

GROW IN GRACE

NEWSLETTER

Volume 39, No.45, November 5, 2013 / Southside Baptist Church & Christian School / P.O. Box 1594 / 1028 South Water Avenue, Gallatin, TN 37066 (615) 452-5951 / **The Grow in Grace Newsletter**— a weekly Bible Study, plus news notes— designed first and foremost for members and those attending services at Southside Church... sent forth to aid one and all, (including friends far and wide who receive the Newsletter), in the experience of 2 Peter 3:18. *"But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our LORD and Saviour JESUS CHRIST. To Him be glory both now and forever. Amen."*

PARENTS and CHILD TRAINING!

Deuteronomy 6:4-9— ⁴Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God is one Lord [the only Lord]. ⁵ And you shall love the Lord your God with all your [mind and] heart and with your entire being and with all your might. ⁶ And these words which I am commanding you this day shall be [first] in your [own] minds *and* hearts; [then] ⁷ You shall whet *and* sharpen them so as to make them penetrate, *and* teach *and* impress them diligently upon the [minds and] hearts of your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down and when you rise up. ⁸ And you shall bind them as a sign upon your hand, and they shall be as frontlets (forehead bands) between your eyes. ⁹ And you shall write them upon the doorposts of your house and on your gates. (Amplified Version)

NOTICE: Whether you have children at home or not, this **Grow in Grace Newsletter** is very **MUCH** needed for **EVERY CHRISTIAN** receiving it— because WE ALL have people in our world who have children at home! The truth in the articles by John Piper and the resources suggested here are Biblically grounded. Applied under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, they are ready to be life altering! Let us use this material to equip ourselves for direct ministry to our families and/or to equip ourselves to encourage others in the ways of the LORD.

NOTE: Here are some helpful books on the high calling of Child Training: 1. *Shepherding a Child's Heart*, by Tedd Tripp. 2. *Successful Christian Parenting*, by John MacArthur. 3. *What the Bible Says about Child Training*, by J. Richard Fugate. 4. *How to be the Parents of Happy and Obedient Children*, by Roy Lessin. 5. *Confident Children and How they Grow*, by Richard L. Strauss.

CAUTION: 'kôSHĕn/ — care taken to avoid danger or mistakes; carefulness, heedfulness, alertness, vigilance!

1. From Deuteronomy 6:4-9, we see that the foundational key to parenting is PARENTS:
⁵And you shall love the Lord your God with all your [mind and] heart and with your entire being and with all your might. ⁶ And these words which I am commanding you this day shall be [first] in your [own] minds and hearts;

In other words, the most important reality to have in the home is the reality of JESUS CHRIST being known, loved, heeded, and depended upon by parents and/or guardians.

2. Children need to grow up SEEING you, the parent, MODELING your role... regardless of what anyone else is doing! THEY NEED A BALANCE of Love, Discipline, Training and Example!

Grace to all! James Bell www.southsidegallatin.org

Parents, Require Obedience of Your Children, by John Piper

I am writing this to plead with Christian parents to require obedience of their children. I am moved to write this by watching young children pay no attention to their parents' requests, with no consequences. Parents tell a child two or three times to sit or stop and come or go, and after the third disobedience, they laughingly bribe the child. This may or may not get the behavior desired.

Last week, I saw two things that prompted this article. One was the killing of 13-year-old Andy Lopez in Santa Rosa, California, by police who thought he was about to shoot them with an assault rifle. It was a toy gun. What made this relevant was that the police said they told the boy two times to drop the gun. Instead he turned it on them. They fired.

I do not know the details of that situation or if Andy even heard the commands. So I can't say for sure he was insubordinate. So my point here is not about young Lopez himself. It's about a "what if." What if he heard the police, and simply defied what they said? If that is true, it cost him his life. Such would be the price of disobeying proper authority.

A Tragedy in the Making

I witnessed such a scenario in the making on a plane last week. I watched a mother preparing her son to be shot. I was sitting behind her and her son, who may have been seven years old. He was playing on his digital tablet. The flight attendant announced that all electronic devices should be turned off for take off. He didn't turn it off. The mother didn't require it.

As the flight attendant walked by, she said he needed to turn it off and kept moving. He didn't do it. The mother didn't require it.

One last time, the flight attendant stood over them and said that the boy would need to give the device to his mother. He turned it off. When the flight attendant took her seat, the boy turned his device back on, and kept it on through the take off. The mother did nothing. I thought to myself, *she is training him to be shot by police.*

Rescue from Foolish Parenting

The defiance and laziness of unbelieving parents I can understand. I have biblical categories of the behavior of the spiritually blind. But the neglect of Christian parents perplexes me. What is behind the failure to require and receive obedience? I'm not sure. But it may be that these nine observations will help rescue some parents from the folly of laissez-faire parenting.

