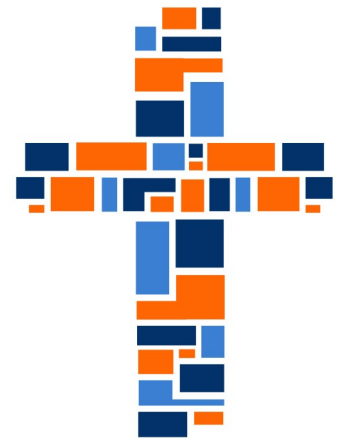




March 2017

parenting CHRISTIAN kids



St. Paul's
Lutheran Church, School & Daycare

How Obedience and Love Are Linked

POWERSOURCE

ASK GOD:

1. To help your kids express love for Jesus by obeying him.
2. To strengthen your family members' trust in God's goodness.
3. To give your children positive, obedient attitudes toward authority figures.

The saying "actions speak louder than words" is especially true when it comes to expressing love. If you repeatedly say you love someone but don't act that way, then your words are empty. That also applies to love for Jesus. If we profess love for him but don't live for him—or obey his commandments—then our words are meaningless.

God gives us laws out of love, and obeying those laws molds us into faithful followers. Unfortunately, being lovingly obedient is often tough. As sinners who've rebelled against God, we often put ourselves ahead of him. The only way we can be equipped to obey God and other people is through a loving relationship with Jesus. The power of his love defeats sin's grip, strengthening us to love and follow

Jesus with all our heart, soul, strength, and mind (see Luke 10:27).

Here are ways to share that message with your children.

Give grace. While explaining that disobedience is serious and has consequences, also emphasize that Jesus offers forgiveness—and so do we.

Provide the big picture. As you read and discuss the Bible with children, emphasize the cycle of restoration. God's people repeatedly break his rules, yet he always restores them to a loving relationship with him.

Read on for more ideas about discussing this important topic with your kids.

The Heart of the Matter



TEACHABLE MOMENTS

Extreme Blessings

Have family members form two groups: a Happy Group and a Sad Group.

Say: **When you hear your group name, show your emotion.** (Practice a few times.)

Say: **Everyone wants to be blessed by God and be happy. No one likes being sad. People will try anything to be happy. Sometimes they even disobey God by stealing, lying, or being selfish. But doing those things only makes them sad.**

Gather together. Say: **The Bible says extreme obedience to God brings us extreme blessing or happiness.**

Read aloud Psalm 119:34-35, NLT.
Ask: **Why do you think this person wants to obey God? Doing what God says to do makes us happy. Let's all show by our faces that we want to choose obedience and happiness!**

Say: **Let's pray. Dear Jesus, help us obey and follow you each day. Thank you for the many blessings you give us, including happiness. Amen.**

Understanding children's hearts is key to relating to them, regardless of their age, development, or behavior. Finding out what makes kids tick is especially essential with behavioral challenges. It's easy for parents to become frustrated with the "symptoms" (poor behavior choices) and miss the "disease" (underlying causes). We see disobedience, *hear* back-talk, and *feel* the escalating chaos. Yet we forget to ask: "Why is my child behaving this way?" If you can look beyond the symptoms and see what ails your child's heart, you can help. No counseling degree is required. All you need is patience, love, and God's guidance. Pray that God will help you see your child through his eyes. Check yourself when frustrations arise. And remember to reinforce any positive behavior and improvements you see.

Squeeze In! Place a sheet of newspaper on the floor. Say, "The goal is for all of us to stand on the newspaper, without touching the floor." (If necessary, stand on one foot.) Afterward, talk about Paul being put in prison (see 2 Corinthians 11:16-28). Ask: "How was being stuck on this newspaper like or unlike being in jail?" Say: "Paul obeyed Jesus and still ended up in jail." Ask: "How might obeying Jesus put you in a tough spot with your friends? What's one way you've obeyed Jesus?"

Simon Says Play Simon Says, taking turns being Simon. Then discuss what it's like to give directions and be "obeyed." Also talk about what makes following instructions easy or difficult.

