

When Parents Are Hypocrites

I used to think (before I had children) that disciplining them would be a piece of cake. I figured that they would commit Infraction A, I would apply Discipline Technique B, and I would get Successful Resolution C. My kids would know that I meant business, and they would make the wise decision to stop doing "A." For the more stubborn issues, where for some unknown reason they didn't immediately stop doing "A," I might have to apply "B" two or three more times—but surely, not more than that—and then the problem would be resolved ("C"). For good.

Yeah, um ... no.

If you've been a parent for longer than about 30 seconds, you know that children's responses are not always predictable. Just because it seems to make sense to you for your child to respond a certain way doesn't mean it will make any kind of sense at all to your child. Or maybe it does make sense, but your child's desire to do "A" is stronger than his or her desire to avoid "B." In either case, there are plenty of issues that cannot be resolved in just a few attempts. You have to keep trying. For a long time.

One such issue at our house is the issue of speaking nicely to each other. "Just because you're annoyed with your brother/sister," I've said over and over, "doesn't mean you can talk to him/her like that."

Another issue we sometimes (often) struggle with is complaining. We've dealt with this to the point that the kids don't usually put their discontentment into words. But oh, the dejected body language, disappointed tones of voice and dramatic sighs!

Good thing I, as the mom/adult, always speak nicely and never complain

Yeah. Ouch. Because the words that roll off my tongue towards others aren't always nice, and aren't always spoken in a pleasant tone of voice. And sometimes I do complain when circumstances aren't to my liking. The odds are, you have difficulties in these areas too—at least occasionally.

We discipline our children for sins that we allow ourselves to get away with.

Jesus had something to say about that. In fact, He called us hypocrites. “What do you think you're doing correcting someone else for the same faults you commit, but letting yourself get away with it?” He asked (my paraphrase). He goes on to tell us, “You correct your own faults, and then you will be in a position to help others correct theirs” (again, my paraphrase).

It is most certainly one of our duties as parents to help our children correct their faults. So if we apply Jesus' words to our situation, we realize that since we must correct our children, we better be correcting ourselves as well.

“Hypocrites,” Jesus calls us when we don't do that. And children can spot a hypocrite a mile away.

We're never going to be perfectly sin-free this side of heaven, true. But if we deal as firmly with our own sins as we do with our children's sins, not only will we please God, but we'll also show our children that we mean what we say. God's Word and His ways apply to everyone—and that, of course, is what we want them to know.

What do you discipline your children for? Have you dealt with that sin in your own life first?

Matthew 7:3-5 says, “Why do you look at the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ and behold, the log is in your own

eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye."

*Adapted from **Megan Breedlove's** blog, Manna for Moms. Megan is the author of Well Done, Good and Faithful Mommy and Manna for Moms: God's Provision for Your Hair-Raising, Miracle-Filled Mothering Adventure (Regal Books.) She is also a blogger and a stay-at-home mom with five children.*