

CHAPTER 6LEARNING TO LIKE THE LIMITS

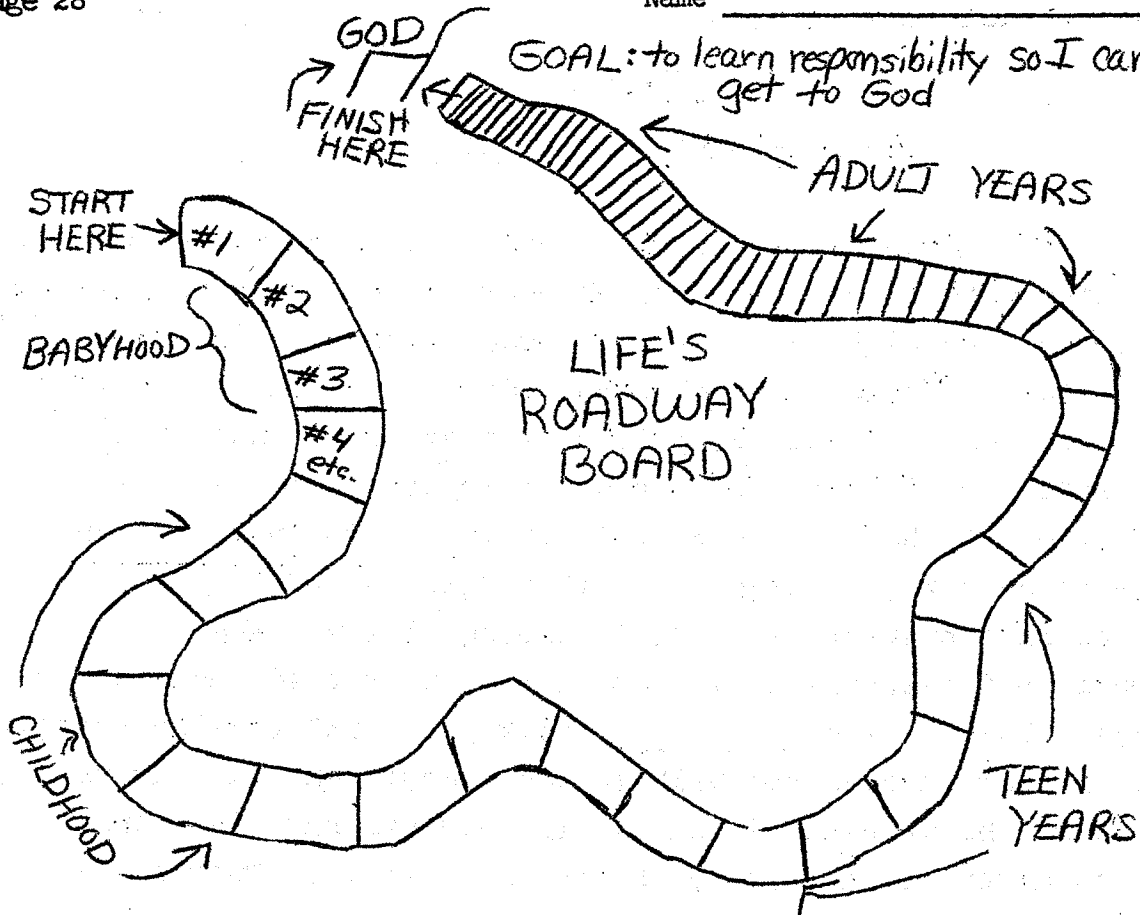
Limits are boundaries or bounds which restrain or confine. We all are familiar with speed limits which restrain cars and trucks from going too fast on the highways. How safe would our roads be without any limits or laws? Would you feel secure driving on the highway if all the other drivers were going as fast as they wanted and if they had total freedom to disregard all laws and to drive however they please? The lion at the zoo has certain limits as to where it can go and where it cannot go. Aren't you glad this is so?

In the last chapter we studied responsibility. What if a young person is not responsible to get on the right road and stay on it? God says, "This is the _____, walk ye in it" (Isaiah 30:21). What if a young person does not walk in God's way? Should that person be allowed to go the wrong way? Should the parents say, "We permit our son (or daughter) to go any way he (or she) wants. That's his (or her) choice!"?

Consider Isaiah 53:6. Do people naturally go God's way or do they go their own sinful and selfish way? _____
Do people tend to stay on track (on God's road) or do they tend to go astray? Do people tend to stay in the way or go out of the way (Romans 3:12)? _____ Which dog would you need to restrain (get a leash for), the one which always stays by your side or the one that always wanders off?

