

How Do You Handle Boys and Guns?

Joanne and I put a lot of thought and prayer into raising our boys to be men of good character. It is such a joy to see the fine young men that they have become. It certainly was a struggle at many points along the way, but it was worth it all the way through.

One of the issues we wrestled with was how to deal with boys and guns. (or weapons, or fire, or you name it!) I've always believed that God created boys/men with a spirit of adventure and a drive to protect, defend and conquer. It's part of God's design. So, it's in their nature to seek out games and activities that provide an outlet for these drives. Any game that allows them to do battle, wrestle and compete attracts their interest. If there is no activity planned for them, they'll create one as an outlet to release this energy.

At the same time, we wanted to protect them from the senseless violence that is so prevalent in our culture. We wanted them to understand the difference between "fantasy violence" in games and movies and real violence that actually destroys and kills. Many children today don't have anyone to help them understand this difference so they don't understand that there are real consequences when violence and anger are unleashed on another person.

When Dave and Tim were young, we kept all guns out of the house. This was actually very hard for me because I like guns and weapons. I've always enjoyed target shooting with guns, bow and arrow, darts, water guns, etc. I never wanted to kill anything, but I liked the challenge of hitting a target. I was also committed to fight against the violence in our culture, so I agreed to work hard on this. An amazing thing happened over those years.

We discovered that the boys didn't actually need guns to play "war games" or do target shooting. They used sticks, their fingers, stones, acorns and that was just fine with them. We also found ourselves constantly playing the role of a policeman in the lives of our boys and we didn't like that.

So what's a parent of boys supposed to do with that?

As we have done in every aspect of our parenting, we decided to focus more on "training the heart" and less on adhering to rules. This is one of the basic tenants of our approach at **The National Center for Biblical Parenting**. We started to teach character qualities like love, respect and honor. The focus was on the right way to view people and how to interact well. There may be a time for protecting ourselves or our loved ones from dangerous people, but our main goal is to be like Jesus and "Love Our Enemies."

At about this time, Scott and Joanne were developing their "honor" material. We had the privilege of "field testing" the **Kid's Honor Club**. This was transformative for our whole family and that includes me. I had to learn to honor others and that included my children. Children are young people, made in God's image. They're not just "future" adults. Our children are also our brothers and sisters in Christ. A light went on for me when I came to understand this truth. We learned about honor together as a family. Both of my sons embody this character quality today.

Let's get back to guns and boys for a minute. We stopped focusing on "no guns or weapons" and started focusing on understanding violence and relationships. It seems to have worked as neither of my boys is violent or aggressive as adults. They're kind, honoring and caring people. **What do you think about my solution?**

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