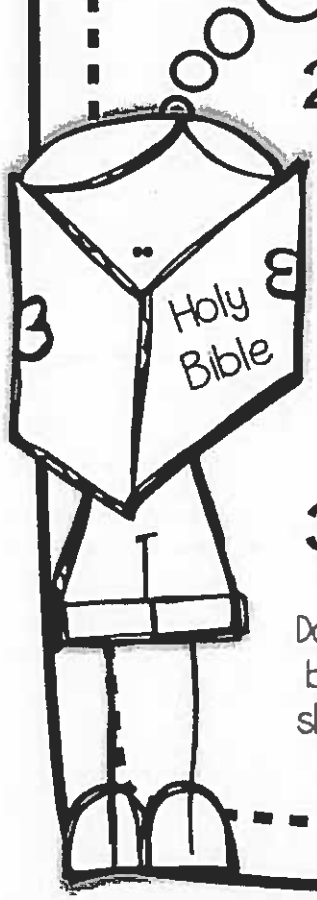
Obey

"My sheep listen to my voice;
I know them and they follow me."
John 10:27

1. Right Away...

I will hurry,
without delay,
to obey
your commands.
Psalm 119:60

<u>Obedience</u> - behavior that's respectful and mindful of rules and laws.



2. All the Way...

Loving God means keeping his commandments, and his commandments are not burdensome.
1 John 5:3

You have commanded *us* to keep your precepts diligently.
Psalm 119:4

3. In a Happy Way...

Do everything without grumbling or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure, children of God...Then you will shine... like stars in the sky as you hold firmly to the word of life.
Philippians 2:14-16

At Whit's End

*Ideas in this document adapted from Ginger Plowman, author of <u>The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Parents</u>

KIDS of INTEGRITY

Obedience

Bake some crazy cookies, play Simon Says or go on an "O" hunt. Or check out more fun ways to learn to obey.

Work through your choice of activities over a week or more to help your kids:

- be quick to obey their parents
- deepen their desire to obey God
- adopt a positive attitude toward authority figures.

This lesson also helps curb defiance, an argumentative attitude and a tendency to ignore instructions.

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Parents' prayer

God knows the disappointment you experience when your children are disobedient: Adam and Eve's first act of defiance toward God – their Creator – was to disobey His direct command.

Use this prayer to ask God to help you be patient as you strive to teach your children to be obedient. Alternatively, formulate your own prayer based on the verses suggested under "Scripture-guided prayer for parents."

Sample prayer

Loving Father, Your Son Jesus was so obedient that He humbled Himself to death on the cross (Philippians 2:8). His prayer was, "Yet not as I will, but as You will" (Matthew 26:39). Jesus was so passionate about obedience that He said, "My food . . . is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to finish His work" (John 4:34). His time on earth provides a real-life example for us to follow.

I desire to be like Jesus, but so often fall short of my goal. Some days I imagine You are up in heaven, thinking, "How many times do I have to tell him/her?" Please forgive my lack of diligence in following Your directions.

I ask that You will give me a humble, obedient spirit that desires to wholeheartedly obey Your commands. I pray with David, "Oh that my ways were steadfast in obeying Your decrees! . . . Teach me, O Lord, to follow Your decrees; then I will keep them to the end. Give me understanding and I will keep Your law and obey it with all my heart" (Psalm 119:5,33-34). I pray my children will see in me a passion for doing Your will that inspires them to follow You wholeheartedly.

Your heart is filled with pain over sin, yet You are gracious, slow to anger and abounding in love (Genesis 6:5-6, Exodus 34:6, Psalm 145:8). I find it grievous and frustrating when my children do not obey me. Please fill me with Your Spirit to enable me to provide correction as You would, in a gracious and loving way. After all, it is easier for my children to obey me when I give advice gently and patiently, than when I am in "drill sergeant mode." When my children are disobedient, please give me Your wisdom so that I may "govern" them in a

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discerning way, distinguishing between right and wrong (1 Kings 3:9). Help me to notice and give them appropriate recognition when they do obey.

I pray for my children, _____ and _____. I don't want them to do the right thing just because they have to. Rather, I ask that You will bless them with obedient hearts that desire to obey You and others in authority. Please help my children to keep their way pure by living according to Your Word. May they be diligent in seeking You with all of their hearts so that they will not stray from Your commands.

I pray that because _____ and _____ have hidden Your Word in their hearts, they will be kept from sinning against You (Psalm 119:9-11). As they grow up, I pray they will guard Your teachings as the apple of their eye. Bind them on their fingers, Lord, and write them on the tablet of their hearts (Proverbs 7:1-3).

We read in 1 John 2:5-6, "But if anyone obeys His word, God's love is truly made complete in him. This is how we know we are in Him: Whoever claims to live in Him must walk as Jesus did." This is my prayer for our family – that we will obey Your Word and walk as Jesus walked, in complete obedience to You. Amen.

Scripture-guided prayer for parents

Read and pray through one or more of the selected Scriptures under each heading. Focus on listening to God and allowing His Spirit to direct you as you pray.

