

The Danger of Being an Indulgent Parent

By Matthew Black, Pastor

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Tabernacle Baptist Church

7020 Barrington Road

Hanover Park, Illinois 60133

Website: www.GodCentered.info

Introduction: Open your Bible to the book of **2 Samuel 14**. The title of our message tonight is "The Danger of Being an Indulgent Parent".

Indulgent parents will raise children who are self centered. How do you raise a self-centered child? Actually it is quite easy. It doesn't take very much effort at all. Raising up godly children on the other hand takes a great amount of effort. It takes consistency. It takes pouring out your heart to the Lord and begging Him to do a spiritual work of resurrection in the heart of your child.

David blew it big time in raising Absalom. None among his sons was so in love with himself. The Scriptures reveal to us the mistakes David made. There are at least six that are in this passage. The Bible says according to **1 Corinthians 10:11** that "all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition".

How can you be an indulgent parent who raises a child in love with himself and a rebel against the Lord, like Absalom?

- I. First, just do **Nothing**. We learn this from David. After Absalom murdered Amnon, David did nothing. Absalom has become a fugitive of his own will, but he was never officially banished. Look at **2 Samuel 13:38-39**, "So Absalom fled, and went to Geshur, and was there three years. 39 And the soul of king David longed to go forth unto Absalom: for he was comforted concerning Amnon, seeing he was dead."

Many parents are unwilling to seriously and strongly confront spiritual issues in the right way. There are always excuses. There is nothing wrong at all with David's love, but we must never excuse sin or ignore serious spiritual issues. It never does any of our children any good in ignoring their heart.

We must be careful not to comfort ourselves even if our children are well behaved. Being well behaved is not the prerequisite for heaven. We must aim the conversation in the direction of the new birth. They must be "born again" if they are to enter into the kingdom of heaven.

The truth is we really need do nothing to raise a rebel. How is that you ask? The Scripture says your child is born with sufficient wickedness in him that he will rebel without you having to teach him anything. In other words, your child is born a rebel.

- A. **Illustration:** Have you been to the supermarket lately? Wal-mart? Have you heard how children act toward their parents? Most parents have no idea what to do with their children. And so, they do nothing. This is the most efficient and easiest way to raise a rebel.

B. **Explanation:** The philosopher John Locke said that children are a blank slate and their environment determines their behavior. The Bible tells a different story! David says in **Psalm 51:5**, "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me." Bruce Ray comments, "What does he mean? David was shaped just as you and I were: in the womb of our mothers. As he developed within the womb, he developed organs capable of fulfilling the sinful intentions of his heart. As his arms and his legs were formed, and as his fingers were formed on the ends of his hands, he was shaped in his iniquity: fully prepared to come forth from the womb to obey the lusts of the flesh and to express his sinful nature."^[1] This is astounding! Jesus, when he spoke to the Pharisees said, "Ye are of your father the devil and the lusts of your father ye will do" (**John 8:44**). By saying this, Jesus was implying that all men without Christ have the natural inclinations and desires (lusts) of fallen angels—devils! That's what we are facing!

C. **Explanation:** Instead, we must be proactive parents. We cannot simply let a child raise himself according to his own heart. **Proverbs 22:6** tells us we need to proactively instruct our children: "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it." Matthew Henry says, "*Train* them up, not in the way they would go (the bias of their corrupt hearts would draw them aside), but *in the way they should go*, the way in which, if you love them, you would have them go."¹

II. Second, follow your **Emotions**, without seeking God's wisdom in His Word. Look at **2 Samuel 13:38-39**, "So Absalom fled, and went to Geshur, and was there three years. 39 And the soul of king David longed to go forth unto Absalom: for he was comforted concerning Amnon, seeing he was dead." Now look at **2 Samuel 14:1**, "Now Joab the son of Zeruiah perceived that the king's heart was toward Absalom". As human beings we are all prone to make decisions not based on the Word of God, but on convenience, emotion, or sentimentalism.

Application: Have you ever flippantly advised someone to "follow their heart"? We are actually commanded not to do that in Scripture. We need to remember that even for saved people, we still have a sinful nature. We can still be deceived by our own heart. That's why Jeremiah says, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" (**Jeremiah 17:9**). We must not follow the guide of our heart, but instead the guide of God and His Word. Our own heart, because of our sinful nature and our finiteness and human limitations can easily lead us astray.

*Guide me, O Thou great Jehovah,
Pilgrim through this barren land.
I am weak, but Thou art mighty;
Hold me with Thy powerful hand.
Bread of Heaven, Bread of Heaven,
Feed me till I want no more;
Feed me till I want no more.*²

¹ Matthew Henry. *Commentary on the Whole Bible*. Comment from Proverbs 22:6.

² William Williams, *Halleluiah* (Bristol, England: 1745) (*Arglwydd, arwain trwy'r anialwch*). Translated from Welsh to English by Peter Williams, *Hymns on Various Subjects* (Carmarthen, Wales: 1771).