Love Rules Together, create an imaginary dangerous mission for your family to go on. Then set guidelines to protect one another; for example, if you're going on foot on safari, you might say, "Don't feed the alligators." Say: "God loves us so much that he gives us the Ten Commandments, or rules, to protect us." Read aloud Exodus 20:1-17. Then reword each rule to explain why it's a loving rule from a loving God. For example, "Because I want you to be protected from religions that would mislead you,

don't have any other gods except me." End in prayer, asking God to help you all obey him out of love.

The Right Path Hide a Bible and make an easy map so kids can find the Bible in a few minutes. Give them the map and say, "Search for something special I've hidden." When they find the Bible, say that God's Word shows us how to follow Jesus on the right path. Then give some "directions" and have kids tell you if they're from the Bible or not. For example, "Love your enemies" (yes!); "Lie only if you have to" (no!).

Fish Fling You'll need a blanket, a doll or action figure, and a bucket. Have family members gather around the blanket and each hold on to it. Recap what happened to Jonah. Place the doll on the blanket and say, "This is Jonah on the sea, and the bucket is the mouth of a big fish. Let's fling Jonah into the fish!" After playing, ask: "Why did God put Jonah in the big fish? Why should we obey God even when we're afraid of what he's asking?" Say: "Jonah didn't want to obey God, but after being in the fish, he realized God's way is always best. God will protect us when we obey him."

"Oh, how I love your instructions! I think about them all day long. Your commands make me wiser than my enemies, for they are my constant guide."

—Psalm 119:97-98

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MEDIA MADNESS



MOVIE

Title: *Beauty and the Beast*

Genre: Family, Fantasy, Musical

Rating: PG

Cast: Emma Watson, Dan Stevens, Ewan McGregor, Emma Thompson

Synopsis: On March 17, Disney's long-awaited retelling of this classic fairy tale hits big screens. Book-loving Belle, a devoted daughter, falls in love with a monstrous-looking prince. All the beloved characters from the animated version appear in this live-action film.

Our Take: This family-friendly movie will get children and parents singing together. It also offers opportunities to discuss topics such as looking beyond appearances, discerning between love for others and narcissism, overcoming fears, and staying loyal to one's family.



TV

Title: *Lost & Found Music Studios*

Network: Netflix

Synopsis: This half-hour drama series, geared toward preteens, has a reality-show feel. It follows young musicians in an elite after-school music program. Each year, the studio owner selects standout performers to participate in a live tour. The show quickly developed a following, and season two is now available.

Our Take: Being a drama series, this show includes some crushes and other teenage issues. Overall, though, it sends positive messages that promote friendship, self-expression, and healthy self-esteem. Another plus is that the show helps kids see what it's like to actually work in a music studio.



CULTURE & TRENDS

Can You Code? More educators now consider computer coding an essential subject, and 24 countries mandate that students learn this skill in the classroom. Trend-spotters at the 2017 Consumer Electronics Show say the hot new toys will teach children as young as 3 to code. (*toyassociation.org*)

Budget Busters Between 2003 and 2015, median household income in the United States increased by 26.2%. The bad news is that the cost of living increased by 29%. Prior to 2009, the two were increasing together, or income was increasing at a higher rate than the cost of living. (*statisticbrain.com*)

QUICK STATS

Decisions, Decisions By age 6, many children see an inner moral conflict in decision-making as a positive rather than a negative thing. (*pss.sagepub.com*)

Free to Roam Fifty-one percent of parents say they don't monitor their kids' Internet use. (*experianplc.com*)

Games, Sites & Apps

Roblox

This was named the #1 gaming site for kids and teenagers. Users visit a 3D world, play games, and create adventures. The site promotes imagination and creativity. But because there's no upper age limit, anyone can join and initiate contact with players. We don't recommend this game.

Joinvroom.org

This free site, funded by the Bezos Family Foundation, helps parents and caregivers create brain-building moments throughout the day for children from birth to age 5. A free app delivers personalized, age-appropriate, and location-specific tips for nurturing little learners.

Sharing With Duckie Deck

This iPhone app (\$2.99) offers a variety of games and activities showing why it's fun—and fair—to share. The dialogue-free app is ideal for kids ages 3 to 6. The characters express clear emotions, based on players' choices. Children hear lots of cheering when they share.

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