Character focus

Begin by letting God know how much you appreciate His love and guidance.
Exodus 15:1,11-13 | Psalm 73:23-26 | Psalm 139:7-10 | Isaiah 30:18-21 | John 16:12-15

Heart search

Acknowledge when and how you fall short of obeying God.
Deuteronomy 30:15-20 | 1 Samuel 15:22-23 | Proverbs 13:13 | Isaiah 1:18-20 | 1 John 2:3-4

Gratitude

Thank God for ways you have seen obedience exhibited in your family.

Family requests

Ask God to help you and your family to be obedient in all circumstances.
Deuteronomy 30:5-10 | Psalm 25:4-5 | Psalm 119:44-48 | John 14:23-26 | Proverbs 16:9,20

Kids talk with God

Use this section to help your children request God's help in growing in the area of obedience. The sample prayers all begin with "Dear God," however, you may use any other names for God your children are comfortable with (i.e. Jesus, Father God, Lord Jesus, Heavenly Father, Abba Father, Lord). If your children are ready to learn how to formulate their own prayers, use the verses under "Scripture-guided prayer for children" for inspiration.

Sample prayers

Dear God, it is hard to obey sometimes – like right now. Please help me to obey my parents, as I know this pleases You. Amen.

Dear God, when I feel like disobeying, please help me to think of the promise You gave us in the Bible – when I obey my parents, things will go well for me (Jeremiah 7:23). Amen.

Dear God, please send Your Holy Spirit to help me be obedient to You, my parents and teachers. Amen.

Dear God, please help me to listen to You and my parents so that I can be obedient. Amen.

Dear God, help me to hide Your word in my heart so that I won't sin against You (Psalm 119:11). Amen.

Dear God, I am sorry that I have disobeyed my parents. Please forgive me and help me to obey next time. Amen.

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Scripture-guided prayer for children

Read through one of the selected Scriptures under each heading and help your children pray based on the verse that you read. Encourage them to listen to God and allow His Spirit to guide them as they pray.

Character focus

Begin by letting God know how much you appreciate His love and guidance.
Psalm 119:73 | Proverbs 2:6 | Psalm 73:23-24

Heart search

Acknowledge when and how you are disobedient.
1 Samuel 15:22 | Proverbs 13:13 | Isaiah 1:18-20

Gratitude

Thank God for ways you have been obedient.

Personal requests

Ask God to help you and your siblings to be obedient.
Psalm 119:9-11 | John 14:23,26 | Ephesians 6:1-3 | Proverbs 4:10-13

Speak a blessing

God will reward your efforts to teach your children to obey promptly. Here are some ideas that will help you celebrate your children's progress and encourage them to keep working on this important attribute.

- _____ is such an obedient boy/girl.
- I really appreciate how quickly you obey, _____.
- God is pleased with such immediate obedience, _____.
- Thank you for remembering my instructions, _____. They will be a garland to grace your head and a chain to adorn your neck.
- Thank you for obeying, _____; it sure makes life easier for all of us when we obey.

Memory verses

Choose one of the verses below to learn during your study on obedience.

Psalm 119:5 "Oh, that my ways were steadfast in obeying your decrees!"

Proverbs 1:8-9 "Listen, my son, to your father's instruction and do not forsake your mother's teaching. They will be a garland to grace your head and a chain to adorn your neck."

Proverbs 3:1-2 "My son, do not forget my teaching, but keep my commands in your heart, for they will prolong your life many years and bring you prosperity."

Proverbs 13:13 "He who scorns instruction will pay for it, but he who respects a command is rewarded."

Proverbs 16:20 "Whoever gives heed to instruction prospers, and blessed is he who trusts in the Lord."

Proverbs 19:16 "He who obeys instructions guards his life, but he who is contemptuous of his ways will die."

Isaiah 1:18-20 " 'Come now, let us reason together,' says the Lord. 'Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool. If you are willing and obedient, you will eat the best from the land; but if you resist and rebel, you will be devoured by the sword.' For the mouth of the Lord has spoken."

John 14:15 "If you love Me, you will obey what I command."

John 14:21 "Whoever has My commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves Me. . . ."

John 14:23 "Jesus replied, 'If anyone loves Me, he will obey My teaching.' "

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 – 'That it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on earth.' "

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Colossians 3:20 "Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord."

1 John 2:5-6 "But if anyone obeys His word, God's love is truly made complete in Him. This is how we know we are in Him: Whoever claims to live in Him must walk as Jesus did."

1 John 5:3 "This is love for God: to obey His commands. And His commands are not burdensome . . ."

Kick-off craft

Painters needed – no experience required! For this activity, you will help your children make a poster that reminds your children to be obedient.

Love-in-action poster

Directions

1. Write or paint the following header at the top of a large piece of poster paper: "To Love Means to Obey."

2. Choose *one* of these verses on obedience from John 14 and write it on your poster:

John 14:15 "If you love Me, you will obey what I command."

