

5 Confessions That Every Parent Should Make to Their Kids

If you think being a perfect parent is the key to raising awesome kids, you could not be more wrong. Instead, authenticity is the common characteristic of parents who have emotionally healthy and spiritually strong kids.

The older our kids get, the more they see our imperfections. Eventually, our shortcomings will be on full display. Failing to admit our failures (especially when they are so obvious) only serves to drive a wedge between us and our kids. If we are unwilling to admit it when we are wrong, they will eventually begin to question our credibility. There goes our influence.

Crackpots Make the Best Parents

In a similar way, perfect parents leave no room for the power and grace of God. Instead, everything is about performance. When they aren't perfect, parents have to create the illusion that they are. Kids learn to do likewise. It's the reason kids lie about their behavior and cheat in school. They have learned that there is no room for falling short; no room for failure.

I can think of no worldview that is more anti-Christian than this. Still, it is practiced in many legalistic and moralistic "Christian" homes that I know. These perfect parents think they are living out the gospel. They are wrong. Second Corinthians 4:7 reminds us that *"we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us."* The point is that Christ's power is demonstrated best through cracked pots. If we were perfect, we wouldn't need Him. And nobody would see Him shining through our cracks.

In our pursuit of authenticity at home, here are five confessions that we should get into the habit of making to our kids.

1. "I was wrong."

Some kids have never heard those words from their parents. These moms and dads think that admitting a mistake is like sharing a weakness that will be exploited at a later date. They are motivated by keeping the upper hand, refusing to admit any wrongdoing. These parents are foolish. They don't realize that the honest confession of a failure can powerfully bind people together, especially when one has caused a hurt in the relationship. Add a sincere "I'm sorry/will you forgive me?" and things get even better.

2. "I still deal with peer pressure."

Many parents are worried that their kids will make poor decisions due to the influence of their peers. But they fail to realize that every time they give their teenager a lecture on the subject, their teenager is likely noticing the same types of behaviors in their parents. They can tell when we make choices because we want to be liked by others. To claim that our actions are no longer influenced by our peers is ridiculous. The drive to be "people pleasers" is rooted in the sin nature of each of us at some level. Admit that to your kids.

3. "I can be hypocritical."

When we say "don't text and drive" and then play with our smartphones behind the wheel, our kids see the contradiction. There is a word for people who expect a perfect standard of behavior from others that they know they rarely live up to. The name is hypocrite. If we would be honest with our kids that we can often be hypocritical, it will go a long way to them being introspective and noticing the shortcomings in their own lives. But when we claim the high ground and suggest

that our words and behavior are never at odds, our kids see right through that.

4. "I am broken."

Whenever we teach our "Critical Conversations" conference, parents always ask us, "How much should I tell my kids about my own sexual past?" They are afraid that their kids will think, "Well, you made some mistakes and you turned out alright." We don't think you need to share explicit details, but you need make clear to your kids that you are, in fact, not alright. While God may be restoring you, you will still likely carry some of the affects of your past sins until the day you die. Admitting that brokenness makes everyone in your family more desperate for eternity. That is always a good thing.

5. "I have no idea what I'm doing."

Our kids don't realize that there is no training course on raising kids. While we can work to be equipped, most parents are making things up as they go. And because each new stage of our kids' lives brings a whole new dimension of issues, it is impossible for us to fully keep up. It makes us needy for God's leadership and desperate for our kids' patience. You might need to regularly remind your kids of that.

Remind your kids that the world expects you to be perfect parents in the midst of circumstances that are constantly changing. In many ways, you are having to figure things out on the fly. You are going to get it wrong sometimes.

Remind your kids that you pray for them, but that they also need to pray for you. You struggle and have feelings and need encouragement just like everybody else does.

Remind your kids that you are going to encourage them to pursue God's standard but that you know they aren't going to ever measure up. And that's OK.

Remind your kids that you are human and that you are going to let them down sometimes. This should make everyone in your family more desperate for God's grace. And more willing to extend grace to each other.

Finally, remind your kids that you are, in fact, a crackpot of a parent. But you are a cracked pot that contains the image and nature of God. Make sure that they see a lot of Him whenever they see you.

Q. What is another confession that we might need to make to our kids?