

# ParentPause

Ideas to Grow Your Preschooler's Faith at Home

OCTOBER 2011

The lessons children learn when they are very young can last a lifetime — even lessons about manners.

One father of two girls had this experience: *When my daughters were very young, just learning how to speak, we taught them that the word for “up” when they wanted to be carried was “up please,” and the word for “down” when they didn’t want to be held was “down please.” In addition, whenever they asked for something, we just looked at them — not critically or impatiently, but as though we were waiting for something. They soon learned that we would respond only after they said please. And once we gave them what they asked for, we would repeat “thank you” until they said it.*

*The workers in the nursery at our church were amazed. They’d never seen such polite toddlers. We just smiled. At that age, our daughters didn’t understand manners — it’s just what they’d been taught.*

*But even now, when both of them are adults, they still find it very easy to say please and thank you.*

You might be familiar with Proverbs 22:6: *Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it.* It’s important to realize that this is a principle, not a promise. When kids get older, they are free to make their own choices, and that includes the choice to make bad choices.

But the principle does hold in the majority of cases, even in small areas like manners.

In all sorts of situations, you can teach your children how to respond — holding a door open for someone, pitching in to help somebody in need, being aware of others around us and not getting in the way.

continued on page 2

“Up Please!”





continued from page 1

As you respond to life by applying Bible truth when you make choices, watch for ways to explain to your kids why you made the choice you did and what the Bible has to say about it.

For example, have your child help you make and deliver a meal to somebody recovering from surgery. Explain that people who love the Lord are to help each other when problems crop up. Recite verses about hospitality such as 1 Peter 4:9: *Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling.* Or Galatians 6:10: *Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.* Young children may not grasp the finer points of why you're doing what you're doing, but they will understand the concept of helping others. And if the relevant Bible verses are something they hear regularly, they'll remember them too.

Another good opportunity to raise your children with strong values is to set a good example when you do make mistakes — and you *will* make mistakes. Have you ever gotten upset when your child carelessly spilled his milk, only to knock your own glass over when you're wiping up his mess? How did you handle that situation? Did your mistake make you angrier? Or did you realize that life includes spilled milk and respond with grace and comfort? The truth is that, sooner or later, your children will realize you're not perfect. If you admit your mistakes and even apologize when an apology is called for, you'll be training your child to treat others with grace and forgiveness.

The apostle Paul sent this bit of advice to Titus: *In everything set them an example by doing what is good (Titus 2:7a).* If this is good advice in the church, how much better advice is it in our homes?

## Mealtime Practice

The family dinner table may be the best time to teach and model manners. Even very young children can learn not to speak when someone else is talking, to not speak with their mouths full and to say please and thank you. And yes, it's important that children learn to obey you, but that doesn't mean you can't say please and thank you to them too. Instead of a brusque "Pass the peas," use a pleasant voice and say, "          (child's name)          , please pass the peas." And follow that with a polite "thank you."



Look at the drawings with your child and explain why the children should say "please" and/or "thank you" in each situation.

Then let your child color the pictures.

