What’s with All the Whining?

Guest: Ginger Hubbard
From the series: I Can’t Believe You Just Said That (Day 1 of 2)
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Bob: There were some aspects of parenting that Ginger Hubbard remembers took her by surprise.

Ginger: I remember, before I even had kids, I would look around at other people’s kids that were whining, and disrespecting, and talking back and thinking to myself, “You know, when I have kids, they are not going to act like that!” [Laughter] And then the stick turned blue twice. [Laughter] So I was very taken aback by just some of the things that would come out of my kids’ mouths. Like a lot of moms, I would look at them and just in shock say, “Why do you act like that?”

Bob: This is FamilyLife Today for Wednesday, May 8th. Our hosts are Dave and Ann Wilson; I’m Bob Lepine. What about your kids? Have they said or done things that have caused you to look at them and go, “Where did that come from?” We’re going to talk about that with Ginger Hubbard today. Stay with us.

And welcome to FamilyLife Today. Thanks for joining us. I remember, when our kids were growing up, we had—these were cassette tapes; these are ancient artifacts that people may not remember anymore.

Dave: I remember them.

Bob: But our kids would listen to cassettes of Bible verses that were put to music; right? You remember these?

Ann: Yes.

Bob: So there was one that was “Keep your tongue from evil; keep your tongue…” Do you remember this song?

Ann: Was that Psalty the Singing Songbook?

Bob: No; I think this was Hide ’Em in Your Heart with Steve Green.

Ann: Oh, yes.
Bob: So, the second time you would sing the song, *Keep Your Tongue from Evil*, you would hold your tongue. You would, literally, put your finger—

Dave: Really? I want to see you do it!

Bob: [Holding tongue] “Keep your tongue from evil; keep your tongue. Keep your tongue from evil; keep your tongue…” [Laughter]

Ann: That’s very impressive!

Bob: You like that?

Ann: Yes!

Dave: Is this really how we’re starting this show? [Laughter]

Bob: I think it’s *appropriate* for what we’re talking about; don’t you?

Dave: I think you’re right! I mean, when I looked at the title of your book, I just thought—*I Can’t Believe You Just Said That!*—I’m like, “My wife has said that to me multiple times, and I’ve said it to her.” [Laughter]

Bob: You thought it was a marriage book instead of a parenting book? [Laughter]

Dave: I did; it can be marriage—you name it—it’s for *anybody*, because we’ve all done it.

Bob: Ginger Hubbard is joining us on *FamilyLife Today*. Ginger, welcome back.

Ginger: Thanks, Bob; good to be with you.

Bob: Nice to have you here. Ginger is an author and a speaker. The last book that she wrote was *Don’t Make Me Count to Three*—that’s the one I remember. You just put all of the parenting phrases into book titles and turn them into advice for all of us who are raising the next generation.

Ginger: I do—what we say on an everyday basis. [Laughter]

Bob: That’s right. This book is called *I Can’t Believe You Just Said That!: Biblical Wisdom for Taming Your Child’s Tongue*. Was this an issue for you, raising three boys?

Ann: Oh, I wish I would have *had* this book, Ginger; because you feel so lost and desperate when these things come out of our kids’ mouths. We don’t know what to *do* and where to go from there—like: “What should I do?” So, this really does offer so much practical help.
**Ginger:** Right; and that’s exactly where I was. I would look around—I remember, before I even had kids, I would look around at other people’s kids that were whining, and disrespecting, and talking back and thinking to myself, “You know, when I have kids, they are not going to act like that.” [Laughter]

**Ann:** And then…?

**Ginger:** And then the stick turned blue *twice*. [Laughter] So I was very taken aback by just some of the things that would come out of my kids’ mouths. Like a lot of moms, I would look at them and just, in shock, say, “Why do you act like that?”

But after a closer look at the Word of God, I began to realize that I was asking the wrong question. In Matthew 12:34 Jesus explained, “For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of.” In other words, there’s merit to that old saying, “What’s down in the well comes up in the bucket.” So we learn from that that our sin does *not* begin with our mouths, it begins with our hearts; and it starts a lot sooner than we might think.

**Ann:** Well, that’s kind of scary, actually.

**Dave:** Yes; I was going to throw in here—I can remember—I was 13 years old, being raised by a single mom. She has some friends over, and I’ll never forget this day—I’ll never forget it—I cursed at the dinner table. I know nobody here can believe I would ever do that—

**Bob:** You used profanity, as a 13-year-old.

**Dave:** I used profanity; yes. I was ramped up about something, and I said—I don’t know what; I don’t remember—but I said it. I could see my mom was irate and embarrassed. She goes right to the kitchen—she always said she was going to do this: “I’m going to wash your mouth out with soap,”—she did it! She, literally, grabbed soap—

**Bob:** Bar soap, or liquid, or what?

**Dave:** Bar soap. I don’t think they had that new invention—liquid soap—then. [Laughter] I remember her taking my head—putting it under the thing, in front of everybody—and washing my mouth out with soap.

