



Marilyn Sharpe
Ministries, LLC

(612) 202-8152

[Email Marilyn](#)

2015?

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HOW CONGREGATIONS CAN SUPPORT FAMILIES IN RAISING CHILDREN WHO ARE NOT OVERINDULGED

Jesus was God's gift, sent not to overindulge humankind, but to show the way of life that is God-pleasing. Jesus, who could have claimed center stage, went to those who were excluded, reviled, and accorded little respect. On the poor, he poured out his attention and care ... and he told us to do the same. He turned the social order of wealth and status upside down. "The last shall be first." "Blessed are the poor."

So, how can congregations support families to resist the siren song of cultural consumerism? Let's build robust, cross+generational, year around opportunities for service that include our children and youth. These service opportunities will braid the generations together into a caring community of faith. The young and the old will know and cherish one another. Families can spend quality time together, building a family identity that is generous, compassionate, and helpful.

So, what can we ask children to do at church and beyond those walls, surrounded by adults who help, support, love, and cheer them on?

- Visit those who have few visitors
- Make cards or "refrigerator art" for those who don't live with children
- Usher
- Read the lessons
- Help with food drives
- Read to younger children or older adults with failing eyesight
- Sing songs of faith
- With their families, share what they have with others, who lack clothes, toys, and food
- Pray
- Befriend those new to church or school

DEC 10th, 2014

AVOIDING OVERINDULGENCE

'Tis the season of overindulgence. Wherever we look, there are ads, whose sole goal is to make us and our children discontent with what we have. Advertising lures us into believing that buying something (or a lot of somethings) will make us happy, popular, and successful. Our kids spend hours pouring over catalogs and ads, making lists for Santa. Parents wring their hands, worried about credit card bills in January, disappointment when all the gifts are open, kids who are unappreciative and whiney and apparently never satisfied with what they have. But this isn't the only time of year that parents worry about overindulgence. It's a yearlong epidemic.

So, what is overindulgence anyway? It is more than just having everything our children ever want. It is also

- Having too much stuff. It's a mess. We hear the plaintive cry, "I don't have anything to play with," when they mean they can't find all of the parts or even see what they have.
- Experiencing no opportunity to learn delayed gratification. They want what they want and they want it NOW! The ability to delay gratification is linked with better experiences in adulthood.
- Not making a distinction between wants and needs. Everything gets expressed as "But, I need it!"
- Over-scheduling our kids, so life becomes hectic and frantic and leaves very little time for building relationships and prioritizing activities.
- Believing that kids need to be entertained all of the time.
- Doing for kids what they can do for themselves, thereby hampering their growing competency.
- Soft structure, marked by low expectations, few rules, no enforcement, too much freedom, and kids being in charge.

What are the consequences of overindulgence? They are all First Commandment issues, putting things in the place of God! Overindulged kids

- Exhibit a rampant sense of entitlement, believing they are the center of the universe.
- Expect immediate gratification.
- Demonstrate a disrespectful attitude.
- Don't know what is enough.
- Appear helpless.
- Exhibit Incompetence or uneven competence. (Although they may be brilliant at basketball, they can't get their socks into the laundry basket!)
- Confuse wants and needs.
- Are chronically discontent.
- Have poor boundaries and don't respect the space and possessions of others.
- taking care of their things.
- Don't demonstrate gratitude.
- Lack self-control.
- Have poor relationship skills
- Identify personal goals that are all about aggrandizing the self (money, fame, power, image).

- Create "car bags," filled with non-perishable food, socks, gift certificates for food, personal care items. Carry them in their cars and parents can distribute them to those who are homeless and hungry, asking for help on freeway off ramps.
- Invite friends or new neighbors to join you at church.

Really, the list is endless. Just ask the kids!

Then, make sure adults are on the lookout for these wonderful behaviors and let kids know how much they mean to your church family.

Do your leaders need a trainer and presenter who can help your congregation build children and youth who serve?

Invite Marilyn!

[EMAIL](#)

- Lack compassion

So, what is the antidote to overindulgence? Here are important steps that parents can take in the family:

- Build a sense of community in your family. Use "we" and "us" more often than "I" and "me." Talk about the values for which we stand.
- Make it clear that everyone counts.
- Expect and make sure that everyone helps.
- Link responsibilities with privileges.
- Develop competencies and celebrate them.
- Establish clear, enforced rules and boundaries that are age appropriate.
- Teach compassion and concern for others.
- Model gratitude, respect, self-control, contentment, and responsibility.
- Catch your child doing the right thing.
- Give kids opportunities to do service for others, in your household and beyond your family.

The oft quoted Proverb 22:6 reminds us to "*Train children in the right way, and when old, they will not stray.*" It takes daily teaching, both by our words and our examples, as well as by "catching" our children being generous, kind, compassionate, caring people and letting our children know we are delighted!

[For more on overindulgence, read *How Much is Too Much?* by Clarke, Dawson, and Bredehoft]

The most powerful way to make this a memorable Christmas is with PRESENCE, not PRESENTS. Being together, focusing on one another, spending time together ... these are the traditions that create cherished memories! So, lavish your presence on the ones you love this season.

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