Do Our Children Need Manners?
Homebuilders' Essay by Karen Kreider
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I am sure we would all give a hearty "Yes" to this title. I was inspired by this study and became aware of areas I can help my children improve. I think we can make things fun for our children while they are learning.

I heard this illustration given to help our children learn table manners. Set a ceramic pig in the center of the table. Then if brother talks with food in his mouth, he gets the pig in front of him. If mom props her elbows on the table, the pig moves over to her. Whoever has the pig at the end of the meal has to do the dishes.

Our children need to be taught manners early in life. Manners are little ways of developing the child's conscience. Manners stem from the concept of respect. When our children learns to respect and obey their parents at home, then they'll respect their grandparents, ministers, and school teachers. When children learn to obey at home, they will also learn to obey God. What we teach our children will go with them through life. As we meet people from day to day, we want it to be natural for us to give them a friendly smile and let the love of Jesus spill over into their lives.

I would like to share a few Bible verses that apply to this subject. "Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them" (Matthew 7:12). "Giving thanks always for all things ..." (Ephesians 5:20). When we express our thankfulness, we are showing that others make a difference in our lives. Philippians 2 talks about the joy of serving others. We are to lay aside selfishness and treat others with respect and common courtesy.

Manners are a way of communicating to others that they are important to us. Lack of manners and respect is a serious problem in our nation. Good manners have gone "out of style". The decline of manners and respect for authority began in the 60's. Thoughtlessness and rudeness to others quickly took over. Nowadays children are encouraged to be themselves! Don't worry about anyone else!

There was an article in last week's newspaper titled, "Youth out of Hand in Millcreek", (That's my home area!) It went on to say how youth were trespassing through private yards at night. They told an elderly woman who was standing on her porch to go inside and "stop being nosy". Those who confront the youth for their behavior usually get a disrespectful retort. They ended the article by saying, "It's the parents fault." So we see it is very important to teach our children manners and respect. Proper manners and respect affects all areas of our life.

Let's look at a few basic manners we need to teach our children:
AT THE TABLE
—Have a properly set table. Having a napkin handy avoids the sleeve swipes.
—Keep your elbows off the table.
— Chew with your mouth closed.
— Don't take the biggest piece.

— Keep your napkin in your lap.
— Never reach across someone else's plate to get something. Ask politely, "Will you please pass the potatoes?"
— If you must burp, do it as quietly as possible, and then say, "Excuse me."
— In your own home, help clean up after a meal. Then you'll know what's expected when away.

ATTITUDES & ACTIONS
—Say "Thank You" to show appreciation
—Please is a powerful word that takes away demand. It's a way of asking permission.
— I'm Sorry. If your child breaks someone else's toy, is "Sorry" always enough? Sometimes the item should be replaced.
—Say "Will you forgive me?" when you have wronged someone.
—Say "I will forgive you" when someone apologizes to you.
— Watch your tone of voice. Is it harsh and sarcastic? Is it gentle?
—Don't interrupt if someone is talking.
—If you didn't hear someone clearly, say "pardon me", not "huh".
— If someone makes a mistake, or seems different from you, never laugh or tease them. Instead, try to make them feel better by showing acceptance and love.
—Never say anything to anyone that could hurt someone's feelings. Never tease or call someone names.

ON THE PHONE
—Answer with a SMILE in your voice. That means a smile on your face and in your heart!
— Say a cheery, clear "Hello, this is Amy."
—If the caller asks for someone else, say, "Just a minute, I'll get her".
—If your parents are not home, say, "I'm sorry, my mom is not able to come to the phone right now. May I take a message?"
—Never listen in on someone else's conversation.
—Always be honest, but use some tact. Don't blurt out the exact location of mom by saying something like, "She's in the bathroom!!!"
—Be brief and too the point, or make sure the caller has time to chat. Other people's time is valuable.

TALKING WITH OTHERS
—Always answer when spoken to.
—Look them in the eye and give them a friendly greeting.
—Don't brag about yourself.
—Learn to listen before speaking.

Showing respect for each other is what we as parents are really focused on teaching. The best educator of respect is what children see and hear in their own home. Children are mirrors that reflect what they see, and tape recorders that mimic what they hear. What goes on in the home is so important. Our children "might" do what we tell them, but they will probably do what we do. Our homes are the perfect place for practicing the Golden Rule, "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you."

We will need to remind our children how to act. Example: Before going to the store, remind them to keep their hands to themselves and talk softly. Give a reminder if they have a tendency to run ahead or hang their head when spoken to.

As mothers we cannot let our children get away with misconduct. Our Christian witness is at stake. We need to be firm and fair, not haphazard, and not changing depending on our mood. Discipline requires a consistency that our children can count on. (They may not like it, but they can count on it!) I've heard it said that it's not the severity of a consequence that makes it effective, but the certainty of it. Still the punishment must outweigh the joy of the wrong. When our children know exactly what our expectations are and that there will be a penalty for failing to meet those expectations, they will more likely behave in an appropriate manner.

It is vitally important to praise our children for good behavior. Our praise and encouragement have a tremendous impact. Give a smile, a hug, a wink, or a word of praise and appreciation. Our children learn how to treat others by our example.

I have a poem that talks about a mother and her pleasant disposition with her two little children.

HER TWO LITTLE SHADOWS

I saw a young mother with eyes full of laughter
And two little shadows came following after.
Wherever she moved, they were always right there,
Holding on to her skirts, hanging on to her chair —
Before her, behind her, an adhesive pair.
Don't you ever get weary, as day after day,
Your two little tag—alongs get in your way?
She smiled as she shook her pretty young head
And I'll always remember the words that she said:
It's good to have shadows That run when you run;
That laugh when you're happy, And hum when you hum.
For you only have shadows When your life's filled with sun!'

Let's keep the love of Jesus glowing from our life like this mother did.

We need to pray often for our children. God has not left us alone in the task of raising them. Make manners a part of your everyday life. Isaiah 28:10 says, "Precept upon precept; line upon line, here a little, and there a little." Be patient; learning manners is a process that isn't learned overnight.