John 14:21 "Whoever has My commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves Me. . . ."

John 14:23 "Jesus replied, 'If anyone loves Me, he will obey My teaching.' "

3. Paint your children's feet with washable paint, and have them make footprints across the paper.

4. Explain to your kids that the footprints represent someone doing exactly as they are asked. Remind them that the Bible says that if they love God, they will obey His commandments. Explain that when they obey God or their parents, they are showing that they love them.

5. Remind your kids of one or two recent incidents where they obeyed you. Add one or two heart stickers (or draw heart shapes on the paper) to "reward" these examples of obedience. Thank your children for obeying and showing you that they love you and God. Let your children know that when they obey, they can add more hearts to the poster.

6. Hang the poster in a prominent location as a reminder to be obedient.

Each time you add a heart to your poster, review the memory verse and remind your children that they show they love God when they obey Him and their parents.

Bible stories

The Bible provides many stories that illustrate how much God values obedience. Choose one of the stories below, as appropriate for your children. If you wish, you may use the accompanying questions to help your children internalize the truths from the passage.

If the Bible passage is too complex for your kids, paraphrase the story yourself or use the summary provided under "key concepts."

Adam and Eve tangle with a snake

Read Genesis 2:15-17, Genesis 3.

Questions for discussion

1. What did God ask Adam and Eve not to do?
2. What did they do?
3. What did God do when Adam and Eve disobeyed Him?
4. What are some things Mommy and Daddy ask you to do?
5. Do you always obey?
6. Do you think God is happy when you disobey?
7. What do you think God would want Mommy and Daddy to do when you disobey?

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Key concepts

God gave Adam and Eve a wonderful garden, filled with many fruit trees. He told Adam and Eve that they could eat any fruit they wished except for the fruit of one tree – the tree in the middle of the garden. But Satan wanted Adam and Eve to disobey God. One day, Satan convinced Eve to try the "forbidden" fruit, and Adam ate some, too. Instead of doing what God asked them to do, they did what Satan wanted them to do.

Adam and Eve felt very badly after they had disobeyed, but God had to discipline them anyway. He had to send them out of the beautiful garden. Just as God disciplined Adam and Eve, He expects parents to discipline their children to help them learn to obey.

Abraham obeys when it is difficult

Read Genesis 12.

Questions for discussion

1. What did God ask Abraham to do?

2. Did he go?

3. Because Abraham obeyed, what did God promise to do for him?

4. Do Mommy and Daddy ask you to do things that are hard for you to do?

5. What do you think your parents will do for you when you obey?

Key concepts

God asked Abraham to take his family and move to an unknown country. Abraham followed God's instructions, even though it was hard. Because Abraham obeyed, God promised to make Abraham into a great nation, and He did.

God rewards obedience generously! You can also expect that we, as your parents, will reward you when you are obedient.

A disobedient wife

Read Genesis 19:15-29 and 2 Peter 2:4-10.

Questions for discussion

1. What did the angels instruct Lot and his family to do?

2. What did Lot's wife do?

3. After Lot's wife disobeyed, what happened to her?

4. If Mom and Dad tell you not to peek inside a gift, is it hard or easy to obey?

5. If Mom and Dad tell you to _____, is it easy to obey?

6. What does it mean to "despise authority"?

7. What does God say about those who ignore instructions?

8. What do you think God wants us, your parents, to do if you do not obey?

Key concepts

Lot tried to honour God in everything he did and to live how God wanted him to. But Lot and his family lived in a city filled with very wicked people. Two angels came and told Lot to take his family and hurry out of the city, and not to look back, as God was about to destroy the city.

Lot's wife disobeyed the instructions given by the angels and looked behind her as they were fleeing the city. God dealt with her disobedience severely, turning her into a pillar of salt.

Just as obedience is very important to God, obedience is very important in our family. God warns that there will be punishment for those who "despise authority," and protection for those who are righteous (2 Peter 2:4-10).

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Jonah learns to obey the hard way

Read Jonah 1-2.

Questions for discussion

1. What did God ask Jonah to do?
2. What did Jonah do instead?
3. What happened to Jonah when he tried to run away from God?
4. Do you feel like running away and hiding when Mom or Dad ask you to do something?
5. What would God want you to do?
6. Do you think God would send you into the belly of a whale for a time out?

Key concepts

God gave Jonah a job to do. He wanted Jonah to go to the city of Nineveh and warn them that God was planning to discipline all the people there because of their evil behaviour. But instead of doing what God asked, Jonah ran away. He joined some sailors on a boat headed for Tarshish.

God knew where Jonah was and chose to discipline him. When God sent a frightening storm, Jonah realized the storm was his fault. Jonah told the sailors to throw him overboard to save their own lives.

Instead of letting Jonah drown, God sent a big fish to swallow him. Jonah spent three days and nights the belly of the fish, which was like having a long "time out" in a very smelly place!

When Jonah was in the fish, he prayed and told God that he was sorry for not obeying. God let Jonah out of the fish, giving him another chance. This time Jonah was ready to obey God. He went and told the people of Nineveh that God wanted them to stop doing wrong.

