

Be the Change You Want to See in Your Kids

Sometimes my kids drive me crazy. They are too negative, too cranky and too quick to point out ways their siblings fall short. They get frustrated with the puppy and they don't often pick up after themselves.

One day, as I was going through a list of all the ways my kids were falling short, God pointed my finger back at me. It's easy to tell my kids what to do. It's harder to model what needs to be done. It's easy to tell my kids to be nice, be kind, while at the same time having a stinky attitude. It's easy to be picky with my kids, yet offer myself grace.

I am negative, cranky, and I don't always pick up after myself ... yet I expect so much more from my kids! Hmm... Deep down, I know that this parenting style won't get any of us very far.

If I want my kids to change, it all starts with me.

I have to model kindness and gentleness.

I have to clean up after myself.

I have to pray, asking God to help me and help them.

I have to be patient with the puppy. (Even when she chews up my books!)

So how does real change—in you and your kids—happen? Where do we start?

- **Write down your kids' weaknesses.** Then ask yourself, "Which ones are my own?" Seek God. Ask Him to show you the core issues that need to be rooted out. Pray for God's wisdom and grace.
- **Realize your change isn't up to you alone.** Romans 12:1-2 says, "So here's what I want you to do, God helping you: Take your everyday, ordinary life—your sleeping, eating,

going-to-work, and walking-around life—and place it before God as an offering. Embracing what God does for you is the best thing you can do for him ... fix your attention on God. You'll be changed from the inside out" (MSG). When you give everything you do to God, then He has the chance to work!

- **Confess your weaknesses to your kids.** Point out areas that you struggle. Ask your children to pray for you too. I don't know why we parents pretend to be perfect. It's obvious to our kids that we're not!
- **Be grateful for small changes.** Praise your kids for every small step they take toward change. The more praise, the more kids are encouraged. It's amazing how well this works.
- **Rejoice in your changes too.** Tell your husband or a cherished friend about the changes you are making. Ask that person to rejoice with you.
- **Don't stop with easy, outward fixes.** Even as change comes, don't be content with being "good enough." I often pray Psalms 139:23-34, "Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting" (NIV). God knows our hearts best. He knows us the inner issues that are hurting us more than we think. He knows how these will impact our kids. Allow God to reveal deep flaws that you might not even be aware of and turn to Him for healing. The changes you make will forever impact your children. When you are healed, you'll be able to offer guidance to them. Don't let your unwillingness to allow God to work negatively impact your children. God can help you to change, but it must start with, "Lord, I am willing."

As you turn to God for change in yourself, you'll be amazed how much your kids will change too. Children do what we do, not what we say. When we do all we can for the glory of God they'll learn to do that, too!

Tricia Goyer has written more than 35 books, including two novels that delight and entertain readers and nonfiction titles that offer encouragement and hope. She has also published more than 500 articles in national publications such as Guideposts, Thriving Family, Proverbs 31, and HomeLife Magazine.