

## Dupable Parents

No one likes to be a dupe, but I am sad to say that there have been times in my past when I was a dupe. I have been tricked, deceived, and even cheated. For my family's and my own sanity, I hope that I have learned how not to become a dupe. The definition of a "dupe" is first, an easily deceived person; or second, a person who functions as the tool of another person or power.

I am not in the minority, having been the object of duping. I have seen others fall prey to deceitful people. It would seem that everyone has to learn this hard lesson of life; even parents. Yes, that is right, I said even parents. I do not mean parents who are being duped by other adults, but rather by their own children. Little, sweet, innocent children have been known to dupe their parents. When I was little, I attempted to dupe (lie to) my mom and dad. I guess I was not very good at it. My backside eventually got tired of all the spankings, so I quit. My mom and dad were just not dupable; at least not my me.

Growing up, I knew several kids who could get away with murder. These kids did nothing wrong; at least not in the eyes of their parents. Teachers would agonize over students who would cause trouble, and then their parents would say, "Why, my little Johnny would never do anything like that." The teachers are left with leaving the problem child up to the principal. When parents view their children as saints, never doing anything wrong, they are putting the child in danger. Do I dare use the phrase "spiritual child abuse"? Yes, "spiritual child abuse" does describe well the actions of parents who believe their children can do no wrong. When we fail or neglect to raise our children in the manner of God's word, we neglect their spiritual well being. Consider what Solomon wrote regarding children: "Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him" (Proverbs 22:15). When a parent chooses not to properly discipline their child, the child will retain his foolishness.

There are those people who believe that physical punishment (spanking) is not necessary nor acceptable regarding child rearing. The question I have for these people is this. If the "rod of correction" is not used to drive the foolishness from the heart of the child, then what will? Was Solomon wrong? When a person denies the necessity of physical punishment, they are saying, "I am smarter than Solomon, whose wisdom was given to him by God."

Speaking on a personal note, I have had family members, as well as brethren, criticize me for the way we discipline our children. All I can say is let them criticize. Parents should have control over their children and their children's behavior. Children should not control the parents! I have seen children who, if they throw a big enough of a fit, will control their parents. Now, is it acceptable for a child to control their parents? Of course not. Does Ephesians 6:4 say, "And, ye children, provoke not your parents to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord?" Certainly not. Ephesians 6:4 actually reads, "And, ye FATHERS, provoke not your CHILDREN to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." Consider the following question, "When you get into an argument with your child, who typically gives in?" Some parents

give in to make their child shut up. Other parents do not budge. I have actually heard some people who would question the wisdom of any parent who would engage in an argument with their child.

Now, back to being a dupe. You might say that one of my fears is being duped by my children. As much as I would like to think that my children never do anything wrong, experience has taught me otherwise. I realize that it is possible for my children to disobey me, lie to me, talk back to me, etc. Either I can choose to believe the possibility exists and, therefore, be on guard, or just say, "My children cannot disobey me or lie to me." I would be a first class dupe to believe the latter. "Why?" you may ask? Because I have caught my children in lies. To escape from trouble, my children have told me they did not do a certain deed when I knew that they did. I would ask them again and again, until they finally would tell me the truth. Now, did my children lie to me? YES. I could choose to ignore what I saw, making an excuse for my kid's behavior. But I do not and I will not. If a child succeeds in duping their parents into believing that the child does nothing wrong, then that child will suffer.

Once again, consider the definition of "dupe." Does this definition define you and your child's relationship? Are you being duped by your children? If you think that you child can do nothing wrong, then you may be a dupe.

John M. Duvall