_____ So also young people need limits because they do not naturally go in the right direction.

Responsibility is something that must be learned. Every person goes through the various stages of life until he eventually reaches adulthood. Limits help to get us through these stages of development and prevent us from becoming a "casualty" and ending up off the road in a ditch! These stages of life can be illustrated by a "roadway board" (you are familiar with game boards; on the next page we have a "roadway board" which illustrates a person's journey through life on the way to the finish line or the goal line):



The parents' responsibility is to keep the young person on track (on the road of rightness) so that they may reach the goal. Every person must start at Square #1 on life's roadway. No one has an advantage over someone else because all must start at the beginning. A person cannot start his life's course as a teen, because there are 12 years of living and learning that must come first! Everyone has an equal advantage and everyone is equally responsible to get to God who is the GOAL (remember Ezekiel 18--see page 24--everyone is individually responsible to go down the right road).

As we saw in the last chapter, irresponsibility is costly (page 25) and it is necessary to have one's course corrected (lest we be like the derailed train--page 26)! This is where discipline comes in as the parents' responsibility. Discipline is that which is necessary to keep a person within limits. Does God love the believer so much that He corrects him by His Word (2 Timothy 3:16)? _____ So also the loving parent should discipline and correct in order to keep the young person in the path of life. The object of discipline and limits is to keep you on the road and prevent you from falling off the edge:

(this is illustrated on the next page)

When there are no limits to keep the young person in that place of safety, then the results are disastrous and tragic. This can cripple a young person and make it most difficult to enter adulthood and to handle life's responsibilities rightly.

If you do not believe

this, enter a mental hospital and meet some young people who have been ruined and mentally crippled by drugs and drink and dozens of other things which they plunged into. Of course, it is not just young people who have such problems.

The need for proper discipline and for establishing proper limits is great. Discipline results in security. The one who is disciplined is the one who is secure. Consider these two governments:

GOVERNMENT A

A government with a stable and solid military, a stable money system (backed up by gold), a stable manpower system where there are job opportunities for qualified workers and healthy competition and a free market; a government where there is law and order and where lawbreakers are swiftly punished.

GOVERNMENT B

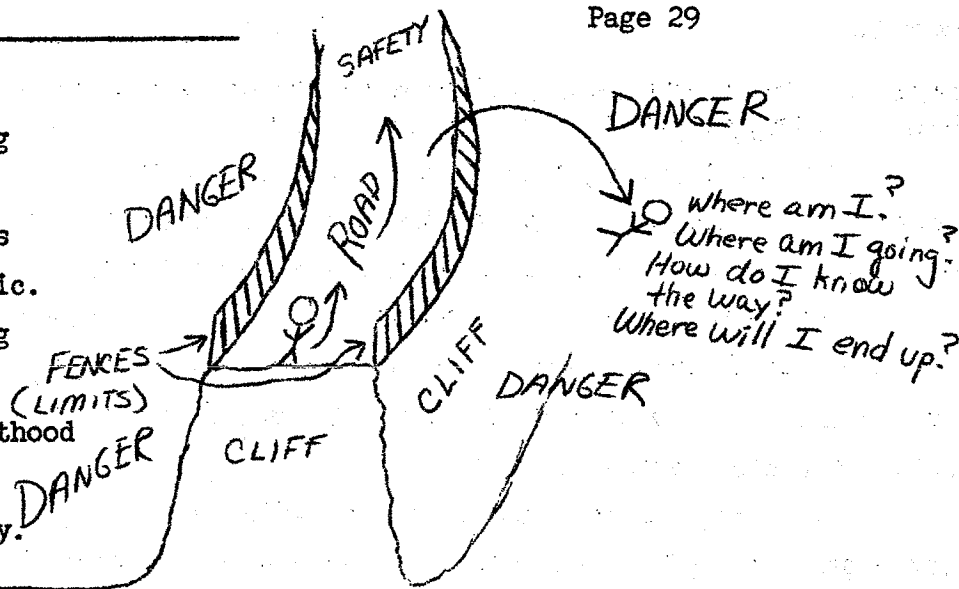
A government that has a weak military and which has lost control of the money system (through runaway inflation), where unemployment is very high, where lawlessness abounds on every hand and where criminals receive more pity than do the victims of the crimes.