Here’s what I also remember—it didn’t work. [Laughter] It didn’t work!

**Bob:** Because it didn’t get to the heart.

**Dave:** No; because I didn’t know the Bible said that then. That’s exactly your point—it’s like, “Yes; she dealt with the tongue”; but she didn’t deal with the tongue, because it was so much deeper than that.
**Bob:** And here’s what we’ve recognized, as parents: “What comes out of our kids’ mouths is often what they’ve heard come out of our mouths *first*. What we model for our kids—those are the seeds that come back in their behavior, often”; right?

**Ginger:** Right; it is. You know, we’re all going to blow it sometimes and say things that we shouldn’t say. Even in those moments, though, God can use our imperfections and the times that we blow it, if we’re willing to humbly go to our kids and say: “You know, the way that I just spoke to you didn’t show respect to you. It didn’t honor God, so will you forgive me and let me do that again?”

Instead of beating ourselves up when we blow it with our kids, and we say something that we shouldn’t say—whether it’s, I guess, a profanity, or scolding them, or anything along those lines—we can demonstrate to them what it looks like to have that personal, ongoing relationship with Jesus; and help them understand what the conviction of the Holy Spirit means and what repentance really looks like; and going back and doing it the right way.

**Ann:** Give us an example, Ginger, because I *love* how this sounds. How do you do it? You know, what does it look like on a practical, day to day, when you’re tearing your hair out and your kids are just crazy?

**Ginger:** I remember one time really, really blowing it with Alex. You know, I’m the one that *wrote* these parenting books; you’d think I’d get it right, but I blew it sometimes with my kids. I remember one day in particular—it was one of those days, where I was ready to pull my hair out; and everything was going wrong; and we were late for appointments, and just so overwhelmed and frustrated.

We got home from running a bunch of errands. Alex was about four years old at the time—that’s my daughter—and she absolutely delights in playing outside, barefooted. But on this particular day, it was very unusually cold for Alabama—it was down in the 30s. She was on her way out to play, without her shoes on. I was helping her put her coat on; and I said: “No, Alex; you may not play outside without your shoes on today. It’s too cold. Now, you put your shoes on and then you may go out.”

She says, “Yes, ma’am.” So I guess it was about 20 minutes later; I’m taking the trash outside. I find Alex running around on bare feet that have now turned a bluish-purple color. [Laughter] Not only that, but her pants were a little bit too long for her; and so, without her shoes on, they dragged the ground. After grinding the bottom of her pants into our concrete driveway for 20 minutes, she now has two holes in her brand-new pants.

So, to put it mildly, I was *ticked*. [Laughter] I just completely went off on her. You know, Alex had a choice there: She had a choice to either obey or disobey, and she chose to disobey. But I had a choice: I could either scold her, or I could gently correct and
instruct her. I blew it that day. I said: “Alex, I told you not to go outside without your shoes on; and now just look at your feet! They’re half frozen! Look at what you’ve done to your pants! Your daddy worked so hard to buy you these pants, and this is how you show your appreciation!

Ann: Ooh, that’s good; you got the guilt one in there too. [Laughter]

Ginger: “You just see how fast you can get your tail in your room, young lady. You are in major trouble.”

So, when I finished just completely unloading on her,—

Ann: —which, a lot of moms are listening, thinking: “Well, that was good! That’s good”; you know? Okay; keep going.

Ginger: —so, all of a sudden, her eyes just filled up with tears and her little bottom lip’s quivering. She ran into her room and just flopped on her bed. I knew, immediately, the conviction of the Holy Spirit came on me—that I had not corrected her gently and in love.

You know, the Scriptures say in Proverbs that “A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.” I had stirred up hurt and anger in her little heart. So what that looked like—was for me to go to her. I went and I climbed in bed with her. I said, “Alex, honey, I need to ask you to forgive me.” I said: “The way that I just talked to you didn’t show any respect to you, and it completely dishonored God. So please forgive me, and let me do that the right way.”

