

The Value of Obedience

No matter our faith or lack of it, most of us share many core values and beliefs. Most of these are instilled by our parents, including love first and foremost as well as the need for respect and obedience. We usually learn these by the time we reach the age of reason, typically 6-7 years old, while we learn much of what is right or wrong as young as a toddler.

Yesterday my thoughts turned to obedience after going to see *The Lion King* with my daughter Katie and my two grandchildren, Audrey, who is almost 2-1/2, and Olivia, almost 5. The movie didn't catch as much of their attention as *Toy Story 4*, because it was a surreal kind of animation instead of a cartoon. The adventures of Woody, Little Bo Peep and the gang are much more rapid fire and fun. Fortunately, we had four big theater seats without another row in front of us, which made it much easier when Audrey became restless and too talkative.

We emerged from the theater with Katie feeling frustrated due to Audrey's lack of obedience. Indeed, over the last six months or more, Audrey has gained great pleasure in being disobedient and defiant over basic requests. Part of me knows it's just a phase yet I also know there are many influences in their lives. Katie shares the kids with her ex for one weekend day every week and works full time which results in many childcare influences. She also has lapses in discipline at times, which is all too common with the juggling of life. It isn't easy, and I'm reminded of *A New Found Appreciation for Mothers*.

Conflicts and efforts to discipline have frequently occurred in our family. Katie's mom was very inconsistent when applying discipline, particularly with Chris. This led to many issues between us as they grew up. Eventually they understood and respected requests for obedience from both of us, but more so from me based on a "No means no" policy. Chris was younger and grew up loving his mother dearly yet was often disobedient and disrespectful. Hence, his overall maturity took longer. The important thing is that he has now reached a good, often great place as a disciplined and responsible almost 27-year-old.

The day after seeing *The Lion King*, I left home at 6AM and attended Living Waters Church in Harrisburg, PA as I headed out on a long trip into the Midwest and further west. This was the third time I had visited this church after previously trying another church in Harrisburg that made me uncomfortable. From my first visit, I had been very comfortable at Living Waters, which had grown under the leadership of Pastor Mike and other disciples to bring many people back to the church as well as embrace God's expectation of us to *Love All Brothers and Sisters*.

Sometimes there are ironies in God's plan. For example, today's sermon was entitled "Disasters of Disobedience" as part of a longer series. The pastor began with a non-Christian example of a little girl who enjoyed being defiant before she knew better. One day a gate was left open, and the child continued to run away when her parents called her, and she was tragically hit by a car. As parents, we are here to love and protect, but we can only come close to full protection when children are obedient.

Pastor Mike's sermon mentioned "with disobedience comes pain" and included several examples from scripture. He focused on Genesis including Genesis 31:3, "Then the Lord said to Jacob,

“Return to the land of your fathers and to your relatives, and I will be with you.” Jacob disobeyed the Lord and his family, including his daughter Dinah, suffered immensely.

Pastor Mike also stated, “Often when we disobey the Lord, it is for a selfish purpose,” and continued with examples from scripture. When you are selfish, you can easily disobey and suffer the consequences. Selflessness is most often a learned trait that for many, including myself, takes many years or decades to fully understand and practice regularly.

From Ephesians 6:1-3 “Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honor your father and mother - which is the first commandment with a promise - so that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy a long life on the earth.” We do have a God of *Absolute Forgiveness*. We can repent and be forgiven when we are disobedient to the Lord, and this should be true for parents as well. We are usually Blessed with time to heal including a need for learned obedience, time to learn how to live a Godly life, and how to be a better parent and grandparent as well.

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