Which government would you rather live under? _____

It's also a problem when there is too much control and when people are forced to go in the wrong direction and down the wrong road. Consider, for example, a communist dictatorship where there is total control. In this case there is no freedom to develop (there is no development of the person). It's true that a communist country can develop a skilled athlete or gymnast for the Olympics, and yet this system of government fails to develop them as a person. It is one thing to have one's body developed; it's another thing to have one's mind and soul developed in the proper way. Proper discipline allows for such development. The right kind of discipline develops a person; a dictatorship denies a person healthy development.

Where would you rather be educated (assuming you really want to learn), in a well disciplined environment where the teacher has everything under control or in a chaotic environment where the students do whatever they please and where the teacher has absolutely no control over them? _____

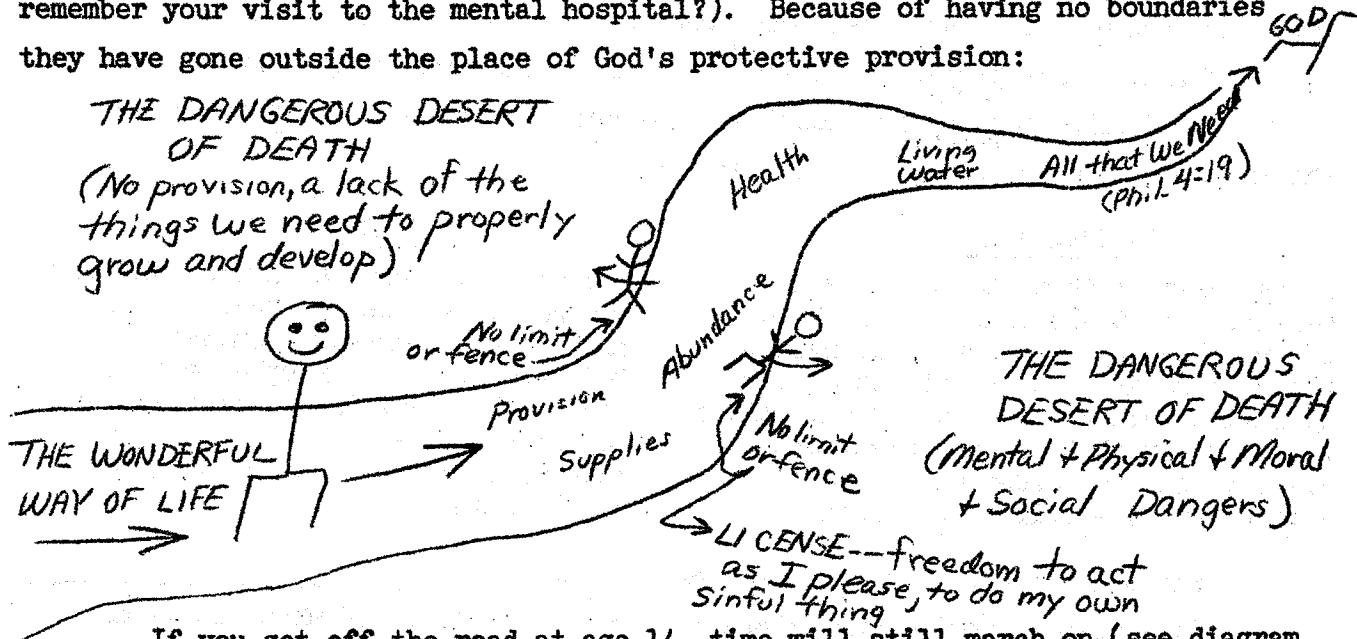
(Note: Here again, in Communist schools there is much order and control, and yet



the minds of the students do not have the freedom to develop because they are being indoctrinated with error rather than truth).

Limits allow a person to feel safe and secure. I'm secure at the zoo because of the limits placed on the tiger. I feel secure on the roller coaster because I'm strapped in and a safety bar is placed over me! How would you like to ride a roller coaster without such limits. I feel secure as I drive the winding mountain road because there is a sturdy guard rail that separates me from the edge of the cliff. Oh how I love limits! Can you think of other limits that keep us safe and protect us every day?

The danger comes when there are no limits. The great tragedy is when a young person is given the freedom to do whatever he pleases. This results in lawlessness and disaster. The young person leaves the place of safety and gets hurt and harmed, sometimes to the point where there is no recovery (do you remember your visit to the mental hospital?). Because of having no boundaries they have gone outside the place of God's protective provision:



If you get off the road at age 14, time will still march on (see diagram on page 28). The hands of the clock will not stop! By the time you are 24 years old, you may be very thirsty, but you are in the desert (the wrong place to get water). You are off-track and as time goes on it becomes harder and harder to get back on track. For 10 years you have lived outside of the safety zone in the desert, and you are insecure and unsure how to tackle life's problems. You are not ready to face life.

