



## People Are Talking About QUEEN MOM . . .

“*Queen Mom* is the most encouraging book about parenting I have ever read. Brimming with practical examples and biblical truth, it illustrates how to be the mom God has called me to be—from my children’s toddler years through their teenage years. If I could recommend only one book to busy young moms, this would be it.”

—Elizabeth, former elementary school teacher and mother of two toddlers

“The section of *Queen Mom* that really spoke to me said I could quit comparing my kingdom to those around me. Satan loves to discourage us, and this is one of his tactics! But God’s plan is different for each household. This book is a great read, no matter what stage of child rearing you’re in.”

—Cheryl, mother of four teens

“I used to wonder how I’d ever have any wits left to deal with my kids when they reached the teen years. But Brenda’s honesty and practical guidelines in *Queen Mom* have given me the tools I need to deal with the stage I’m currently in. And now I can approach the future years with courage and confident parenting. I needed this book!”

—Amy, writer and mother of two elementary-age kids

“Brenda’s down-to-earth style and humor help me not to lose hope while dealing with the daunting task of raising my son in a godly fashion. The ideas in *Queen Mom* lead me to think through my priorities and rules of conduct, and they challenge me to check everything against the Bible’s solid foundation.”

—Debra, director of women’s ministry and mother of a teen son

## and About Brenda Garrison

“Warmth and genuineness set the stage as Brenda Garrison engages audiences both large and small with her wise, original, and thoroughly entertaining speaking style and talent.”

—Julie Ann Barnhill, international speaker  
and author of *She’s Gonna Blow!*

“With humor and depth, Brenda Garrison reached each woman in our audience. She welcomed her audience into her life experiences and shaped her role as a godly woman, wife, mother, and friend to encourage us to remove our own masks of what a stay-at-home mom or Christian looks like. She drew us closer to grace and allowed us to examine ourselves through the transparency of her own life. To say that she was enjoyed would be an understatement.”

—Sarah Moon, MOPS coordinator in Peoria, Illinois

“Brenda is a wonderful teacher and storyteller. I want to learn more from her.”

“Women can identify with Brenda as she observes life vulnerably and honestly.”

“Brenda offers humor, insight, and hope, based on God’s grace and truth.”

—Retreat attendees

“Brenda is refreshing. I liked her challenge to be authentic.”

“I love . . . her humor and transparency.”

“I appreciate her sharing where God has brought her from. Brenda pumps you up!”

—MOPS leadership seminar attendees



brenda garrison



Queen Mom

a royal plan for restoring  
order in your home

**Standard**<sup>®</sup>  
PUBLISHING  
*Bringing The Word to Life*

Cincinnati, Ohio

Published by Standard Publishing, Cincinnati, Ohio  
www.standardpub.com

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Project editor: Lynn Lusby Pratt

Cover and interior design: Brand Navigation

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ISBN 0-7847-1986-1

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Garrison, Brenda, 1959-

Queen mom : a royal plan for restoring order in your home / Brenda Garrison.

p. cm.

ISBN 0-7847-1986-1 (perfect bound)

1. Households--Religious aspects--Christianity. 2. Mother and child--Religious aspects--Christianity. 3.



Households--Decision making. 4. Family--Decision making. I. Title.

BV4526.3.G38 2007

248.8'431--dc22

2006029594

13 12 11 10 09 08 07 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1



**For my incredible husband, Gene,  
and our princesses—  
Katie, Kelsey, and Kerry.**

Special thanks to Eric, Deb, and Danielle  
and to my praying ladies—  
Linda, Toni, Donna, Lora, Diane F, Dede,  
Deb, Crystal, Ann, and Diane Mc.





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## chapter one

# Who Took My Crown and Scepter?

### When and How Mom Got Dethroned

“Then tell your story.”

My heart almost stopped. I could barely hear what my friend said next. *Tell my story! I can't do that. What will people think of me?*

The advice came matter-of-factly as my friend nudged me toward writing this book. She has great success meeting women where they are by telling her story and being transparent. Was I ready to be open enough to tell my story to thousands of fellow moms? Was this absolutely necessary? I came to realize that, yes, it was.

The more I thought about the story of my mothering career, the more I had no clue what to say. I was not one of those moms God blessed with a compliant child right off the bat just to build her mommy self-esteem. No, God knows I have a pride problem, so he gave me just what I needed—a strong-willed child . . . followed by another strong-willed child, then a nice break to catch my breath, and five years later a compliant child.

