were good parents, parenting will be easier than for those who come from single-parent homes or from very dysfunctional families. One goal of this book is to enable parents to be capable, competent role models for their children in order to rear the next generation of the Lord's disciples for life in His service.

Parenting Flashback

Let's consider the home in the last few generations to get a feel for how parenting has changed since our grandparents were children. During the Depression years, there wasn't a lot of nurturing in most families. People worked from "can see to can't see." There wasn't a lot of time for extra nurturing because people were too busy trying to survive. Discipline was strict and harsh, with little time for long arguments and explanations. A child who did not obey quickly had an unpleasant encounter with a razor strop or a hickory switch.

Many of the children who were reared during the Depression became parents who wanted to give their children everything they never had. They wanted their children to feel loved. They felt the discipline they received was too harsh, so they reared their children in a more permissive environment.

During World War II, our nation was in a crisis mode. Many of the women had to work in the factories while the men were defending the country. After the war, when men were once again available for the work

force, some women gladly went back home. Others continued to pursue careers. They bought into the idea that a woman can have a good career and that her husband and children can benefit from her improved self-esteem and from the extras her paycheck could provide.

During the early 1950s, there were pretty standard rules about child rearing. Many moms were still at home. If a mother worked, it was often as a secretary, nurse, or teacher. Many a mother stayed home until the children were in school and then arranged for a job that allowed her to be home when the children were home. The money that mom earned enabled the children to have extras that had never been part of the budget. They could take piano lessons and art lessons. They could play on teams that required uniforms and other costly items. Moms felt good about the extras they could provide because, as children reared during the Depression, they knew what it was to do without, and they didn't want their children to want for anything.

In the early 1950s, most families had the same set of rules. A child knew that if he misbehaved at the home of his friend, the parents in that house would handle it as if he were their own child. He also knew before he got home that he would be in trouble as soon as he walked through the door.

Teachers and principals were allowed to paddle disobedient children. Most children knew that if they got into trouble at school, they would get a spanking as soon as they got home.

Standard Rules Replaced

The 1960s and 1970s saw a lot of cultural changes. People were "finding themselves" and "doing their own thing." The *Feminist Movement* encouraged women to be more independent and to find fulfillment in the career world. The new philosophy encouraged selfishness and discouraged good parenting. Educational standards plummeted, and learning by exploring became popular. That philosophy wasn't good for parenting. These cultural changes meant that parents started exploring their way through parenting. They made it up as they went, so the rules for behavior in one house were often different from those in the home next door.

Perhaps the biggest change was that more and more mothers left the home to go to work—some by choice, some of necessity. They discovered, sometimes far too late, that a person cannot give a hundred percent at work and a hun-



dred percent at home. Parenting is a full-time job, but something had to give; the family usually got the leftover time and attention. Parenting done by those who can't give full attention to the job greatly increases the stress level in the family. Trying to have a secure family while treating parenting as a part-time responsibility is the main reason for the rising rate of divorce, teen pregnancy, and drug and alcohol abuse.

Parents learned the hard way that someone had to be devoted to the training of the children. Parenting requires a lot of time and attention to detail. If one of the parents cannot be at home with the children, the only way to do the job successfully is to find a faithful Christian who will serve as a substitute parent and be completely devoted to the training of the children. A daycare center is unacceptable. Parenting cannot be done by proxy. Someone being paid minimum wage to watch ten children is not going to be devoted to training your child properly.

Trying to have a secure family while treating parenting as a part-time responsibility is the main reason for the rising rate of divorce, teen pregnancy, and drug and alcohol abuse.

Necessity or Luxury?

Because many of the folks becoming parents in the 1970s had been raised with lots of extras provided by parents who wanted them to have everything they wanted, the line between necessity and luxury became blurred. For years, if a family with a dozen children had a small house, an outhouse, water nearby, a garden, a few chickens, and a cow or pig, little else was needed. If each person had one outfit for Sunday and two changes of clothing for work or school, he had an adequate wardrobe. Clothes were passed down from child to child until they were worn out. Then the better pieces were used for making quilts and the rest for cleaning rags.