Every young person must develop a good "mental map." Suppose you wanted to locate the city of Middletown, Connecticut on a map. If you had a world globe, would this show Middletown? _____ Would a map of the U.S. show Middletown? _____ Would a map of New England show Middletown? _____ Would a map of Connecticut show Middletown? _____ Which map would be the most helpful in locating Middletown and showing exactly how to get there?

Suppose you wanted to locate East Street in Middletown, Connecticut. Would the map of Connecticut help you? _____ What kind of map would you need? _____ You need a very specific map with very specific information.

Many young people (and older people too) have a very poor mental map in their heads. They are satisfied with a general map of the world (a globe) which does not give them very specific information concerning where to go and how to get there. They have never developed a correct mental map of life. Perhaps they get themselves high on drugs which keeps their minds from getting the specific information it needs. Perhaps they are not serious about their studies and thus they fail to receive the valuable lessons and directions that could come from books and teachers. They fail to listen to parents and police and pastors--all of whom could give them very good directions. Most of all, they have no ears to hear what God says--the One who is the perfect Guide and direction-giver!

As a result they have very little straight in their heads and they are off track. Life requires them to go somewhere and get somewhere, but they are unable to do it. They have a very poor mental map, and the information and directions that they need to go down life's road is just not in their heads.

Is this true of young people that you know? How well can they really handle responsibility? How ready are they to hold down a job and earn a steady income? How prepared are they to be on their own and to face the hard realities of life? Think of the young people you know. Are they really ready to tackle living in the world with all the problems, pressures and pains? If your parents were suddenly to send you out the door on your own, how well would you survive? How ready are you?

Not everyone enjoys the same kind of discipline in the home. In some homes there is practically no discipline at all--a totally permissive atmosphere exists where the young person is free to do as he pleases. In other homes there is discipline, but it is the wrong kind of discipline. It is merely a frustrated or angry parent getting after a young person for the wrong reasons. In this case the parent fails to responsibly and correctly handle life, and the child or young person suffers because of it. How can the parents keep you on the right road if they are not on it themselves?

There is also correct Biblical discipline where the parents establish wise limits to protect the young person and allow him (or her) to develop and grow up straight and tall. Can a person have too much discipline? Can a person have too much rightness? Can a person be too healthy? Can a person be too much on track? Godly discipline ever seeks to develop the good and destroy the bad.

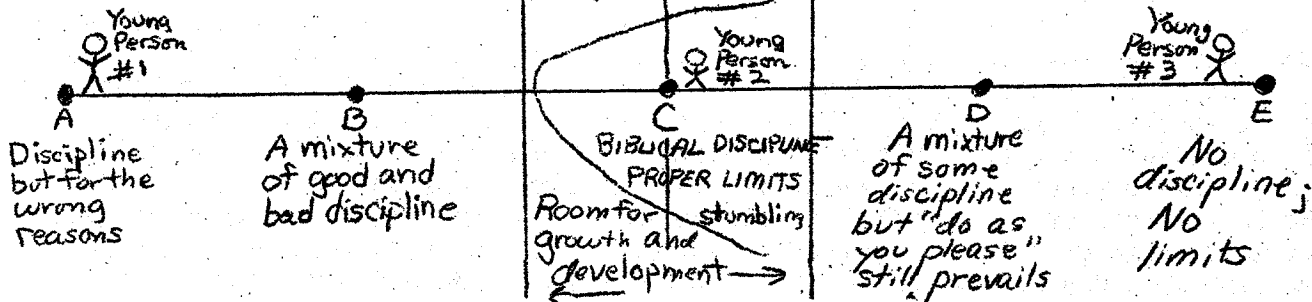
On the next page there is a diagram which seeks to show wrong discipline, right discipline and no discipline. Where do you find yourself on the discipline line as shown on the top of the next page?

OVERLY DOMINEERING

Parents are wrong

OVERLY PERMISSIVE

Parents are wrong



What should Young Person #1 do? If my Dad is drunk and strikes me, how should I react? Should I strike him back? Should I run away? Should I hide? Remember: The fact that my Father or Mother may not be on the right road does not mean that I must follow their poor example (Ezekiel 18:14-17). I am responsible for myself and if I am not on the right road I have only myself to blame!

