

## Stop Focusing on Impossible Obedience

### I. Your unsaved children cannot please God. It's impossible obedience.

- Too many parents find their anxieties appeased when their kids simply “follow the rules.” They have no real passion or love for God, but they’re “good kids.” They get good grades. They do good work. They like good things. And we convince ourselves that it’s good enough.
- But the problem is that Romans 8:7-8 tells us, *“The mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so, and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.”*
- Deep inside we know that superficial, pharisaical obedience isn’t good enough, but we lie to ourselves by pretending that when our children muster up enough fleshly self-control to outwardly conform to simple rules, they’re actually doing something worth while. But they’re not.
- Yes, they eat vegetables instead of doing drugs. Yes, they go right to sleep instead of sleeping around. Yes, they tackle their homework instead of beating up kids at school, but Romans 14:23 makes it very clear that anything we do (including outward acts of religiosity) that’s not done from genuine faith . . . is sin.
- That means that my unconverted five year old is no more pleasing God by going to bed sweetly than a fifteen year old is messing around with his girlfriend.
- If you have children who are not born again, please stop hanging your peace on their ability to obey. They cannot truly obey. They cannot glorify God without first being regenerated, submitting to Him, and being born again.
- It’s impossible obedience, and it shouldn’t be our goal.
- If our kids are not born again, our biggest focus should be on introducing them to God.
- They need to see His miraculous works. They need to wonder at His infinite character. Without first understanding His perfection, their sinfulness won’t be that bad.
- If their sin isn’t that bad, they won’t need saving.
- That’s the first impossible obedience — that’s expecting a dead person to live. Your unregenerate children cannot obey.
- Yes, you should have standards, but the requirement that they do the right things in the right way is merely a schoolmaster to show them how sinful they actually are. It’s not an end goal . . . it’s merely part of the process of realizing they’re a sinner and seeing their need for a savior.
- But, even if our kids are born again, we can still expect impossible obedience.

### II. Your born again children can’t obey if you are the motivation for their obedience. It’s impossible obedience.

- If you want your children to worship God, stop demanding that they worship you.
- We should never be happy with our unsaved children’s mere conformity to rules because they need far greater. They need to become a follower of God.
- In the same vein, just because my kids are born again doesn’t mean that mere outward conformity to my rules pleases the Lord.
- If my kids are doing the right thing in the right way, but they’re doing it for my reasons . . . they’re not obeying any more than an unsaved kid is.
- The parents want their kids to obey for the parents. They literally want their kids to engage in idol worship with the parents themselves as the idols.
- Sometimes it involves manipulation, sometimes we use force, but it’s not rightly motivating our kids behavior.
- Our kids cannot please God while they’re obeying solely for us. It’s impossible obedience.

- So, what do we do?
- We need to stop focusing on impossible obedience. But more than that, we need to stop focusing on obedience . . . period.
  - Travel back in time with me to Mt. Sinai. Moses had just given the children the 10 Commandments he had received from God Himself.
  - But despite the Lord setting up a theocracy and codifying religious expectations, God did something else very important. In order to really appreciate it, we need to travel back a little further.
  - God called Moses, equipped him, and performed fantastic miracles in order to save Israel from the Egyptians.
  - And then, when the time came to make them a nation and give them the Law, God's first words are, *"I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. You shall have no other gods before Me."*
  - There was one and only one motivation for the Jews obedience. God is worthy of their obedience.
  - Obedience has never been the goal. It's merely a byproduct of the goal.
    - The goal is that all people everywhere would recognize God for Who He is and give Him the love and honor and fear and adoration that's due Him. That's the goal.
    - And when people love God, they obey God.
    - Loving God is the goal. Obeying God is merely a consequences of achieving the goal.
  - Our problem is that we make obedience the goal, and when we make obedience the goal, we are expecting an impossible obedience.
- So, do we expect our children to obey? Of course we do. God expects our children to obey. But, we don't make the obedience anything more than God does.
  - God expects obedience because He expects love. He demands fear and honor and glory. He doesn't want obedience if the love isn't there.
  - This is why in Amos 5:22-24 God says, *"Even though you offer up to Me burnt offerings and your grain offerings, I will not accept them; And I will not even look at the peace offerings of your fatlings. 23 "Take away from Me the noise of your songs; I will not even listen to the sound of your harps. 24 "But let justice roll down like waters And righteousness like an ever-flowing stream."*
  - True justice and righteousness can only grow from love for God.
  - This is why Jesus said, in Matthew 22:37-40, *"'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.' 38 This is the great and foremost commandment. 39 The second is like it, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' 40 On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets."*
  - The whole Law depends on loving God.
  - We only expect our children to obey because our greatest goal for them is to love God. Therefore, their disobedience is concerning to us simply because it reveals that — in that moment — they're not loving God. We're not bothered by their disobedience because they're disobeying. We're concerned that their disobedience is revealing they clearly don't know God the way they should.
  - The disobedience won't get under our skin. It won't annoy us. It won't exasperate us. It will remind us that our kids don't love God the way they should, and we need to redouble our efforts to make certain that they know just how worthy God is.