1. Requiring obedience of children is implicit in the biblical requirement that children obey their parents.

"Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right" ([Ephesians 6:1](#)). It makes no sense that God would require children to obey parents and yet not require parents to require obedience from the children. It is part of our job — to teach children the glory of a happy, submissive spirit to authorities that God has put in place. Parents represent God to small children, and it is deadly to train children to ignore the commands of God.

2. Obedience is a new-covenant, gospel category.

Obedience is not merely a "legal" category. It is a gospel category. Paul said that his gospel aim was "to bring about the *obedience* of faith" ([Romans 1:5](#)). He said, "I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me to bring the Gentiles to *obedience* — by word and deed" ([Romans 15:18](#)).

Paul's aim was "to take every thought captive to *obey* Christ" ([2 Corinthians 10:5](#)). He required it of the churches: "If anyone does not *obey* what we say in this letter, take note of that person, and have nothing to do with him" ([2 Thessalonians 3:14](#)).

Parents who do not teach their children to obey God's appointed authorities prepare them for a life out of step with God's word — a life out of step with the very gospel they desire to emphasize.

(If anyone doubts how crucial this doctrine is, please consider reading Wayne Grudem's chapter, "Pleasing God by Our Obedience: A Neglected New Testament Teaching" in *For the Fame of God's Name*, edited by Justin Taylor and Sam Storms.)

3. Requiring obedience of children is possible.

To watch parents act as if they are helpless in the presence of disobedient children is pitiful. God requires that children obey because it is possible for parents to require obedience. Little children, under a year old, can be shown effectively what they may not touch, bite, pull, poke, spit out, or shriek about. You are bigger than they are. Use your size to save them for joy, not sentence them to selfishness.

4. Requiring obedience should be practiced at home on inconsequential things so that it is possible in public on consequential things.

One explanation why children are out of control in public is that they have not been taught to obey at home. One reason for this is that many things at home don't seem worth the battle. It's easier to do it ourselves than to take the time and effort to deal with a child's unwillingness to do it. But this simply trains children that obedience anywhere is optional. Consistency in requiring obedience at home will help your children be enjoyable in public.

5. It takes effort to require obedience and it is worth it.

If you tell a child to stay in bed and he gets up anyway, it is simply easier to say, go back to bed, than to get up and deal with the disobedience. Parents are tired. I sympathize. For more than 40 years, I've had children under eighteen. Requiring obedience takes energy, both physically and emotionally. It is easier simply to let the children have their way.

The result? Uncontrollable children when it matters. They have learned how to work the angles. Mommy is powerless, and daddy is a patsy. They can read when you are about to explode. So they defy your words just short of that. This bears sour fruit for everyone. But the work it takes to be immediately consistent with every disobedience bears sweet fruit for parents, children, and others.

6. You can break the multi-generational dysfunction.

One reason parents don't require discipline is they have never seen it done. They come from homes that had two modes: passivity and anger. They know they don't want to parent in anger. The only alternative they know is passivity. There is good news: this can change. Parents can learn from the Bible and from wise people what is possible, what is commanded, what is wise, and how to do it in a spirit that is patient, firm, loving, and grounded in the gospel.

7. Gracious parenting leads children from external compliance to joyful willingness.

Children need to obey before they can process obedience through faith. When faith comes, the obedience which they have learned from fear and reward and respect will become the natural expression of faith.

Not to require obedience before faith is folly. It's not loving in the long run. It cuts deep furrows of disobedient habits that faith must then not infuse, but overcome.

8. Children whose parents require obedience are happier.

Laissez-faire parenting does not produce gracious, humble children. It produces brats. They are neither fun to be around, nor happy themselves. They are demanding and insolent. Their "freedom" is not a blessing to them or others. They are free the way a boat without a rudder is free. They are the victims of their whims. Sooner or later, these whims will be crossed. That spells misery. Or, even a deadly encounter with the police.

9. Requiring obedience is not the same as requiring perfection.

Since parents represent God to children — especially before they can know God through faith in the gospel — we show them both justice and mercy. Not every disobedience is punished. Some are noted, reprovved, and passed over. There is no precise manual for this mixture. Children should learn from our parenting that the God of the gospel is a consuming fire ([Hebrews 12:7, 29](#)) and that he is patient and slow to anger ([1 Timothy 1:16](#)). In both cases — discipline and patience — the aim is quick, happy, thorough obedience. That's what knowing God in Christ produces. Parents, you can do this. It is a hard season. I've spent more than sixty percent of my life in it. But there is divine grace for this, and you will be richly rewarded.