What should Young Person #2 do? If I am receiving healthy discipline I should be thankful. If I am not thankful, God help me to be thankful! Learn to enjoy what very few young people have!

What should Young Person #3 do? If I do not have limits, then I must make them myself! If I am driving on a mountain road where there are no guard rails, I must do my best to stay on the road! If the teacher fails to discipline and control the class, then I am still going to pay attention and learn all I can anyway. Even if my parents fail to give me limits, God has given limits and I must find those limits in His Word. He's my Guide. God has Guidelines. His Word is my Guidebook! I can go to His Word and be governed by that. To want right leads to thinking right leads to living right! Do you want right?

Regardless of your home background or situation, there is hope for you! You can do something about it! You can turn to God and be on the right road. Consider a 25 year old person who is from a home where there was no discipline. Suddenly this person gets saved. Is there any hope for him? Is this person doomed to be on the wrong road forever? Can this person do something about his situation immediately? Can this person get on the right road right away? YES!!! And if he can, so can you! If you don't, you have only yourself to blame!

What is Biblical discipline and what is involved? Consider the following:

- 1) It is a COMMAND. God commands parents to make sure their children are on the right road (Ephesians 6:4; Titus 1:6; Proverbs 22:6).
- 2) It is COMMUNICATION. Parents can verbally point out God's road, "This is the way, walk ye in it!"

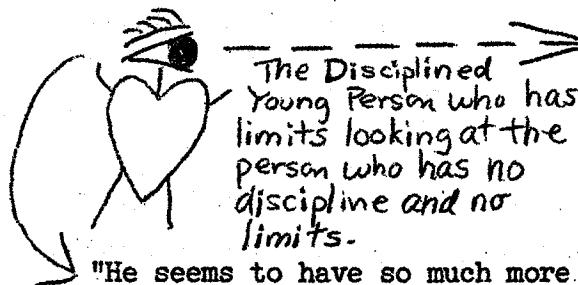
3) It is CORRECTION. Sometimes something stronger than words is needed to get the point across. To curb delinquency it is often necessary to start at the bottom! The board of education must frequently be applied to the seat of learning! The book of Proverbs has much to say about the rod of correction.

4) It is COMFORT. All young people get off track from time to time (this is what comes naturally--Isaiah 53:6)! Along with firm correction there needs to be comfort and encouragement as the straying one is welcomed back to the road once again (notice Jesus' words to a very wayward woman in John 8:11).

5) It is CONTROLLED. Limits are necessary and must be firmly enforced for the welfare of the young person. What good are speed limits if the state police never enforce them?

6) It is CARING. The parent wants only the highest and best for the child, which is nothing less than to lead them to God (parents are a bridge that should bring a child to God).

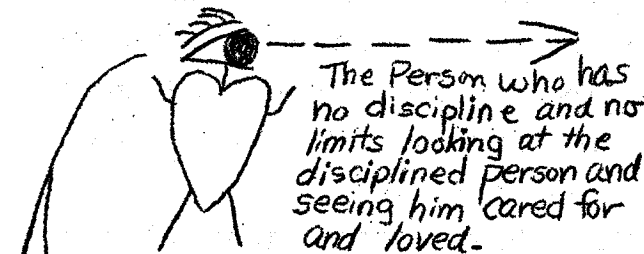
Discipline seems COSTLY to the one looking out at those who are not disciplined:



MR. FREEDOM

"He seems to have so much more than I. He can go where he wants, do what he wants, be with whom he wants. He seems so free and I seem so bound. I wish I could be like him!"

