

Obedience as Evidence of Discipline

When I was a young child, I was a spoiled brat (if you need confirmation, you can ask my siblings). My father died from cancer when I was seven years old. In order to pay the bills and take care of us, my mother had to work two to three jobs at a time. We moved into a home with my grandparents, who also had to work to assist with the unexpected need to provide for my two brothers, my sister and me. We were what is now known as latchkey kids, who, for the most part, looked after ourselves until one of the adults made it home from work. Of course, this situation would be frowned upon today, but it was fairly common 50 years ago.

Because we spent hours every day without adult supervision, we regularly got into trouble of our own making. I began smoking at the age of eight, and there was no lock on the liquor cabinet, so we drank whatever was available whenever we chose to. We vandalized our neighbors' homes and other buildings in our town. We became creative shoplifters and even stole money from the tzedakah boxes at our synagogue, which we attended regularly. Most of these adventures were unknown to my mother and grandparents, as they were very busy providing a home, food, clothing and other needs for our family.

By the time I was 11 years old, I was well on my way to a life of crime, alcohol and other delinquent activities when suddenly, out of nowhere, my life was changed. The unimaginable happened: My mother got married. My stepfather brought with him five things: four siblings (two brothers and two sisters) and discipline. My world changed suddenly and dramatically. He came into my life like Captain Von Trapp from "The Sound of Music" before Julie Andrews came and made everything wonderful.

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From the moment he entered our lives, things changed. It was as if we had entered boot camp. Suddenly, beds had to be made every morning. Clothes had to be folded and put neatly away. Floors had to be swept and mopped, toilets had to be scrubbed and windows had to be washed. "Yes, sir," "No, ma'am" and "please and thank you" were words added to our vocabulary and all of the curse words (including the Yiddish ones) were removed. Doors held open and chairs pulled back for ladies (even sisters) were now required, as well as asking to be excused from the table after completing a meal. Lights were turned off, and gardens were weeded.

My life became bitter and miserable. I was filled with resentment toward my mother for getting married and toward my stepfather for existing. After all, I was a spoiled brat. I had done what I wanted my whole life. My life was my own. Suddenly, everything was different. I now had a new father and was part of a new family. It was weird because I wanted all of the good things that came with having a new father, except the discipline. I wanted to live in my father's house. I just wanted to be able to live there my way.

But as time went on, I learned that discipline, while never enjoyable when being employed, is valuable and necessary to an individual's maturity and development. As I matured, I found myself in less and less need of discipline, and my actions and choices became molded through the discipline my father provided.

Years later, I became a believer in Yeshua as my Messiah. Once again, my life dramatically changed. Once again, I received a new Father and new siblings. Once again, I realized I was a brat who still wanted everything my way. Once again, my new Father brought much-needed discipline into my life.

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I share this today because as I look around the body of the Messiah, I find that there are many believers who through faith were adopted by a new Father but are fighting against and rejecting His discipline. Those who, like me, want the benefits of living in the Father's house, but still want to have everything their way. Those who have forgotten that the words of what we call "the Great Commission," found in Matthew 28:19, say to make disciples (disciplined ones) and to teach them to observe all that was commanded.

"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, immersing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Ruach ha-Kodesh, teaching them to observe all I have commanded you. And remember! I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Matt. 28:19-20, TLV).

Too many believers today are spiritual spoiled brats, undisciplined and undisciplined. They want the blessings of living in the Father's house, but they don't want to submit to the Father's will. The result of this rejection of the Father's discipline is that we have a generation of spiritual Peter Pans, grown-up immature children who are so busy complaining about their self-imposed problems that they never experience the unbelievable blessing of our Father's discipline.

The evidence of discipline is obedience.

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