

Parent *pages*



Resources for Christian parents in the 21st Century

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Please pass the salt

Your child spends a great deal of time at school. Education and faith development are very important to your child's future. Gone are the days when parents dropped their children off at the schoolhouse door and didn't show up again until parent/teacher conferences.

Parents have a strong interest in their child's school. It is important for parents to pay attention to, participate in, and influence the school. We want to make sure, however, that we are being salt and light (Matt. 5:13-16) and not chili powder and laser pointers.

God invites you to preserve what is good about your church and school and to shine the light of His Gospel to be a guide to what can be improved.

When we are *salt and light*, we preserve what is good and shine the light of the Gospel that guides good decisions. If we are *chili powder and laser pointers*, we just add heat and pointed accusations to the situation. Every school and faculty has strengths and weaknesses. We need to seek and celebrate what is good and properly address what needs to be strengthened. Chili powder behavior only creates heat—it cannot heal or protect. Laser pointer behavior highlights what is wrong without

shining light on what can help.

Chili powder/laser pointer behaviors include:

■ **Clandestine parking lot meetings:** Parking lot meetings should be about play dates and carpools. Avoid meetings that involve conversations about what is wrong with the school, the principal, the board, or your child's teacher.

■ **Guerilla tactics to mobilize against a teacher:** Avoid phone conversations that begin with "Some other parents and I have a concern and wonder if you agree with us . . ."

■ **Military coup on the principal:** The principal, complete with gifts and faults, has been called to be the shepherd of the school. Any actions that undermine his or her authority will only exacerbate the situation.

■ **Hostile take-over of the board:** Serving on the board is a ministry decision. It is not appropriate to volunteer to serve because you have a specific change in mind. Likewise, there are appropriate ways to make your opinion known to the board. Surprise visits to meetings are laser pointer behavior.

■ **Land mine letters:** Anonymous letters are not healthy or helpful. Problems cannot be properly addressed through



such letters because important information is missing. Sending an anonymous letter, or a hurtful letter that is signed, will only impede your efforts to resolve the issue.

Salt/light behaviors include:

■ **Pray:** First bring your concerns to God in prayer. In preparation for your prayer, study the words of Matt. 18:15-16. In these words, Jesus shows us the proper way to confront a behavior that is harmful.

■ **Start close to home:** If your child

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has an issue with a classmate, start with your child. Give him or her strategies for dealing with the issue. If this does not work then go with your child to talk to the teacher. By the same token, if you have a concern about a teacher, then talk to the teacher first before involving the administration.

■ **Make a new friend:** From the very beginning, take time to build relationships with the teachers and principal. The more you know about each other, the more mutual respect and admiration you will have. Mutual respect will help you deal with the issue at hand and not the emotions behind it.

■ **Check your emotions at the door:** When discussing an issue, be careful to be a good listener. This will help you keep a good perspective on the situation. Anger, threats, accusations, and hysterics are chili powder behavior. Remember, salt enhances flavor, it doesn't overpower.

■ **Try on a different pair of shoes:** You may not be able to walk in the teacher's shoes but you can make an effort to see the other side of the problem. The

principal needs to do what is best for the school and all the families, not just yours. Likewise, the teacher has a whole classroom full of needs and challenges. Also, be willing to accept your child's participation in the situation. You and the teacher both want what's best for your child. Your separate perspectives on the issue can work together to solve the problem.

■ **Put it on a timeline:** Some issues that seem to be life or death today may not even be a memory tomorrow. Put the issue in perspective. Is this something your child can learn from? Are you trying to solve problems your child could tackle on his or her own? Being light does not mean that you make the situation perfect: only that you see it through the light of the Gospel.

■ **Be involved:** Find ways to volunteer or help. Participate in PTL. Be sure to read all communications from the school and the teacher. Engage in regular conversations with your child about school. The more information you gather, the better prepared you will be to be a good influence.

■ **Recommend your school participate in National Lutheran School Accreditation:** This program helps the church, school staff, and parents shine a light on every process of the school and its ministry. The result is accreditation and a stronger school. Be willing to serve in this process. You will have opportunities to be both salt and light.

Save the chili powder for your next spicy dish and the laser pointer for a presentation at work. God invites you to preserve what is good about your church and school and to shine the light of His Gospel to be a guide to what can be improved.

"You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? . . . You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. . . let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven."

Matt. 5:13-16

Questions for discussion

1. Think of a school issue you handled in the past. What was salt and light and what was chili powder and laser pointer?
2. What are the benefits of allowing children to handle problems on their own, with communication and guidance from you?
3. What are three things you would like to change about your child's school? What would be the best way to go about shining light on these issues? How can you be salt?

For further study:

- The Conflict Resolution Information Source, go to www.crinfo.org.

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