

BEYOND OBEDIENCE

"Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. 5 Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus" Philippians 2:3-5

Many parents grasp the importance of raising obedient, respectful children, but fail to understand the significance of raising them to be lovers of God and others. They assume that a self-governing child, raised in the Christian faith, will automatically grow to spiritual maturity as they grow in physical and mental maturity. However, such parents often discover that when their children reach adulthood, they may not continue in the morality or faith which their parents sought to give them. Even more frightening, some parents *are* content with the results of their parenting, but shouldn't be. They are satisfied that their children have grown up and remain active in the church, but these grownup children lack the most important Christian virtue – *love*.

Parents, gauge your values. Will you be satisfied if your children are obedient and respectful, serve in church ministries, wear conservative clothes, have neatly groomed hair, and listen only to hymns? These things may be good signs, but not if the children are socially cold and grow up with no concern for the lost or noticeable love for others, not if they are so self-involved that they avoid meeting new people and are not accustomed to reaching out to strangers, or opening their homes to the needy.

Check your goals. Will you be satisfied if your children can quote the entire Westminster Shorter Catechism [Bible], are so self-governing that they are able to sit silent and motionless in church for hours at a time, and are so well-behaved that wherever you walk they remain right by your side? Such self-restrained actions are a good foundation, but may be meaningless if they continually gossip, criticize, and demean others.

Will you be content if your sons wear suits to church and your daughters modest dresses, if they are known to be hardworking and responsible, and they address all adults as Mr. and Mrs.? If so, do not overlook their heart condition which allows them to continually bicker at home, and be unkind to all who offend them.

What if your children are as well-mannered at home as they are in public, and their only flaw is their tendency to point out the shortcomings of others? We are foolish to be happy if our children's only imperfection is their arrogance, for God resists the proud. A well-behaved proud child is useless to his fellow man and just as displeasing to God as a defiant rebel.

So, if we raise children who have the ability to speak in the tongues of angels, have the faith to move mountains, perform deeds of self-sacrificing benevolence, and can obey in a flash with total respect, but lack love, we have accomplished *nothing*. Zip. Zero. Nada. Yes, obedient, self-governing children are beautiful and necessary, but if they do not *love*, they lack the quality most dear to the heart of our God.

Teach them the doctrinal truth of the gospel: God loves sinners

But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. 9 Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! 10 For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life! Romans 5:8

Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven--for she loved much. But he who has been forgiven little loves little." Luke 7:47

Teach them who God is – the most amazing and lovable being who has ever existed

... And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, 18 may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the

love of Christ, 19 and to know this love that surpasses knowledge--that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. Ephesians 3:17-19

When we truly understand the gospel message we come to know God as incredibly lovable. Yet, even aside from seeing the mercy revealed on the cross, those who know Him find themselves in awe of Him and enamored with Him. The old expression “to know Him is to love Him” must have started with God. If we want our children to love God, then in the words of author, Tedd Tripp, “Dazzle them with God!”

Do you know anyone who is “dazzled” with God? Do you know what that looks like, and do you know what it is about God that dazzles them? One who was enthralled with God was King David – he was thoroughly smitten with Him. So fulfilled was he by his intimate relationship with his Heavenly Father he once declared “... *As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O God. 2 My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God?*” (Psalm 42:1 & 2). And again, “*One thing I ask of the LORD, this is what I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD and to seek him in his temple*” (Psalm 27:4).

The longer David got to know God the more he found Him to be absolutely and totally wonderful.

I have seen you in the sanctuary and beheld your power and your glory. 3 Because your love is better than life, my lips will glorify you. 4 I will praise you as long as I live, and in your name I will lift up my hands. 5 My soul will be satisfied as with the richest of foods; with singing lips my mouth will praise you. 6 On my bed I remember you; I think of you through the watches of the night. 7 Because you are my help, I sing in the shadow of your wings. 8 My soul clings to you; your right hand upholds me. Psalm 63:2-8

[One can't communicate a good case of the measles unless you have them yourself. –V.P.Wierwille]

Model for them love for God

I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. John 13:15

... set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity. 1 Timothy 4:12

A problem faced by some parents is that the “love for God” they model doesn’t look to their children like love at all. Their children perceive the Christian life to be a loveless, joyless, preoccupation with avoiding bad stuff. Certainly, a critical aspect of walking with Christ is throwing off everything that hinders and the sin that entangles, as well as avoiding harmful influences. However, if it appears to our children that our Christian life is a drudgery and a burden, and our dominant concern is with what we must *avoid* and what we *don’t do*, we must ask ourselves – will they want that? *We don’t even really want that for ourselves!*

Convey to them the love of God by loving them

Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. 8 Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love ... 16 And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him. 1 John 4:7-8, 16

WHAT ARE SOME PRACTICAL TIPS FOR RAISING LOVING CHILDREN?

From the time they are born, we must elevate love as their life purpose.

- Emphasize to them throughout their day that loving and serving [God and] others is our supreme goal.
- Evaluate all their social and moral decisions from the standpoint of love.
- Make the absence of love the issue of every childish dispute. When children are in conflict, do not just rebuke them for fighting, but

admonish them for *not loving*. Don't ask them "Who started it?" Ask them each how have they failed to love the other.

Parents, just as God does not intend that the Christian life be burdensome, neither should our parenting. If we are weighed down just trying to survive our children, or if we daily struggle just to tolerate them, we are falling short of God's calling for us. We will always be miserable and our children will not easily be trained. God does not want us just to endure our kids or merely put up with them – He wants us to aggressively love them! There is a vast difference. When we properly love our children God is glorified and our families reap great blessings. Remember, as Jesus told his followers – when we obey his commandment to love, our joy will be full.

1 Timothy 1:5 But the goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.

See the whole article at http://www.familyministries.com/beyond_obedience.htm.