So which story would I tell?

Should I tell how Daughter One constantly challenged my husband and me and caused us to make rules for everything, because to her if there was not a boundary, then it must be permissible? Should I tell how often and how easily she got mad at me and how I responded by getting mad back at her? Should I tell about the times Daughter Two got Daughter One in trouble and I mistakenly punished Daughter One? Should I tell about the daughter who snuck around and lied and by God's grace we caught her? (God can make computers print stuff parents need to see without the parent even hitting a key. It happened. So now my kids believe me when I tell them, "God is not on your side. He is on *our* side, and he wants you to get caught.")

You're going to hear of my mothering fiascoes, challenges, and mistakes. I hope you can identify with some; maybe a few will bring a tear. And one may even cause some I've-been-there-can't-believe-she-did-that-too laughter.

Moms, we are all in the same messy predicament. (I don't know why we're afraid to let on to each other.) Take a deep breath and try to relax for the next five minutes as you read the following fairy tale.

## The Kingdom .....

*Once upon a time in a land closer than you might think, the king and queen had a beautiful baby boy. They cherished him and declared his birthday a national holiday. This prince was still in diapers when the king and queen discovered that soon he would have a new sibling. Excitement and anticipation swept through the kingdom. Gifts for the new royal arrived daily.*

*Finally, the blessed day came. The queen gave birth to a princess. Life in the kingdom couldn't have been better.*

*Every morning after the nanny bathed and fed the prince and the princess, she brought them into the throne room to play while the king and queen attended to royal business in the court. The prince and princess loved to be near their parents and often made the nanny tie their blankies around their necks so they could pretend to be the king and queen.*

*One day the nanny brought the prince and princess to the throne room before the king and queen arrived. She watched the prince and princess play. First, the prince (who was a monkey at heart) climbed onto the king's throne. The princess was not to be outdone, so she mounted the queen's throne. They looked at each other and laughed and jumped up and down. The nanny was removing them from the thrones just as the king and queen entered the room.*

*The queen scolded the nanny for letting the prince and princess on the thrones. How could she allow her prince and princess to do something so mischievous? The queen wanted her children to be the perfect royals. Besides, if the nanny didn't discipline them and the queen had to be in charge of her children, she feared her temper would rule.*

*From that day forward, whenever they had the chance, the prince and princess climbed onto the thrones and pretended to be the king and queen. Soon they were mastering their verbal skills and learned that the servants would do whatever they told them to do. Of course, the king and queen put a stop to whatever plan was in the works. This led to temper tantrums by the little royals.*

*"What should we do, my dear?" lamented the queen.*

*"I think they need some diversion," declared the king. "Let's call the royal puppeteers to perform for the children in the nursery, and we can enjoy some peace and quiet."*

*Situations of disobedience and defiance arose more and more often with the prince and princess. However, the kingdom was growing and so were the demands on the king and queen. They had less time and energy for the prince and princess. Many times the king and queen gave in and let the children have their way to make up for the long hours their parents were in the court.*

*One evening the royal family sat down to dinner. When the servants lifted the silver covers off the plates, the king and queen were surprised to see cake and ice cream.*

*“This must be a mistake. Take the dessert back and bring in the entrée at once!” ordered the king.*

*The servant realized he had been tricked and said, “The prince and princess told us you requested cake and ice cream for dinner.”*

*“Children,” said the horrified queen, “you know we must have dinner before dessert.”*

*“NO! NO!” objected the little royals.*

*The king and queen didn’t want a scene. “One time won’t hurt,” they rationalized. So they conceded, and the family ate only cake and ice cream that evening.*

*Score one more for the prince and princess.*

*Time passed, and the kingdom flourished under the king and queen’s reign. The years had gone so quickly, it hardly seemed possible that the prince would soon turn thirteen. The kingdom made preparations for the spectacular celebration.*

*The special evening climaxed when the king and queen bestowed a crown on the prince. “You are almost a man, son,” they proclaimed. “This crown symbolizes the new responsibilities and privileges you will now have in this exciting time of your life.”*

*Everyone oohed and aahed as the brilliant crown was placed on the prince’s head. That night the prince went to bed with ideas of grandeur filling his dreams.*