Moses obeys, but only halfway

Read Numbers 20:2-13.

Questions for discussion

1. Have you ever been asked to put away your toys, but you only put away a few?
2. Have you ever washed your hands, as you were asked, but didn't use any soap?
3. Can you think of other times when you didn't do exactly as you were told?
4. Were your parents happy or unhappy when they found out?
5. Do you think that obeying only part-way is a sin?
6. What did God ask Moses to do?
7. What did Moses do instead?
8. Did this make God happy?
9. What did God do?
10. Do you think God is pleased when parents discipline their children when they don't obey?

Key concepts

Moses was a good leader and most of the time he did exactly what God asked him to do. Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt and into the desert, just as God had instructed him.

Unfortunately, when they got to the Desert of Zin, the people started to complain that there was no good food and no water to drink. Moses and Aaron prayed and asked God what to do. God promised Moses that if he gathered the people together and **spoke** to the rock, God would make water pour from the rock for the people to drink.

Moses did gather the people together, but instead of speaking to the rock, Moses hit it twice with his staff. Water did pour out, but God was very displeased, as Moses did not obey His instructions completely. For this reason, God did not allow Moses and Aaron

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to take the Israelites into The Promised Land. This was a major discipline for Moses and Aaron, who had looked forward to seeing The Promised Land for forty years.

Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego obey when it is hard

Read Daniel 3.

Questions for discussion

1. Is it always easy to obey?
2. Do you think it was easy for Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego to obey God?
3. How did God take care of them?
4. How did God reward their obedience?
5. Can you think of a time when you had to choose to be different from others because you were obeying your Mom or Dad?

Key concepts

Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego lived in Babylon, which was ruled by King Nebuchadnezzar. The king ordered everyone to bow down to a golden statue. He even made a law saying that anyone who did not bow down to the statue would be thrown into a fiery furnace.

But Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego refused to bow down to the statue. They chose to obey God's rule regarding idols, which says, "You shall not bow down to them or worship them" (Deuteronomy 5:8-9). Even though they knew that they might die, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego still chose to obey God rather than the king. God rewarded their obedience by protecting them when they were thrown into a furnace full of fire.

When the king saw how God had protected Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, he told all of the other people to honour the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. They were also given a promotion in their workplace.

At times, you will find it hard to obey because obeying may mean that someone will make fun of you or that you will have to choose to be different from others. At these times, remember that God is always watching over you and will always care for you.

Noah obeys a strange request

Read Genesis 6:9-7:11.

Questions for discussion

1. Do you think it was easy for Noah to obey?
2. What do you think the people who were watching Noah build the ark said?
3. What would have happened if Noah hadn't obeyed God?
4. How did God reward Noah's obedience?
5. What are some things that your parents ask you to do that seem strange? (You may wish to use some of the examples below. Use the accompanying questions to prompt further discussion.)

Parent: "Don't drink that blue stuff in the bottle in the garage."
Child: "But it looks like Kool-Aid."
Parent: "That could be antifreeze in the bottle. What do you think would happen if you drank antifreeze chemicals?"

Parent: "Always get off your bike to cross the road."
Child: "But it's such a bother to walk my bike across the road. The cars always stop for me anyway."
Parent: "What could happen if a car didn't have time to stop?"

Parent: "Don't touch the candle, please."
Child: "The flickering flame looks so interesting. I want to touch it."
Parent: "What would happen if you did touch it?"

Parent: "Make sure you don't eat that green bar."
Child: "But it looks just like the candy that Joey had. Why can't I try it?"

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Parent: "The green bar could be mouse poison. What do you think would happen if you ate mouse poison?"

Key concepts

God asked Noah to do a strange job. He asked him to build a boat when there wasn't even a lake or an ocean around. God told Noah that He was going to flood the whole earth with water. The boat that God asked him to build was to be huge! It was to be large enough to hold Noah and his family and also some of each kind of animal that lived on the earth. It may have seemed like a strange request from God, but Noah obeyed.

Sometimes we (your parents) ask you to do things you don't understand, such as "Don't touch that," or "Don't play over there," and you wonder why you have to obey. Even though the requests seem strange, it is still very important for you to obey your parents' instructions. Disobeying can be the difference between life and death.

Jesus' friends

Read 1 John 2:3-6.

Questions for discussion

1. How will others know that we love God?
2. What do you think Jesus did when His parents asked Him to brush His hair?
3. What do you think Jesus did when His parents asked Him to pick up His toys?
4. What do you think Jesus did when His parents asked Him to leave His brother/sister alone?
5. What do you think Jesus did when His parents asked Him to be quiet while they were talking?

Create additional questions similar to these, focusing on areas where your children struggle with obedience.

Key concepts

The Bible tells us that we show our love for God by obeying His commands (1 John 5:3, John 14:23). Jesus considered His purpose here on earth "to do His Father's work" (John 6:38). One of God's commands is for children to obey their parents (Ephesians 6:1, Colossians 3:20). Just as God was pleased with Jesus for doing His will, God is also pleased with children who follow His instructions, obeying Him and their parents.

