

Ten Commandments of Parenting

Paul A. Adekunte¹, Matthew N. O. Sadiku², Janet O. Sadiku³

¹International Institute of Professional Security, Lagos, Nigeria

²Roy G. Perry College of Engineering, Prairie View A&M University, Prairie View, TX, USA

³Juliana King University, Houston, TX, USA

ABSTRACT

The concept of “Ten Commandments of Parenting” is adapted from the Ten Commandments, to actually serve as guidance or guidelines that help parents in their roles and responsibilities. While there is not a single, universally accepted version, there are various interpretations that offer valuable insights. Christian parents are well known of asking questions about parenting, seeking for specific and practical advice for rearing their children in the best ways. It therefore follows that most couple understand their general parental responsibilities, but often will speak of the need for help in specifically framing their biblical commitments to optimally shepherd and train their children. In parenting the children as parents or even grandparents, the “ten commandments” from God’s Word are sure to benefit you, your family, and your church. This paper looks at the “Ten Commandments to Parenting” holistically and the benefits to the children, parents, church, and the society in general.

KEYWORDS: *Ten Commandments, parents, parenting, God’s Word, family, training/shepherding, parental responsibility, group dynamics, parenting styles, parenting stress/burnout.*

INTRODUCTION

Parenting is one of the most significant responsibilities in human society, as this lays the foundation for a child’s physical, emotional, social, and moral development, as shown in Figure 1. According to psychologists, educators, and religious scholars do agree to the fact that children are molded or shaped largely by the quality of their upbringing. Good parenting practices do not only influence immediate well-being but also impact future success, relationships, and contributions to society [1].

Out of many frameworks which have been proposed as a guide for parents, one of such is the “Ten Commandments of Parenting.” These are not rigid laws but practical principles rooted in developmental psychology, child welfare, and moral teachings. They are much like the biblical Ten Commandments, serving as timeless guidelines that help parents balance love, discipline, protection, and guidance in raising responsible children [2]. Parenting requires unconditional love, consistent discipline, role modeling, effective communication, quality time, fostering independence, nurturing talents, providing education, ensuring protection, and instilling moral

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values. The principles underlining the Ten Commandments of Parenting reflect the multidimensional role of parents as caregivers, teachers, mentors, and protectors – providing a holistic framework for child-rearing [3-5], as shown in Figure 2.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The idea of “Ten Commandments of Parenting” is a modern adaptation of the biblical Ten Commandments – a set of moral laws given in the Judeo-Christian tradition in Exodus 20: 1-17 and Deuteronomy 5. The Ten Commandments are believed to have been given to Moses on Mount Sinai around 1300 BCE, as described in the Book of Exodus in the Hebrew Bible – laying the foundational ethical guidelines for living a just life [6]. Family and parenting scholars, religious leaders, and psychologists have borrowed the biblical concept to create a structured, and principle-based guidelines for raising children. The phrase “Ten Commandments of Parenting” emerged in the late 20th century as educators and family counselors sought simple yet comprehensive ways to teach parents core principles

of child-rearing. David Trumbull's The Ten Commandments of Parenting, one of the earliest faith-based references offered a Christian-centered guidance for parents using biblical wisdom [2]. Family development specialists at this same time began to use the term in seminars and parenting workshops to communicate key parenting values. From a psychological perspective, the commandments drew on the following major theories of child development:

- Attachment theory – which stressed the need for love, security, and bonding between parent and child [5, 7].
- Parenting style theory – this theory emphasized the balance of warmth and control, shaping discipline-related commandments [4, 8]. The four main parenting styles are: authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, and neglectful, as shown in Figure 3.
- Social learning theory – this theory underscored the importance of role modeling, reflected in commandments that encourage parents to “practice what they preach” [3].

Looking at it from the religious and cultural context, it is known that many churches, mosques, and family institutions have incorporated “Ten Commandments of Parenting” into family life programs, seminars, and workshops. This has led to the blending of spiritual teachings with modern child psychology, making them adaptable across cultures. In the African and Asian traditions, for instance, the extended family plays a key role as these commandments are sometimes extended to include communal responsibilities in raising children.