Because the line between necessity and luxury became so blurred, by the mid 1970s the requirements had grown. It was "necessary" to have at least a three-bedroom house if you had more than one child. It was "necessary" to have at least one television and at least two cars. It was "necessary" to have the right kind of clothes to blend in with the current fashion trends.

Here we are in the next century, and many folks consider the following items to be necessities: a TV in nearly every room, at least one computer, a VCR and DVD player, a microwave oven, at least two cars, and a

wardrobe that conforms to the current style. It is necessary for each child to have his own bedroom and all the toys and video games he wants. It is necessary for children to take music lessons, art lessons, and dance lessons and to participate in sports activities. It is necessary to have a nice house. It is necessary to eat out often.

Compare the modern list of necessities with what the apostle Paul had to say.

“But godliness actually is a means of great gain, when accompanied by contentment. For we have brought nothing into the world, so we cannot take anything out of it either. And if we have food and covering, with these we shall be content. But those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith, and pierced themselves with many a pang” (1 Timothy 6:6–10).

The Changing Standards for Parenting

Back in the early '50s, the Bible was read daily in many homes. The rules for parenting followed biblical guidelines, and parents were confident in their ability to rear children. Television programs honored family values. Dad was the head of his home, and Mom was there to support him and keep the household running smoothly. With the other cultural changes of the past few decades, television programming has made Dad look like the family idiot who has to be rescued by his wife and smart-aleck children. All forms of dysfunctional family life provide the humor for modern programs. That shift in what passes for entertainment has helped undermine the family.

With a more hectic lifestyle that has followed on the heels of cultural change, the Bible isn't being read consistently in most homes. Without that biblical standard, parenting philosophies change often. Parenting philosophies are based on what the pediatrician recommends, or on an article in some parenting magazine, or on what was presented on the parenting segment of the morning TV news program. Without a standard for parenting, many parents are less confident. They aren't sure how to handle the day-to-day situations that occur in the life of a family.

Warning: A child always knows when you aren't sure about what you are doing.



The Relationship of Security and Confidence

When rules and ideas flip-flop based on the latest thing a parent has read or heard, two things happen: (1) parents are less confident about their ability to parent successfully; (2) children grow up without self-discipline because they have never had consistent discipline in their lives.

As the level of parental confidence decreases, insecurity increases both for the parents and the children. In the 1950s, if John's mom called Billy's mom to report Billy's misbehavior, Billy's mom would be grateful and handle the situation with confidence. She would also be comfortable calling John's mom if the situation were reversed. Because the boys knew their moms would be comparing notes and agreeing on disciplinary procedures, they were more apt to consider the consequences before choosing to misbehave.

Modern parents generally have less confidence. If someone informs a parent about a child's disobedience, the parent is apt to be defensive. The parent may turn on the one reporting the misbehavior because it confirms what the parent already knows: “I don't know how to do this parenting thing very well, and I'm angry with you for making me even more aware that I don't know. I'm angry and embarrassed because now you are aware of my shortcomings, and I will be embarrassed every time I see you and am reminded that you think I am a lousy parent.”

When defensive parents attack the accuser instead of responding to the child's misbehavior with confidence, the child learns that his behavior is acceptable to his parents. He knows that the next time he is accused of wrongdoing, his parents will attack the accuser instead of penalizing him. Confronting the accuser instead of the guilty child is one of the main reasons for the erosion of our nation's morality. As engineers, we must do our part to stop this trend; it must be done one family at a time.

When defensive parents attack the accuser instead of responding to the child's misbehavior with confidence, the child learns that his behavior is acceptable to his parents.

Parenting Styles

The cultural changes that have rocked the United States in recent decades have left us with four basic parenting styles: (1) high control/high

support, (2) low control/high support, (3) high control/low support, and (4) low control/low support. Let's look at each of these.