Extreme obedience

Read 2 Kings 18:1-12.

Questions for discussion

1. How old was Hezekiah when he became king?
2. Does being young excuse us from being obedient?
3. How did God bless Hezekiah's obedience?
4. What happened to King Hoshea and the Israelites when they were disobedient?
5. What had they done?
6. Has it ever seemed to you that your parents are not giving you anything good or that they are taking away too many of your treats or privileges?
7. Do you think your parents follow God's example by rewarding obedience and punishing disobedience?
8. Do you think your parents would rather give you good things, or punish you?
9. What do you need to do when your parents give you instructions?

Key concepts

Hezekiah was a young man when he became king of Judah. He loved God, and obeyed all God's commands. Because he loved God, God made sure that Hezekiah succeeded in everything that he did.

God told the Israelites many times that if they followed His commands, He would give them many good things to enjoy. He promises to reward obedience with great blessing, including protection, guidance, honour, answered prayer, joy, long life and prosperity (Deuteronomy 5:32-33; 8:1; 26:16-19;

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28:1-14, Psalm 119:1-2, Proverbs 3:1-2,33; 4:10-13; 10:28; 15:9, Isaiah 1:19-20, James 5:16, 1 Peter 3:12, 1 John 3:21-22). God also gave the Israelites many warnings about the hardship and disaster they would suffer if they chose not to obey His instructions (Deuteronomy 28:15-20). God is always faithful to do as He promises.

God gets mad!

Prior to reading this story, review some of God's instructions and warnings given in Deuteronomy 28 with your children, emphasizing that God promised blessings for obedience and hardship and disaster for disobedience.

Read Judges 2:6-23.

Questions for discussion

1. What did the Israelites do to make God mad?
2. What did God do then?
3. What did God do to try to get the Israelites to listen?
4. Did the Israelites listen to the judges?
5. When you disobey again and again, what do your parents do?
6. Do you think God is happy when you are stubborn and refuse to obey your parents?
7. What can you do to please God?
8. Would you like to ask God to help you obey us (your parents)?

Key concepts

After the death of Joshua, the Israelites continually tried God's patience by disobeying His commands and worshipping foreign gods. Even though He disciplined them again and again, still they chose to disobey. He sent judges (leaders) to speak to the people and guide them in doing what was right, but the Israelites continued to disobey.

Finally, God got very angry and decided to quit clearing the foreign people out of the land He had given the Israelites. Instead, God chose to leave the foreign nations there to test Israel to see if they would choose to follow God or not.

We (your parents) get angry too, when our children disobey over and over again. God disciplined the Israelites as He thought best for them. As your parents, we will discipline you with God's guidance. The good news is that God will help you obey us (your parents) if you ask Him to.

A sullen and disobedient king

Read Deuteronomy 20:16-18 and 1 Kings 20:26-43.

Questions for discussion

1. What were the instructions God gave to King Ahab?
2. What do you do when your parents discipline you and you think you don't deserve it?
3. What did King Ahab do?
4. Did he deserve to be punished?

Key concepts

God went with the Israelites into battle and promised to fight for them and give them victory. He did this to show other nations that He is the Lord. His plan was to have Israel clear all of the foreign nations out of the land that He had promised them as a gift. King Ahab chose to let the king of the Arameans (Ben Hadad) stay alive, rather than putting him to death as God had commanded. God sent Elijah to show Ahab how unhappy He was with what Ahab had done. Ahab became sullen and angry because he didn't like his discipline.

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Creative discipline

Children may greatly dislike these suggested forms of discipline, but it is important to let your children know, at an early age, that disobedience will be dealt with severely. Try these ideas, or come up with some of your own, but do be sure to demonstrate how much you value obedience.

Loss of privileges

Biblical basis

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 – 'That it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on earth.' "

Suggested disciplinary action

When children are obeying, make sure that things "go well" for them. Allow them to participate in activities they enjoy like: play dates, video viewing and games. When children are disobedient, make sure that things do not go well for them. For example, turn down the sucker offered by the grocery clerk when a child has not behaved well in the store. Be sure to let the cashier and the child know why. Remove privileges and treats that your child looks forward to. As a warning, inform him/her of the consequences at the first sign of disobedience.

Affirmation

Encourage the child who has disobeyed by praying with him/her, asking God to help him/her obey in the future. Assure the child that you forgive him/her just as God does when he/she asks. Remind all of your children that you will be watching for ways you can celebrate with them when they obey.

A taste of your disapproval

Biblical basis

Genesis 19:15-29 (the story of Lot's wife and the pillar of salt)

Suggested disciplinary action

Discipline your child's disobedience by placing a small quantity of salt on his/her tongue.

Affirmation

Gently remind your children that you do not want to give them awful tasting things to eat. Tell them that you would prefer to give them something good to eat, but that you must follow God's example by disciplining them for disobedience.

