



What a mess!

'Lachlan, please do not kick the ball inside the house. I don't want you breaking anything.'

'But, Mum, I'm being careful.'

'Just take the ball outside.'

As Mum went to the kitchen, Lachlan gave his ball one last, ever so gentle, kick.

The ball hit the cat, who jumped for the drapes. She knocked the knick-knacks off the window ledge. They fell onto the CD player, shattered and broke the cover of Mum's new André Rieu CD.

What a mess!

Lachlan thought about blaming the cat. After all, Mum didn't really see how it all started, but he knew it was his fault.

'Mum, I'm really, really, sorry I didn't listen to you' he wailed when Mum came running into the room. 'I'll buy you some new stuff out of my pocket money.'

'Those knick-knacks were souvenirs. You can't replace them,' said Mum. 'But you will clean up this mess. And then, you will keep your football outside!'

Lachlan now understands why his mother has that rule.

faith family



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Youth and Children's Ministry Unit, Uniting Church in Australia, Queensland

Boundaries

When Australian Rules football was first played 150 years ago there were no boundary lines. Imagine the confusion of a game with no boundaries: no marks to show players where they should be.

We need boundary marks in life, too: rules that show us how far we can go and the consequences of stepping beyond the line. There's truth in the saying: 'It's a parent's job to set boundaries; a child's job to test them'.

The early years

A baby's first boundaries are physical: they simply cannot move beyond their parent's arms or the sides of their cot. Soon they begin experimenting and learn that their behaviour can affect the world and people around them.

Just as parents establish physically safe spaces for their growing children, they establish safe and appropriate boundaries for behaviour.

Young children need to understand that their parent's 'no' means 'no'. But saying 'no' too often becomes counter-productive. Supervision, anticipation and distraction are better options for the young child. Giving attention to good behaviour works much more effectively than constantly criticising. Patience and consistency are crucial.

A two year-old will soon learn that throwing tantrums won't get what they want if the parent refuses to give in.

A three year-old who is encouraged to help put their toys away will grow to expect that they will tidy up after they use something.

A four-year old can take responsibility for small tasks like taking their dishes

to the kitchen after a meal. Thanking them for their help encourages them to see that helping and sharing is a pleasant experience.

Preschoolers can understand that there are consequences for their actions — good and bad. Parents can work out which consequences for inappropriate behaviour work best for each child. Some children hate to be isolated from other people, while the removal of a favourite toy or computer game for a time will be more effective for another.

Simple, short explanations when you and the child are in a good mood are more likely to be effective than yelling when you are upset and bothered.

Avoid threats that you cannot or won't carry out. A child soon learns if you don't mean what you say and will find it easy to then ignore you.

The primary school years

In the busy-ness of life for children these days, many boundary issues are about managing their time: school, homework, sport, music, church, friends and responsibilities at home — caring for pets, stacking the dishwasher, tidying their bedroom.

It is important that children learn to manage the demands made on them. Intervening to save a child from the consequences of their actions (eg texting to friends all night instead of doing homework) will not teach them to manage their boundaries.

What is initially imposed from outside will over time come from within. Boundaries learned in childhood stand us in good stead for the rest of our lives.



faith family



A Christian resource for families



Stick with the plan

Jeremy wanted to go to his friend Alex's place to shoot some pool on Friday afternoon. Alex's dad had given the OK when he'd picked both boys up from school.

'You can go after you've done 15 minutes clarinet practice and tidied your room,' said his mum.

Jeremy grabbed a drink from the fridge and lay on the couch watching TV. He got absorbed in a program, and before he knew it an hour had slipped by. He needed to get going. Jeremy picked up his jacket and headed to the front door.

'Where are you off to?' Mum called.

'To Alex's. Remember!'

'You've got a couple of jobs to do before you go.'

'Ohh, Muuum. I'll do them when I get back. I promise. If I don't go now it'll be too late,' whined Jeremy, hoping to win his mother's sympathy.

It would have been easy for Mum to give in, avoid a blow-up and keep the peace. But backing down, or changing our mind won't equip our children well for life. Learning the consequences of our actions and taking responsibility for the outcome is a tough but necessary part of growing up.

Talking about boundaries is never going to be enough. We need to model boundaries for our kids. They learn these from being around us and living as part of a family where structure, responsibility and values are demonstrated in day-to-day life.

We do this because we love our kids — enough to do the hard work of parenting.



Because we love them, and because we ourselves fail in that work, we also model forgiveness.