That’s what it’s all about, too, is going back and doing it the right way. That’s what we want to teach our kids. It’s never enough to train our children in what not to do; we have to train our children in what to do. I think about that verse in Corinthians—1 Corinthians 10:13—that says that God will not let us be tempted beyond what we can bear; but when we are tempted, He also provide us a means of escape. So, when we correct our children for wrong behavior but fail to train them in righteous behavior, we’re going to exasperate them; because we’re not providing them with that means of escape. We’re not giving them that way out. According to the Scripture, that can provoke them to anger.

Ann: That’s so wise, but how do we do it? Like, walk me back in that exact scenario. How should you have talked to your daughter?

Ginger: I said, “Let’s just start over, Alex; and let me do this the right way.” I said: “Sweetie, I told you to put your shoes on before you went outside. Now, have you obeyed, or have you disobeyed?”
And then, once she verbalizes that she’s disobeyed—or even, she might not answer—some moms may be sitting there, thinking, “Well, my kid just wouldn’t answer.” Well, don’t get into a power struggle; just answer for them. I might say, if she didn’t answer, “Well, sweetie, you disobeyed; because I told you to put your shoes on, and you didn’t. Honey, how does God want you to obey?”

One thing that I taught my kids, at a very young age, that I read about in several parenting books is—I could hold up three fingers and I could say, “How does God want you to obey?” They would say, “All the way, right away, and with a happy heart.” That pretty much covers complete obedience. So, because she disobeyed: “Well, sweetie, I love you too much to allow you to disobey. It’s my responsibility to train you in wisdom and to train you to obey. So you need to go in your room. I’ll be in there in just a minute, and we’ll deal with this.”

Bob: I remember one of our guests on FamilyLife Today, years ago, making this statement—and it kind of was one of those things that I thought, “I wish I’d heard this 25 years ago”; right?—he said, “Whenever I have a discipline encounter with a child,”—a correction encounter like you just described—“my goal is that, at the end of that encounter, they would love Jesus more.” I thought, “That wasn’t my goal.” [Laughter] My goal was that they would shape up; my goal was that they would never behave that way again.

What a perspective-changer that is, when you say, “My goal here is that they would come out of that correction, going, ‘God is good, and Jesus is good; and I want to follow Him.’” What you just described is a great precursor; because you’re modeling God’s gentle, graceful correction of us in how you’re talking to your kids.

Ginger: Right; and you know, a lot of times, we have a tendency to just ignore our children or to just administer consequences when they speak in a way that they shouldn’t speak, whether it’s whining, or tattling, or lying, or any sort of verbal offense. Sometimes, we’ll ignore them or just administer the consequences; but both of those methods are ineffective, because they fail to train and instruct. Now, sometimes, it’s certainly more convenient for us to ignore them, if we’re busy with something; but to ignore a child, who is in need of correction and guidance, is to really selfishly place our own interest above the interest and the well-being of the child.

Then, on the other hand, consequences have their place; but they’re not a substitute for training and instructing. When we just merely administer consequences when our children do something wrong, we’re really only teaching them one thing. If we’re not following through with that righteous training, but just administering the consequences, the only thing we’re really teaching them is that there are consequences to sin.

While that is an important lesson, an even greater lesson is helping them understand that higher calling of living in ways that are pleasing to God and bring Him the glory He deserves. Our goal in disciplining our children is—not just to teach them to avoid
consequences—but to teach, and guide, and encourage them to honor God with their lives.

**Bob:** I want to read through the Table of Contents. There are 16 chapters in this book. I’ll just read all 16 of these; and then, you guys pick one that you want us to explore.

**Ann:** Yes.

**Bob:** Okay?

**Ann:** Okay.

**Bob:** So, there’s “Whining”; there’s “Lying”—

**Dave:** Okay; you’re good! [Laughter]

**Ginger:** “Let’s do those!”

**Dave:** Let’s do those. [Laughter]

**Bob:** “Can we just jump right into those?” Whining has to be—

**Ann:** Yes; I was going to say—

**Bob:** That has to be the number one—it’s why you start your book there, Ginger.

**Ann:** —it’s the hardest one, too; because it gets on your nerves—

**Ginger:** Yes.

**Ann:** —so you just react instead of responding.

**Ginger:** Yes.

**Ann:** It’s hard! So, how do you instruct parents to deal with that?

**Ginger:** I can certainly relate to moms dealing with that annoying offense, because whining can really get under our skin. My daughter, Alex, really struggled with whining when she was younger. Let’s just do an example. Let’s just say that Alex comes into the kitchen and, instead of asking for a cup of juice, she whines for it. I want to get to the heart of that.

