

When You Don't Get Your Way

It is an annual agreement with my mother-in-law. She will feed me if I will hand out candy to the over 100 children who will trick-or-treat at her door.

Will work for food.

So the doorbell rang, and I grabbed the metal bowl filled with everything chocolate. A herd of children was at the door, and I filled plastic sacks, cute little pumpkin buckets, and pillowcases. (I think those kids with pillowcases are highly optimistic.)

That group of kids turned to leave, and two little girls made their way to the door.

The face of the girl on the right crumpled.

"The door's already open," she said.

With my great experience as a mother, I read the situation and quickly said, "Were you hoping to ring the doorbell?"

"Yes," she said. Lips turned down.

"Okay, wait a second. I'll close the door, and you can ring the bell."

I closed the door. The bell rang. I opened the door. And all was chaos.

Her friend had beat her to the bell.

"I wanted to ring it!" she screamed. And screamed. And cried.

Her dad approached with a horrified expression.

"That didn't go the way I was thinking," I said to him.

He knelt down in front of his distraught child and said

firmly, "We do not throw fits on other people's front porches!" Because parenting books prepare you for all such events, so you know what to say.

I quietly closed the door, went inside the house, and tried to contain one of those I-know-this-shouldn't-be-funny laughs.

Tantrums are so entertaining when they're happening on someone else's kid.

All I can think of right now is that **we all tend to wail when we expect something and don't get it**. We throw adult-flavored tantrums and scream with decorum on the inside.

James talks about it:

What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? You want something but don't get it. ... (James 4:1-2, NIV).

It's really cute when it's a little girl screaming on my front porch. Not cute when it's me.

Wanting something from my husband but not getting it.

Wanting something at work and not getting it.

Wanting a friend to be something and not getting it.

Wanting my child to act a certain way and not getting it.

... You quarrel and fight. You do not have, because you do not ask God. When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures (James 4:2-3, NIV).

This is a Monday morning motive check (and I do not take lightly alliteration).

What do we want?

And do we seek our own pleasure, without regard to what God wants for us?

Motto for the week: We do not throw fits on other people's front porches.

Christy Fitzwater *is the author of A Study of Psalm 25: Seven Actions to Take When Life Gets Hard. She is a blogger, pastor's wife and mom of two teenagers and resides in Montana. Visit for more information about her ministry.*