

How This Control Freak Learned to Raise the White Flag

Lean in close, I have a secret to tell: I am a recovering control freak.

Seriously.

Life is good when things go according to plan, when nothing too crazy happens and when people behave themselves. But if things start to veer too far off course, I get anxious.

God has grown me a lot in this area over the last few years, though. I'm learning to raise the white flag, to trust Him and listen to His voice when things seem out of control.

I had an opportunity to practice this recently.

My child was very loudly and quite passionately objecting to the word "no." I knew I couldn't give in to the tantrum. Such behavior was unacceptable. I needed to make the child stop. But all my efforts were in vain. Every discipline or redirection seemed to make things worse.

I tried desperately to reestablish order, even picking up the phone to call my husband for advice. As I tapped his number, that's when I heard it –the still, small voice of God deep within my soul.

"You haven't asked *Me* for advice."

I slumped to a seat, raising my heart's white flag, and prayed, "What should I do, Lord?"

His inaudible voice was louder than words. "Parenting is not about controlling your children's behavior. It's

about training their hearts.”

God reminded me of His patience when I vent my emotions to Him. He’s usually quiet until I get it all out. Once my heart calms down, He gently guides me in understanding things from His perspective.

In those moments during my child’s tantrum, I experienced a great paradigm shift. The Perfect Parent began retraining my heart on how to approach training my kids.

Here’s what I’m learning:

- **Invite God into the situation.**

God is our child’s Creator. He understands the intricacies of their hearts far better than we ever will. He sees their needs in the moment and will guide us in training their hearts if we ask for His help.

- **Give understanding.**

Our children need to feel heard. Once they’ve calmed down (which may take some time and space), asking open-ended questions can help us understand what caused them to react the way they did. Questions like these:

- What were you feeling?

This teaches them to recognize their own emotions.

- What made you feel that way?

This helps them process the situation. It may also alert us to another person contributing to the problem.

- Did you handle your feelings in a way that pleases Jesus?

This acknowledges personal responsibility for actions and reactions, regardless of the behavior of others.

- How could Jesus help you handle things differently next time?

This offers hope for change.

- **Let them know we're on their team.**

It's important our kids know we are *for* them. On more than one occasion, I've seen my child's rigid heart melt when I hold her and remind her I'm here to help her in her struggles. We are not enemies. We can fight sin together.

- **Speak the truth.**

The Bible is "useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness" (2 Tim. 3:16b). As we discuss God's truth with our kids, even memorizing related verses together, we are planting life-changing seeds in their hearts. (*is a great resource for finding verses topically.*)

Our children need frequent reminders that we all need Jesus—every moment of every day. He is ever ready to forgive and provide the strength and desire to do what's right.

- **Trust God with their hearts.**

As parents, we have the unspeakable privilege of guiding our kids on this path of life. We are called to teach them right from wrong, giving rewards and/or consequences as necessary.

Ultimately, however, it's up to God to captivate their hearts' affection and allegiance. We can bring those character flaws, those relationship struggles, those confusing situations to Jesus. He is, after all, the Wonderful Counselor. He's the One who changes hearts—both theirs and ours.

How about you? Are there any white flags you need to raise today?

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