



## Parenting the Strong-Willed Child *by Joy Stoner*

When I was pregnant with my oldest, I prayed that she would be independent and strong; that she wouldn't just sit back in the shadows, but that she would live big and brightly.

You know it. You've heard it. Watch out what you pray for.

Fast forward almost a decade and I'm sitting on the front row this past weekend listening to Dr. Gary Oliver talk on Parenting the Strong-Willed Child. That girl has a brother living just as big and bright in the room right next to hers so I was ready to find out what made these kids tick and get some answers!

As we went through the common characteristics of a strong-willed child, I wanted to check a lot of the boxes. Judging by the amount of people in the room, I wasn't the only one who had living, breathing examples of these at home. Maybe you do, too! Dr. Oliver described them as determined, unyielding, tenacious, obstinate kids who:

- *can and will argue forever. These are your debaters, masters at finding loop holes.*
- *can be opinionated, bossy, and tell others what to do.*
- *demand to know why.*
- *can be fiercely stubborn (spoiler alert: nagging, begging, and rationalizing won't work).*
- *can be impatient.*

Now, here's a confession...I was ready to hear what I needed to do to change all this crazy behavior. They're passionate kids and our job is to shape them, so how do we do that? Guess what? We spent most of the time talking about who we need to be as parents!

Yes, there were some great tips on what we could do (make sure they are loved; choose your battles...don't make everything non-negotiable; ask more questions and give fewer commands; hand out more tickets and give fewer warnings; choose discipline over punishment; respond and don't react; lighten up...but don't let up) and I have a lot to think about on some of those. But, really it came down to HOW we do what we do. This should not have come as a surprise to me, but the way the class ended was an aha moment for me:

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## What's Happening?

### OCTOBER/NOVEMBER:

#### Spring Break Mission Trip Sign-Ups

##### [Register](#)

*Trips during Spring Break to NWA, Kansas City, and Guatemala*

## Parenting in a Sexual Culture

October 15 | 9:30 and 11:00am  
Student Center Central  
[Register](#)

## Streetfest

October 25 | 6:00-8:00pm  
North Parking Lot behind  
Student Center  
Admission: one bag of candy per family

## Operation Christmas Child

Worship Center Foyer  
Return shoe boxes by Nov. 19

For more information on any of the events above, email [mosaic@fellowshipnwa.org](mailto:mosaic@fellowshipnwa.org)

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## RESOURCES

- [Center for Healthy Relationships](#)
- [How to Really Love Your Child](#)
- [Parenting with Love & Logic](#)
- [Setting Limits with Your Strong-Willed Child](#)
- [Strong-Willed or Dreamer](#)

*Parenting doesn't start with what I do or what I know. Parenting starts with who I am. It starts with who I am in Christ.* Let that sink in for a bit.

Discipline strategies, training, and communication techniques are all important but we have to get to the heart of things. We have to start with who we are and what we should be as parents:

- motivated by love ([Revelation 3:19](#))
- patient ([Proverbs 15:18b](#))
- under control ([Proverbs 15:28](#))
- not controlled by anger ([Proverbs 29:22](#))

There it was...before I can help shape my children and help them grow, I need to have some shaping of my own done in my life. It wouldn't take long for me to put some of this stuff into practice. And that night, as I fell into bed, tired and exhausted, I read a prayer that was shared that morning:

*[...]Let me not discipline out of my own embarrassment, exhaustion, fear, or haste.  
Let me put away the tools of demolition: shame, rage, sarcasm, fear,*

*and fit me instead with the fruit of your Spirit, that I may spend it on the little ones who wonder what you're like.*

*[...]And when I fail -when, not if - when I rail and scream and kick and flail against you like the unruly, hot-cheeked child that I am, pick me up, turn me around, bend low and speak my name.  
Give me courage to meet your gaze, and show me how it's done again.*

Tomorrow, give me courage. Show me how it's done again.

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*All content in italics above was taken from materials/notes in Dr. Oliver's class on Parenting the Strong-Willed Child. You can view the full content of slides and handouts on our [BiLD resources page](#).*

