

Parent *pages*

**A Growing
Christian
makes the
Best Parent!**

Resources for Christian parents in the 21st Century

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Do schools teach social skills?

Contrary to popular belief, children do not learn social skills at school. They practice social skills at school, but they learn them at home. A teacher can observe, set rules for behavior, or guide children to better skills, but we cannot teach what is learned at home. At school, your child will come into contact with many different personalities. Children need to have skills that enable them to interact effectively with all types of people.

“Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.”

1 Cor. 13:4-7

All you need is God's love

Learning social skills is learning how to love. *God is our best model for love.* He loves us with a perfect agape love. Because of God's love, because of Jesus' death and resurrection, because of the work of the Holy Spirit, we can, and do, love our children. Your child's personality and preferences are part of the equation; however, the relationship you have with your child will be the primary factor in his or her social skill development.

This newsletter will look at four important realities that parents teach their children that will in turn help them develop healthy social skills:

1. My friends still love me when they say “no.” (I can accept compromise.)
2. My friends still love me when



I make a mistake. (I can accept forgiveness.)

3. My friends still love me even if I am not the best. (I can accept waiting for my turn.)
4. My friends still love me if I have a problem. (I can accept help.)

God's love for us is perfectly unconditional. He loves us no matter what. We are to have unconditional love for our children. Unconditional love will create an emotionally healthy child; a child who is confident that the world will not come crashing down if things don't go perfectly. It is easy for us to understand that we are to love our children even when they sin.

Certainly, we want to bring them to the point of repentance and forgiveness, and we assure them of our continual love. But, unconditional love comes into play when we disappoint our children. They need to know that we still love them even if we aren't doing what they want us to do.

Love your kids—no matter what

The scene is a grocery store at 5:30 p.m. Parent and child are tired and hungry. The child sees a toy and immediately cries for it. Your instinct is to say “no,” but you know what will happen if you do. The parent police will scowl at you because you can't keep your 3-year-old from screaming. If a child frequently gets what he wants despite a parent's better judgment, or more importantly, if that child rarely experiences a “no” that sticks, he will learn that mom and dad love him when they give in.

At this point, not getting the toy is no longer about the toy; it is instead a proof of love. If your child comes to school with this mindset, he will apply that to other children. If other children say “no,” your child will believe he isn't liked and that no one will play with him. When we disappoint children and show them with words and actions that they are still

loved, we teach them that love is unconditional. Children who are afraid of disappointment learn to find friends they can control.

God's forgiveness is complete. He promises to remember our sin no more. As parents we cannot be perfect in forgiveness. However, we can be aware of the importance of forgiveness. It is easy to slip into Law mode when we parent. There are so many rules and so many ways for children to get around the rules. We must be ever vigilant in our quest to keep our children on the straight and narrow.

Mistakes are a given

Guess what? We are going to mess up. Our children are going to stray. We are going to need to forgive and be forgiven. It is OK; we will still be good parents because our skills as parents come from God and He is always good. The ability to forgive is ours because Jesus died and rose again for us. God forgives us so we are then able to forgive each other. This is the Gospel that balances the Law. Children remember the rules and the consequences but they need to feel the forgiveness.

You will not undermine the effects of your discipline by assuring your child that he or she is forgiven. In fact, you will only support those efforts. Children who know forgiveness are able to admit when they are wrong. This is a vital skill when dealing with friends. A child that fears she will not be forgiven will deny wrong-doing and develop a need to always be right. She will think no one likes her. If she expects forgiveness to be the result of repentance, she will not fear being wrong. She will also learn how to forgive others.

Competition is fine on the ball field, on the tournament mat, or at the chess board. Competition does not belong in family relationships. This is easier said than done, especially if you have a Type A, highly intense and focused child. God does choose favorites. We are each His favorite. It is quite a challenge to make each child in your family feel like a favorite. The best way to do that is to teach

children to be happy for the successes and blessings of others.

“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.”

Deut. 6:4-7

We are parents all the time. Our children learn from us all the time. It can be

overwhelming to think that we have such an influence on our children, but it is also a blessing to know that we have this influence. God's plan is that we would have opportunities to shape these children and to help them grow in the love and knowledge of their Savior. This is His will and He stands ready to work with us in this endeavor. Will we make mistakes? Yes! Here is God's promise found in 1 Peter 4:8 “Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers a multitude of sins.”

Merry Christmas

Questions for discussion

1. Describe your social skills as a child. How did your family affect your social skills?
2. What social skills have your children learned from you?
3. How is a classroom like a family? How are a classroom and a family different?
4. Describe God's unconditional love.
5. How does Deut. 6:4-7 apply to your job as a parent? How has God prepared you for parenting? How does He help you?

Recommended reading/research:

John R. Bucka has a series of books, available from CPH:

- “Faithfully Parenting Preschoolers”
- “Faithfully Parenting Tweens”
- “Faithfully Parenting Teens”

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