

Behavior Guidelines

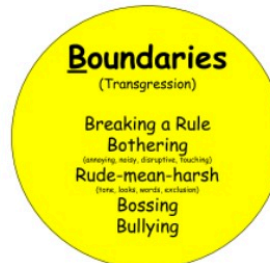
CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT & DISCIPLINE

The expectation for all students and adults is **respect**. That is respect for God, each other (including the building and the present authorities), and themselves. Many conflicts and issues can be resolved simply with the golden rule, “do unto others as you would have them do unto you” (Matt. 7:12).

However, at times it is necessary to “discipline those whom you love” (Prov. 3:12). As a learning center, we keep certain things in mind as we approach discipline:

1. Children have a sinful nature. (Psalm 51:5)
2. Children naturally test boundaries, therefore require guidance that is clear, firm, and direct. (Prov. 3:12, 13:24)
3. Children are not miniature adults. In fact, they are immature and may require much patient nurturing and unconditional love. (1 Cor. 13: 4,11)
4. Children mature at different rates and have various dispositions requiring wisdom in the ways of disciplining. One size does not fit all. (Prov. 22:6)

Your children will bring home some little circles like these. These are Levels of Behaviors: A, B, C, & D.



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CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT & DISCIPLINE

We teach behavior guidelines in our classrooms at Legacy. It's based largely on a model designed by Dr. Marvin Marshall, which he lays out in his book, Discipline without Stress, Punishments, or Rewards: How to Promote Responsibility. In large part, even though I don't know that he intended it this way, there is a lot of biblical correlation to his approach. Let me explain.

Level Democracy (Discipleship) *highest/maturest level

-Dependable, Responsible, Self-disciplined

*Student does "right" thing without being asked or reminded because they want to do the "right" thing. Of course, our standard of "right" is the Bible (i.e. stewardship, integrity, honor, obedience, love, mercy, etc...)

Level Cooperation (Citizenship)

-Controls (self), communicates, respects, follows directions, attentive, considerate, kind, careful *Student is a good citizen of the group (classroom, school, family, team, church, community, etc...)

Level Boundaries (Transgression)

-Breaking the Rules, Bothering, Bossing, Bullying- annoying, mean, harsh, & rude with hands, words, & stuff *Student temporarily "crosses the line".

Level Anarchy (Rebellion)

-chaos, out of control, defiant, unsafe

The ultimate goal is responsibility with the pillars of his approach being positivity, choices, and reflection. Here are the biblical correlations I see.

Responsibility is one of the greatest signs of maturity ("growing up"). Discipline (or control) your self so others don't have to (very often at least). This is illustrated in "Stewardship" (Taking care good care of what is yours- life, possessions, assignments, domains, etc...- i.e. what has been entrusted to you...).

Positivity- The bible is not just a list of "Do not's", but even more so a list of "Do's", promises, and hope. It is also full of "If, then..." statements. Click [here](#) for some examples.

Choice - "Choose ye this day whom you will serve...", "Life or death", "Broad or Narrow", "God or Mammon", "Lift yourself up or down", "Flesh or Spirit", "For me or against me", etc...

Behavior Guidelines

CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT & DISCIPLINE

Reflection- Just look at Jesus' example. How often did he ask questions for his disciples, his followers, the crowds, and even the haters to "reflect" on? Over 300 are recorded in the gospels. Click [here](#) for a list of a few.

I have added my own flavor along the way. And it usually plays out in these ways.

Responsibility - One of my main goals is to raise good citizens, who take ownership for their lives. My goal is their maturity, not their happiness.

Positivity- Lots of "If/Then" or "When/Then" statements and encouragement- i.e. "I am confident you can fix this/figure it out."

Choice - Humans are "choosers". I realized early in my teaching career, if I want kids to become good at making choices, I need to let them make lots of choices (practice), even bad ones (failure). Experiencing the consequences of their poor choices is a very strong teacher- i.e. "timeout" to "reflect" or separation from the group (society) until they are willing to change (repent) and follow the rules (laws) or pain in the form of a "loss of privilege" (which becomes incentive) until **they** fix the problem, etc....

Reflection- I have determined it is better for them to make mistakes now under our tutelage where we can provide guidance (coaching). I spent way too much time in the beginning of my teaching career trying to talk kids into making all the "right" choices. Now, I focus on helping them see the options (choices) beforehand ("You can do this work now or at recess?" "Do **you** want to fix it, or do you want **me** to?" "This food or nothing?") and then dreflecting afterward ("Would you like to be treated that way?", "What could you do next time?") and grow from their choices.

All that to say, just to be clear, this approach does not mean teachers/parents should never "tell kids what to do". Personally, I believe kids should "do what they're told" *the first time* because "I said so". Many take this as a punitive approach (they hear it said in a stern maybe even harsh/angry voice). However, I have come to realize that this is intended to be an expression of **authority** (spoken in a calm yet firm/confident voice). Then, it becomes an exercise in **trust**. When we (the authority) are faithful to our word (i.e. mean what we say and say what we mean) we demonstrate that we are trustworthy and the child learns to believe (trust) that we mean what we say (not just the "promises", but also the if/thens, the directives, etc..).

