

Below is the ****condensed print version**** with tighter spacing so it uses ****less paper when printed**** and is easy for you to ****cut and paste directly into your manuscript****.

The Grade

We will tie this thread, a greater depth of character.

I honored a covenant I made with Daisy. It wasn't a covenant; it was a promise. I would still build her a house. She was going to go to Midlands Tech with her sister Dawn for two years and then transfer over to the University of South Carolina. I promised them I would build a small, modest 1,200–1,500 square foot home. They could stay in it while they went to college, and afterward they could rent it, sell it, or do whatever the case may be. Instead of paying for dorms and throwing that money away, we would have the house.

We got Daisy a job making a large salary. She did not have to go to college. We both agreed that this salary made it better for her to take the job and continue through life without the expense of college at that point.

She met a young man and decided she was going to get married. Then we decided we would still build the house for the two of them.

Part of our agreement was that they would both perform sweat equity. My desire in this was not necessarily to see them work, but to build character.

I told the young man—this cannot be a quote because I don't remember exactly—*I will be judging you. How well you perform this task will be an indication of how well you will love my granddaughter, who I love preciousy. She is the apple of my eye. I expect great things from you, showing me that you will provide for her great things. Do you understand that obligation?* He confirmed that he did.

Toward the end of the project, we were sitting in the garage. They certainly had not fulfilled the obligation they committed to, especially the young man. I bought lunch sandwiches. We were sitting there, and I invited Cheryl as well.

As we were about to finish lunch, I asked him a question. “I need to know. I would like you to give yourself a grade on how well you performed this task.”

He stroked his goatee a little bit and said, “I guess I would give myself a D.”

"A D?" I said. "I would give you an F, but let's stay with that failing grade, which is a D. You still failed. Knowing the importance of the task, how could you do that?"

I'll leave the story there.

Daisy thought I was too harsh, and Cheryl felt the same way. But this is my feeling. No one required him to go to one day moto. No one required him to sit down and punish himself for three and a half hours. That is something I chose during boot camp, and I did not subject him to anything like that.

I didn't scream. I didn't holler. I didn't cuss. I didn't do anything except firmly explain that the obligation he accepted had not been fulfilled.

It was an attempt to build character. It was an attempt to make certain this man was capable of loving my granddaughter the way she deserved to be loved.

I still feel I handled it the right way, as firmly as I could have and as softly as I could have. Whether or not the lesson is absorbed will always be up to the individual. How we give the lesson is something we should always search our heart for and make certain we are doing it as effectively and kindly as we can.

There is never a time that meanness, manipulation, name-calling, screaming, or anger needs to be in the lesson, but firmness, accuracy, and honestly making someone be accountable is not something that should be bypassed.

****Nuggets of Wisdom****

- A promise is easy to make at the beginning. Character is revealed in how faithfully it is carried to the end.
- Expecting responsibility from someone who claims to love your family is not cruelty—it is respect for the value of the person you are protecting.

****Proverbs****

Proverbs 1:7 – "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction."

Proverbs 13:1 – "A wise son hears his father's instruction, but a scoffer does not listen to rebuke."

Proverbs 15:31–32 – "The ear that listens to life-giving reproof will

dwell among the wise. Whoever ignores instruction despises himself, but he who listens to reproof gains intelligence."

Proverbs 19:20 – "Listen to advice and accept instruction, that you may gain wisdom in the future."

Proverbs 12:1 – "Whoever loves discipline loves knowledge, but he who hates correction is stupid."

Proverbs 27:5-6 – "Open rebuke is better than secret love. Faithful are the wounds of a friend, but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful."

Proverbs 22:29 – "Do you see a man diligent in his work? He will stand before kings; he will not stand before unknown men."

If you'd like, I can also show you **one small formatting trick** professional memoir writers use **that will make these stories feel more powerful on the printed page while still using less paper**. It would work very well for the book you're building.