Encourage them with 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 – 'That it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on earth.' "

Express to your children that you understand that it is hard to obey, but you are looking forward to rewarding them when they do obey. Allow your child to wash the taste out of their mouth with fresh water. Explain that just as the fresh water takes the bad taste away, God promises to wash our sins away when we ask Him to.

Hands-on options

You don't need exotic or expensive props to reinforce what your children are learning about obedience. These options will help you create "memorable moments" using materials you have on hand. Choose one or two activities that will fit your schedule.

Celebrating obedience

fun with food

Plan a special family meal where your theme is "Obedience is a family affair." Let your children know you are celebrating the fact that your family chooses to obey the Lord. Invite your children to help you create a menu that includes only foods that are shaped like an "O." Some ideas include:

- circular pasta served with sausage slices in sauce
- hamburgers and buns
- Cheerios®
- slices of carrots and cucumbers
- round crackers and cheese (cut the cheese with a round cookie cutter)

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- apples, oranges, bananas and pears (slice across the middle to create circular shapes)
- muffins
- round sandwiches (trim the bread using a lid as a template)
- round ice cream sandwiches, cookies or cupcakes.

Even young children can hear the long "O" sound at the beginning of the word "obedience." Have fun looking at all the Os during the meal and talk about how happy God is when we o bey.

To continue the learning experience after the meal, make a poster or banner that says, "As for me and my house we will serve the Lord" (Joshua 24:15). Draw a house on your banner together and have each family member draw a picture of him/herself beside your house. Make a list of ways your family obeys and serves God and write it on the banner, too.

Hang your banner up where it can be used as a reminder that your family rules are based on your family's commitment to follow God. Explain to your children that you, as parents, need to obey a father, too – your Father in heaven!

Other ideas

To do this activity on a smaller scale, plan a snack time or play date where all the food is O shaped.

Relevant Scripture

Joshua 24:15 ". . . as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord."

Going on an "O" hunt

drive time

Look for "O" shapes in traffic signs when you are out driving. You'll find them in "Stop" signs, traffic lights and speed limit signs. "Stop" signs have an "O" in the word "Stop," traffic lights are O-shaped and the numbers in speed limit signs have zeros.

For some musical entertainment during your search, try chanting these verses to the rhythm of *Going on a Lion Hunt*:

Chorus:
Going on an "O" hunt.
But I'm not afraid!
I'm obeyin' the rules.
Look! What's that up ahead?

A "Stop" sign!
Can't go under it!
Can't go over it!
Can't go through it!
We've gotta stop!

[Repeat chorus]

A red light!
Can't go under it!
Can't go over it!
Can't go through it!
We've gotta stop!

[Repeat chorus]

A speed limit sign!
Can't go under it!
Can't go over it!
Can't go through it!
Let's obey it!

[Repeat chorus]

A policeman!
Can't go under him!
Can't go over him!
Can't go through him!
We're not afraid; we're obeyin' the rules!

Questions for discussion

During your "O" hunt, use these questions for discussion to emphasize the importance of obeying traffic rules:

- What does a "Stop" sign mean?
- What does a red traffic light mean?
- What does a green traffic light mean?
- What does a yellow traffic light mean?

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- What do speed limit signs mean?
- Why do we need to obey the "rules of the road"?
- Are traffic signs placed randomly, or are they put in a carefully-selected location?
- Why does God give us rules?
- Would you like to live somewhere where it is considered acceptable to steal?

Key concepts

Just as city engineers place signs to prevent accidents, so it is with God's rules. God gives us commandments in the Bible that are there for our own good. Driving would be chaotic if no one followed the traffic signs. Our lives, too, would be miserable if we didn't follow God's rules. For example, one of God's rules is "Do not steal" (Deuteronomy 5:19). Imagine how dreadful it would be to live somewhere where stealing was allowed. God gives us rules so that life may go well for us.

Relevant Scripture

Deuteronomy 6:18 "Do what is right and good in the Lord's sight, so that it may go well with you . . ."

The "Os" have it!

fun with food or *creative crafts*

Have each of your children decorate a special jar or container, then place the decorated jar where your children will see it often.

When a child is obedient, recognize their obedience by awarding them an "obedience bead" to put a bead in their jar. Obedience beads can be Cheerios® or Fruit Loops®. At a predetermined time, have your children thread the beads on a string and allow them to wear it, and/or eat it.

Other ideas

If it seems appropriate, you may like to try the additional step of removing a bead from a child's jar when they are disobedient. If you prefer a tangible but less sugary reward, use craft beads instead, but be sure they are not a choking hazard for younger children in your home.

Relevant Scripture

Proverbs 1:8-9 "Listen, my son, to your father's instruction and do not forsake your mother's teaching. They will be a garland to grace your head and a chain to adorn your neck."

Mom says / dad says

physical activity

Modify the popular game of Simon Says by replacing the phrase "Simon says" with "Mom says" or "Dad says."

