

Taming Your Child's Tongue in 3 Steps

by Ginger Hubbard

Ask heart-probing questions. *The purposes of a person's heart are deep waters, but one who has insight draws them out (Proverbs 20:5).* A wise parent will follow the example of Jesus by reaching beyond outward behaviors to address the issues of the heart. After all, once the heart is reached, the behavior will take care of itself. Asking children questions such as "Did you obey or disobey?" or "Could it be that you are tattling because you are delighting in getting your brother in trouble?" help children evaluate their own hearts and take ownership for their sins, which helps them recognize their need for Christ.

Correct children for foolishness. *For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart (Hebrews 4:12).* It's not our words, but God's words that will penetrate the heart. Pointing children to what God's Word says about foolish behavior and what it can lead to, sheds light where there is darkness, thus convicting the guilty child.

Train children in wisdom. *You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness (Ephesians 4:22).* While it is important to teach children to "put off" wrong behavior (foolishness), it is even more important to train them to "put on" right behavior (wisdom). It is never enough to train children in what not to do, parents must faithfully instruct them in what to do. Training children in wisdom involves teaching them how to replace what is wrong with what is right.

Parents might consider role-playing as an effective way to help children become a doer of the Word. By requiring them to practice the biblical alternative to the sinful behavior, parents are teaching children how to apply the wisdom of God's Word to daily life.

If you would like more information on how to apply this three-step plan to the specific struggles your children are facing, such as whining, lying, and tattling, check out Ginger's book, *I Can't Believe You Just Said That: Biblical Wisdom for Taming Your Child's Tongue.*