*Across the hall in her bedroom, the princess formed a plan of her own. If the prince was getting new privileges, why shouldn't she? Everyone knows girls mature faster than boys, so in girl-years she was as mature as the prince. She should have a crown of her own too.*

*The next morning a storm rolled in. The castle was damp and dark, so the king and queen slept in. After a leisurely breakfast, they made their way to the throne room. They stopped cold in their tracks when they saw what was taking place.*

*The prince and princess were sitting on the thrones. This time they weren't pretending to be the king and queen; they were running the court. They were giving orders to the cook, the gardener, the chambermaids, the knights, and anyone else they could find. The court was in chaos.*

*The king and queen approached their thrones. "Children, you need to step down and let us rule the kingdom."*

*The prince and princess acknowledged their parents with looks that said "Make us." The prince rose from the throne, picked up the gauntlet he had been saving for just this moment, and threw it at the feet of his father. Then the prince and princess laughed in their faces.*

*The king and queen stared in disbelief. How did this happen? What would they do now? The prince and princess were not good at obeying them. The king and queen didn't want to make the prince and princess angry. They wanted the prince and princess to always like them. They could take away privileges, but that seemed mean. They could ground the prince and princess, but then they would have to stay home and spend time with them. Other kings and queens didn't spend time at home with their children. What would people think of the king and queen if they missed the upcoming ball so they could stay at home with their children?*

*They decided that the best way to keep peace in their kingdom would be to give the prince and princess whatever they desired. The*

*king and queen would do whatever they asked. Surely the prince and princess would eventually get tired of all this, and the king and queen would get their thrones back.*

*And this is where the fairy tale becomes grim. . . .*



Sound like anyone you know? I want to know when the rules changed and who changed them. When and how did the Queen Mom get dethroned? Who decided the prince and princess could reign sovereign?

## Reviewing the Basics

Moms, it's time we take back what God gave to us—the role of the mom. The sad truth is that in more and more homes, moms are at the beck and call of the kids. The children dictate what they are allowed to do, how they talk (even with disrespect), where they go, what they watch and listen to, and whatever else their little hearts desire. Moms are shrinking from their God-given roles and responsibilities.

And God *has* given this responsibility to us—“she watches over the affairs of her household” (Proverbs 31:27). The Bible has much to say about a mother's role. Proverbs 1:8 says, “Listen, my son, to your father's instruction and do not forsake your mother's teaching.” Matthew Henry comments, “[Solomon] takes it for granted that parents will, with all the wisdom they have, instruct their children, and with all the authority they have, give law to them for their good.” And “the divine law secures the honour of the mother also.”<sup>1</sup>

It's a sobering truth: the king and queen *need* to be responsible for the well-being of the prince and princess. The Bible lays out the benefits of parental discipline: a life not cut short by bad

choices; wisdom—the ability to make good decisions; saved from consequences of poor choices, including Hell; blessings, honor, and peace for the parents (Proverbs 19:18; 22:15; 29:15, 17).

**God has given this responsibility to us—  
“she watches over the affairs of her household.”**

Parents need to be parents if the kids are to grow into happy, well-adjusted, and mature adults; then they will be ready to be kings and queens of their own kingdoms someday. We all know that strong kingdoms (families) make a strong nation, but in today’s society we are seeing the devastating results of children growing up in weak families or without real families.

## So What Happened?

Let’s back up to the beginning of my own story. It too started like a fairy tale. Two love-struck redheads got married. It was a match made in Heaven. With our heads still in the clouds, we naively decided to have a little redhead of our own. *What’s the big deal about having a baby?* My parents had made parenting look easy. My husband, Gene, had a totally different childhood from mine. He and his twin brother experienced chaos in their early years of childhood, so when they finally settled in a loving, stable home, it didn’t even cross Gene’s mind to break the rules.

What was the big deal about being parents? We were about to find out.

As I said, Princess One was born a strong-willed child (with lots of curly red hair). Just like the prince and princess in our fairy tale, she tried our patience and wisdom those first few years. Princess One didn’t like to sleep, even as an infant. She

took half-hour naps in her swing—one in the morning and one in the afternoon. That was it. When she hit toddlerhood, we didn't need to waste money on toys for her; she didn't play with them. She was constantly on the run. I couldn't turn my back on her, even for a second, or she would be into something. One week I had to call the poison control center twice. I'm glad they didn't have caller ID back then!

