

Susanna Wesley's 16 Rules of Parenthood

Susannah Wesley was the 25th child of twenty-five, and the mother of nineteen children, including John and Charles Wesley. Through much adversity, she dedicated her life to instilling a sense of Christian Destiny into each of her children. Her children went on to change the world.

Here are 16 rules she laid down in her home.



1. Eating between meals not allowed.
2. As children they are to be in bed by 8 p.m.
3. They are required to take medicine without complaining.
4. Subdue self-will in a child, and those working together with God to save the child's soul.
5. To teach a child to pray as soon as he can speak.
6. Require all to be still during Family Worship.
7. Give them nothing that they cry for, and only that when asked for politely.
8. To prevent lying, punish no fault which is first confessed and repented of.
9. Never allow a sinful act to go unpunished.
10. Never punish a child twice for a single offense.
11. Comment and reward good behavior.
12. Any attempt to please, even if poorly performed, should be commended.
13. Preserve property rights, even in smallest matters.
14. Strictly observe all promises.
15. Require no daughter to work before she can read well.
16. Teach children to fear the rod.

On Discipline

Susannah Wesley believed that for a child to grow into a *self-disciplined* adult, he/she must first be a *parent-disciplined* child. To her, the stubborn flesh was the hardest battle for Christians to fight, and godly parents would do well to equip their children to overcome it early. She writes:

“When the will of a child is totally subdued, and it is brought to revere and stand in awe of the parents, then a great many childish follies ... may be passed by. . . . I insist on the conquering of the will of children betimes, because this is the only strong and rational foundation of a religious education ... when this *is thoroughly done, then a child is capable of being governed by reason and piety.*”



One day one of her daughters wished to do something which was not altogether bad, but which was not right. When she was told not to do it, she was not convinced.

It was late and she and her mother were sitting beside a dead fire. Her mother said to her: “Pick up that bit of coal.” “I don’t want to,” said the girl. “Go on,” said her mother. “The fire is out, it won’t burn you.” “I know that,” said the girl. “I know it won’t burn me but it will blacken my hands.” “Exactly,” said Susannah Wesley. “That thing which you wish to do won’t burn, but it will blacken. Leave it alone.”

See last page for book reviews on Susanna Wesley.