- **Proverbs 3:5** tells us, "Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding". Why must we not lean to our own understanding and instead meditate on the Word day and night?
- **Proverbs 16:25**, "There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death."
- We are told in **Psalm 119:11**, "Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee". We have to not lean to our own heart, but lean on the heart of God.
- **Isaiah 53:6** tells us, "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way". We must not go according to what we think is right, but what God says is right in the Bible.

Absalom was in Geshur for three years after murdering his brother Amnon. Joab, David's general cooks up a plan to get Absalom back to Jerusalem. That brings us to our third point.

- III. If you want to raise a rebel, follow your **Friends** instead of God's Word. In our life, we have various people around us who want to give us advice. And truly **Proverbs 11:14**, "Where no counsel is, the people fall: but in the multitude of counsellors there is safety." Joab makes a play on David's emotions to try to bring Absalom back. Joab coaches a woman from Tekoah to trick David into allowing Absalom, the murderer, to return. David allows himself to be manipulated. He doesn't try to check the Word of God or godly counselors.

Verses 2-3, "And Joab sent to Tekoah, and fetched thence a wise woman, and said unto her, I pray thee, feign thyself to be a mourner, and put on now mourning apparel, and anoint not thyself with oil, but be as a woman that had a long time mourned for the dead: 3 And come to the king, and speak on this manner unto him...."

Coached by Joab, the woman gives a story that plays on David's emotions and corners him into allowing Absalom back into the kingdom. David of course relents and allows Absalom back!

Verses 13-14, "Wherefore then hast thou thought such a thing against the people of God? for the king doth speak this thing as one which is faulty, in that the king doth not fetch home again his banished. 14 For we must needs die, and are as water spilt on the ground, which cannot be gathered up again; neither doth God respect any person: yet doth he devise means, that his banished be not expelled from him".

This woman is making a case for setting aside the Word of God. She's using God's name. She's sounds pious. But she's a liar. Joab's got her lying to David.

David figures it is Joab. Look at verse 18, "Then the king answered and said unto the woman, Hide not from me, I pray thee, the thing that I shall ask thee. And the woman said, Let my lord the king now speak. 19 And the king said, Is not the hand of Joab with thee in all this? And the woman answered and said, As thy soul liveth, my lord the king, none can turn to the right hand or to the left from ought that my lord the king hath spoken: for thy servant Joab, he bade me, and he put all these words in the mouth of thine handmaid".

David knew the Law of God would not allow Absalom back in Israel, but he sets it aside for a "friend's" advice. Look at **verse 21**, "And the king said unto Joab, Behold now, I have done this thing: go therefore, bring the young man Absalom again. 22 And Joab

fell to the ground on his face, and bowed himself, and thanked the king: and Joab said, To day thy servant knoweth that I have found grace in thy sight, my lord, O king, in that the king hath fulfilled the request of his servant."

Application: I've seen people deny the Word of God because someone they respected advised them. It could be a friend or a family member. When people want to sin, they can talk to enough people that will twist the Word of God and permit their sin. I've seen people get divorced—they'll say "God doesn't want me to be unhappy". I have to ask, where did they get that from? Often we are unhappy with the circumstances of life. But our joy comes not from this world, but from seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness. Beware of friends that give unbiblical advice. Check everything by the Word of God. Obey the Word of God even if you are a lone ranger!!

- IV. Fourth, allow the **Outward** to be emphasized instead of the inward. David knew that "man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart" (1 Samuel 16:7). We read in **Proverbs 31:30**, "Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the LORD, she shall be praised."

Why was Absalom popular in the nation? Because he was godly? No! Because he was good looking! What a low state the nation of Israel was in. Look at verses 25-26, "But in all Israel there was none to be so much praised as Absalom for his beauty: from the sole of his foot even to the crown of his head there was no blemish in him. 26 And when he polled his head, (for it was at every year's end that he polled it: because the hair was heavy on him, therefore he polled it:) he weighed the hair of his head at two hundred shekels after the king's weight." Absalom is vain. He's a man that grows his hair long to demonstrate strength. He even weighs his hair. He's concerned with the outward.

Often times we are prone to ignore someone's wickedness because of their wit and good looks. Absalom truly had only one agenda in life: to please himself. He was so vain, that he weighed his hair after it was cut. When Absalom died, he had no legacy. According to **2 Samuel 18:18**, his three sons and one daughter born to him (**verse 27**) evidently died at an early age. "Now Absalom in his lifetime had taken and reared up for himself a pillar, which is in the king's dale: for he said, I have no son to keep my name in remembrance: and he called the pillar after his own name: and it is called unto this day, Absalom's place".

Application: Are you focused on the outward of your children's learning and ability. I've said it before, I would rather my child grow up to be a garbage picker for the glory of God than to be a millionaire that denies Him! **Mark 8:36-37**, "For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? 37 Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"

- V. Fifth, only obey God **Partially**. Now we are going to see that David allows Absalom back into Jerusalem, but not into his presence. Absalom had not repented nor been punished for his sin.

David only obeyed God partially. He gave Absalom a little bit of justice, by not letting him come to his presence. Look at **verse 23**, "So Joab arose and went to Geshur, and brought Absalom to Jerusalem. 24 And the king said, Let him turn to his own house, and let him not see my face. So Absalom returned to his own house, and saw not the king's face." David may have blessed Absalom with allowing him to enter again to Jerusalem but he was not blessed by God!