Throughout my whole book, I really encourage parents to use three steps: heart-probing questions, what to put off, and what to put on. So, she comes in; she whines for a cup of juice. I’m going to start with those heart-probing questions, just something very simple.
Bob: Let me just make sure—when you say, “…whines for a cup”—instead of saying, “May I please have a cup of juice?” she says, “I want a cup of juiiice!” Is that—

Ginger: Yes; that’s perfect.

Ann: Ooh, Bob, that’s really—that’s good! He is! I wonder if Mary Ann thinks that.

Bob: So, it has to do—

Ginger: He’s a seasoned whiner!

Ann: He is! I wonder if Mary Ann thinks that. [Laughter]

Dave: Yes.

Bob: We’re talking about tone. Also, there’s politeness; because “May I please have a cup of juice?” is different than “I want a cup of juice.” But you’re really correcting for the sound of the question as much as anything else; aren’t you?

Ginger: Right; right. It’s the tone of voice; it’s the way they say it—it’s basically not communicating with self-control. You know, if you think about it, all behaviors are linked to a particular attitude of the heart. A lot of parents would look at whining and say, “Well, the Bible doesn’t really say anything about whining”; but the Bible does talk about self-control, and whining is an issue of self-control.

I would ask her: “Alex, honey, are you asking for that juice with your self-controlled voice? No, sweetie; you’re not. God wants you to have self-control, even with your voice. Because I love you so much”—love is always love that motivates us to correct our children—“because I love you so much, I’m going to help you get that self-control.”

One thing that I found very helpful with my kids is—I had a little kitchen timer that I kept with me. I would say: “So, here’s what we’re going to do. I’m going to set the timer for three minutes. When that timer goes off, then you may come back and ask for juice the right way, with your self-controlled voice.”

Ann: Oh, that’s good.

Ginger: I reproved her in a way that she could comprehend—I had her suffer the consequences of having to wait three minutes—and that gives her time to think about what a self-controlled voice might look like. I may even need to model that for her, and that’s okay. Then, most important, I would have her come back and do it the right way. That way, I’m not just correcting her for what is wrong; I’m training her in what is right.
Dave: Talk about this: “Does this work?”—I’m thinking of that mom or dad, sitting out there—that’d probably be me, driving around in my car, right now, going—“Okay; a teenager. I have a 13-year-old, who has an attitude. How do I deal with that guy/that kid?”

Ginger: That’s good; that’s good. Wesley, my son, when he hit the teenage years—he was probably 13 or 14—he started having this disrespectful tone on his face, and he would do that. Sort of the same—I mean, obviously you’re going to word it a little bit more maturely, in accordance with their age.

Say that he comes in and says something in a disrespectful tone, or even his words might be disrespectful. I would say something like: “You know, Wes, honey, the way that you’re talking to me is dishonoring. Do you feel like you’re showing respect with the way that you’re talking to me? Well, no; you’re not, so I think maybe you need to go in your room and cool off.” Sometimes, they might need to cool off a little bit; and sometimes, we may need to go to our room and cool off a little bit before we can have that conversation! [Laughter] That’s okay—to take some time.

But then, most importantly, I would want him, once he has had time to think about it, to come back and communicate the right way, by using the appropriate words and the appropriate tone of voice. For many children—particularly mine, as they were growing into their teen years—the appropriate facial expression.

Ann: So you even looked at that?

Ginger: Yes; so it’s about teaching them what to do instead of just what not to do. It’s providing them with that means of escape.

When the Bible says that parents are to train their children in righteousness, that’s what it means. It’s not enough to tell our children what not to do; we have to teach our children what to do. We have to provide them with that means of escape.

Ann: As I listen to you, I think I can tell that you’re mature in your walk with God; because as you’re talking, you’re displaying the fruit of the Spirit to your children. You’re displaying love, and joy, and peace, and patience. As I listen to you, I think that’s so important for us, as parents, to be spending time with God—to be filled up with those things—so we can demonstrate the self-control to them.

Bob: Because it’s really easy, when your kids are being obnoxious, whiny, and disrespectful, for you just to turn and start using the wrong kind of speech back to them.

Ann: Yes!

Bob: You’re disrespectful; and you’re shouting; and you’re saying things you shouldn’t say. That’s why we have to be walking in the Spirit and handling it the right way.
Ann: Right.

Bob: So, here’s where I come to, as we’ve had this conversation. First of all, when you blow it, there’s a path back—you’ve illustrated that. You can go to your kids; you can confess; you can ask for their forgiveness; you can restore the relationship—it’s not like it’s over. You’re modeling grace at that point.

