

John Kozlowski

From: John Kozlowski <John@Kozlowski.org>
Sent: Wednesday, May 2, 2012 1:52 PM
To: Render Caines (jcaines@covenantchattanooga.org)
Subject: Excessive Discipline

Render,

An alleged anonymous call to the Tennessee Department of Children's Services has resulted in Patrick Vasterling, a Program Coordinator, visiting our home today. We were clearly surprised by his visit. This email is a way for me to document what happened, and I'm sharing it with you to have a good record and solicit your prayers for this situation. We take it very seriously.

Mr. Vasterling requested private interviews with our children to verify that we were not using excessive discipline on them. It was clear that this interview included examining their buttocks for bruises. This I clearly found unacceptable. Not having much time to review my options and with the belief that I am my family's last line of defense, I refused to allow that on his request. He said that he was obligated and his next step would be a court order to do the interviews.

I contacted HSLDA via phone to get a better understanding of what my rights and obligations were. They immediately connected me with an attorney, Darren Jones, and he was very helpful.

Mr. Vasterling stayed in the driveway and about 15 minutes later was joined by a Polk County Sheriff's officer. Dorothy-Jane, Julia, George, Susanna, Gloria-Jane, Walter, Zadok, and I went out to greet them. I was on the phone with the HSLDA attorney at the time.

Dorothy-Jane was on the phone with Dr. Patricia Pagan during this time to seek her professional assistance. Dr. Pagan offered to talk with Mr. Vasterling on the phone at that time, if that would allay their concerns. We were told that this was insufficient.

The officer informed us that Mr. Vasterling had his obligation and he wanted to know if we would comply. I replied that I was unaware of any legal obligation for me to allow Mr. Vasterling to interview my children simply by the authority of his business card or id card. I did say that with a written legal document I would comply.

I did state that we do offer corporal punishment to our children and that we typically use a Lexan vacuum cleaner tube as our "rod of correction." I stated we use this rod for its balance of sting and not causing physical harm to the child. I also stated that this was only occurring with our current children ages 3 to 11.

Mr. Vasterling stepped away and made a call on his cell phone. The officer then softly told me that if I continued this that I would be going to jail. I asked why, and his response with something to the effect of my being difficult. I don't remember his exact words. During this time all parties were having a polite conversation with the children present. I again said that I would cooperate with written authority, but not simply on the words of a man.

Mr. Vasterling returned and said that he could not contact the party he needed to, but that would transpire later. A summons would be issued for our family to show up at the local courthouse, probably on Friday, for the interviews to take place. He requested an examination by our pediatrician of the kids and I told him that we would arrange for Dr. Pat Pagan, our family practice doctor, to examine the children as requested.

As we concluded I did speak to both gentlemen and said that I had no personal misgivings about them as individuals and shook their hands. I also said that I believed the Lord calls me to protect my family and this was my attempt to do so, but I would cooperate with their formal legal request.

I have attached some photos of the event.

There was no indication of a specific child in question or a specific event. At home, in respect for the children, we typically take the child into the master bathroom for their spanking. Both Dorothy-Jane and I do this. Spankings are always preceded by a statement by the child of why the spanking is to be administered and followed with some combination of a forgiveness request, a repentance statement, and prayer.

I am aware that there are those who want to see spanking made illegal. Fortunately it is not in the state of Tennessee. Proverbs 13:24 states things clearly, *“Whoever spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is diligent to discipline him.”* I do not hate my children and acknowledge my duty to love them and discipline them as the Lord requires.

We have clearly wondered what would have caused someone to call Children’s Services. It seems it was either belligerent or out of a concern due to a misunderstanding.

The potential misunderstandings that I can think of include an event when Susanna was outside screaming in pain from a splinter being removed from her foot. Dorothy-Jane’s successful effort to remove it was met with our theatrical Susanna screaming as if her foot was being amputated.

At church Zadok has always been with a family member or in sight of one. At six months, he has never been to the nursery. He is the first child with whom we are attempting “Elimination Communication” and it has gone very well. On occasion he is vocal about his dislike for his situation, perhaps due to monotony, frequency or duration which could be moments. I have taken him to the men’s room at church on several occasions and I think only once has he voiced his desire not to be there and the room was occupied with others at that time. I do this in the large stall with the door open.

As I am currently working 10 to 15 hours a day in front of the computer at home in an attempt to provide for my family, the time this will take will extract a heavy cost. Your prayers are appreciated.

John Kozlowski

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[Duty is ours; results are God’s • John Quincy Adams](#)



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Mr. Vasterling’s business card.



Mr. Vasterling's badge.



Mr. Vasterling.



Mr. Vasterling and the Sheriff's vehicles. Both gentlemen are talking behind the car.