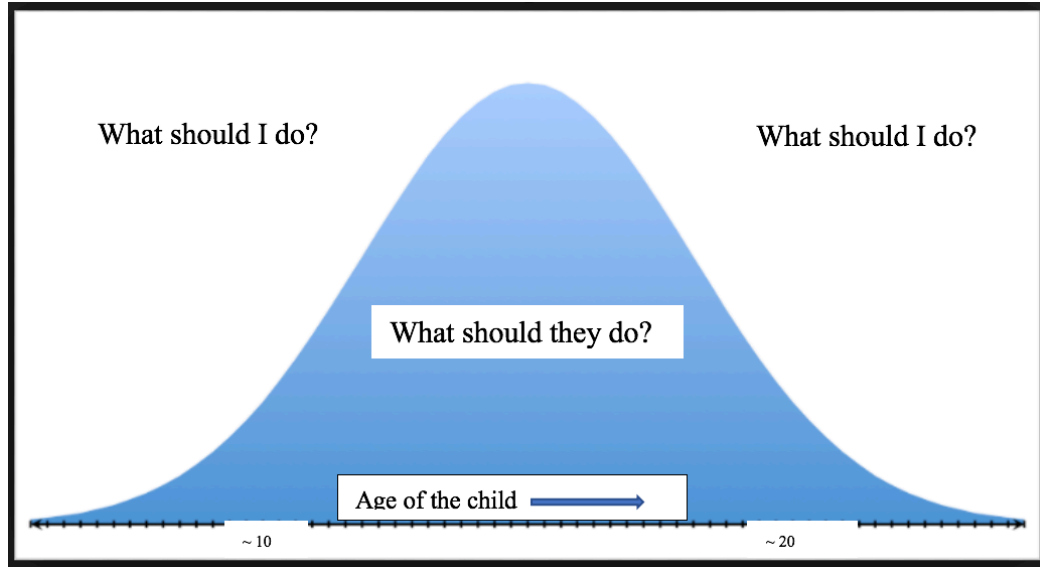


### The Parenting Curve

By David DeWitt



**It is my observation that Biblical parenting takes the form of something like a bell-shaped curve.**

When a child is very young, a baby through the first years, parenting has nothing to do with instruction about what the child should do. It's all about modeling a lifestyle for the child to observe and imitate. As a parent, it's about **What should I do?**

As the child grows and develops, parenting gradually becomes more and more about instructing a child *in the way he should go*, with specifics about what is right and wrong in the culture we live in at the time. As a parent, it's no longer just about What should I do? It gradually, but definitely, becomes about what impact my instruction has on my children. It's more about, **What should they do?**

As he or she becomes independent, my son or daughter is no longer a child. Then my question reverts back to what it was when they were as an infant. As a parent, it is once again about **What should I do?**

But the specifics, of what I should do, change. If a child is acting like an adult, independent from parental authority, then they should be treated as an adult. In 1 Corinthians 5, Paul addressed an adult child committing adultery, apparently, with his father's second wife (since she is never called his mother). Paul refers to several Deuteronomy passages (13:5; 17:7, 12; 21:21; 22:21), concluding the Corinthian believers should *remove the wicked man from among yourselves*. The reason Paul gives is *that a little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough* (1 Corinthians 5:6).

If I'm a parent of an older *stubborn and rebellious* sinful child, there may be nothing I can do to change their behavior. **But that doesn't mean there is nothing I can do. There is a lot I can do and must do.**

If a parent does nothing about a *stubborn and rebellious* older, independent child living in sin, then that parent is telling his or her other children, and their grandchildren or future grandchildren, that such behavior is acceptable. **As a parent, whatever you tolerate you endorse.** If I do nothing about, say, alcoholism, homosexuality, co-habitation, drug abuse, theft, etc., then I am telling the rest of my family that it's okay. As for me, I can't afford to do that. So, my parenting role changes, but the basic question reverts back to the one that began my parenting when they were infants and very young. Not what should they do? but **What should I do?**