However, in recent decades, the concept has become widespread in family studies literature, parenting blogs, counseling programs, and family ministries, often framed as timeless principles rather than strict rules. The following authors also popularized parenting principles that aligned closely with the “Ten Commandments” frameworks even though they didn't use the exact title [9, 10].

THE KEY PRINCIPLES

The key principles of effective parenting include among others [11]:

1. Unconditional love – showing your child love, acceptance, and support without condition.
2. Positive reinforcement – focus on encouraging good behavior rather than punishing bad behavior.

3. Clear communication – you communicate effectively, clearly, respectfully, and actively listen to your child.
4. Consistency – establish clear rules and consequences so as to promote consistency and responsibility.
5. Being a good role model – model the behavior and values you want your child to adopt.
6. Prioritizing your child's well-being – put your child's needs first and prioritize their physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being.

TEN COMMANDMENTS OF PARENTING

Mentioned below is the detailed overview of the “Ten Commandments of Parenting” – as a set of guiding principle parents can follow to nurture responsible, emotional stable, and socially adjusted children, which are not rigid laws but are widely recognized values drawn from child psychology, family studies, and educational research:

1. Thou shalt love unconditionally: Children are known to thrive when they feel loved without conditions attached to performance, behavior, or achievements. Hence, unconditional love fosters self-worth, security, and resilience [12].
2. Thou shalt provide consistency and discipline: Children need structure and clear boundaries. Consistent discipline (not punishment) teaches self-control, responsibility, and respect for rules [4].
3. Thou shalt model good behavior: Children learn more from what parents do than what they say. Role modeling, honesty, kindness, patience, and empathy helps children adopt positive values [3].
4. Thou shalt listen and communicate: Effective parenting requires listening to children's feelings, validating their emotions, and fostering open dialogue. This helps to build trust and strengthens the parent-child bond [13].
5. Thou shalt nurture independence: Children should be allowed to make age-appropriate decisions and learn from mistakes. This helps to build self-confidence, problem-solving, and resilience [14].
6. Thou shalt encourage learning and curiosity: Parents should support their child's intellectual growth by encouraging questions, exploration, and creativity both at home and in school [15].
7. Thou shalt respect individuality: Parents must know that every child has unique strengths, weaknesses, and interests. Therefore, respecting

individuality prevents unhealthy comparisons and promotes healthy self-esteem [16].

8. Thou shalt spend quality time together: Shared activities such as meals, reading, and play strengthen family bonds, reduce behavioral problems, and improve emotional well-being [17].
9. Thou shalt provide security and stability: Essential for children's healthy development is a safe and stable environment, i. e., physically, emotionally, and financially [18].
10. Thou shalt practice patience and forgiveness: Parenting involves mistakes, stress, and frustrations. Nonetheless, patience and forgiveness towards both children and oneself are essential keys to maintaining a healthy family relationship [19].

The ten commandments of parenting do lay emphasis on love, discipline, communication, role modeling, respect, patience, and security, which when practiced together would foster well-rounded children who would be capable of thriving in diverse aspects of life [20].

RULES FOR PARENTING

According to Laurence Steinberg, he offered the following seven advises for the parents of teens [21]:

1. What you do matters: It is wrong to believe as parents that by the time children have become teenagers, there is nothing more a parent can do. Studies show that good parenting continues to help teenagers develop in healthy ways, to stay out of trouble and do well in school.
2. You can't be too loving: Parents should not hold back when it comes to pouring on praise and showing physical affection. Don't embarrass them in front of their friends.
3. Stay involved: Parents need to be actively involved in their child's life during childhood and when they are teenagers. Participate in school programs, get to know your child's friends, and also spend time together with them.
4. Adapt your parenting: Many parenting strategies that work at one age stop working at the next stage of development. This is due to the fact that as children get older, for example, their ability to reason drastically improves, and they will challenge you if what you are asking doesn't make sense.
5. Set limits: Most importantly children need love from their parents. Teenagers need rules and limits. Be firm but fair. Relax your rules bit by bit

as your child demonstrates more maturity. If he or she can't handle the freedom, tighten the reins and try again in a few months.