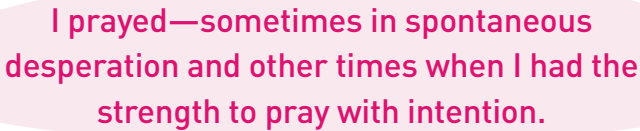
However, we kept our wits about us and stayed on our thrones. Then Princess One hit preadolescence. She developed wisdom beyond her years, knew more than we did, and definitely deserved to rule. (Do you detect a bit of sarcasm?) At least this was the fairy tale taking place in her creative mind. Combine these delusions of grandeur with her strong-willed personality—and the fact that our princess was dealing with friends who had turned into their own kind of monsters—and you can imagine the turmoil we had in our home every day. When Princess One was in the house, things were roaring.

**One week I had to call the poison control center twice. I'm glad they didn't have caller ID back then!**

Princess One isn't the only one who played a part in her attempted takeover. I was unprepared for these changes, and I handled myself poorly. I too am a firstborn. I too like to be in charge. (I call it strong leadership skills; some people call it bossy.) In my family of origin, we kids didn't push the powers-that-be (Mom) very far or when the power-that-was (Dad) got home, we would be reminded of who was really in charge.

So I thought if I was firm (OK, bossy and controlling), Princess One would obey. I was firm about everything. Princess

One didn't have much breathing room, but she was wired to need breathing room. This style of parenting frustrated her, which brought on anger that she didn't know what to do with. I was missing the main idea of being a mom, which is to raise my child to be the person God designed her to be, not what I thought she should be (Proverbs 22:6).



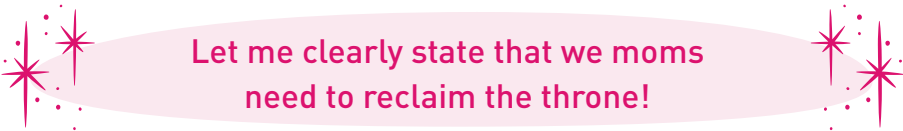
**I prayed—sometimes in spontaneous desperation and other times when I had the strength to pray with intention.**

The battle lines were drawn. Strong-willed, know-it-all daughter vs. strong-willed, know-it-all mom. Oh yeah, things were getting interesting.

I cried often. I prayed—sometimes in spontaneous desperation and other times when I had the strength to pray with intention. Some days I truly wanted to run away from home. What kind of mom can't even get along with her own kid? Then I felt worse. What kind of mom even *thinks* about running away from home? I was definitely not the mom who had it all together. I was broken because our relationship was rocky. My friends were loving this time in their kids' lives. I was not loving it. I was barely surviving it.

As time went on and our relationship did not improve, the guilt strapped on my back got heavier. *What if I cause Princess One to harden her heart against the family? Or worse, against God? What if she tries something crazy? What if she turns from us and runs in the opposite direction? What if. . . ?* I felt like we were walking a tightrope with her. We couldn't give in to her demands, yet what we were doing was definitely not working. No, Princess One

wasn't dethroning me on her own. My anger and frustration kept me from thinking clearly and being an effective mom. I was beating *myself* at this mom business.



**Let me clearly state that we moms  
need to reclaim the throne!**

I prayed and cried some more. I listened to the experts and read their books. Although this helped some, God finally got *his* message through to me: the core of my parenting tactics needed to change.

With an open mind I prayed for what God would show me now. I listened to him, and through a variety of ways, he showed me how to be the Queen Mom, not just for Princess One but for Princesses Two and Three as well. By trial and a lot of error, reading, and listening—to the Lord, his Word, the experts, and some wise moms—I've learned a few guidelines that have helped me be the Queen Mom that my family needs. We'll get to all that. But for starters, let me clearly state that we moms need to reclaim the throne!

## **Reclaiming the Throne**

Preadolescence is a most difficult and crucial point in a child's life. Many moms become overwhelmed, tired, and clueless about what to do next with their preadolescent kids. So we back away, throw our hands in the air, and say, "I've done all I can do; she's in the Lord's hands now." It was at this time I read some priceless words by Joe White in *Parents' Guide to the Spiritual Mentoring of Teens*: "Now is not the time to coast. . . . You still have to play the fourth quarter—your child's teen years. . . . The final quarter of

your parenting career can be your finest hour—or it can be the time when you see everything you have worked for come undone.”<sup>2</sup>

So don't believe those lies that say moms are not important and effective. Moms *do* matter. We do make a difference, but we can't do our job from the sidelines. We need to be in the game—in our children's lives. Giving up and getting lazy is not an option.

