

**March
Challenge
Detest the
sin and love
the sinner.**



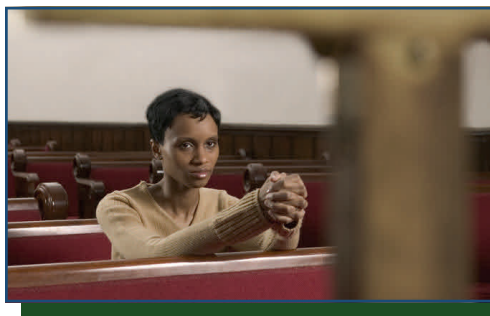
VOLUME 2, ISSUE 7

Teaching the Way of Love

MARCH, 2015

Even with Great Planning, Stuff Happens

Attentive parents understand that what they do as either a mother or father affects their children. That is why they intentionally plan to keep their children on the road to goodness and out of the ditch which is filled with trials and pain. They set expectations of goodness. They set restrictions that keep their children out of spiritual and physical danger. They even build in some planned flexibility for those surprising circumstances.



But despite the best efforts of parents, children will still falter.

When this happens, it can be easy for parents to take it personally. We start thinking, "Where did we go wrong?" and, "How could she do this to us?"

When our children end up in life's ditch, despite our best efforts, we need to keep in mind a few important things. First of all, we have to remember that our children are fallen human beings just like us, with the same free will and the same tendency toward sin and weakness. It is a mistake to assume that your parenting has been in vain just because your child messed up.

Secondly, we need to remember that an individual mistake - or even an individual sin - does not turn our child into a permanent failure or wrong doer. There is a big difference between a single event and a pattern of events; correcting something that happens once is easier than correcting something that has become a habit. While this is true, both a one-time situation and an ingrained habit can be corrected and forgiven.

It can be very tempting for parents to try to fix everything for the child who has made a mistake or entered into a sinful situation. The first knee jerk reaction for many moms and dads is to shelter their offspring from the consequences. This temptation is understandable, especially if we feel guilt about "failing" our child as parents in the first place. But sheltering our children from the consequences of their actions robs them of the opportunity to learn the life lesson that God wants them to learn.

Because humanity passes by way of the family...

PLEASE PRAY THAT

- Parents will be open to the animation of the Holy Spirit as they guide their children towards God's goodness—especially during their trials.
- Parents will model the beauty and the benefits of a Sacramental Marriage.
- The Catholic Church will be a sign of trust and hope in the world.
- Young people may have the courage to forge life-long, faithful commitments.
- The Catholic Church is recognized by all as faithful to God and trustworthy .
- Families will be built upon the Sacrament of Holy Matrimony.
- Parents are able to provide for the health and well-being of their family.

What is the right course of action for parents who know that their child has skidded off the road? The best course for correction includes three vital steps: acknowledge the problem, give them ownership of the situation, guide them as they solve the problem.

While you're not going to remove the consequences for your child, you aren't going to make her face them alone, either. Keep engaging your child using these three questions as your foundation. Be patient as it may take some time for the child to give you the full and true story or develop a workable solution to the issue. Ensure her that you will support her in her efforts to make things right.

During every step of the process, recognize that your child needs healing and forgiveness. She needs to know that you “detest what she did” but that you “still love her.” Whether she is making an effort to face the consequences of her choice or struggling to do so, she should feel confident that her parents will be there throughout the entire journey.

Also let her experience God's forgiveness. Take your child to the Sacrament of Reconciliation, even if there was no mortal sin involved in the bad choice she made. The Sacrament of Reconciliation offers forgiveness, but also grace to help her heal and get back on track. It also shows her that God's love for her is unconditional just as yours is.

Help your child to see that bad choices don't condemn her to the ditch forever. She can choose God's plan. Let her know that your expectations and restrictions remain in place to help her choose what is right and good because you know that God's plan for her is still the best. Everyone is capable of sin and error. Good people are those who refuse to let their bad choices define them. They seek God's forgiveness and get back on the road to God's plan for them.

Here is your March Challenge

If we are serious about leading our children to goodness according to God's plan, we cannot afford to be the naive parents who think that their child is not capable of making bad choices. We need to prepare ourselves to be there for our children when they get themselves into sinful, unhealthy and risky situations. Learn how to work through tough issues with your child by going to: twl4parents.com/march-challenge. Download the practical worksheet on guiding your children through trials.



Are you ready to meet this month's challenge? Give it a try! You'll find that this activity not only improves attitudes toward chores, but also improves the sense of true community within your family. This challenge is just a small part of good Catholic parenting. Visit www.twl4parents.com for more strategies that will help you become the best parent you can be. And for the best systematic approach to parenting, consider purchasing the Teaching the Way of Love program, which can be found at the same website.

This article series is brought to you by Alice Heinzen and Jeff Arrowood, authors of the Teaching the Way of Love home study series for parents. Find out more at www.twl4parents.com/teaching-the-way-of-love.