

THE FOURTH RULE FOR LIFE

by Brian Burgess, Forefront Families LLC

Rule 4 from Bill Gates to teenagers:

'If you think your teacher is tough, wait till you get a boss!'

I've heard so many complaints by students over the years about their teacher being too tough and expecting too much. This statement usually comes from students whose parents have been too weak on them. The parents have not only rescued them from trouble in the community or at school, they have rarely expected them to do any chores or take on any responsibilities.

One day a parent said to me that she didn't want her child to do any chores or take on responsibilities yet because they would have more than enough to do when they became an adult. What a fatally flawed argument! A major parental role is to shape a child to take on their responsibilities in the real world. A child's work ethic will come from seeing their parents working hard around home and by children sharing the workload as team members in the family.

We need to be tough on our children and hold them to a high standard. Children want to please their parents and will do anything to get that positive response. "Well done! You did a great job! Thank you." Your child and their future bosses will thank you. I had a humbling yet incredibly pleasant experience when I went to pick up my son from his work. He introduced me to his boss who then said, "Mr. Burgess, I'm so pleased to meet you. You and your wife must have done a lot of things right because your son is incredible. We just love having him here." It almost brought me to tears and I have never forgotten this praise. We were tough on our kids, but we demonstrated a lot of love, too. I have had similar experiences with bosses and work colleagues where our daughter has worked.

I'm not telling you this for any aggrandizement, but simply to say that what I have explained to you about preparing our children for the real world is based on my experience as a parent and as a teacher and school administrator. No boss wants to hear from your child, "Well, I was in Special Education classes or I was abused when I was a child. That's why I am not doing my job to your standards. I'll have to get my mom to come and have a talk with you." You cannot go to your child's place of work and blast the boss because he is being too tough.

The solution to this is: When your children are very young teach them respect for all forms of authority. It starts with them respecting you. Give them respect and train them to respect others, respect the earth and especially to respect God. When they see us being respectful in relationships they will model on that. If they do not observe us being respectful, that's how they will act. If our

children see us being lazy, not completing tasks and being lax with them they will think their boss is being over-tough on them if he/she expects any more than that. Bye-bye job!

We have all heard the phrase, "There is no freedom without responsibility." If our child displays a very responsible attitude they will probably be given more freedom at home and within their job because they can be trusted. If they have to be 'stood over' regularly to get any sort of work out of them the boss is going to be saying things our child may not like to hear. This is usually interpreted as being too tough. So few people today seem to want to take responsibility for their actions. It's always somebody else's fault. In summary, it is our duty as a parent to ensure our children are adequately equipped for the real world well before they go to work.

If you have any comments or questions on this subject, please do not hesitate to contact us at sally@forefrontfamilies.org. We invite you to also check out our website at www.forefrontfamilies.org and our blog site at www.forefrontfamilies.blogspot.com for further assistance.