Absalom is willing to do anything to see his father. It's very likely that because he's always gotten his way, that he is already plotting to overthrow the kingdom.

Verses 28-32, "So Absalom dwelt two full years in Jerusalem, and saw not the king's face. 29 Therefore Absalom sent for Joab, to have sent him to the king; but he would not come to him: and when he sent again the second time, he would not come. 30 Therefore he said unto his servants, See, Joab's field is near mine, and he hath barley there; go and set it on fire. And Absalom's servants set the field on fire. 31 Then Joab arose, and came to Absalom unto his house, and said unto him, Wherefore have thy servants set my field on fire? 32 And Absalom answered Joab, Behold, I sent unto thee, saying, Come hither, that I may send thee to the king, to say, Wherefore am I come from Geshur? it had been good for me to have been there still: now therefore let me see the king's face; and if there be any iniquity in me, let him kill me".

Absalom has not seen his father in five years. For the first three years of the five, he has been in Geshur. In the last two years, he has been in Jerusalem. Despite being in close proximity to his father, he is not allowed to see his face. Under no circumstances was he to come near the palace. But he knew he could get back into the king's presence, so he sent messengers to Joab to try and talk to David. Twice they were denied. Finally, Joab commanded that they set Joab's field on fire.

Now Absalom had gotten Joab's attention. He knew his father wouldn't follow through with what was right.

Application: Do you follow through with what is right? Are you consistent, or do you find ways to excuse your child's sin? That brings us to our next point...

- VI. Sixth, **Excuse** your child's sins. Absalom does not see his sin as God sees it, and David let's his sin slide! Look at **verse 32**, "And Absalom answered Joab, Behold, I sent unto thee, saying, Come hither, that I may send thee to the king, to say, Wherefore am I come From Geshur? it had been good for me to have been there still: now therefore let me see the king's face; and if there be any iniquity in me, let him kill me". Absalom was denying his crimes against Amnon.

David by doing nothing, excuses his son's sins. Look at **verse 33**, "So Joab came to the king, and told him: and when he had called for Absalom, he came to the king, and bowed himself on his face to the ground before the king: and the king kissed Absalom."

If we fail to deal sternly with our children's sins and wink at their childish rebellions, we may lose our children!

A.W. Pink said, "David's inordinate tenderness only paved the way for Absalom's open rebellion...Deal tenderly with evil, and it will, assuredly, rise to a head and crush you in the end. On the other hand, meet evil with a face of flint, and victory is sure. Play not with the serpent, but at once crush it beneath your feet."³

If you begin excusing sin in your children it will destroy them. The well known preacher R.G. Lee once said,

"In 1520 one man brought small pox to Mexico, where it cost three and one half million deaths. Another man, who landed in England in 1348, was responsible for

³Arthur W. Pink. *Life of David*.

spreading the Black Death, "Bubonic Plague," the greatest killer Great Britain has ever known. It does not take many bullets from a rifle to kill a man. One bullet can kill. It does not take many deadly diseases to bring death to the human body. One deadly disease can bring death. It does not take the breakage of many bones to cripple the hand. One broken bone can cripple."⁴

Absalom was guilty of murder. As chief magistrate in Israel, David had set aside the divine law. Therefore he must not be surprised if his wayward son now resorts to further lawlessness, for there is no escape from the outworking of the principle of sowing and reaping.

- VII. Finally, give your child his **Way**, early and often. Look again at **verse 33**, "So Joab came to the king, and told him: and when he had called for Absalom, he came to the king, and bowed himself on his face to the ground before the king: and the king kissed Absalom." This was Absalom literally getting away with murder! Absalom had committed a capital offense, and he should have been put to death. Absalom got his way, and it empowered him.

Every time we give our children their way, we also empower them to rebel and sin against the Lord. There are many ways that a child can get his way with his parents.

- A. He can use cuteness. Cuteness teaches the child that he can get his way through his charm and good looks. Allow him to use that and you'll raise an adult that does the same thing. Lying and cheating always work in the world of politics and corruption. If you allow your children to use cuteness to deceive, then you may raise a politician or a con man, but you will not raise a godly child.

Application: What is cute when a child is eight months old, is not cute when they are eight or eighteen years old. What you teach a child before they are a year old will save you years of headaches and heartaches!

- B. Whining and fussing are very effective for the child to get his way. The tenth commandment is "Thou shalt not covet". Whining and fussing to get one's way is coveting. It should be met with a swift spanking. **Proverbs 13:24** He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes. Betimes means early, or right away!
- C. Your child can simply throw a tantrum to get his way. Children of the earliest ages can scream, hold their breath, and exhibit extreme anger. It needs to be met with a spanking or you will raise a rebel. This is one of the oldest and most trusted forms of rebellion. Again, **Proverbs 13:24** is our guide: "He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes."

Conclusion: No one wants to raise a rebel. We must be careful to raise them "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." If we do nothing, they will go their own way. We must train them in the way they SHOULD go, and when they are old they will not depart from it!

⁴ Robert G. Lee, SERMONIC LIBRARY, p. 46.