

Made This Way

How to Prepare Kids to Face
Today's Tough Moral Issues



LEILA
MILLER

with

TRENT
HORN

LEILA MILLER
with
TRENT HORN

MADE THIS WAY

How to Prepare Kids to
Face Today's Tough Moral Issues



Contents

THE REASON FOR THIS BOOK	11
1. GETTING KIDS TO HEAVEN	13
2. UNDERSTANDING NATURAL LAW	19
3. SEX OUTSIDE OF MARRIAGE	
<i>What the Church Teaches</i>	27
<i>Advice for Little Kids</i>	33
<i>Advice for Big Kids</i>	39
4. SAME-SEX MARRIAGE	
<i>What the Church Teaches</i>	47
<i>Advice for Little Kids</i>	55
<i>Advice for Big Kids</i>	60
5. DIVORCE	
<i>What the Church Teaches</i>	69
<i>Advice for Little Kids</i>	75
<i>Advice for Big Kids</i>	81
6. CONTRACEPTION	
<i>What the Church Teaches</i>	87
<i>Advice for Little Kids</i>	95
<i>Advice for Big Kids</i>	102

7. ABORTION

<i>What the Church Teaches</i>	111
<i>Advice for Little Kids</i>	118
<i>Advice for Big Kids</i>	124

8. REPRODUCTIVE TECHNOLOGIES

<i>What the Church Teaches</i>	133
<i>Advice for Little Kids</i>	141
<i>Advice for Big Kids</i>	146

9. MODESTY

<i>What the Church Teaches</i>	155
<i>Advice for Little Kids</i>	161
<i>Advice for Big Kids</i>	167

10. PORNOGRAPHY

<i>What the Church Teaches</i>	175
<i>Advice for Little Kids</i>	180
<i>Advice for Big Kids</i>	185

11. TRANSGENDER IDENTITY

<i>What the Church Teaches</i>	195
<i>Advice for Little Kids</i>	202
<i>Advice for Big Kids</i>	208

12. HOMOSEXUALITY

<i>What the Church Teaches</i>	215
<i>Advice for Little Kids</i>	223
<i>Advice for Big Kids</i>	230

MADE TO BE . . . FULLY HUMAN	239
--	-----

GETTING KIDS TO HEAVEN

There's an old joke that fits me well:

Before I got married, I had eight theories about raising kids; now I have eight kids and no theories.

When I enrolled my first child in a wonderful Catholic elementary school many years ago, I marveled at all the large families I encountered. I remember seeing a mother of eight come onto campus one day with all her little ones in tow. Her youngest, a two-year-old, was barefoot and had peanut butter crusted around his mouth. As a young mom, I smugly thought that no matter how many children I had, *I* would never allow such a thing.

Now I roll with laughter as I think about all the times my own eight children went out barefoot and with dirty faces!

I share this because I understand that being a parent is hard work, and I don't have any complicated or magical parenting theories to offer. What I do have is the guidance of Christ, his Church, and the witness of the saints, plus the next-best teachers—humility and experience. I respect that parents know their own children better than anyone else does, and so I simply want to give parents, or anyone who interacts

with young people (like aunts, uncles, grandparents, and even youth ministers) some tools that have helped me in my own vocation as a Catholic mother hoping to raise saints.

Friend, Parent, or Friendly Parent?

When raising children, there are two extremes we need to avoid: that of *permissive* parents who ditch rules in order to be their child's "friend," and that of *authoritarian* parents who crush their children under harsh rules. (Ironically, these different parenting styles often lead to the same kind of child: one who has low self-esteem and makes bad life choices.)

A better approach is to be an *authoritative* parent.

Unlike permissive parents (who seem to operate from fear or neglectfulness), we aren't merely our child's "friend," and we lay down the law when necessary. We know, as the Bible says, that "all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant; [but] later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it" (Heb. 12:11). But unlike authoritarian parents (who seem to operate from anger or pride), we don't teach our children to disdain us or be afraid of us through cold, harsh punishment. We follow St. Paul's instruction to "not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord" (Eph. 6:4).