Problems that often arise though are:

1. **Control** - Often, the authority focuses on controlling the wrong person/things. It all starts with us (Practice what we preach, right?) The authority makes their own choices, not other people's choices, even their kids. Well kind of - It is about proportion- my main focus of control is me, and in this case, my trustworthiness. One day when I was driving home from school, my wife asked me how my day was. I began talking about the kids and all the wrong things they did. Suddenly, I had this thought, "she asked you how **your** day was **not the kid's**". The Holy Spirit was

Behavior Guidelines

CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT & DISCIPLINE

teaching me at the time (and since) about my ability to respond to things (i.e. response-ability). I was giving too much power (control) to them. They were influencing me, instead of the opposite. Unfortunately however, we cannot give what we do not have and this may require some *work* on our part. Peace begets peace; chaos does not bring peace. The following C's expand on this premise.

2. **Confidence**- The authority (teacher, parent, grandma, etc...) often don't say it (directives) with **confidence** (like they mean it). It usually comes across as a request or even a question. If we don't really expect them to do it, how can we really expect it to happen. Kids are like dogs, only they can smell doubt instead of fear. Also similar to dogs, every kid has some (or a lot of - lol) alpha in them that is happy to run the show if another alpha (the adult) isn't.
3. **Communication** - The authority does not make sure the kids heard them, as in stopping them and making them look them in the eye or repeat back what was stated. Often the words are just spoken out into the atmosphere hoping the kids "hear" them. Even as an adult, I can't hold my wife accountable for things I am not sure she heard. If she is focused on a task (reading, computer, tv, phone, thinking, etc...), just saying the words into a room without first getting her attention (or at least confirming she heard it afterwards) just isn't fair or respectful **communication**.
4. **Consistency**- The authority will often repeat themselves several times thinking they are being "nice" (they are just little kids after all). However, after each time the authority gets a little more angry inside until they, not so nicely, blurt out something like "why do I have to tell you so many times?" Well, the answer is: you don't. Or better- because you (the adult) have trained them so. We have been **consistent** alright, but not in telling them "only once". If for years we have been telling them 2, 3, 4 + times, then we have trained them that they have 2,3, 4+ chances. As the adults (authority), that is on us. A friend once asked me to "pray that I won't have to tell my boys 3 times to do things". I said I could not do that. Rather, I told her she should stop "telling" them **3 times** to do things.
5. **Calm** - The authority gives too many directives and either losses track of what they have said or doesn't follow up. Expectations are **not clear and confusion** results for them. How can kids believe (trust) someone who doesn't remember what they said and/or follow through on their "promises"? Their yes is not yes and their no is not no. They do not mean what they say or say what they mean. This is especially challenging in our fast-paced, highly distracted culture. We must slow down and be more intentional with our words (short, sweet, direct).
*This is also why organization is so powerful (reminders, charts, posters, routines, procedures, etc...).
6. **Challenge** - Adults often mistake a question to our directive or rule, i.e. "why?" as a desire to understand. Kids don't usually ask why because they really want to

Behavior Guidelines

CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT & DISCIPLINE

understand, but rather as a **challenge** to our authority. It may appear as a teachable moment, but it often is really their hearts lack of trust in our leadership. Sound familiar? (One way to discern is: does the “why” follow a directive/correction or does it come up during conversation when they are not being required to do something they don’t want to do.) The thing that we know which they don’t, however, is that trust grows over time with experience. Explanations appeal to the intellect, but trust happens in the heart. When we are faithful in our words (promises, directives, conditions, etc...) and behavior, then we have done our part as the authority, in being trust-worthy. Now, the trust-ing is up to them (their part/choice). And that takes different amounts of time for each person which requires patience on our part; or as the King James Version puts it- longsuffering. (You know, suffering long.) In class, I’ve used the example of Colson (my toddler) running into the street or grabbing things with his hands or climbing too high on things. Even with the most eloquent explanation, he just simply cannot understand all the “whys” behind my directives/rules/boundaries (because of maturity not intelligence). That makes sense to them, so I explain to them that every stage of development (elementary, middle, high) has versions of this (wandering off alone, staying home alone, technology, driving, etc...) and that parents and I and society and God have rules and boundaries for their safety and growth. Ultimately, we are training them to be independent humans who are fully in charge of them self someday. That’s our goal as their authorities.

In closing, I believe that’s what these levels and this approach promotes: responsibility. Therefore, as authorities, I propose that faithfulness (saying less and meaning more) will bear more fruit in our long term efforts than the most eloquent explanations in the moments. Sometimes, when my kids ask me why, I will simply say “because I (your father/teacher) said so and you can trust that”.

Blessings!

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Legacy Christain Learning Center