The Bible gives us some encouragement for this time of life: “Let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us” (Hebrews 12:1). If you are a mom, the race marked out for you is the task of seeing your child through to the end.

## Throw Off Busyness

So moms, how did we get off track? One answer is, we're just too busy.

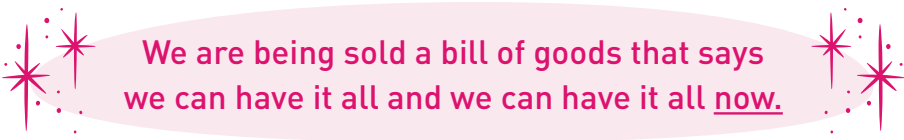
The past thirty years in our American culture have been about women being “liberated” and “finding themselves.” And while some of this was necessary and not all bad, society has gone from one extreme (women chained to the house) to the other (women trying to fulfill their own needs at all costs). The problem is that moms are having a hard time finding balance between spreading their wings and being the Queen Moms their families so desperately need.

Up until about thirty years ago, a mom's main responsibilities were her family, home, and perhaps a once-a-month meeting. Today's moms are trying to find time for their husbands, children, work, volunteering—and themselves. Moms are told they can (and often implied, *must*) have all the balls in the air at once and keep juggling them there perfectly. We've come to believe that since everyone else is doing *it* and the media keeps telling

us to do *it*, we must do *it* too, or we will be missing out on who knows what. We are being sold a bill of goods that says we can have it all and we can have it all *now*. How insane is that?

Ecclesiastes 3:1 states, “There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven.” If we have children at home, this is our season to concentrate on being the best moms God designed us to be. We get only one chance to raise each child. None of us wants to blow it, especially on things that won’t matter in the big picture. This doesn’t mean that we can’t have a job, ministry, hobbies, and friends, but it all needs to be done with our kids’ interests considered first. We will talk more about this in chapter 2.

Moms are discovering that keeping all the balls in the air takes a lot of energy. We are tired, stressed, hurried, and overwhelmed. We know we are flailing, and that causes us to feel guilty.

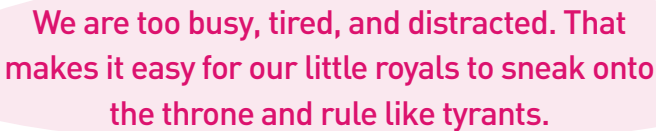


**We are being sold a bill of goods that says we can have it all and we can have it all now.**

The busyness and demands of our fast-paced lives take our sights off what is really important. Our kids become just one more responsibility, another thing to check off the to-do list. Instead, they should be the love of our hearts. What is best for them should drive our decisions.

Picture this: You are standing in your front yard talking with your neighbor. You glance toward the street just in time to see an oncoming car headed for your young child who is riding her bike. Now, do you politely excuse yourself from the conversation and then saunter to the street to rescue your darling? Of course not! The split second you see the impending danger, you shift

into what I call mama tiger mode—darting toward your child with lightning speed, ready to defend her at all costs. I don't know a healthy mom who would not do this for her child. Yet when it comes to everyday life, our kids and our relationships with them are easily sacrificed. We put them on hold while we meet the expectations of others.



**We are too busy, tired, and distracted. That makes it easy for our little royals to sneak onto the throne and rule like tyrants.**

How sad this is since, second only to our relationship with God, our children (along with our husbands, if we are married) are the most valuable parts of our lives. Our lives should reflect that. I feel like Paul felt in 1 Corinthians 9:16 when he said, “I am compelled to preach.” God did an indescribable thing in me when I gave birth to my first princess, and it compels me to be a mom—though many times I fail and don't have a clue what to do next.

The world has succeeded in chipping away at the call God gave to moms. We are too busy, tired, and distracted. That makes it easy for our little royals to sneak onto the throne and rule like tyrants.

