



## Prevent Problems

There are many approaches to “management” or “discipline.” But those attitudes and methods don’t value relationship very highly. And in the Body of Christ, it’s ALL about relationship—we are a family!

**1 So the first job of a teacher is to help fill kids’ emotional tanks—or build them up, as the Scripture tells us to do.**

Here are ways to do this:

- Accept them just the way they are.
- Listen carefully when they want to share.
- Encourage them.
- Remember their birthdays.
- Write notes to them “just because.”
- Honor their achievements.
- Spend time with them, doing things kids like to do.
- Attend their games, concerts and award ceremonies.
- Pray for them individually.
- Let them know you are on their side—and so is Jesus.

**2 Your second job is to avoid draining their emotional tanks!** We adults may be used to sarcasm as a way of life; we “don’t mean it” but avoid this with kids. They often can’t tell the difference. There’s a fine line between having a sense of humor and putting kids down. Keep your smile, but never embarrass them.

**3 Your third job is to make the boundaries clear.** Kids want and need boundaries. A child who never pushes the boundaries likely never gains the security he or she needs. Expect kids to test you. Sometimes when kids are pushing the limits or complaining about rules, they are truly asking you to show them love by not giving into their requests or demands. Have a few simple rules, and keep boundaries clear as to what’s OK and what’s not. Removing boundaries causes insecurity, which can cause further acting out!

Tell the kids what you want. Some discipline problems exist not because there are no boundaries but simply because we have never made clear to the kids what those boundaries are. We must remember that our kids have different adults with different expectations in every



sphere of life. Review the game plan at the start of a new year, at the beginning of a new program, after a major break or holiday or whenever kids seem to be forgetting what they've agreed to do.

Part of our role in the classroom is to be the solid rock that kids can test, push away, and then come back to when they need to be loved and filled up again. When we don't consistently enforce limits, we lose our ability to be the secure foundation that kids want and need.

**4 Fourth, we should be people who expect the best.** As mentors and disciplers, we need to have the highest hopes for our kids. They want to know how to live and they want to know how to please us. Our expectations will subtly show through in all we do. They pick up on these expectations and consciously or subconsciously attempt to live up to them. Therefore, if we believe the best and hope the best, we're more likely to get the best!

**5 Last but certainly not least, in unconditional love, we need to see ourselves as disciplers!** Know that teaching kids what is right to do is immensely valuable. Be willing to give lots of loving patience to that process. Just as Jesus patiently loved His disciples (and us) through

failures and shortcomings, we must do the same with our students. Part of our work is to love them to maturity in their faith. Look at every discipline challenge as an opportunity to be Jesus in their lives! Every problem is an opportunity for us to help them see where they can grow in Christ and how to do that.

In order to do this, **we cannot have the focus on ourselves; our focus needs to be on the kids and what will benefit them.** Kids know instantly if we are more concerned about ourselves or them. Be ready to have tough skin, to receive little thanks and to grin and bear some rudeness from time to time.

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**Remember: Rules without relationship spawn rebellion.** When we know we are loved by someone, we value that person's requests; we easily cooperate with him or her. Kids who have experienced our love, even when they know they are being unlovable, behave differently. The "hardest to love" and "hardest to discipline" kids may be the ones who are not experiencing unconditional love at home. Every kid will benefit from your showing God's love and grace, but these kids will gain more from your simple helpings of extra love and acceptance!