6. Foster independence: Parents should not erroneously equate their teenager's drive for independence with rebelliousness, disobedience or disrespect. It is normal or healthy for adolescents to push for autonomy. Give your children the psychological space they need to learn to be self-reliant, and resist the temptation to micromanage.
7. Explain your decisions: Good parents have expectations, but for your teenager to live up to them, your rules and decisions have to be clear and appropriate. Therefore, as your child becomes more adept at reasoning, it's no longer good enough to say "because I said so."

THE 7-7-7 RULE FOR PARENTS

The 7-7-7 parenting rule is said to refer to several distinct frameworks depending on the context. Some of the most widely discussed versions, each with a clear focus – whether they are developmental stages, connection rituals, stress management, co-parenting logistics, or daily balance [22-26] are:

1. The 7-7-7 parenting rule breaks your child's development into three key phases: 0-7 years for play, 7-14 years for teaching, and 14-21 years for guidance (Play-Teach-Guide). The adoption of parents to these stages, can help nurture creativity, life skills, and independence – which are in line with social, emotional, and cognitive growth.
2. The 7-7-7 rule: Daily connection moments (Morning-Evening-Bedtime). This version encourages dedicating seven minutes at three daily moments to connect with your child, i. e., morning, evening, and before bedtime.
3. The 7-7-7 rule: A stress buster (Breathe-Hold-Exhale). This is a quick breathing technique for parents in stressful moments: Inhale for 7 seconds, hold for 7 seconds, and then exhale for 7 seconds, as shown in Figure 4.
4. The 7 by 7 rule: Alternating weeks in co-parenting. This is used in shared custody arrangements. In this case, the children spend seven consecutive days with one parent, and then switch to the other for the next seven days.
5. The 7-7-7 rule: Balanced daily schedule (Sleep-Learning-Play). This is a lifestyle guideline that breaks a child's day into three balanced parts of: 7 hours sleep, 7 hours school/learning, and 7 hours of play, meals, and family time.

BENEFITS OF THE TEN COMMANDMENTS OF PARENTING

Some of the benefits of applying the Ten Commandments of Parenting principles include [27-29]:

- Stronger family relationships: Honoring parents and showing respect can create a positive cycle of love and respect, extending beyond the immediate family (fostering social cohesion or group dynamics), as shown in Figure 5.
- Improved mental health: Good relationships with parents can reduce stress and anxiety, improving overall well-being.
- Spiritual growth: The obedience to God's commands and honoring parents can lead to spiritual growth and a deeper relationship with God.
- Blessings and prosperity: Honoring parents is believed to bring blessings and prosperity, as promised in the Bible.
- Positive impact on society: Strong families built on love and respect contributes to the overall health of society.
- Moral and ethical guidance: The Ten Commandments provide a moral framework for decision-making and behavior.
- Increased obedience: Following the Ten Commandments can make it easier to obey other biblical commands.
- Freedom and happiness: The obedience to God's commands can lead to freedom and happiness.

CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS TO THE TEN COMMANDMENTS OF PARENTING

Applying the Ten Commandments of Parenting can be challenging due to various obstacles. Some of the hurdles are [3, 4, 30-37]:

- Personal stress and emotional baggage: In this case, parents' own upbringing, stress, and emotional issues can impact their ability to parent effectively. Solution to apply by parents is to practice emotional regulation, schedule quality time, and to affirm their children's worth beyond performance. Note that mindfulness-based parenting helps maintain emotional balance.
- Inconsistent discipline: Parents often swing between harsh discipline and permissiveness due to stress or lack of knowledge. Possible solution is to adopt authoritative parenting – clear rules combined with warmth and consistency. Make use of positive discipline (natural consequences, time-outs, reward systems).