High Control/High Support

These parents are the most successful. The rockets entrusted to them can fly correctly because the wiring is secure. These parents are able to control the behavior of their children. They are also very supportive. They encourage their children to try new things and take reasonable risks. When mistakes occur, they move in to support and redirect the child. They are not intimidated or confused by misbehavior. They respond with confidence when their authority is challenged. These parents keep a close eye on the Assistant Engineers to make sure that they are helping to install the wiring properly. These engineers know the Master's Schematics and follow them closely. They are in close, daily contact with the Mission Specialist. The most faithful servants of God come from this type of home.

Low Control/High Support

These are the permissive parents. The wiring in the rockets entrusted to them is often loosely connected and not securely anchored. These parents have a laid-back leadership style. They usually have a very lenient plan of action when their authority is challenged. They love their children and are very supportive. The children from these homes often have behavior patterns that are annoying to those who prefer a more structured environment.

High Control/Low Support

This type of leadership is most commonly seen in parents from military backgrounds. Discipline is rigid and severe, but it isn't balanced with high support. Children wired by engineers with this parenting philosophy often have great difficulty giving and receiving love. They are emotionally insecure but may appear very tough on the outside. This "hit 'em fast and hit 'em hard" style of leadership often produces children who are unable to serve with the Kingdom Fleet. When children see parents as rigid and unloving, it's hard for them to conceive of a heavenly Father who expects to be obeyed and has serious penalties for the disobedient, but who balances those expectations with love and support beyond comprehension.



Low Control/Low Support

Rockets wired by these types of engineers often wind up in jails or mental institutions. Parents of this type often make babies but then do little, if anything, to prepare them for life. These rockets go through life as empty shells that tend to collect life's dirt and grime.

Conclusion

As Chief Engineers in the Father's service, we need to have special places in our lives for these children. As we have opportunity to interact with rockets from these situations, we need to do what we can to install whatever wiring time allows us to install.

With these models in mind, let's take a look at how we can be more confident and how we can move our families closer to being the ones that produce the most capable, faithful servants of the Lord.

Drill for Skills



Making Connections

1. Parents must learn to act with _____, even when humiliation and fear are the primary feelings.
2. One benefit to having children is that they do improve one's _____.
3. As Chief Engineers, we are to wire the next generation of the _____.
4. The cycle of _____ instead of the guilty child is one of the main reasons for the erosion of our nation's morality.
5. The most faithful servants of the Lord are wired by engineers who follow the _____ control, _____ support model of leadership.



Troubleshooting

1. Why is it necessary to have “God-confidence” instead of “self-confidence”?
2. What is the goal of parenting?
3. What is one reason for the confidence level of today’s parents being lower than that of parents in the first half of the twentieth century?
4. What two things happen when parenting rules flip flop based on the latest thing a parent has read or heard?
5. Discuss the four parenting styles.
6. Discuss some of the embarrassing things that have happened in your parenting career. Are you pleased with the way you handled those situations? What changes would you make if you could relive those experiences?
7. How has parenting changed since the 1960s?
8. What are some things your parents did that you will choose to handle in a different way.
9. Why are parents of today less comfortable comparing notes and agreeing on the way to handle misbehavior?
10. Why is it important for the Chief Engineers to know the Assistant Engineers well?

2

The Chief Engineers

In order to properly wire the rockets that have been entrusted to us, each of the Chief Engineers must understand the Master’s Schematics and must understand the role he or she is to play in the wiring of the rocket.

Fathers have a unique responsibility. Children get their first ideas about God from their fathers. Because God has given fathers the primary role of leadership in the family, it is very important for dads to do their job well. Counselors often encounter adults who have a hard time loving God as a heavenly Father because of their childhood experiences with earthly fathers who were harsh or unloving.

God’s Instructions to Husbands and Fathers

“So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself; for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also does the church” (Ephesians 5:28–29).

“Husbands, love your wives, and do not be embittered against them” (Colossians 3:19).

One of the most important ways a child learns about his dad’s character is in the way Dad loves Mom. It gives a child enormous security to know that his parents love each other and are kind to each other. As children see the gentler side of Dad interacting in healthy ways with Mom, they perceive him as being more “user friendly.”

