

Wise Parents Listen to Their Children

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I couldn't help but notice the young father trying to get his little daughter to obey. "Please do what Daddy asks," he pleaded. "Please stop what you are doing and come here. Please make Daddy happy."

What the father failed to realize is that the struggle going on had nothing to do with making him happy. It had everything to do with power. The little girl was testing the waters. She was about to see who was in control.

As the father continued to beg, those nearby could not help but notice. Finally, in desperation, he pleaded, "Honey, let's go buy an ice cream bar."

The battle was over. The little girl stopped what she was doing and went with her father. But who won that day?

The father may have thought that he won. After all, his little daughter had stopped her objectionable behavior. But he was setting himself up to lose in the end. If his daughter could extract an ice cream bar at age three, just think what she could demand at sixteen.

Did the little girl win that day? She, too, was a loser. She was losing the security of a father whose word she could always trust. Her world was becoming confused. If the pattern continued, when would "No" mean "No", and when would it mean "Maybe"?

Children who do not learn to respect authority often become problem students. Assignments seem negotiable. To these children, school rules and regulations are not seen as absolutes, but rather as lines which you cross as far as you can without getting caught.

In the end, it is the child who suffers most. Because he doesn't understand how to respect authority, he may have trouble holding a job. Often he ignores the law as well. Too many times he becomes another prison statistic.

Jesus said, *"Simply let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' be 'No'; anything beyond this comes from the evil one"* (Matthew 5:37). In other words, say what you mean and mean what you say.

The Bible says, *"Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right"* (Ephesians 6:11). Parents who govern their families "in the Lord" do it with the same love that God shows for His children.

God always has the best interest of His children in mind. He is not harsh, cruel or unfair. He builds us up and showers us with compliments. He gives His Word because he wants us to avoid things that destroy our families and ourselves. He wants us to discover lasting happiness.

But God is also approachable. We can take our doubts and questions to Him. He listens to us.

Wise parents listen to their children. If they find that they have required too much or have been too harsh, they are willing to admit their error. In doing so, they are able to maintain both their integrity and their authority.

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