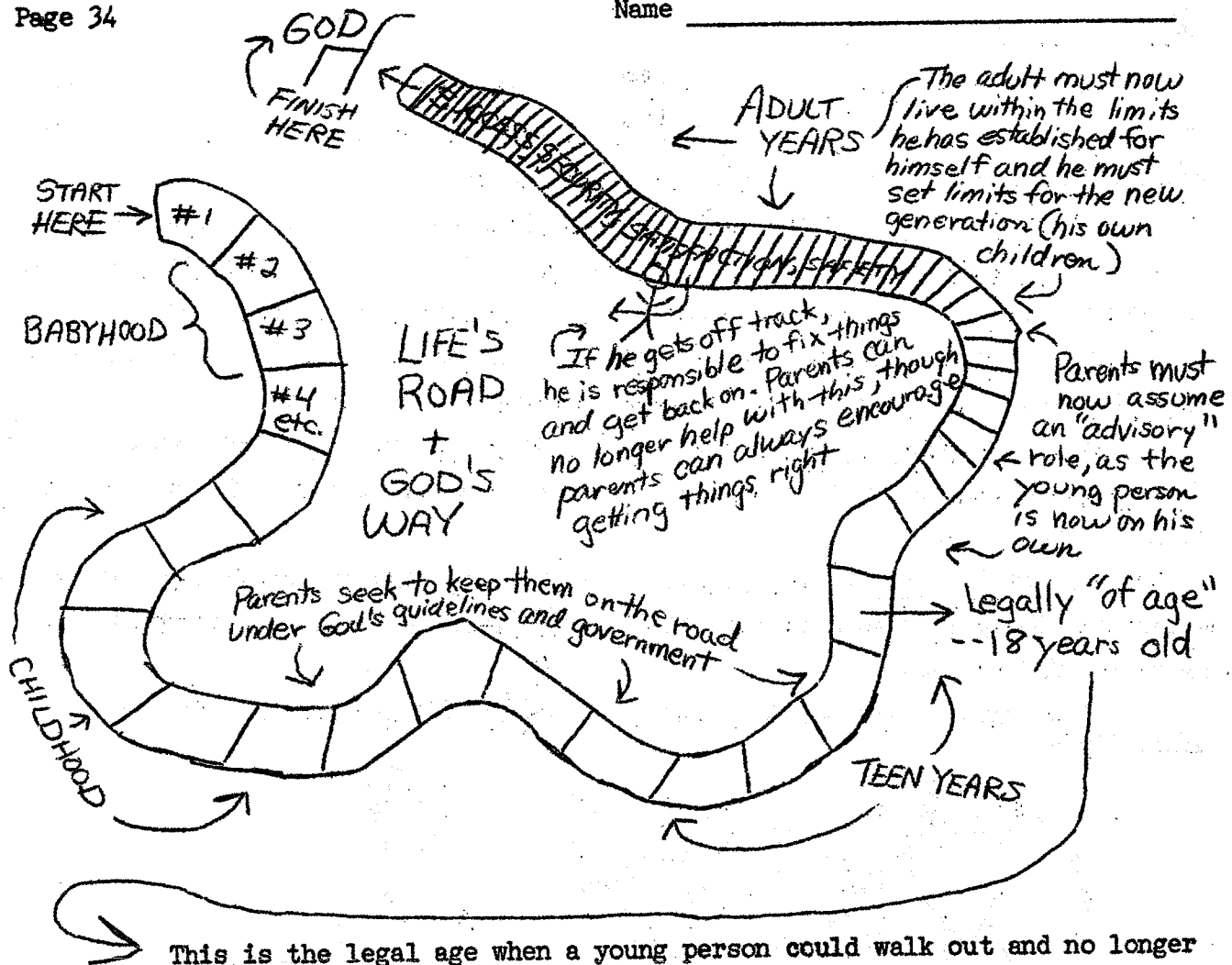
Now consider the undisciplined person looking out at those who are rightly and correctly disciplined:



MR. LIMITED

IF HE IS HONEST HE WOULD SAY: "I wish I had parents who are at home and care enough to spank me. No one ever tells me that I can't do something. They let me do whatever I want. I wish I had parents to communicate with and correct and comfort and care for and control me!"

IF HE IS DISHONEST HE WOULD SAY: "I'm going to try to entice Mr. Limited to come over to my side and to break out of his limits. I'll say to him, 'See, you're missing out on all the fun!' If he doesn't come to my side I'll condemn him and disassociate from him and make him feel like an oddball."



This is the legal age when a young person could walk out and no longer be under the authority of the parents (it used to be 21 years but it was lowered to 18). Remember that man's present thinking may not be in harmony with God's thinking. Few are really ready at age 18 to be independent and on their own. The world is telling them that at this age they are ready when they are not really ready at all to face life and tackle life's problems. Our society has not helped as it should to prepare young people for adult life and its responsibilities.

REMEMBER: Within the home the house rules still apply even if you are over 18, that is, you can not go against the parents or owners to ruin their Christian testimony or to tear apart their family foundations and building. For example, if a smoker were to be invited into a home as a guest and if his host were to say, "Sorry, but in this house we do not allow smoking!", then the guest would have to abide by the rules of the home. Also suppose a son were a convicted criminal. Certainly the parents could not allow him to hide in their home and seek refuge there. If they did the public would see that they were harboring a criminal and this would be a terrible testimony. If this son should straighten out his life, then he could be allowed in. As long as a person is IN THE HOUSE, the house rules remain in effect REGARDLESS OF AGE.