

CHAPTER TWO

WILL YOUR CHILD EVER GO TO PRISON

“Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it” (Proverbs 22:6)

Every parent probably thinks about the possibility that his or her child will grow up and go to prison some day. It is a very real possibility. Mass media and the expanding prison system have made parents aware of the risks involved for every child in this age of drugs and juvenile delinquency. It is relatively easy today to run afoul of the law. Well-meaning parents can bury the frustration they feel in age-old clichés and structured discipline without regard for the outcome or the end product. They try to do the “right thing” but they really don’t know how to do it.

A quick evaluation of most prison files will reveal one overriding consideration. Almost all convicts have had some kind of legal discipline trouble as a juvenile. When it happens very few parents expect it to go any further, and when it does develop into serious trouble they have difficulty believing it until it results in a penitentiary term. Somewhere in the makeup or training of the youngster were the seeds for further discipline problems after the initial brush with the law as a child. The sad part about this entire situation is the truth that almost every social factor affecting children’s behavior can be related to some extent to relationships with their parents.

Let’s look at something you may have never considered. The *strong-willed child* or the young person who is prone to *excess* is often a likely candidate for a prison cell. It’s not necessarily the kid from the wrong side of the tracks or the local goofball. He may be arrested, but he will probably complete a supervised probation. It is the young man prone to generally overdoing in everything that can result in excess drugs, alcohol, money, and violence (see Chapter Five). Crime is related to these excesses which can lead to a prison term. Following are seven points that parents should consider in their concern to avoid juvenile and adult prison problems:

1. Radiate the love of Jesus Christ in your life and marriage. Provide a secure and peaceful home in which your child can grow up, and learn to know the Lord.
2. Control printed material, television, associations and associates until the child is old enough to judge right from wrong under your guidance.
3. Teach the child respect for legal and lawful authority.
4. Give the child what it needs and not what it wants. A conservative lifestyle and the use of economic common sense will do much to control the impulse to go to excess.
5. Deal with the excessively stubborn and strong-willed child as early in life as possible. Seek professional help at the age of two or three years if necessary. You may save your child a lifetime of trouble and a prison education.
6. Radiate a positive attitude toward life and teach your child the same virtue.
7. Instill in your child a deep religious commitment through training and knowledge of our Lord and Savior. A child’s personal relationship with Jesus Christ is the only hope of your success as a parent which can lessen much of the chance that your child will ever see the inside of a prison as an inmate.

Sometimes there is no logical reason why someone will commit a capital crime. Many prison terms have been started by mixing legal prescription drugs and alcohol. Others result from stormy marriages or ill-considered responses to significant problems such as marital infidelity or a triangle affair. But behind it all is often a rebellious will and a weak religious faith. Parents do have a good deal of control over tomorrow’s prison inmate population and again Jesus Christ is the answer to keeping your child out of prison.