

PARENT CONVERSATIONS

Parenting techniques come and go, but the answer to this month's question is based on more than new research or a passing fad. It's based on the solid rock of God's Word, and it's as true now as it was in 2006 when Dr. John Juern, a WELS psychologist, first wrote it.

—Nicole Balza

WHY SHOULD CHILDREN OBEY THEIR PARENTS?

WHY SHOULD CHILDREN obey their parents? Ask different people and you get different answers: "They are supposed to" or "I'm the parent!" or "If they don't, they'll be grounded." A Christian parent might reply, "The Bible tells children to obey their parents." And it does. But none of these responses gets at the real heart of God-pleasing obedience.

The answer to that question sets Christian children apart from others. Take away Christian faith, and a child's obedience is usually connected either to the fear of punishment or the promise of reward. **For the Christian child, obedience to parents flows out of a love for Jesus.** All of us as Christians—adults or children—do what we do because it's our way of showing our gratitude for all that the Lord has done for us, beginning with his gracious gift of salvation. The Bible says it this way: "We love because he first loved us" (1 John 4:19).

This is a fundamental principle: We obey God by living according to the Ten Commandments, and we live that Christian life out of love for him. So, the essence of all Christian discipline is serving the Lord with our lives.

Loving the Lord doesn't happen on its own. The Holy Spirit plants the seed for such an obedient life at the moment of baptism. And God is with Christian parents every day as they teach children that misbehavior and disobedience are sins. It's really quite simple: Christian parents teach their children that wrong is wrong because it ignores God's Ten Commandments.

But along with teaching children right from wrong, parents need to tell their children about the wonderful gift of forgiveness that is theirs through faith in

Christ Jesus. Their sins are forgiven. That forgiveness brings joy. And the joy is expressed in the children's obedience. It's that message of forgiveness that motivates them.

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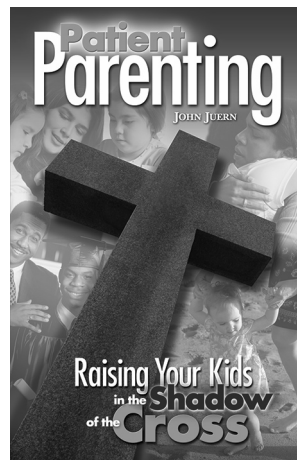
Yes, children will sin again. And probably again and again. But each time, there is forgiveness and joy and a renewed commitment to do God's will.

Parents don't need to go through this explanation

every time their child does something wrong. The key is to remain consistent with God's will in setting rules and expectations for children; let the Ten Commandments set the standard.

There is still an appropriate time and place for time-outs, grounding, and other types of punishment. Sin has consequences. Star charts posted on the refrigerator door and surprise hugs can still reinforce good behavior.

But these things in and of themselves do not bring about compliant behavior. Christian children obey their parents because they love their Savior.



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