Then the second thing is—I’ve been coming back to 2 Corinthians 3:16, which you’ve been talking about this whole time, Ginger. It says, “All Scripture is breathed out by God and is profitable”—for these things—“for teaching, reproof, correction, and training in righteousness.” I learned, from Dennis Rainey—that’s the parenting assignment: teaching, reproof, correction, training in righteousness.

Most often, I’ll watch parents who want to correct and reprove; and they’re not doing the teaching, and they’re not doing the training. They’re just like, “I told them once…” Well, what do you think? Your kids are going to hear it—did you hear it once and get it right? No; we have to continually be teaching and training; and then the correcting and reproving is a part of that “…so that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.”

I love the strategy, Ginger, that you provide us with, which is: “Ask heart-probing questions,” “What do we need to put off?” “What do we need to put on?” You can just tuck that away, and that’ll serve you so well as a parent. That’s at the heart of the book that you’ve written, Ginger, called I Can’t Believe You Just Said That!: Biblical Wisdom for Taming Your Child’s Tongue. We have copies of the book in our FamilyLife Today Resource Center. You can order it from us, online, at FamilyLifeToday.com; or you can call to order at 1-800-FL-TODAY.

Again, the book is called I Can’t Believe You Just Said That!: Biblical Wisdom for Taming Your Child’s Tongue. The website is FamilyLifeToday.com if you want to order online, or you can order by phone by calling 1-800-358-6329—that’s 1-800-“F” as in family, “L” as in life, and then the word, “TODAY.”

You know, what Ginger has been talking about today—helping our kids control their speech/their tongue—this is really just basic training/basic discipleship, which is not something that ends when we get to a certain age. It’s something that’s a lifelong process, discipling and being discipled.

David Robbins, the President of FamilyLife®, is here. You’re passionate about discipleship.

David: Yes; that’s one of my core passions in life; absolutely. It comes from—I had the privilege of being intentionally discipled myself. I’ve had the privilege of having parents be intentional with me; and then, as I got into college, having a few men really pour into
me: “What does it look like to follow Jesus?”—and not only modeled that—but intentionally train and teach me. You know, I’m still benefitting from what they’ve taught me. I still meet with a mentor every other week and have intentional time to continue to pursue growth and be discipled.

We don’t always think about parenting in the same way, but that’s exactly what we’re called to do. If anything, we don’t join in on our kids’ discipleship for a season/or a year or two; we get to be a part of their discipleship and formation for 18 years as the primary disciples God gives us and entrusts to us.

One of the questions I keep asking myself is, “As I seek to disciple my kids, am I continuing to posture myself to be discipled?” That’d be a challenge I would invite everyone to consider. You know, we go through seasons, where we have people investing in us; but then, also, there are times—where we move or transitions happen—where we don’t. It gets a little dangerous; it gets stagnant. So, as we consider discipling our kids and pouring out to them, I think it’s really important that we keep pursuing our own discipleship and finding people to invest in us.

Bob: We can’t pour out unless we’re being poured into. That’s a great picture, David—great challenge. Thank you for that.

A quick reminder for listeners: “May is an important month for us, here, at FamilyLife. We’ve had some friends of the ministry, who have stepped forward and offered to help match every donation we receive, during the month of May, up to a total of $550,000. That’s a great opportunity for us; because oftentimes, in the summer, we see a decline in donations. We’re trying to head into the summer months with everything fully-funded and in a good position.

That’s why we’re asking you to consider making a donation this month in support of the ministry. Your donation will be matched, dollar for dollar, up to that total of $550,000. If you decide, in the month of May, to become one of our monthly Legacy Partners and make a donation each month over the next year, every time you make a donation for the next year, your donation is going to be doubled—so, not just your first donation—but every donation you make, subsequently, will be matched, dollar for dollar, until we are out of funds in that matching-gift fund.

In addition, when you become a Legacy Partner, we want to say, “Thank you for joining the team.” We want to send you a gift card so that you, or someone you know, can attend a Weekend to Remember® marriage getaway as our guests. Again, it’s our way of saying, “Thank you for being part of the team that makes FamilyLife Today possible.” You can donate, online, at FamilyLifeToday.com; or you can call to donate at 1-800-FL-TODAY. Help us take full advantage of this matching-gift opportunity during the month of May, and we look forward to hearing from you.
And we hope you can join us back, again, tomorrow when we’re going to go through some of the very specific ways that our kids—and sometimes, even their parents—can sin with their tongues. We’ll talk more about that tomorrow with Ginger Hubbard. I hope you can tune in for that.

I want to thank our engineer today, Keith Lynch, along with our entire broadcast production team. On behalf of our hosts, Dave and Ann Wilson, I’m Bob Lepine. We will see you back next time for another edition of FamilyLife Today.

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