- Inability to communicate effectively: Many children feel unheard due to parental lecturing, cultural hierarchies, or digital distractions. This can be solved via practice of active listening, validate emotions, encourage open dialogue, and limit technology during family interactions.
- Negative role model: Parents may unintentionally model negative behaviors e.g., anger, dishonesty, substance use, etc. The solution would involve the practice of self-awareness and the demonstration of behaviors children should emulate such as respect, responsibility, healthy lifestyle, etc.
- Lack of guidance and structure: Some parents either micromanage (leading to dependency) or neglect guidance (leading to confusion). The solution is to balance structure with autonomy i.e., set clear expectations while allowing age-appropriate decision-making.
- Over-protectiveness: Over-protectiveness (helicopter parenting) or neglect may hinder children's self-confidence. Therefore, there is need to assign responsibilities, encourage problem-solving, and allow safe failures as learning opportunities.
- Overemphasis on academics: Parents may overemphasize academics at the expense of moral development or struggle with access to quality education. The solution is to integrate moral lessons into daily life, read together, support schoolwork, and moral ethical behavior.
- Family conflicts: Family conflicts, divorce, financial instability, or frequent relocations undermine children's sense of security. Hence, the need to maintain routines, minimize exposure to parental conflicts, reassure children, and to seek for external support when needed.

CONCLUSION

The application of the principles of the "Ten Commandments of Parenting" offers a foundational guide for nurturing healthy, respectful, and emotionally secure children. These principles, ranging from showing unconditional love and setting clear boundaries to modeling good behavior and fostering open communication, are not rigid rules, but adaptable guidelines that emphasize consistency, compassion, and presence. Successful parenting is not about perfection, but about intentionality. When parents lead with love, patience, and integrity, they create an environment where children can thrive emotionally, socially, and morally. Hence, the Ten Commandments serve as a reminder that parenting is a privilege and a responsibility, i.e., one that shapes the future.

More information on the “Ten Commandments of Parenting” can be found in the books in [38-42].

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Figure 1. Parenting

Source: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parenting>



Figure 2. The Ten Commandments

Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ten_Commandments



Figure 3. Parenting styles

Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parenting_styles

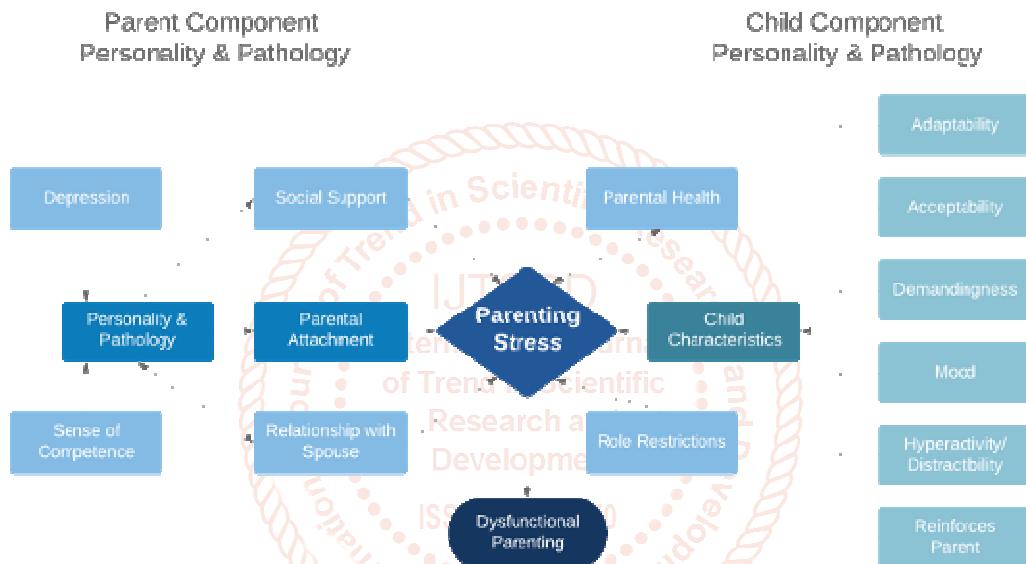


Figure 4. Parenting stress

Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parenting_stress



Figure 5. Sociology of the family

Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sociology_of_the_family