

How to Rightly Debate Your Child

Introduction: There are righteous ways to debate, and just because the other person isn't swayed to our side after the final rebuttal, doesn't make the process invaluable.

The Makeup of our debates – We're never allowed to debate using lies, fallacious reasoning, or sinful philosophy. Therefore, if my child were trying to persuade me that homosexuality isn't a sin — this is not a debatable topic. No now in our home is allowed to deliberately disagree with God and argue against Him. Those conversations are right off the table.

The Method of our debates – We're never allowed to speak God's Truth in an unloving way. Angry, unkind words undermine the power of the Bible. Disrespect, pride, ungratefulness, and sinful anger mean we've stepped outside The Communication House and must not continue until we're back in The House.

The Motivation for our debates – We're never allowed to baptize our arguments in "love" in order to manipulate people. If I'm not genuinely speaking biblical Truth to accomplish God's purposes, then it doesn't matter how syrupy sweet I sound . . . I'm not really being loving. I need to want God best interest for my opponents. For example, if I don't want my child to hold the remote because I'm a control freak and don't feel right not holding it . . . even though I don't plan on doing anything with it — and my child respectfully asks if she can retain it, I'd better not try to spiritualize my selfishness.

I. If the parent is incredibly inferior to his child in that . . .

- He is not prepared to argue using God's Truth,
- Cannot open his mouth without being caustic and unkind,
- Becomes defensive at the hint of a disagreement, or
- Manifests any number of other sinful character traits, he must not only avoid the debate, but refuse to engage lest he hurt the cause of Christ. If you can't stay in The House, you don't have the conversation.
- I John tells us "*We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love abides in death. Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer; and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him. We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.*"

II. If the parent is inferior in his ability to rightly divide the Word of Truth and/or inferior to his child's ability to logically and respectfully prove his arguments . . .

- He should either rally more help to his side, or avoid getting into such debates period.
- II Timothy 2:15 *"Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth."*

III. If the parent is equally matched with his child's question . . .

- He must first reconsider his thesis. Assuming his motivation is the glory of God and his thesis is in line with the Bible, and assuming his rhetorical abilities are on par with his child, this parent should "offer" a debate,
- But never just plunge forward assuming the victory is his. And if he should meet an argument he cannot answer, he must graciously admit he doesn't know and politely request the opportunity to do more research.
- Proverbs 26:4-5 *"Do not answer a fool according to his folly, or you will also be like him. Answer a fool as his folly deserves, that he not be wise in his own eyes."*

IV. If the parent is twice as skilled as his child in validity of content and mastery of language . . .

- He should exercise his rhetorical devices to "divide" the opponent's arguments with Truth. These scenarios often occur when the parent is debating a lie veiled in "truth." This isn't to say that our children are directly attacking God's Word, but that they're legitimately confused because they think their Failure Philosophy is biblical. To show the error of truth/lies, the parent must be at least twice as skilled as his child.
- Abiding on this plateau of debate requires continued study and humility. Humility is the character trait that will keep the parent immersed in God's Word and protect her from being overconfident or arrogant in light of her ability to "divide" her child's arguments.

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V. If the parent is five times more skilled . . .

- His argument should make short order of his child's simply by sharing God's irrefutable Truth in a logical way.
- The ability to quickly dispense with a foolish argument often leads to a dominating, unloving spirit. This parent must always temper his knowledge with love because I Corinthians 8:1 says, "*knowledge makes arrogant, but love edifies.*"

VI. If the parent is ten times more skilled in Truth and communication — he possesses a greater knowledge and handling of God's Word that only comes through intense study and devotion to God — . . .

- He will be able to cogently debate the topic with sincerity and depth that not only proves difficult to counter,
- But also shows deep love and respect for his child.
- In order to be this type of parent, this Ambassador of God must continually return to Ephesians 3:14-19 to remember why we're here: "*For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; and that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God.*"

Parent.
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