

Tough Love

In the April 27, 2006 issue of *Good Tidings of Good Things*, a weekly bulletin of the Jacksonville, Alabama church, I read an article by Don Martin that reminded me of the need that sometimes arises for tough love. The article was about Paul “Bear” Bryant, the legendary football coach of the Crimson Tide at the University of Alabama.

When Joe Namath was the star quarterback at Alabama, he was found guilty of breaking team rules. Everyone believed that Namath was indispensable to the team and with two games left on the schedule all eyes were on Coach Bryant to see what he would do with his star. Many were surprised when Bear informed Namath that he was suspended for the year and maybe forever. Bryant received over 6000 letters of protest from fans who knew the chances of Alabama winning without Namath were slim. However, the coach stood firm and played the final two games without his star, winning both by narrow margins. Namath returned the next year and led the Crimson Tide to the National Championship.

Years later Namath agreed that Bryant was right to stick by the suspension. What did Coach Bryant teach his team about himself? What did Namath learn from this incident? What did the team learn that would affect it for years to come? There is a time to practice tough love.

This principle applies to the family. If parents are to lead their children in the right way, they must learn to practice tough love. When rules are broken, consequences must follow . . . Parents must stick by their guns. It’s not because they love so little, but because they love so much. Life-changing lessons may be learned by the practice of tough love.

The principle applies in the church, too. Under the leadership of our shepherds we are to dwell together in love and unity. When someone steps out of line, fails to walk in unity and love, and disturbs the life of the body, then that person must be confronted and corrected (Romans 16:17,18). It’s not the easy thing to do, but it is the right thing to do. And it’s not because we love so little, but because we love people and the church so much.

—Jay Lockhart