

Practice the Golden Rule With Your Children

Do unto your children as you would have them do unto you.

The Lord has been convicting me from this verse for a few weeks. I am long familiar with The Golden Rule, yet it's only in the last month that I've thought of it particularly in terms of my **children**—not treating them as they ARE but as I would have them TO BE.

As often is the case, God used my son's little secular hippie preschool to bring this home for me. At a parent meeting, the speaker asked parents what were their main concerns for their children's behavior right now.

Parents yelled out things like **sibling rivalry**, **angry tantrums**, hitting, general snotty **attitudes** and so forth. Then she asked what **character** qualities we hoped they'd have when they headed to college. The group suggested **empathy**, **perseverance**, and **self-confidence**, among others.

As a **believer**, I would add **grace**, **service**, and **love**. I really want my boys to have personal confidence in who they are in Christ, which equips them to extend grace to others. I want them to love as I Corinthians 13 defines it—with patience, with a long fuse, not rude, not keeping a record of wrongs, giving the benefit of the doubt, and so on. I want them to serve like Christ.

Then the speaker led us in an exercise. She said, "Put your feet squarely on the floor." She did it, and we did too. "Sit up straight." She modeled, and we did it too. "Touch your thumb and first finger in an OK sign." We did it with her.

"Put the OK sign on your chin." But she put hers on her cheek. And every last one of us in the room without thinking put ours

on our cheek too. She had made her point effectively. We say we want one thing with our kids, but so often we model something else. And they will always pick up what we MODEL over what we SAY.

God got my attention. My son has an anger problem because I have an anger problem that I have well modeled for him. And when I get angry at him because he got angry and threw a toy, I'm not helping anything.

Apart from scripture, my default belief system is that when he sins, I need to get really angry in proportion to the seriousness of the offense, that the angrier I get, the more effective it will be at deterring him from doing it again. The only problem is that my anger is NOT a deterrent to him doing it again. It just models anger for him and educates him in more sophisticated ways to act on it. That's not how God transforms me, and it's not how He intends me to disciple my children.

Here are Jesus' instructions from Luke 6.

"And just as you want men to do to you, you also do to them likewise" (Luke 6:31 NKJV).

"If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. And if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. And if you lend to those from whom you hope to receive back, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, to receive as much back. But love your enemies, do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, for he is kind to the unthankful and evil. Therefore be merciful, even as your Father also is merciful" (Luke 6:32-36).

As I wish that my boys would do to me and others, I should do to them. Not do to them in a reactionary response to what they

just did. It's my job to break the cycle of "act and react."

I should just ACT. Stay on course. Love. Grace. Compassion. Endurance. Act on my vision of what I want them to be and model consistently for them my end goal. My angry little boy sure can make me angry. But my job in Christ is to stop the cycle, correct him, and model for him with my life as well as my words a new and better way through gospel grace to deal with conflict.

Of course, the **Golden Rule** transcends child-rearing. I had just never thought of it in those specific terms. It applies to my children, my husband, my friends, and my enemies. Do to them not in reaction to what they just did to me, but do to them with a vision of where God is calling them. And THAT is the essence of being salt and light in the places God has called me to function.

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