

# The *Real* Battle of the Strong-Willed Child

*By Sonya Cherici*

In a recent radio broadcast about parenting strong-willed children, a woman who professed to have been a strong-willed child offered advice to parents. She gave pointers for getting children to cooperate; all of which validated behaviors and placed the children in the position of authority. Her suggestion to parents was to placate, negotiate, submit to demands or if fatigued from battle, to basically throw their hands up in defeat when affronted by their children.

My question to the woman and to those who are in agreement with her is, “Why is it more palatable for children to rebel than for adults who exhibit the same behaviors?” Is it because they are small and cute, or they are teens under their care that parents tolerate such behaviors? Would it be acceptable for an adult to go to work and continually challenge his or her boss regarding assigned projects and other tasks? What about throwing temper tantrums when things do not go his or her way? No. Certainly not if they want to keep their job. Rearing children is not to be compared with a 9-to-5. However, God has placed parents in authority over children and expect them to be good stewards and raise children according to His word.

Today, many children are out of control and are practically dominating the home. We live in a world where television shows such as “Nanny 911” and “Super Nanny” are aired to help parents know how to discipline their children. God does not exempt parents with weak parenting skills nor does He exempt over indulging parents. As Christian parents, we are called to lay a godly foundation. That means, pray daily and consult the Bible as a source. God will give the strength and knowledge needed to run a peaceful, orderly household.

I was in an elementary school classroom when a kindergartener suddenly folded her arms and said that she would do nothing. Then she proceeded to throw everything from her desk, ripping up papers on her desk and the boards while shouting, “I will do what I want!” This little girl was not in control of her actions. It was a demonic outburst. Do you recall in the book of Matthew when a man went to Jesus stating that his son had seizures and was often thrown into the fire and water? (Matthew 17:14-18) Do you understand the implications? The boy was under the control of the demon who caused seizures and caused him to throw himself in the fire and water. Similarly, this little girl did not or could not show restraint but went about causing chaos and destruction under the influence of a demon. After a while, the girl was sitted quietly again. I am not saying that every rebellious child is demonized. However, in extreme cases where the child cannot control him or herself it is to be considered. Everyone is in a spiritual battle whether or not it is recognized.

The Bible says that we are not unaware of the enemy’s devices. The enemy’s strategy has always been to deceive or to cause doubt and discouragement. When he spoke to Eve in the garden, he questioned God’s words by asking Eve, “Did God say you may not eat from any tree in the garden?” Similarly, the enemy deceives parents by saying the child is not really rebellious and disobedient, he is just strong willed.

Does changing the name of a behavior make it more acceptable? If you look at the behaviors of the so-called, "strong-will" child in context of the Bible, you would understand that strong-willed is another name for "stubborn and rebellious." On several occasions, God called the Israelites a stubborn and obstinate people (Romans 10:21). Their behavior brought the punishment of God upon them again and again.

The characteristics of strong-willed children include imposing self will above authority, obstinate and outright disobedience. They often have to say the last word or they push to the limits. These traits are in direct opposition to the word of God which says children of the light should be submissive, humble and obedient. If children do not submit to their parents, how will they submit to God? Noted in the Book of 1 Samuel is this powerful verse: "For rebellion is like the sin of divination or witchcraft, and arrogance like the evil of idolatry.

This battle started in Heaven when the devil, who is full of pride and selfish ambition, attempted to make himself equal to God. Look at the traits he exhibited and compare them with your child's behaviors:

- Pride: a lack of humility
- Selfish ambition or Self exaltation: to exalt oneself above everyone and everything. The child exalts his or her will above the parent's.
- Rebellion: defiance or resistance to the governing authority. When children rebel against their parents, they are rebelling against the authority instituted by God.
- Disobedience – breaking the established rule or law.

Simply put, these are traits of the fallen sin nature. "But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth, such wisdom does not come down from Heaven, but is earthly, unspiritual, of the devil." (James 3:14-15)(NIV)

Our God is a God of order. The Bible clearly states (Ephesians 6:1-3) that children must obey their parents. Children must also honor their parents that they may live long on the earth. This responsibility should not be taken lightly. "The authorities that exist have been established by God. Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves." (Romans 13:1-2)(NIV)

It is not easy to overcome the sin nature. As Christian parents we must take up the armor of the Lord daily to assist our children in this effort. Parents have an awesome responsibility of teaching their children to submit according to God's word. Instead of surrendering in defeat, have courage and be strengthened because God is on your side. This calls for fervent prayer and wisdom. Ask God to remove the spirits of rebellion, defiance and disobedience from your child. Pray that God will soften your child's heart and fill him or her with humility. Ask God to remove anything within your child that is not holy; and to fill your child with His Holy Spirit. Pray and fast. Allow God to be your guide.

Children need a balance of love, affection, boundaries, discipline and fervent prayer so that the enemy does not gain a stronghold in their lives. They are all different. Knowing the right balance for each child takes wisdom. It is a good practice to avoid all extremes. At times they may require more face time and

affection. Other times may call for more discipline and communication. Pray about this and ask the Lord for discernment. He knows your children and what they need. Remember, the Lord has unconditional love for you and your children.

My prayer for you is that God will give you the strength to be the parent He has called you to be. I pray that God will replace rebellion and stubbornness with a spirit of love, humility, respect and obedience. The Lord is God. Be encouraged and stand strong. Remember God's word.

Sonya Cherici