Why Require Unregenerate Children to Act Like They're Good?

If mere external conformity to God's commands (like don't lie, don't steal, don't kill) is hypocritical and spiritually defective, then why should parents require obedience from their unregenerate children?

Won't this simply confirm them in unspiritual religious conformity, hypocritical patterns of life, and legalistic moralism?

Here are at least three reasons why Christian parents should require their small children (regenerate or unregenerate) to behave in ways that conform externally to God's revealed will.

I say "small children" because as a child gets older, there are certain external conformities to God's revealed will that should be required and others that should not. It seems to me, for example, while parents should require drug-free, respectful decency from a 15-year-old, it would do little good to require an unbelieving and indifferent 15-year-old to read his Bible

every day. But it would be wise to require that of a 6-year-old, while doing all we can to help him enjoy it and see the benefit in it.

So the following points are reasons why we should require smaller children to behave in ways that conform at least externally to God's word.

1) For children, external, unspiritual conformity to God's commanded patterns of behavior is better than external, unspiritual non-conformity to those patterns of behavior.

A respectful and mannerly 5-year-old unbeliever is better for the world than a more authentic defiant, disrespectful, ill-mannered, unbelieving bully. The family, the friendships, the church, and the world in general will be thankful for parents that restrain the egocentric impulses of their children and confirm in them every impulse toward courtesy and kindness and respect.

2) Requiring obedience from children in conformity with God's will confronts them with the meaning of sin in relation to God, the nature of their own depravity, and their need for inner transformation by the power of grace through the gospel of Christ.

There comes a point where the "law" dawns on the child. That is, he realizes that God (not just his parents) requires a certain way of life from him and that he does not like some of it, and that he cannot do all of it.

At this crisis moment, the good news of Christ's dying for our sins becomes all important. Will the child settle into a moralistic effort the rest of his life, trying to win the acceptance and love of God? Or will he hear and believe that God's acceptance and forgiveness and love are free gifts—and receive this God in Christ as the supreme treasure of his life?

The child will have a hard time grasping the meaning of the cross if parents have not required of him behaviors, some of which he dislikes, and none of which he can do perfectly.

Christ lived and died to provide for us the righteousness we need (but cannot perform) and to endure for us the punishment we deserve (but cannot endure). If parents do not require external righteousness and apply measures of punishment, the categories of the cross will be difficult for a child to grasp.

3) The marks of devotion, civility, and manners ("please," "thank you," and good eye contact) are habits that, God willing, are filled later with grace and become more helpful ways of blessing others and expressing a humble heart.

No parents have the luxury of teaching their child nothing while they wait for his regeneration. If we are not requiring obedience, we are confirming defiance.

If we are not inculcating manners, we are training in boorishness. If we are not developing the disciplines of prayer and Bible-listening, we are solidifying the sense that prayerlessness and Biblelessness are normal.

Inculcated good habits may later become formalistic legalism. Inculcated insolence, rudeness, and irreligion will likely become worldly decadence. But by God's grace, and saturated with prayer, good habits may be filled with the life of the Spirit by faith. But the patterns of insolence and rudeness and irreligion will be hard to undo.

Caution. Here we are only answering one question: Why should parents require submissive behaviors of children when they may be unregenerate rebels at heart? Of course that is not all Christian parents should do.

- Let there be much spontaneous celebration verbally of every hopeful sign of life and goodness in our children.
- Let us forgive them often and be longsuffering.
- Let us serve them and not use them.
- Let us lavish them with joyful participation in their interests.
- Let us model for them the joy of knowing and submitting to the *Lord Jesus*.
- Let us apologize often when we fall short of our own Father's requirements.
- Let us pray for them without ceasing.
- Let us saturate them with the word of God from the moment they are in the womb (the uterus is not sound proof).
- Let us involve them in happy ministry experiences and show them it is more blessed to give than to receive.
- Let them see us sing to the King.
- Let us teach them relentlessly the meaning of the gospel in the hope that God will open their eyes and make them alive. It happens through the gospel ([1 Peter 1:22-25](#)).

Still seeking to grow in my role as a father (of our family and our church),

Pastor John ©2013 Desiring God Foundation. Used by Permission.

Permissions: You are permitted and encouraged to reproduce and distribute this material in its entirety or in unaltered excerpts, as long as you do not charge a fee. For Internet posting, please use only unaltered excerpts (not the content in its entirety) and provide a hyperlink to this page. Any exceptions to the above must be

approved by Desiring God. **Please include the following statement on any distributed copy:** By John Piper.
©2013 Desiring God Foundation. Website: desiringGod.org