The rules of the game are as follows: The game leader (mom or dad) calls out a simple instruction such as "Touch your toes." If the game leader precedes their instruction with the words "Mom says" or "Dad says," the children playing the game need to complete the action called out by the game leader. If a child has not been listening closely and follows a directive that was not preceded by "Mom says" or "Dad says," they are "out."

Usually, anyone "caught out" in this way has to sit out the remaining rounds of the game until only one child – the winner – is left. However, you may decide to skip this step to ensure that all children remain in the game for each round.

Relevant Scripture

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 – 'That it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on earth.' "

Colossians 3:20 "Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord."

Follow the leader

physical activity

Play the traditional game of Follow the Leader. Begin by acting as the leader yourself, then allow each child to take a turn as leader.

Afterwards, have a short discussion with your children, explaining that since you are followers of Jesus, you try to live like Jesus did by following His example.

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Brainstorm together with your kids to create a list of ways you can show love to others.

Relevant Scripture

1 Corinthians 11:1 "Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ."

1 John 2:5-6 "But if anyone obeys His word, God's love is truly made complete in Him. This is how we know we are in Him: Whoever claims to live in Him must walk as Jesus did."

Oh joy!

any time

An obedient child is a joy to their parents! Set aside some "one-on-one" time to spend with each of your children. Let them know that you want to spend time with them because you delight in having a child who chooses to be obedient. Your special time might be spent playing a game, taking a walk, extending story time or going out on a date. The purpose of this activity is to celebrate your child's obedience.

Relevant Scripture

Proverbs 23:23-25 "Buy the truth and do not sell it; get wisdom, discipline and understanding. The father of a righteous man has great joy; he who has a wise son delights in him. May your father and mother be glad; may she who gave you birth rejoice."

A beary important lesson

any time or *drama / role play*

Share the following story about a mother bear and a disobedient cub if you feel it is appropriate for your children.

After reading any of these stories about obedience, have your children re-enact the different roles to further enhance their learning.

> ***The grizzly bear and her cubs****
> *There were three young grizzly cubs playfully exploring the woods near their den. The scent of food caused them to be drawn away from the protection of their mother. Their curiosity drew them closer and closer to danger. The food they had smelled was a caribou carcass that belonged to a family of wolves who had hidden it in the bushes and dirt near their own den.*
>
> *As the cubs came closer, the wolves circled preparing for a deadly attack. The mother bear heard the cries from her cubs and came running to their defence. The mother bear fought savagely and was finally able to separate herself and her cubs from the attacking wolves.*
>
> *They had just reached the safety of a nearby hill when the weakest of the three cubs ignored the protective wishes of its mother and returned to sniff the caribou. In seconds it was surrounded by the wolf pack. The mother now had to expose herself and the other two cubs to the battle again.*
>
> *The lead wolf had returned from hunting and distracted the mother bear while four other wolves attacked the weak cub. The mother bear broke free from the lead wolf and roared furiously at those who were attacking her cub. She wildly swung her paws in defence. Finally, she drove the three cubs through a thick patch of brush and into a glacial stream.*
>
> *The smallest cub cringed on the shore, frightened . . . The mother pushed it into the water so the wolves would no longer follow. The wounds the young cub suffered were a lasting reminder of the consequences of not following the instructions of the one caring for you.*
>
> * *Reproduced from* Character Sketches from the Pages of Scripture, Illustrated in the World of Nature Volume I. *Institute in Basic Life Principles, Oak Brook, IL, 1976. www.iblp.org. Reproduced with permission.*

Questions for discussion

- Which rule did the little bear disobey?
- What rules do Mom and Dad give you for your own safety?
- What could happen to you when you choose to disobey these rules?
- What do kinds of food do Mom and Dad ask you to eat, but you would prefer not to?

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- What do you think would happen to you if you ate cake, ice cream and cookies at every meal?
- What kinds of traps do bears get stuck in?
- What kinds of "traps" does Satan set for people?

Key concepts

Here are some key points to emphasize in discussing this story with your children:

A mother grizzly must help her cubs to survive by teaching them what foods are available in which seasons and how to find them. Likewise, as parents, it is our responsibility to teach you how to eat healthy meals. For example, we encourage you to eat balanced meals, including lots of vegetables.

A mother bear also teaches her cubs how to avoid natural dangers such as hunters, bear traps, porcupines and wolves. Again, without her guidance, the cubs' chances of survival would decrease significantly. It is our job, as your parents, to teach you how to be safe. That's why we give your rules such as "Don't play in the street" and "Don't go anywhere with strangers." These rules keep you safe physically.

It's also our job to keep you safe spiritually. Satan is our enemy and he is always tempting us to do wrong. We need to teach you how to overcome the temptation that Satan sends and how to live to please God instead.

Shining for Jesus

science with a twist

You will need some dirty pennies, two small bowls, salt, vinegar, cotton swabs (the double-ended stick swabs) and a copy of these paragraphs to serve as your "instructions."

