

A Parenting Game You Absolutely Must Not Play

I. The Reality

- Statistically speaking, one to two-thirds of parents actually admit they prefer one child over the others.
- What is Favoritism?
 - *You find yourself giving more affection to one child over another.*
 - *You give one child fewer consequences.*
 - *You spend more time with one of your kids.*
 - *You find yourself providing more little gifts and privileges to one of them*

II. The Struggle

- Even if our society didn't do such a great job teaching us to compartmentalize people and flock with similar feathers, our sin nature would do it anyway. Our elementary teacher may have paired us up with that boy we didn't like for our science report, but we won't play with him at recess.
- Types of Favoritism
 - The I Like You Because You Don't Cause Trouble favoritism. As I mentioned, it's all too easy to develop a negative attitude or bitterness toward a troublesome child.
 - The I Like You Because You Accomplish More favoritism. For some of us, it's not a situation where one child has made herself a nuisance so much as it is that another child has really risen to the occasion. This happens when our academically average child's hard-earned report card doesn't get the same adulation that our academically superior child's receives. But what if they both genuinely did their best?
 - The I Like You Because You're Like Me favoritism. This third category of favoritism is when our kids are all seemingly on the same level in most endeavors, but there's just that one who really clicks with us. Whether they have similar likes or humor or personality, when given the opportunity, we just feel drawn to the one. Sometimes it even has to do with the sex of the child. Too many moms prefer their daughters because they can relate better, and the dads feel the same.
 - Then there's the I Like You Because You're "Mine" favoritism. This is a hard one. This occurs when there are biological, adopted, step, and or foster kids in the house. Now, you couldn't see it, but I used the quote-fingers around the word "mine" when I said, "I Like You Because You're (quote) Mine." But that misunderstanding is where the problem comes from. The potential pitfalls here are devastatingly easy to slip into.
 - And sometimes it's a unique mix of any or all of the above. Once every couple of years we receive a boy at Victory who has the unfortunate honor of being the adopted underachiever and social outcast of the family. It's always due — in part — to his own sinful choices, but often times — early on — seeds of neglect are planted by mom and dad that are hard to ignore.

III. The Consequences

- Take some time to study Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob's favoritism.
- It hurts the child being neglected.
- It also hurts the child being favored.
- It hurts your spouse.
- It hurts you.

IV. The Victory

- I Like You Because You Don't Cause Trouble
 - Jesus commands us to love our enemies.
 - Matthew 5
- I Like You Because You Accomplish More
 - James demands that we lovingly show mercy.
 - James 2
- I Like You Because You're Like Me
 - Jesus not only spent His entire earthly ministry serving people who were nothing like Him. He spent most of His time with the lowliest of His creation — lepers and beggars and fisherman and prostitutes.
 - The whole life of Jesus
- I Like You Because You're "Mine"
 - Jesus revealed that God's love is a unifying love for people who were outsiders.
 - John 17

V. Review

- So, how do we overcome the temptation to favor one child over the others?
- First, we need to love them all as God loves us. Even though we were enemies of the King, He loved us enough to sacrifice His greatest gift.
- Second, we need to avoid partiality by learning to be merciful — which is not relating people according to what they can do for us. Praise God He doesn't immediately give us what we deserve.
- Third, we must grow in our humility. Only then can serve our children as God intends. Isn't amazing that the all-powerful Creator of the universe was the most humble man in history?
- And lastly, we must have a love so powerful that it unifies us. This doesn't mean we allow sin — God forbid! But it means that our children know that even when they sin, their parents love them with all of their hearts and no less than anyone else. This is true of us because the Father looks at His redeemed children and sees the sacrifice of Christ.