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parenting CHRISTIAN kids



How to Delight in God's Loving Laws

POWERSOURCE

ASK JESUS:

1. To give you hearts willing to obey God and his commands.
2. To show your family that obedience brings blessings, not burdens.
3. To help you lovingly obey other authority figures.

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The words “love” and “law” are rarely used in the same sentence these days. Yet the Old Testament psalmists express great delight in God’s commands: “Oh, how I love your law! I meditate on it all day long” (Psalm 119:97) and “See how I love your commandments, Lord. Give back my life because of your unfailing love” (verse 159).

In the New Testament, Jesus also connects the concepts of love and obedience to the law. In John 14:15, he tells his followers, “If you love me, obey my commands.”

Love is at the “heart” of all God’s laws, from the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20 to the two great commandments Jesus gives: “Love

the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind” and “Love your neighbor as yourself” (Luke 10:27). The golden rule—“Do to others as you would like them to do to you.” (Luke 6:31)—also is based on love.

As with any rule or law, we humans repeatedly fall short when it comes to obedience. That’s why it’s important to emphasize the forgiveness that Jesus freely offers to us—and that we are to freely offer to other people.

Throughout the Bible, it’s clear that disobedience is serious and has big consequences. Yet our loving God longs to forgive us, restore us, and reconcile us to himself. Continue reading for high-impact ways to share these messages with your kids.

Commandments for Kids

The Ten Commandments can seem intimidating—not just because they set a high standard but because they include some archaic language. Bring the law to children’s level with these age-appropriate adaptations: #1: God is the one true God. #2: Worship only God. #3: Be careful with God’s name. #4: Set aside a day for God and for rest. #5: Respect your mom and dad. #6: Don’t kill or hurt anyone. #7: Keep your marriage promises. #8: Don’t steal or take what isn’t yours. #9: Don’t tell lies. #10: Don’t feel jealous of other people and what they have.



TEACHABLE MOMENTS

#1 in Our Hearts

Tape a red heart shape onto a pitcher. Gather cups of water, small rocks, and markers.

Say: **This pitcher is like a heart. Let’s fill it with God.** Take turns pouring in water and saying why God deserves first place in your heart; for example, “God deserves first place in my heart because he made me.”

When the pitcher is full, say: **Our hearts are full of God’s goodness, but sometimes other things try to crowd into our hearts.** Have family members each draw on a rock one thing that takes up their time and attention. One at a time, add rocks to the pitcher until water starts to overflow.

Ask: **How is this like what happens in our hearts? How can we keep our hearts full of God so he has first place?** Read Exodus 20:3. Say: **God tells us not to have any idols. An idol is anything that crowds God out. God wants and deserves first place in our heart!**

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In Synch Give each person two paper plates. Practice “skating” around a room on them. Then form pairs and have partners try to do the same moves. Switch partners for more synchronized fun. Then ask: “As you skated, how did you get to know your partner?” Read aloud 1 Corinthians 8:3. Ask: “How does knowing and following God’s laws and rules help us stay in sync with him?”

No More Hard Hearts Hand out hardboiled eggs. Decorate them with markers as you discuss how the outside of the eggs feel. Read aloud Psalm 95:6-9. Say: “God wants our hearts to be soft toward him so we obey out of love, but sometimes our hearts get hard and are closed to God.” Ask: “What might make people’s hearts hard?” Crack the eggs, peel the shells, and discuss how the inside of the eggs feel. Say: “When our hearts are hard, God can crack away the outer shell to reveal something soft on the inside.” Ask: “What helps make your heart soft toward God?” End with prayer—and eat the eggs.

Focused Followers Have family members form pairs. Whisper a strange instruction to one person in each pair; for example, put socks on your hands or sit on your head. Each instruction recipient must then silently get his or her partner

to do the task. Switch roles so everyone gets a turn. Ask: “How did you know what your partner wanted you to do? How do you know what God wants you to do?” Read aloud 1 Thessalonians 4:11. Ask: “How does living a quiet life help us focus on following God?”