'Every kid deserves a 13th chance,' shrugged Paul Moulds of the Salvation Army's Oasis Youth Support Network in a recent ABC television documentary. Captain Moulds tries to find the right blend of boundaries and consequences with forgiveness and second chances for street kids. It's a balancing act we all struggle with.

It reflects God's love for us. The Bible tells how God gave people laws to protect them. God let people experience the consequences of going their own way and gave them second chances. Ultimately God demonstrated his love and forgiveness when his own Son Jesus kept the law perfectly and accepted the consequence for other people going their own way.

Issue 15 Contents

Page 2

Resources for your home

Children need positive values

Page 3

Have you got something for me?

A cool idea for saying 'sorry' and 'I forgive you'

Page 4

What a mess!

Boundaries

God's Spirit makes us loving, happy, peaceful, patient, kind, good, faithful, gentle and self-controlled
(Galatians 5:22,23 CEV)

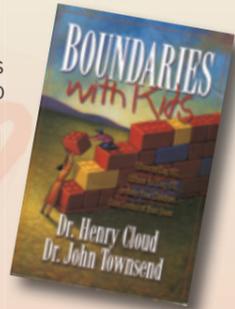
Resources for your home

Boundaries with kids

by Henry Cloud & John Townsend

How do you help your child deal with the tough stuff in life? This book gives guidance to parents about how to teach healthy personal boundaries to their children. With many stories and examples it offers principles to enable children to take ownership of their lives.

Adult, paperback
RRP \$9.95

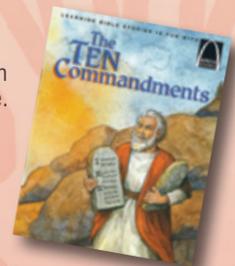


The Ten Commandments

Arch Books, Concordia Publishing House

This book introduces young children to the Ten Commandments in a simple rhyming style.

Ages 3-7
paperback, 12 pages
RRP \$2.95



Our Father

by Sabrina Bus

Takes young readers through the Lord's Prayer with a simple explanation of each phrase.

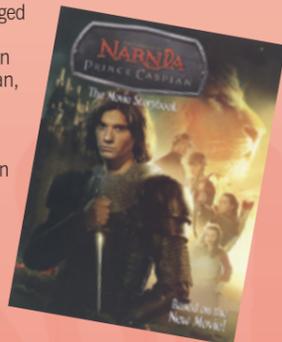
Ages 3-6,
cardboard,
10 pages
RRP \$14.95



Prince Caspian: The Movie Storybook

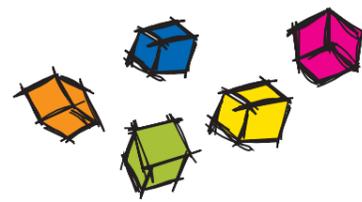
A child-friendly abridged retelling of the CS Lewis classic. Caspian summons Peter, Susan, Edmund and Lucy to help in Narnia's desperate time of need. Published as an accompaniment to the recently released movie. The movie itself is M rated. The complete original version of Prince Caspian is available in several editions.

Ages 8-11,
paperback, 48 pages
RRP \$14.95



See your local Christian book shop for these and other great resources for your home.

Asset Building



Developmental Assets are like building blocks that children need for a positive start in life. The forty assets identified by Search Institute are grouped into eight categories: support, empowerment, boundaries and expectations, constructive use of time, commitment to learning, positive values, social competencies, positive identity.

Children need positive values

Values: this is where the rubber hits the road for parents. The first step in giving our children positive values is to consider our own values and how well we act on them ourselves.

Our schools foster and promote some values the Australian community holds in common. If you don't already know the values promoted in your child's school, find out what they are. Many will be the same as your own values. Where there are differences, talk with your child about why you consider other things important.

The positive values among Search Institute's Developmental Assets have been shown to correlate statistically with positive, healthy life choices. They are: caring, equality and justice, integrity, honesty, responsibility and restraint. You'll find them among the values promoted by most schools.

Responsibility (Asset #30)

Teens and young adults who make positive, healthy choices have learned to accept and take personal responsibility.

Kym and Karin want their girls, Cara and Tessa, to show initiative and to be responsible for their actions. They are teaching their girls responsibility by allowing them to experience natural consequences.

Six year-old Tessa is learning that her actions have an effect on other people. When she puts toys away they stay safe, but if she leaves them scattered on the floor, someone can step on them and get hurt.

Eight year-old Cara knows she must put everything she needs for school the next day beside her school bag at night. If she leaves it until morning, she'll be late or forget something.