One study of college students showed that whereas children with permissive or authoritarian parents sought advice from their peers, children with authoritative parents were more likely to seek advice from Mom and Dad.¹ This reminds me of a time I had lunch with my friend's lovely teenage daughter who said she went straight to her open-hearted mother when she wanted to know the meaning of a sexual term she'd heard. Her mother gave her a clear answer, placed in the context of Church teaching, and the young woman was satisfied.

“My mom always tells me the truth,” she told me, “and I would never think to go to my classmates or friends with that kind of question.”

That is exactly what we want our children to say about us, and being a parent who is properly authoritative gets us to that point. My children have always come to me with difficult moral questions precisely because they know that I will not shame them, or give them evasive “non-answers,” or tacitly approve immorality. However, the answers I give will always be tailored to their *level of development*.

EDUCATION OR INDOCTRINATION?

Permissive parents may believe it is wrong to “indoctrinate” their children. They may say that a child should be free to make up his own mind on various moral issues. But the word *indoctrinate* literally means “to teach,” and even permissive parents indoctrinate their children to value tolerance, open-mindedness, and compassion toward others. So, the question is not, “Will you indoctrinate your children?” but, “With what ideas will you indoctrinate them?”

Made to Receive

Anyone who teaches a child should heed this wisdom from St. Thomas Aquinas: “That which is received is received according to the mode of the receiver.”²

If you pour water into a glass, it forms a column of water. If you pour water onto a plate, it forms a puddle. You can’t get a column of water on a plate because the plate isn’t made to receive water in that way. The same is true when it comes to “pouring” knowledge and truth into a child’s mind.

A child's brain can only receive what it was made to receive, and children's brains change a lot as they develop. The littlest kids (toddlers and preschoolers) understand right and wrong as a matter of avoiding punishment or receiving rewards. As they get older (elementary school), they understand moral concepts like "fairness" or "justice" (consider how they protest an "unfair" rule).

During this "age of innocence" before puberty (also called the "latency period"), a child's mind is not made to receive graphic or explicit truths about the tough moral issues, especially regarding sexuality. That's why the Pontifical Council on the Family's document *The Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality* (TMHS) says of pre-adolescents:

This period of tranquility and serenity must never be disturbed by unnecessary information about sex. During those years, before any physical sexual development is evident, it is normal for the child's interests to turn to other aspects of life So as not to disturb this important natural phase of growth, parents will recognize that prudent formation in chaste love during this period should be indirect, in preparation for puberty, when direct information will be necessary (78).

Throughout the rest of this book, we will show you how to explain these subjects to little ones if they stumble across them. We'll also show you how to sit down with "big kids" (usually those who have hit puberty) who are ready to hear about these subjects from you. "Without showing anxiety, fear or obsessive concern," *The Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality* reminds us, "parents will not let cowardice or convenience hinder their work" of educating their children. Instead:

In a *positive and prudent* way, parents will carry out what the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council requested: “It is important to give suitable and timely instruction to young people, above all in the heart of their own families, about the dignity of married love, its role and its exercise; in this way they will be able to engage in honorable courtship and enter upon marriage of their own” (94).

In answering *children’s questions*, parents should offer well-reasoned arguments about the great value of chastity and show the intellectual and human weakness of theories that inspire permissive and hedonistic behavior. They will answer clearly, without giving excessive importance to pathological sexual problems (96).

The Worst Thing in the World

Being an independent adult is not just about being able to hold a job and balance a budget. If your child hasn’t developed those skills by adulthood, then he might end up in some lawyer’s office filing for bankruptcy—which is bad but isn’t the *worst* thing in the world.

What’s worse is your child becoming an adult and not knowing the difference between good and evil. Or, if he does know it, not having the maturity and the will to choose what is good. If our children aren’t developed in *those* areas, then they might end up separated from God for all eternity—which *is* the worst thing in the world.

