

Don't Just Parent Disobedience

I. The Snare of Obedience-Focused Parenting

- **Parents want what's best for their kids.**
 - Regardless of their worldview, "good" parents try to teach their kids what they believe will lead to the best life possible.
- **Parents cannot see their child's heart.**
 - Not only does the average human being know very little about the all-importance of motivation, when they do consider it in their parenting, it feels like a fruitless endeavor to spend so much time on it because — in the end — it's impossible to really see why their kid did what they did without long, honest conversations. And — even then — why bother if the behavior is good?
 - Motivation is too often a mysterious, misunderstood, and messy facet of parenting which most people feel very comfortable avoiding.
- **Therefore, parents focus primarily on teaching their kids lessons that will be easily observed in their behavior.**
 - Teaching kids to count, recognize colors, tie their shoes, and use the toilet are comparatively simple. It's easy to assess, and it's one and done. Once they learn how to tie their shoes or use the bathroom, you're not going to have to revisit that in their teens. The easiest lessons to teach are the ones that are verifiable and finalize-able.
 - Most parents like to stick to these kinds of lessons.
 - But there are a bunch of life lessons that aren't so easily learned because sinful human nature not only is forgetful, it's rebellious. It wants to do things its own way.
 - Yet we only want to teach the lesson once, and we believe that the lesson has clearly been learned if the outward negative behavior ceases.
- **Children can have the right behaviors for really bad reasons.**
 - This means that parents who view outward conformity as the goal will believe their job is done once they see the good behavior. They'll also be shocked and surprised when the child reverts to their sinful behavior later on. "Didn't we already deal with this? Why are we having to have this conversation over again? Didn't you learn your lesson?"
 - Of course, even if the child continues in their outward conformity to the rules, it's very likely the child isn't really pleasing the Lord because their obedience is motivated by all the wrong reasons.
 - This is probably the biggest danger of the kind of superficial parenting that happens in the first five to seven years of life. We get this idea that our kids can't understand deeper realities about life, and so we avoid talking about them until later.
 - However, the Scriptural approach is to give our children the *whole* counsel of God from the very beginning.
 - This accomplishes two tasks, A. The parent won't fall into the false belief that every lesson I have to teach my kids is as simple as teaching them their colors. And B. Their children will start to learn from a very early age the importance of God.
 - But when outward conformity is the end goal, my parenting changes. I'm tempted to no longer proactively parent toward new life lessons, I start parenting only when disobedience creeps back in.
 - **The act of parenting has been reduced to the teaching of basic principles and the correction of disobedience.**

II. Practical God-Focused Parenting

- Deuteronomy 6; Psalm 78; Ephesians 6; Colossians 3; Proverbs; Psalm 150; Psalm 103:2; Revelation 5:12; Colossians 3:16
 - God is immortal, infinite, and eternal. There is no end to the things we can learn about God.
 - If my job is to teach a never-ending subject, then there will never come a time when my kids have it all figured out. No amount of obedience will ever justify that I don't have to keep pointing them to Christ and helping them mature into His image.
 - This is the biblical model of parenting.
 - Listen carefully to how this works . . . whether your kids are obedient or not, your parenting is too look and sound *the same*. Sure, the consequences will be different, but the content of your parenting — and even the level of intensity in your parenting — should remain the same.
 - If your goal in parenting is to unveil the majesty of God, then your parental-intensity has nothing to with your kids . . . it has everything to do with your awesome God!
- **Parenting our kids to know God doesn't only consist of lecturing.**
 - There are times to lecture, monologue, soapbox, and soliloquy. Jesus often exemplified this kind of didactic approach to education. It's important and vital.
 - But Jesus also exemplified modeling, wrapping truth in casual conversation, and living the Gospel. Both extremes are necessary.
- **Parenting our kids to know God extends beyond their disobedience.**
 - If I am my kids' sole educator, but I only have a high school education, it's going to be very hard for me to teach my children into junior high. Yes, if I were a *perfect* student in high school, I should be able to teach them everything I learned, which means I should be able to take them through high school, but . . . what about college? In my hypothetical illustration, I never learned college-level material; that means I can't teach it to them.
 - *That point at which most parents stop teaching their kids is the point at which they've reached the end of their own knowledge.*
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 - Parenting is an every-moment of the day discipleship process that involves reproofing sin, rebuking, correcting, and admonishing, but it also requires teaching and training, edifying and encouraging, discipling and disciplining.
- **Parenting our kids to know God effects everything in life.**
 - Parenting includes teaching our kids what not to do, but parenting also includes continuing our children's spiritual training even if they're no longer doing the sinful things we taught them not to do.
 - If we only parent disobedience, we're missing out on the *vast* majority of parenting opportunities. We're doing our kids a massive disservice because we're only giving them a fraction of the teaching and training, edifying and encouraging, discipling and discipline God intends.
 - Parenting should be happening every moment I'm with my kids.
 - Parenting is teaching, reproofing, correcting, and training in every aspect of life.
 - Parenting isn't just lectures and monologues; it includes formal and informal teaching, it includes modeling, and it includes simply relating to our kids in Christ-honoring ways.
 - Parenting isn't dictated by the limits of our children, parenting is dictated by the limits of our God.
 - Practically speaking, though, our parenting is limited by our our own immaturity.