Transformed Hearts Say: “Because of sin, no one can perfectly obey God’s law. Sin makes holes in our hearts, but God’s Holy Spirit fills our hearts and covers sin.” Cut brown craft foam into a large person shape and write “sin” across the chest. Cut a red foam heart and staple a heart to the chest. Punch out a large hole in the heart so “sin” shows through. Bunch together strips of orange and yellow tissue paper, pinch the tip, and push it through the hole so the “flame” bursts through the heart. Display your creation where your family can see it as a reminder.

Stay on Track Hide a Bible and give family members an easy map to find it. Then say: “The Bible contains God’s laws and shows us how to stay on track and follow them.” Read some “directions” and have family members tell you if they’re from the Bible or not. For example, “Love your enemies” (yes!); “Lie only if you have to” (no!).

Love means doing what God has commanded us,
and he has commanded us to love another, just as
you heard from the beginning.

—2 John 1:6

MEDIA MADNESS



MOVIE

Title: *The Lego Movie 2*

Genre: Animation, Action, Adventure

Rating: Not yet rated (likely PG)

Cast: Margot Robbie, Chris Pratt, Elizabeth Banks, Channing Tatum

Synopsis: Five years after the original blockbuster hit theaters, everything is *not* awesome. Bricksburg has become a post-apocalyptic wasteland because of destructive space invaders (i.e., Lego Duplo characters). Emmet's building skills are put to the test when Lucy is kidnapped by a villain (who, interestingly, is female).

Our Take: Like the original, expect this movie to offer nonstop action and fun. The violence and peril are cartoonish, with lots of humor to entertain viewers of all ages. Of course, the movie also contains a built-in marketing plug.



MUSIC

Title: *Head Above Water*

Singer: Avril Lavigne

Synopsis: After a five-year break during which she feared she was dying from Lyme disease, Lavigne is back with a powerful song and a video filled with Christian symbolism. Now 34, the singer who once embodied the "skate punk" sound says the lyrics to "Head Above Water" came to her after she prayed for God's help when she felt as if she were drowning.

Our Take: Lavigne, once known for her edgy persona, says she's going back to her roots because she got her start singing in church. The songs on her new album aren't all worship songs, though. And beware that on the album cover, Lavigne sits nude behind her guitar.



CULTURE & TRENDS

Flip Phones Make a Comeback For their children's first phones, more parents are choosing flip phones. Not only are the devices much cheaper than "smart" phones, but they don't come with internet access or social media. Parents say it's an ideal way to keep in touch with kids without exposing them to dangers. (abc13.com)

"Humanizing" Homelessness To impact people's perceptions of the issue, *Sesame Street* added a homelessness storyline for pink puppet Lily. Previously, she was described as having food-security issues. About one in 20 kids under age 6 experiences homelessness each year. (cnn.com)

Games, Podcasts & Apps

Kingdom Hearts 3

Set in a variety of Pixar and Disney worlds, this game features Sora, who doesn't know he's inherited great power. Cartoon characters such as Donald Duck and Goofy help Sora battle against the dark, evil force known as Heartless. The game, rated E10+, also involves magical spells.

Ear Snacks

This free musical podcast features Andrew & Polly, winners of two Parents' Choice Awards. With young helpers, they explore science, art, and culture. Topics range from getting glasses and caring for teeth to silly subjects such as talking like pirates. Kids of all ages—and parents—will enjoy listening.

GooseChase

Send family members on virtual (or actual) scavenger hunts with this app. During setup, you decide if participants need to check in at certain locations or submit photos, videos, or text responses. Use the missions to encourage self-directed learning. Best for ages 8+. Free for recreational use only.

QUICK STATS

Pricey Preschools American parents spend an average of \$5,008 on preschool tuition for their children. In Washington, D.C., the average is almost \$17,000. (nieer.org)

Fluency Deadline By age 10, research shows, a child's chances of becoming fluent in a second language plummet. (*Cognition*)

Young Love? Among surveyed parents, 23% admit to having a favorite child. Among those, 56% say it's their youngest. (inews.co.uk)

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This page is designed to help educate parents and isn't meant to endorse any movie, music, or product. Our prayer is that you'll make informed decisions about what your children watch, read, listen to, and play.

February

The youth had a special event of packing food for children overseas. All the food they packed has already been sent to El Salvador. They packed 67 boxes, 14,472 meals. Cost of the meals they packed was \$3,142 (all provided by donations from individuals & groups) Their "short shift" will serve 39 kids 3 meals per day for a year.