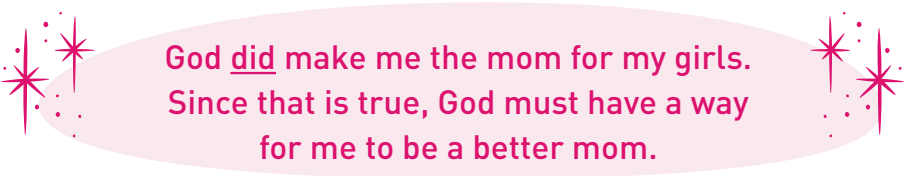
### **Throw Off Timidity**

Maybe you haven't been dethroned due to busyness and distraction. Maybe the reason you aren't enjoying your role as the Queen Mom is because you are a bit timid about raising those kids God gave you. Their personalities are nothing like yours, and you have no idea how to deal with their disobedience, bad attitudes, and defiance. God gave those kids to you for a purpose—a purpose he wants to work *in you* and a purpose he

wants to work through you *in those kids*. Together we will look at how to find that purpose and help make it a reality in your life. I hope you pick up Queen Mom confidence as we go along.

## God's Way

Stop and think—what kind of mom does God want you to be? What kind of home life does God desire for your family?



**God did make me the mom for my girls.  
Since that is true, God must have a way  
for me to be a better mom.**

I hope by now your shoulders aren't drooping too low, but for your sake and your kids' sakes, keep reading. I do know how you feel. I have cried myself dry wondering why God made me a mom. I didn't feel that I was very good at it, nor did I have the "mommy touch" that some gals naturally have. But at those times I had to admit the truth: God *did* make me the mom for my girls. Since that is true, God must have a way for me to be a better mom.

God *does* have a better way. But I had to quit feeling sorry for myself and get rid of the defeatist attitude. God can't teach us anything when we focus on our pathetic little selves. I came to realize that when I'm throwing a pity party, there is room for only me—not God and not my family. Oswald Chambers observed, "No sin is worse than the sin of self-pity, because it obliterates God and puts self-interest upon the throne."<sup>3</sup>

No more self-pity.

Now that God had my attention, I was teachable. So what if I'd lost my crown and scepter? God could fix that. I opened

up to what God was trying to show me and to the changes he wanted to make, not only in my parenting style but also in *me*. The Bible tells me that he can make these changes in me and in my mothering: “Whatever I have, wherever I am, I can make it through anything in the One who makes me who I am” (Philippians 4:13, *The Message*).

Then I had to learn the importance of patience—in dealing with myself, my kids, and my current situation. Have patience. Everything can’t change overnight.



My kids are teens. But the guidelines in this book are not just for parents of preteens and teenagers; they are essential and practical for raising kids of all ages. If I had clued in on them sooner, Princess One’s early teen years would have been less painful for everyone in our kingdom.




## Royal Decree

I want to assure you that I have not arrived. In fact, only two days ago I had one of those I-want-to-run-away-from-home moments. But moms, each of us can get back on the throne and rule as the Queen Mom was destined to do. Let's do it together.

## Royal Inquiry

1. If you were to tell your own Queen Mom story ten, fifteen, or eighteen years from now, what would you hope to be able to say?
2. Recalling Hebrews 12:1, think of a “sin that so easily entangles” you personally. This sin is a huge obstacle in your parenting. Will you repent and give it to God? Find some examples and verses in the Bible that address it. If you are unfamiliar with the Bible, ask a trusted friend to help you.
3. We are to honor our parents. Just as we try to do our best, they did the best they could with what they knew. Yet we all make mistakes. What wrong tapes from your parents or your past do you play over and over—giving them another chance to harm you as you live them out daily? This may be sensitive material, but examining it will be helpful in evaluating your parenting philosophy, motives, and guidelines to see what is in line with God's Word and what is not.



4. Here are a few examples of parenting practices you may have that need to be rethought. Does your household operate under any of the following:



Rules without reason (about clothes, music, hair)?



Fears, either real or imagined? Fear is not from God (2 Timothy 1:7; 1 John 4:18). Pray about the issue. Give your kids to God. This doesn't discount using your brain, but don't let fear be the driving force in your parenting.



Unreasonable expectations? It's possible to have unreasonable expectations for our children of all ages—even babies.

5. Have you been feeling sorry for yourself? How could a renewed effort to make God your king help your attitude?