

JACK'S CORNER

QUESTION: My parents raised me to be “good.” Today, it seems many parents are more concerned with their children’s happiness than good behavior. Is there some kind of balance in this area?

ANSWER: I believe it has more to do with priorities than balance. Most of us over 45 were raised by parents who believed it was important for us to “be good.” Our behavior was important. When we got to be parents (often as a reaction to our own unhappiness in different areas of life), we decided to place a great deal of emphasis on keeping our children happy.

Happiness is important, of course. God made heaven for that, and much more. It is just not AS IMPORTANT as a number of other things...integrity, sacrifice, and holiness to name a few. Do we as parents spend as much time, energy and money in order to develop these qualities as we do in pursuing happiness for our children? **It's easier to keep the kids happy than it is to try to shape them in the image of Christ.** Does our Heavenly Father value happiness as much as he values integrity, sacrifice and holiness? **If happiness were at the top of God's priority list, he would do much more to relieve the pains of life.** Instead, he USES THESE PAINS TO SHAPE OUR CHARACTER. Happiness does not shape character very well...it usually destroys, or at best retards it.

At times, we are called to sacrifice happiness for a greater good...for a nobler goal. Jesus understood. He lived it! Such sacrifice is in keeping with the character of Christ. **Let us beware that placing happiness too high on the list of priorities in life will doom our children to a life of narcissism, hedonism and godlessness.** We have so much more to give our children than just lots of opportunities to be happy. We have the treasures of integrity, sacrifice, holiness, and a relationship with God. Happiness might just come as part of the package!

As a parent, I really want my kids to be happy. It breaks my heart when they aren't. But, I want something more for them than just lots of happy memories. I'm convinced that I must let them struggle and endure, for these times are **opportunities** for Christ-like growth. **Fathers are usually better at recognizing the value of these moments and letting their children endure them. Mothers are often too worried about their children's feelings to let these moments have their full effect.** (Obviously, this is a generalization.) I pray for opportunities for Christian character growth, even at the expense of some happiness. Although it's hard as a parent to watch, I'm willing to sacrifice some happiness for the development of integrity, sacrifice, and holiness.

Jack Lipski, M.A.
SOTHCS Counselor
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