1. Begin by telling your children that you need to clean some pennies and you have read that you can use vinegar to clean them.
2. Put some pennies in the bowl. Dip a cotton swab in vinegar and try to clean the pennies. (You might see a slight cleaning effect, but nothing significant.)
3. Pretend that you are disappointed in the results. Then say, "I guess I should have read the instructions more carefully." Consult your instructions and then say, "Now I understand! I was supposed to mix salt into the vinegar."
4. Now have your children help you stir 1 tsp. of salt into ¼ cup of vinegar. Have them stir until the salt is dissolved.
5. When the salt is completely dissolved, allow your children to put the pennies into the mixture. You may need to stir the solution a bit, but the results will be startlingly different – your efforts will produce some clean and shiny pennies.
6. Explain that we are like the vinegar and the salt is like the Holy Spirit. We can try to be obedient on our own, but it is hard to obey when we try to do it in our own strength. It is much easier to obey when we ask God for help from His Holy Spirit.
7. Give each of your children a shiny penny to remind them how brightly their righteousness shines when they obey God.
8. Pray with your children, asking God to give them a desire to obey.

Question for discussions

- What did I do wrong the first time?
- Which instruction did I not follow at first?
- Where do we find God's instructions?
- Who can help you obey God's instructions?
- What does the Bible say about children obeying their parents?
- What does God promise to children who do obey their parents?
- What does God say He will do for those who choose righteousness?

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Relevant Scripture

John 14:15-17 "If you love Me, you will obey what I command. And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Counselor to be with you forever – the Spirit of truth . . ."

John 14:26 "But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you."

Psalm 37:5-6 "Commit your way to the Lord; trust in Him and He will do this: He will make your righteousness shine like the dawn, the justice of your cause like the noonday sun."

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 – 'That it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on earth.' "

Colossians 3:20 "Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord."

"Flopped" cookies

fun with food

Make oatmeal chocolate chip cookies with your children. Use the recipe for "Family Favourite Oatmeal Cookies" provided below, or another recipe of your own choosing.

Next, make a second, smaller batch of cookies that don't turn out well. Use a recipe of your own, being sure to double the quantity of oil, or follow the recipe for "Sure-to-Flop Cookies" provided below. The increased proportion of oil will make the cookies meld together on the cookie sheet. (Don't worry, the "flopped" cookies won't be wasted; they can be crumbled up and used as an ice cream topping.)

When you are making the second batch, tell your children that you are "making it up as you go."

After you have compared the success of the two batches of cookies and while you are sampling the cookies, talk to your children about the importance of following instructions. Use this to lead into a discussion on the importance of following God's instructions. Close your time by praying that God would help you follow His instructions found in the Bible.

Family Favourite Oatmeal Cookies

¾ cup	butter or margarine
¾ cup	apple sauce
2 cups	brown sugar
4 tsp.	vanilla
2	eggs
⅔ cup	milk
2 cups	whole wheat flour
6 cups	quick cooking oatmeal
2 tsp.	baking powder
1 tsp.	baking soda
1 tsp.	salt
2 cups	chocolate chips

1. Mix the first six ingredients in a large bowl with a hand mixer.

2. Add flour and oatmeal, then sprinkle the salt, baking powder and baking soda on top.

3. Mix with the hand mixer again. Stir in chocolate chips. Drop in teaspoonfuls on a cookie sheet.

4. Bake at 375 °F for 15-20 minutes.

Sure-to-Flop Cookies

⅔ cup	oil
½ cup	brown sugar
1 tsp.	vanilla
1	egg
¼ cup	milk
½ cup	whole wheat flour
1½ cups	rolled oats
½ tsp.	baking powder
¼ tsp.	baking soda
¼ tsp.	salt
½ cup	chocolate chips

5. Mix the first five ingredients in a large bowl with a hand mixer.

6. Add flour and rolled oats, then sprinkle the salt, baking powder and baking soda on top.

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7 Mix with the hand mixer again. Stir in chocolate chips. Drop in teaspoonfuls on a cookie sheet.

8 Bake at 375 °F for 15-20 minutes.

Questions for discussion

- What did I do right the first time?
- What went wrong with the second batch?
- Where do we find God's instructions?
- What does the Bible say about children obeying their parents?
- What is the promise for children who do obey their parents?

Relevant Scripture

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 – 'That it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life onearth.' "

Precious obedience

drive time or *any time*

Ask your children to imagine a table filled with all kinds of delicacies. Have your children add their favourite foods to the story.

Alternatively, describe a toy box filled with all kinds of wonderful toys, again having your children suggest some favourites.

Now ask your children, "How do you think you could please Mom and Dad the most: by giving up the whole table of treats [box of toys] for them, or by obeying their instructions?"

Of course, the correct answer reflects the truth of 1 Samuel 15:22, which emphasizes that obedience is better than sacrifice. Direct your children's attention to this passage of Scripture.

Relevant Scripture

1 Samuel 15:22 "But Samuel replied: 'Does the Lord delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the voice of the Lord? To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams.' "

Recommended resources

For a list of children's stories that reinforce the theme of this lesson, consult the home page for the **obedience** lesson at Kidsofintegrity.com.

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