

10 Reasons Your Children Don't Respect You

There is a common theme in the parenting struggles we hear from moms and dads across the country. In some form or another, the question we hear most is: "Why won't my kids do what I want them to do?"

Parents love Ephesians 6:1-3. It's our favorite verse to teach our children and it hovers in the front of our minds as the standard of what our kids "should do" (even if they rarely do). You know this verse:

"Honor your father and mother," which is the first commandment with a promise, 'so that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth.'

While I would do well to teach this principle to my kids from an early age, I would do even better to focus on what God tells me to do. If I'm honest, I will admit that I'm a lot better at policing the commands given to others than the commands given directly to me. (Am I alone here?) Here's what God tells me to do in Ephesians 6:4:

"Fathers, do not exasperate your children."

Parents are commanded not to "exasperate" their kids. Why does God have to include this in Scripture? Because parents (and particularly fathers) have a natural tendency to exasperate their kids.

Our parents did it to us, and we do it to their grandchildren.

According to the dictionary, you exasperate someone when you annoy them "to the point of impatience, frustration and irritation." By this definition, my kids can certainly

exasperate me. That's been true for every parent since the beginning of time. But the Bible suggests that the process of parenting and teaching obedience is fundamentally compromised when I exasperate my kids.

I can spend all my parental energy trying to make my kids obey or I can look in the mirror and ask God if I am guilty of inadvertently frustrating my children.

Perhaps the kid problem in my home is actually a parent problem.

In reflecting on my own parenting and on the parenting failures and successes of others I have witnessed, I want to suggest nine different parenting patterns that are guaranteed to exasperate children. If your style is characterized by any of these, your effectiveness as a parent is likely to be diminished:

1. Rules Without Relationship

Any parent can make rules. But if there's no heart connection between parent and child, frustration will always be present. As we have written before, "You want your kids to like you. If they don't like you, they won't listen to you."

2. Inconsistency

We are all guilty of this one. Sometimes it's just too hard to tow the line. But if you keep changing the rules or if mom and dad are not on the same page, a child gets confused, and thus, exasperated. Don't blame your toddler for the meltdown if you are the one guilty of being inconsistent.

3. Saying No Too Frequently

As a parent, you're going to have to say no a lot. But make sure you say yes a lot as well. Stop for ice cream when they

ask. Do something ridiculous just because your preschooler suggested it. Let your kids stay out later than usual if they have earned it.

4. Correction With Anger

You have to discipline your kids, but if it's coming from a place of anger and high emotion, your effectiveness is decreased. It's here that you have to be the grown up. Take a moment, catch your breath and discipline with a level head. Your kids will learn more if there's a conversation connected to the correction.

5. Unrealistic Expectations

You might be guilty of setting the bar so high that your kids can never measure up. They will accomplish much but never feel adequate or deserving of your love. Stop doing that! Kids are under way too much pressure today. The last thing they need is mom and dad pushing them harder than they are able.

6. Legalism

Drill sergeant parents who offer no grace for mistakes are particularly ineffective. You might get compliance now, but it won't last. And another thing: You're missing out on a great opportunity to teach your kids the gospel. Parenting like Jesus means offering plenty of second chances.

7. Favoritism or Comparison

Comparing your kids to their siblings (or other kids they know) is like pouring gasoline on an exasperation fire. You think you're motivating them, but you're not. Your kids will come to resent you and eventually not give a rip about your opinion.

8. Never Admitting When You Are Wrong

By the time your kids reach middle school, they know you have flaws. When you won't admit your mistakes (and it's obvious that you blew it), you are now compromising your credibility as a person. That irritates everybody, especially teenagers. Parents are imperfect and it's OK to admit that to your kids.

9. Hypocrisy

When you say one thing and do another, it frustrates your children and provides a lousy environment for influence. "Don't text and drive, but it's OK when I do it." (This is me talking to me here, so there's no need for my wife or teenagers to comment.)

10. Not Allowing Your Child to Have a Voice

Sure, children are commanded to obey and honor. But they can do that and still ask questions and have an opinion about family issues. Use the phrase "because I said so" sparingly. You still get to be the parent and make final decisions, but kids need to know that their perspective matters in your home. That means they need to be heard.

It's impossible to avoid these 10 things completely, so give yourself a break. Imperfect and normal families like ours will always struggle with these tendencies. However, you should realize that you are undermining your influence with your kids the more these things define your parenting style.

Just ask God to help you make a few adjustments. You will stop exasperating your children and get on to the business of Ephesians 6:4: teaching your children the ways of God. Plus, you'll find that you'll enjoy your kids so much more when they aren't "impatient, frustrated and irritated." It's never easy,

but it's worth it! {eoa}

****What else would you add to this list?
What do you sometimes do that makes you
less effective as a parent?***

Adapted from , a ministry founded by Barrett and Jenifer Johnson. After serving in the local church for 25 years, Barrett and Jenifer launched INFO for Families as a ministry designed to encourage people through speaking, personal coaching and resource development. Barrett served for 15 years in youth ministry before serving for 8 years as the Family Minister at Johnson Ferry Baptist Church in Atlanta, one of the largest churches in the South. He has degrees from Texas A&M University and Southwestern Seminary, but he and Jenifer have received their best education through the no-holds-barred nature of everyday family life.