Restraint (Asset #31)

Media reports alarm parents about widespread lack of restraint among teens: vandalism, drug use, binge drinking, careless driving and casual sex.

Saying 'no' is not an easy choice in today's society. Giving children the personal asset of restraint begins when they are still very young.

Parents and other adults can model, monitor and teach children the importance of good health habits. Children learn healthy sexual attitudes and respect for others from people around them.

Year 7 parents at Desley's school agreed to a party pact, stating that they would

- not allow any parties in their home when they were not home,
- supervise all parties held in their home, and
- not allow consumption of alcohol or other drugs.

If we as parents value raising children who make healthy, positive life choices, we will devote the time and energy required to live out these values ourselves as well as to model and discuss them with our children. And we'll try to surround our family with people who share our values.

For a complete list of the 40 Developmental Assets and more information on how everyone can build assets, go to www.search-institute.org/assets

In their book *The Five Love Languages of Children*, Gary Chapman and Ross Campbell suggest that people — children and adults — express their love and receive expressions of love from others in five distinct ways: through words, acts of service, time, touch & gifts.

Do you have something for me?

As little Micah bursts through Helen's back door, she hears him calling, 'Do you have something for me, Nanna?'

Helen knows that Micah's most important love language is receiving gifts. This is how he recognises her love for him. When he calls 'Do you have something for me?' he is really asking, 'Do you love me?'

Most people (of all ages) like gifts, but for those whose primary love language is gifts, it is a big deal. Receiving gifts make them feel special and loved.

Micah jumps up and down with excitement as Helen 'surprises' him with a little wrapped box of home-made choc-chip biscuits.

He takes his time to fully enjoy the gift, examining the wrapping paper and uttering 'ooo' and 'wow' when he opens it. He always says 'thank you' and gives Helen a huge hug. He takes home each gift that he can't eat and finds a special place for it in his room. When friends come over he always shows them the latest gift from Nanna.

Micah often surprises Nanna Helen with his own gifts, too. Usually it's something he has made himself. Sometimes it's a flower, suspiciously just like the ones in her front garden. These gifts are Micah's way of showing Helen that he loves her. Just like Micah, Helen displays his gifts, and delights in showing her friends the latest gift from Micah.

Gifts are not that important for Micah's mum. She tends to think that gifts are frivolous, embarrassing and definitely not necessary. But she has come to recognize how much gifts

mean to Micah: that giving and receiving gifts are the best way of filling up his love tank. So she encourages this way of communicating his love.

Gary Chapman and Ross Campbell in their book *The Five Love Languages of Children* offer these tips for a heartfelt gift:

- Exercise care. Don't be tempted to shower your child with gifts as substitutes for love.
- Use a combination of love languages.
- Be selective when choosing a gift.
- It's not necessary to buy gifts from a store.
- Choose gifts with your child.
- Take time to wrap the gift and then present it in a special way.

Appreciating gifts in your family

Ask each member of your family to look back over their life and think about the many gifts they have received and how they felt receiving them. Talk about the gifts that God gives you and how those gifts can help you recognise God's love for you.



A cool idea for saying 'sorry' and 'I forgive you'

For some people, 'sorry' glides glibly off the tongue. For others, saying sorry is a difficult step in a healing process following experiences of guilt and shame.

Saying sorry does not guarantee that the other person will forgive you. On the other hand, you can forgive someone who has not said 'I'm sorry'.

'Sorry' and 'forgive' stones can help your child think about these key tools for healthy relationships.

Find some smooth stones that will easily fit in your child's hand. On 'sorry' stones draw a sad face. On 'forgive' stones draw a happy face. Keep the stones in a special basket or box.

When you have hurt someone, give them a 'sorry' stone. Tell them what you are sorry about, eg 'I'm sorry I yelled at you. I love you and I don't like to hurt you.'

When someone hurts you, give them a 'forgive' stone. Tell them what you are forgiving, eg 'I felt bad when you yelled at me. But I still love you. I forgive you.'

Once the situation is cleared up, give each other a hug and return the stones to the basket.

With older children, you could consider what God says. You could write messages from the Bible on the stones, eg:

- If we confess our sins to God, he can always be trusted to forgive us and take our sins away. (1 John 1:9)
- Forgive anyone who does you wrong, just as Christ has forgiven you. (Colossians 3:13)
- Jesus said: 'Be careful what you do. Correct any followers of mine who sin, and forgive the ones who say they are sorry.' (Luke 17:3)