How to Build Character in your Children

Day 7:

**Respect**  
By Lisa Lakey

It wasn’t long after my sweet little boy’s speech took off that disrespect parted from his toddler lips. *No* was his new favorite word, and he used it for nearly every response to my requests or orders. “Please sit down in the cart, Max.” *No*. “Please don’t spit out your food.” *No*. It quickly became my least favorite word.

Teaching my son to not respond with “no” all the time took a commitment to teaching him respect. It’s not easy, and, quite frankly, it will be an ongoing battle until he leaves our home. But I believe teaching respect is one of the best things we can do for our children’s future. It will help them in their relationships, home, career, and even their faith. When children are taught to respect the authority of their parents from an early age, they are simultaneously being taught to respect the authority of God.

While it may seem like such a basic concept to address, it takes plenty of patience and perseverance. Maybe that is why Galatians 6:9 is one of my favorite verses right now. “And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up.”

Don’t give up on teaching your children to be respectful. Here are a few of the ways we try to reinforce it in our home.

**Teach manners.** Being born and raised in the South, referring to adults as “ma’am” and “sir” are fundamentals of good manners, and they were most likely two of my first words. What we say and how we say it are as important to manners as what we do. Saying please and thank you and looking someone in the eye when speaking are simple ways to let the others know we respect them and their time.

**Don’t tolerate rudeness.** Rude behavior or speech is a sign of disrespect and needs to be dealt with promptly. Give your kids clear expectations for their behavior, and let them know the consequences for rudeness. Remember, children who are allowed to disrespect their parents will disrespect others. It starts in the home.

**Be respectful yourself.** Children will mirror the speech and mannerisms of their parents. The more sharply I speak, the more I hear it come out of the mouths of my kids. Nothing puts my heart in check as quickly as seeing my attitude reflected back through my children. You should speak respectfully to your children while maintaining authority. And when you slip, offer a lesson in repentance and forgiveness.

**Scripture:**

1 Thessalonians 5:12-13 Dear brothers and sisters, honor those who are your leaders in the Lord’s work. They work hard among you and give you spiritual guidance. 13Show them great respect and wholehearted love because of their work. And live peacefully with each other.

Galatians 6:9 So let’s not get tired of doing what is good. At just the right time we will reap a harvest of blessing if we don’t give up.