So what’s holding back so many parents from teaching their children these important truths about right and wrong? Well, some may be embarrassed about their own past (or current) lifestyles and not want to discuss the issues for fear of being considered a hypocrite. Others may not want to have a confrontation with their kids, hoping that

if they are just “nice” or passive, then everything will work out. Or, they think they can simply say, “This is what we believe!” or “We don’t do that!” because they don’t know how to share *the reasonable foundation* for our beliefs.

If there is one underlying truth I have found in forming my own teenagers, it’s this: they will accept and embrace a worldview that *makes sense to them*—even if that worldview is difficult to live out in our culture. They are “made to receive” not just rules or Church teaching, but *reasons* that support those teachings. And, praise God, those reasons can be adapted for any child, because they are based on a universal principle called *the natural law*.

Endnotes

- 1 Dell Elaine Bednar & Terri Fisher, "Peer referencing in adolescent decision making as a function of perceived parenting style," *Adolescence* 38 (2003) 607–21.
- 2 Thomas refers to the principle multiple times in his writings. For example, "the intellect, according to its own mode, receives under conditions of immateriality and immobility, the species of material and mobile bodies: for the received is in the receiver according to the mode of the receiver," (*Summa Theologiae* I.84.1).
- 3 Seventh and last joint debate with Steven Douglas, held at Alton, Illinois, Oct. 15, 1858. Cited in Scott Horton, "Lincoln—The Eternal Struggle," *Harper's Magazine*, February 12, 2009, <https://harpers.org/blog/2009/02/lincoln-the-eternal-struggle/>.
- 4 Martin Luther King Jr. "Letter from a Birmingham Jail." Available online at: https://www.africa.upenn.edu/Articles_Gen/Letter_Birmingham.html.
- 5 Saint Thomas Aquinas, *In Duo Praecepta Caritatis et in Decem Legis Praecepta. Prologus: Opuscula Theologica*, II, No. 1129, ed. Taurinen. (1954), 245. Cited in *Veritatis Splendor*, 40.
- 6 Cardinal Robert Sarah. *God or Nothing: A Conversation on Faith* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2015), 116.
- 7 Charles Rice, *50 Questions on the Natural Law: What It Is & Why We Need It* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2011), Kindle edition.
- 8 C.S. Lewis. *Mere Christianity* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1952), 23.
- 9 *Summa Theologiae* I–II. 91.2.
- 10 See J. Budziszewski, *What We Can't Not Know* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2011).
- 11 Tom W. Smith and Jaesok Son. "Trends in Public Attitudes about Sexual Morality" (2013). Available online at: http://www.norc.org/PDFs/sexmoralfinal_06–21_FINAL.PDF.
- 12 Jerald G. Bachman, Lloyd D. Johnston, and Patrick M. O'Malley, *Monitoring the Future: Questionnaire Responses from the Nation's High School Seniors, 2000* (Ann Arbor: Michigan, Institute for Social Research, University of Michigan, 2001).
- 13 Frank Sheed, *Society and Sanity* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2013), 99.
- 14 Prostitutes were called *porne* and were similar but distinct from the larger class of people who engaged in sexual immorality outside of marriage.
- 15 Jean M. Twenge, Ryne A. Sherman, and Brooke E. Wells. "Changes in American Adults' Sexual Behavior and Attitudes, 1972–2012," *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, Volume 44, Issue 8, November 2015, 2284.
- 16 *Ibid.*, 84.
- 17 I am indebted to Pope St. John Paul II's personalism for this argument from "the language of the body." Similar themes can be found in Alex Pruss, *One Body: An Essay in Christian Sexual Ethics* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2013).
- 18 Fulton J. Sheen, *Life is Worth Living* (New York: McGraw Hill Book Company, 1954), 61.
- 19 Kimberly Hahn and Mary Hasson, *Catholic Education: Homeward Bound: A Useful Guide to Catholic Home Schooling* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1996), 214.