



DONNA

BESS

AS FOR ME AND MY PARENTING

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Finding My Way

Knowing what I do not want!

As a child raised in a Marine Drill Sergeant's home, I understood quickly as the third child behind two strong-willed brothers, "Don't cross Dad!" I grew up with dad-isms like, "When I say jump, you say how high, Sir?" "Never let them see you sweat," or "Everything has a place; is it in its place?" Don't get me wrong, we were looked upon by others parents

with the greatest of admiration because we knew how to behave in public. We were never beat. In fact, I don't recall ever being spanked.

What I recall most of my growing years in the late 60's and 70's, is that I must do all I can to prove I am worthy of love and respect.

Therefore, I held all emotions. I made

great grades. My room was always clean. I was adored by every adult in my life. I was easily the teacher's pet in nearly every class.

When I was in college, I studied early childhood education and I realized my parents had it all wrong. I knew how to raise a child and my children would have a wonderful life. No fear for them.



Knowing what I thought I wanted!

A few years after my husband and I married, we were excited to be welcoming our first child. With all my worldly knowledge, I was ready to be the best parent. As my husband was gone for work more than he was home, I was essentially the only parent but even that did not daunt me. I had this parent thing in the bag.

That is until my angelic little girl was about 2 years old and I wanted to send myself to my room so I didn't have to deal with this child who knew no boundaries and followed no rule that didn't appeal to her. To say it was a rude awakening is an understatement. I won't bore you with the details of how incredibly challenging our days became with the tantrums, but suffice it to say, I was being very humbled.

PRIDE GOES BEFORE DESTRUCTION, AND A HAUGHTY SPIRIT BEFORE A FALL.

PROVERBS 16:18 ESV



Learning I know nothing!

When Mindy was 12 months old, I received Jesus Christ as my personal Savior and Lord. Prior to going to church, I had no parents of young children in my life. Church provided me with lots of education about how to raise children. Not all of which was good. However, I learned one essential thing. While I don't know anything, I do know the One who knows everything. In desperation one day, I cried out for wisdom on what to do. I knew two ways, and both were not working for me. Like Goldilocks and the three bears, one was too hard and one was too soft; I simply needed to find the one that was just right.

Learning from the ONE who knows everything!

I began to seek out books to teach me Godly parenting. Some principles I learned became a capstone for my parental model with some necessary modifications as my three children advanced in ages. First, I learned there is a difference between childish irresponsibility and willful defiance. While each receives correction, the correction for each is very different. For example, my toddler keeps tipping her drink over at dinner. This is childish irresponsibility. She accidentally hits the glass because she is young and isn't paying attention. Perhaps I move the cup to a coaster and teach her to always put her cup on the coaster. The action is corrective, but no responsibility is given to the child until she learns. When she learns but feels like tipping it over to spite me, that is willful defiance and merits a different response.

Hiney's connection with Mr. Paddle was my chosen response! I learned there is a difference between punishment and discipline. Punishment is done with a motive of keeping the law. It is often done in anger, which every child will recognize even if you are not yelling. Your attitude will reflect this message. "You will follow the rule! When I say jump, you say how high, sir?" The motive is to control with fear, which is very different from teaching self-control that is a fruit of the Spirit.

On the other hand, discipline is what love is all about.

WHOEVER SPARES THE ROD HATES
HIS SON, BUT HE WHO LOVES HIM IS
DILIGENT TO DISCIPLINE HIM

PROVERBS 13:24 ESV

I learned the value of loving discipline. When anger flared, as it often does when raising little ones, I sent them to their room. I took a time out to get my heart right and then I began with, "Because I love you, I will not allow you to do that and not provide you with consequences." I taught them that I was a person of my word. My yes means yes, and my no means no. If I said they would suffer XYZ consequences, they absolutely knew to count on it. I learned to say what I mean and mean what I say. By the time they were 3 and 4 years of age, they rarely needed any corporal discipline. They had been rehearsed in my decision to love them the way God instructed me to love them, and they would submit with a glance.



The rewards!

Though not perfect, I did and do my very best to honor God in my parenting role. My children are all adults now. They each serve God in their churches and their lives. My oldest, Mindy, is a CEO of James Bess Foundation, granting last wishes to terminally ill adults. The second, Jarred, is a Lieutenant for the fire department and a member of the Peer Support Team for Emergency Medical Response personnel through PTSD. And my youngest, Jenna, is near the end of her Masters in Applied Bioscience and has been published for her research.

I am a proud mama. We all are still in the process of growing in God's perfect plan for our lives but we each have Him as our foundation and we will achieve our destinations.



I HAVE NO GREATER JOY THAN TO HEAR THAT
MY CHILDREN ARE WALKING IN THE TRUTH

3 JOHN 1:4 ESV
