

Demonstrating Mercy and Grace to your Children.

Be careful what you pray for. God is listening and He has a sense of humor.

July 17, 2014, 6:30am Bible study with Pastor Jim Brashear. We are studying 2 Corinthians 7. Here is verse 8-10. "⁸ Even if I caused you sorrow by my letter, I do not regret it. Though I did regret it—I see that my letter hurt you, but only for a little while—⁹ yet now I am happy, not because you were made sorry, but because your sorrow led you to repentance. For you became sorrowful as God intended and so were not harmed in any way by us. ¹⁰ Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death."

The conversation goes to, "how do we produce Godly sorrow and repentance in our children?" Are they sorry they got caught (and the punishment) or are they sorry for hurting you through disobedience? Pastor Jim suggested we demonstrate Christ's mercy and grace by not punishing them and taking the punishment yourself and then explaining exactly why you are doing it.

I thought of my own parenting style, I am an advocate of strict rules and discipline (14 years in the military), I do not 'spare the rod' when warranted. Was I producing in my children a Godly sorrow that caused true repentance or just fear of punishment? So I prayed a dangerous prayer. "God please give wisdom and opportunity to teach my children Godly repentance."

Driving home from work that same day at 5pm, it was a gorgeous July day. I decided I would use our season pass and take the kids to the pool for an hour. Then I get home. Mom is disgruntled and the kids are hiding. My 11 year old took apart a pen, including the tip, and drew on my 12 yr old's foot, while she was sitting on my lounge chair watching TV. My 7 and 9 year old boys just watched and laughed. Of course the 12 year old screamed and shook her foot when she discovered the prank, causing the ink to be smeared onto my chair. Then, all of them tried to hide and clean the mess, which only succeeded in smearing it and making it worse.

I was so mad I went on a 2 mile afternoon run, because I try not to punish them while still angry. My plan was to cancel the pool, yell at all of them, have them do chores until bedtime. Instead, God reminded me of my prayer that morning. So, I told them to get their suits on, we are going to the pool and I am doing all of their chores that night. There was shock, followed by disbelief, confusion, and then joy. I went on to explain how mercy is not getting what you deserve, and grace is getting a free gift you don't deserve. I wanted them to know how that feels. This all happened in just under twelve hours. So, as I said in the beginning, be careful what you pray for. God is listening and He has a sense of humor.

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