



Lyyette Reback is a Jesus-loving wife to David and mom to fifteen amazing children. She just so happens to believe that her children and yours will change our world for good and she hopes you will join in that belief at her blog, *Believe With Me*, a ministry that encourages moms and give hope and solutions for the modern challenges of parenting. For more of Lyyette and her family, you can follow them on Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook.

Why I Don't Want to Raise an Obedient Child¹

LYETTE REBACK

It's funny the things people will ask me when they discover I have fifteen children. Most times, the questions are a barrage of "How do you do it?" and "Don't you know what causes that?" Sometimes the questions are heartfelt — "How did you get to adopt four children?" or "Why have so many?"

But one of the most important questions that rarely gets asked is "What's the most important thing I can teach my children?"

Of course the most vital thing to teach any child is the redemptive power that faith in Jesus gives us. But past this, most parents just tend to focus on raising well-behaved kids.

As if being well-behaved is the end-all goal of Christianity. Be good. If I have "good" kids then I am a good parent. If my kids know all the rules and follow them then I have done my job. An added bonus may include a college education or an exemplary skill of

some sort, but truly it just boils down to their behavior, right?

Wrong.

I can see how we easily fall into this trap ... and yes, it's a trap. When the children are small we are basically relegated to making sure the child survives the day — no matter how many times they try and self-destruct between jumping off the couch, climbing out of their crib, and swallowing everything possible to block their windpipe. We begin to think to ourselves that if we could ever just get through a meal at a restaurant without being humiliated, make it through Publix without the three-year-old having a total meltdown, if we could just get them to *listen* to us and *do what we say*, we will have *done it*. Done our jobs. Get those little wee beasties tamed and they may even manage to make us as moms and dads look pretty good in the process.

I am in no way saying that obedience itself is not important. It is. In fact, your child's life may very well depend on them stopping when you ask them to thereby avoiding being run over in the street. We must teach our children to listen to us and obey, but this is something that is rarely accomplished completely at a very young age and I have my sneaking suspicions that's why the Lord gave us a solid sixteen-to-twenty years with our children under our wings.

But while my short term goal may be obedience, I do *not* want an obedient twenty-one year old. I want a young adult who knows the rules and when to break them. "No fighting in school," may be the rule, but I want a teenager who knows when to stick up for a friend and get a bump or bruise in the process. "Live peaceably with all men," say the scriptures, but I want my child to know it is alright to not be "peaceable" when someone is trash talking another classmate. Playing to win may be the unspoken rule, but when my child chooses all the school "losers" to be on her team for dodge ball and they get creamed, my child just won at the game of life.

You see, without watching ourselves, we can accidentally raise a child who is just obedient and not resourceful or full of initiative.

We could raise a child who knows the rules and not the guiding principles, so they never weigh out which is the greater need. And I have two really good examples of this.

Fourteen years ago, I was heavily pregnant with my fourth child. I had taken my three daughters, then six, four, and three years old to play on the beach while my friend and I talked. The girls were skimming along in the waves in barely a foot of water when the hair on the back of my neck stood up. Prompted by what I can only describe as a “Holy Warning,” I yelled “Get out now!” to the children in a voice that screamed terror. The girls sprinted out of the water and ran 30 feet up to the dune. They then turned around and asked, “Why, Mama?”

Thank God they ran before they asked. A tiger shark began rapidly approaching as they sprinted out of the water and I saw it heading straight for where the girls were playing. Surely a tragedy had been avoided because they listened quickly. Shaken, I gathered them up and left the beach that day thanking God for their safety and ever since that day, “shark” has been the buzzword around our house we use when someone doesn’t listen and obey quickly.

Fast forward about ten years. A four-year-old cousin is having a surf party at the beach. About twenty five children are playing in the waves, trying out surfboards and enjoying a fun day in the ocean. One of the dads who is a local surfing legend leans over to me and says, “Shark. Get the kids out.” In my “do-it-or-else-you’ll-be-sorry” voice I promptly tell every kid to get out of the water immediately. Out of the twenty five kids, five decide they would rather play than listen. I tell them there’s a shark in the water and those stinkers start arguing with me that since they don’t see it I must be wrong. And guess who’s still in the water between all these five-to-eight year old arguers? My sixteen-year-old daughter. Daly Kay had become quite a swimmer and reasoned that since she was a strong swimmer she would rather stay in the water and gather up these yahoos to get them out of the water than leave them in there defenseless. Even as she disobeyed the clear commands to leave the water, she was pulling them out to

safety. She broke the rules. She disobeyed. But she did the greater thing. She saved these kids from their own foolishness.

My kids aren't perfect and you can be guaranteed that I'm not either. There have been plenty of times that we've had to learn the hard way to obey. But at the end of the journey, I don't just want an obedient adult. I want a faith-filled bold individual that knows the rules and when to break them. I want my children to be so full of his Word, favor, and grace that they walk in confidence knowing their Heavenly Father loves them and their parents have their back. If we only focus on the short term goal of teaching our children obedience, rather than the long term goal of boldness through faith in Christ (and what his sacrifice bought us: favor, grace, and good standing with our heavenly Father), we will have missed our opportunity as parents to raise up a generation of world-changers.

ENDNOTES

¹ Originally posted on Believe with Me (www.believewithme.com), by Lyette Reback. Used by permission.