

## # 112 12/17/01 'Created' consequences teach child a lesson

Last week, I wrote about allowing a child to suffer the consequences of his disobedience. It is best for a child to experience small consequences before encountering severe ones. Waiting to learn a lesson may have harmful effects that last a lifetime. As an example, the child who is constantly rescued from financial disobedience throughout his youth may squander a family's fortune as an adult.

There are times when naturally occurring consequences are very harsh. Parents may choose to plan a consequence that is related to the misbehavior but is not as severe as what might occur naturally. For example, an adolescent may be prone to drive recklessly or too fast. The natural consequence would be tickets and an increased insurance rate.

An increase in insurance rates would be somewhat painful if the teen were the one paying for the insurance. He might have to give up some other pleasures in order to pay for the increase. If, however, the parents are paying the insurance or know that the teen cannot make enough money to pay the increased premium, it is better to prevent the increase before it happens.

The parents need to create a consequence that is related to the misbehavior. In this case, they might decide that the first ticket would result in having the car parked for a month. The second ticket will cause the car to be parked until the premium goes back down to the normal rate.

This is only an example of a "created" consequence. Pray for wisdom in creating consequences that can be used to teach lessons. The point is that the child be allowed to suffer consequences for speeding tickets before he loses his driver's license or is involved in a fatal accident.

A parent's job is to teach responsible behavior. Some children do not learn from verbal lessons. It is not enough to tell them that they must drive within the limits of the law. Their behavior will not change until they are allowed to learn from experience. Our job as parents is to provide that experience when necessary.