

How Jesus Set the Example for Parents

I had a sweet dinner with two friends last weekend. We are all right in the middle of raising our children, and our concerns for our children and fears for the future dominated our discussion. We listened and encouraged each other, and here are the big ideas that have stuck in my head the week since that discussion.

Do unto our children as we would have them do to us. I wrote about this in a post 2 years ago. You would have thought I had actually learned to live it out by now. Yet, once again, I've been responding to my boys' anger problems with my own personal anger.

News flash—that doesn't work! This week, I've focused anew on responding to my boys with the tone I want them to learn to use—patience when angered and a rational tone that seeks to work out problems rather than escalate them. It's amazing to me how much more effective positive example is than negative reaction when my boys get angry.

End the day with unconditional love and affirmation. Despite my best efforts during the day, I fail my boys. And they fail me. I have learned that no matter how bad our day has been, it is incredibly healing to repair with my boys before they go to sleep.

Sometimes, I need to ask their forgiveness. Sometimes, they need to ask mine. But most of all, I reaffirm my unconditional love for them. "I love you very much, and nothing will ever change that. I am so glad God gave me you for my son." They often say exactly the same thing back to me (substituting mom for son) without any prompting. That blesses me. Then we give each other strong hugs, and no matter what else happened that

day, they go to bed knowing that I love them, and God loves them. That is a precious gift to both them and myself.

Remember that Jesus' discipleship at first looked like an utter failure. I feel most undermined as a parent by my fears for the future. I know many adults who seem to have left the faith in which they were raised as kids. I often feel plagued by Satan with fears for the faith of my own boys.

Will they love Jesus as adults? Will they love me? Will they walk out of the house when they turn 18 and never look back? Will they remember me on Mother's Day? Will they come home for holidays? Will they throw my mistakes as a parent in my face when they grow up?

They may very well do any or all of those! And Jesus' example comforts me. He was God! Yet look at the short-term results of His three years of discipling the 12. Judas betrays Him. Peter denies Him. And only one of the 12 remains at His crucifixion. What underwhelming short term results.

Then look at the long-term results. That little band of fearful, denying disciples changed the world! The Spirit did this. He brought to remembrance all Christ taught them, though at the time they walked with Christ they NEVER demonstrated that they really understood anything He said to them. But the seeds were planted, and truth eventually popped up through the soil of their hearts and brought a great harvest.

Christ's example with His disciples reminds me well of my hope for my children. And it is God Himself, who sends His Spirit to live in their hearts and remind them of truth. It is the Spirit who causes the blooms of fruit to present themselves in my children's lives. I imperfectly sow my seeds, water and fertilize. But God brings forth the harvest in His good time, and He is a very good farmer.

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