

## Have Parents Lost Their Rights?

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News of the arrest of prominent Tele-Evangelist, Reverend Creflo Dollar, for simple battery and cruelty to children caught everyone by surprise. Dollar was arrested after his fifteen-year-old daughter called 9-1-1 reporting an alleged incident of abuse at the hands of her father. In the call that lasted for about 5 minutes, she went on to add that this was not the first time that this type of violence had taken place. News outlets all over America paraded the details of the incident, replaying the phone call the minor made to 9-1-1. USA Today reported that the police report from the Fayette County Sheriff's Office in Georgia, states that the minister choked his daughter then threw her to the ground, punched her and hit her with his shoe. The responding officer noticed a scratch on the daughter's neck near her throat; the daughter said her father gave her the scratch during the fight. When interviewed by Police, Dollar said he tried to restrain his daughter when she "became very disrespectful" after he told her she couldn't go to a party. Dollar admitted to spanking his daughter and wrestling her to the floor, but said it was because she hit him. Dollar was arrested and then released a couple hours after posting a \$5,000 bond. In an effort to be transparent and tell his version of the events, Dollar did not shy away from the issue before his World Changers International congregants. "Like all of us who are parents (know), there are times when discipline and training our kids can become pretty intense," Dollar said. "The truth is that a family conversation with our youngest daughter got emotional, emotions got involved, and things escalated from there." Dollar went on to state that he did not kick or punch his daughter and the scratch on her skin was a prior skin abrasion from eczema. Dollar stated that the incident was part of the devil's plan, "The devil knows in order to discredit the message, you have to first of all discredit the messenger." Since the incident, support for Dollar has increased. Hundreds of Christian parents and members of World Changers have manifested their support and poured out prayers for the family on social media and elsewhere. Many have called on others to withhold judgment until all the facts are revealed. In more ways than one, the Dollar family is symbolic of many American families today. While their celebrity status within the Christian world is not reflective of most families, the deterioration of parental authority and the erosion of healthy interactions between parents and children is of common occurrence in too many families. Too many day-to-day cases indicate that parents have lost their rights to be parents. It would seem that parents are only obligated to provide for their children but have no say in the way their children live their lives or the choices they make. Toddlers shopping with parents only need to throw a few seconds of tantrum before being showered with their demands by embarrassed parents. By the time they are in middle school it is clear in many American families that parents work to fulfill their children's demands. Keeping teenagers appeased often becomes the number one priority in many a home. If children go on to do well in school it comes as an additional bonus but not an expectation. In fact, modern day parents are prone to grant rewards based on demands and not on compliance. This form of

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“reward on demand” parenting has reversed the God-given roles of parents and children. Parents are not the ones setting the rules and expectations. Children’s love for parents is hinged on what parents can purchase for them. Thus children have lost complete respect for parents and do not accept or yield to their authority. In an effort to fulfill all the demands of their children, parents have given children a false sense of entitlement. It is not surprising then that teenagers who have been spoiled to believe that their wishes are their parents commands would have a hard time accepting any form of decline from their parents. What can parents do to re-claim their parental rights?

1. Remember that you are still the parent. As long as you had some part to play in their pro-creation and are the adult responsible for paying the bills and providing for the physical, emotional and spiritual well-being of your children, you are still in charge. 2. It’s perfectly OK to say no. Your child will not be traumatized if you say no. They will not die if they don’t have that pair of sneakers or that gadget. Having to deal with declensions is a real part of life and your child needs to get used to it. 3. Only obedience and good behavior should be rewarded. Rewarding tantrums, rudeness, disobedience, poor performance in school, etc. only sends the message to your child that they can easily manipulate you and other adults. If you can be easily manipulated then you are not worthy of being respected as a figure of authority. 4. Even if you can afford it, never buy your child every thing they ask for. Some parents like to count it as a sense of personal achievement to showcase that they can purchase every thing their child wants. This practice only feeds a false sense of greedy entitlement in children. It is emotionally unhealthy. 5. You have a right to ask questions and expect an answer. Parents need to ask more questions and stop assuming that things are ok or that their kids get it. Children may act annoyed but knowing that their parents will ask questions forces them to become accountable for their actions and choices. 6. Set clear boundaries about how your children are expected to treat you very early on. No child should ever be too young to understand who their parents are and how they should be respected. The Biblical advise to “Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it” (Proverbs 22:6), should be the rule of law for good parenting.

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