

4 Ways to Teach Your Children to Respect You

Six weeks or so ago, our church held a week of Vacation Bible School. The church was full of kids of all ages, from nursery age to rising sixth graders. Children entering seventh grade or above served as youth aides, assigned to assist the adults in making things run smoothly.

One particular young man was especially polite and helpful. He always had a smile on his face, and whenever we asked him to do anything, he would say, "Yes, ma'am" and quickly take care of the task.

Those of us at the registration desk were truly impressed with him. "How did you become so polite and respectful?" someone asked him.

His answer was immediate. "My mom raised me right," he said with a smile. "She's amazing."

One of our primary jobs as a parent is to teach our children to respect us, and not only us, but other human beings in general, and those in authority in particular. Without this respect for their fellow man and their leaders, children grow up to be careless, self-centered people who hurt others and don't really care.

Worst of all, they grow up without a respect and reverence for God.

The Bible gives many examples of how human relationships are really a practicum in learning to relate to God. The apostle John puts it even more bluntly, telling us that if we can't treat other people right, we're not going to be able to treat God right, either. In this case, John is talking about love, but the same principle applies to respect. We are liars, John

would say, if we claim to respect God but have disrespectful attitudes toward other people.

So if we parents don't teach our children to respect us, how will they ever learn to respect God? And *that's* why teaching them to respect us is so important.

So here are four ways we can do that. These are not the only ways, of course, but they are a great start.

First, we can treat our children with respect. What does this have to do with teaching them to respect us? Simply this: Kids don't truly respect someone who treats them badly (adults don't, either). They may fear that person, and they may even obey that person, but they won't truly respect her.

Second, we can be worthy of respect. It's a lot easier for children to respect someone who deserves it. When we demonstrate integrity, when we work hard, when we treat others well, our children see that, and they respect that. Yes, children should respect our position of authority as their parents. But why would we want to make it hard for them by demanding respect for our authority but failing to earn the respect that comes with a life that deserves it?

Third, we can require respectful behavior from our children. We've all seen the mom who allows her children to use a disrespectful tone with her, to ignore her, or to hit her or even call her "stupid," and doesn't put a stop to the behavior. When we allow children to treat us like this, we teach them that doing so is OK.

Fourth, we can let our children see us showing respect to others. When we call other drivers names, deliberately disregard the rules a business sets in place, or treat someone condescendingly, our children learn that it's not important to treat others with respect. They lose respect for us in another way, too, when they realize that we tell them they have to be respectful, but we act as if that principle doesn't apply to

us.

It's not only for our benefit that we need to teach our children to be respectful, but for our children's benefit. And not just so that they will be better received in society and have more friends, but so that they will learn to have the proper respect for God, which is vital to having a close relationship with Him.

Teaching children to learn Bible facts is right and good. But even more important is teaching them to respect us, and therefore, to be able to respect God.