

Session 1

Teaching Kids to Listen and Follow Instructions

Introduction

Parents' job is to mold the child's heart to follow after the Lord.

God is interested in the heart.

This Instruction Routine is a heart-based way to parent children.

I Samuel 15:11 God said, "I am grieved that I have made Saul king, because he has turned away from me and has not carried out my instructions." Saul could not follow simple instructions when he went into battle.

Five Steps for Instruction Routine

Step 1 for the Parent: Get close to the child

Get physically close. (Do not shout instructions across the room.)

Establish eye contact with your child.

Don't give instruction to your child while he is watching TV, reading a book, etc.

Draw your child away from what he is doing so he can focus on the instruction and be ready to receive it.

Step 1 for the Child: Learn to come when called

Teach your young child the "Come when you are called" rule game.

For example, say, "Billy, I want you to stand by the couch and when I call your name, I want you to come to me. Then when you come to me, I want you to say, 'What Dad?'"

Then the parent says, "Great. Let us practice."

Practice it often -- 20 times the first hour; 100 times the first day!

Use the "Come when called" game for hugs, snacks, praise, instruction and correction.

The child needs to learn to come when called every time.

Remember: Yelling across the house is not an honoring way to treat one another.

Principle: Close proximity increases the felt value of your instruction.

Step 2 for the Parent: Consider the timing

Parent needs to evaluate if this is a good time for instruction.

"Do I need to delay a little and put relationship first?"

Might want to delay giving instruction if child has had a difficult day, is emotional, or engaged in a job you want them to do.

However, *sometimes* a parent needs not to postpone instruction because our children need to learn how to respond graciously to interruption and must learn to respond to the needs of others.

Definition: Bossiness is instruction without relationship.

Always give instruction in context of relationship.

Step 2 for the Child: Always be ready to receive an instruction

This step prepares children when they enter the work force.

Teaching children this method helps them learn particular skills they need to be successful.

1 Samuel 3: 1-11 tells the story of God calling Samuel. God called Samuel three times and each time Samuel went to Eli. Then, Eli told Samuel in verse 9, “Go and lie down, and if He calls you, say, ‘Speak, LORD, for your servant is listening.’” We want to teach our children to follow our instruction, not just to get chores done but so that they will be able to listen to God someday and follow God’s instructions.

Principle: Cooperation is fostered when instructions are given in the context of relationship.

Step 3 for the Parent: Give the instruction

Remember: The first two steps are important. Do not skip them. They establish cooperation. They tell the child that they are valuable. The steps tell them that the parent values them more than the job that needs to be done around the house. It builds relationship.

THE WAY A PARENT STATES INSTRUCTION IS IMPORTANT.

Don’t make a suggestion...”Do you want to go to bed now?”

Don’t share our opinion...”I *think* you should do your homework now.”

Don’t confuse them with the instruction.

Instruction needs to sound different. It needs to be clear. Embed word cues into the instruction.

Begin with child’s name, end with the word, “now” and give the instruction in the middle.

INSTRUCTION MODEL: “Johnny...you need to (fold your clothes...), now.”

Don’t use anger cues, don’t need to be loud, just be clear.

Step 3 for the Child: The child answers

The video recommends the child says, “OK, Dad” or “OK, Mom” to know that they child heard.

To avoid confusion and eliminate excuses, have the child repeat back the instruction to you.

When the child answers back, it tells us three things:

1st thing it tells us is that the child heard the instruction.

2nd thing it tells us is that the child intends to obey and respond. It is a verbal agreement/contract and now the parent can expect the child to do it.

3rd thing it tells us is the child’s attitude at the time of instruction. Attitude is important. We do not want children doing the right thing with the wrong attitude. We want to get to the heart attitude of our children.

Principle: Word cues help clarify instructions for children.

Step 4 for the Parent: Wait expectantly

Communicate to your child that you are waiting on him to finish the job.
For example: After a couple of minutes, you could say, “I do not hear the water running.” That tells the child that you are waiting for them to take a shower.
Remember: Don’t yell out an instruction and then forget about it.
We need to teach our children to be responsible. We might need to make our child uncomfortable until the job is done. That teaches responsibility. Remind your child that there is unfinished business here until you finish the job. Then there will be relief when the job is done.

Step 4 for the Child: Do the job as if on a mission.

Send your child on a “mission” to get the job done (create a sense of urgency).
Don’t let him get distracted by TV, etc.
Help your child to focus on the task at hand.
Parent might have to actively help the child fulfill the mission. For example, a parent might stand in the hallway and watch the child and say things like, “there are your shoes”, “put them on”, “hang in there”...
Help the child develop a new pattern.

Principle: Responsibility is the uncomfortable feeling of unfinished business.

Note - In step 5, the child has the first job, then the parent responds.

Step 5 for the Child: Report back

This step reverses the order of initiation. The child initiates this step.
Tell the child “a job is not done until you report back”.
Make the child realize that reporting back is part of the instruction routine.
This trains a child for a job—employers like it when employees report back when a job is done.
The communication process is very important. It lets the parent know how the child is doing; it gives the parent an up-date.
Remember: Good communication is good for relationship.

Step 5 for the Parent: Inspect and Release

Inspect

After the child reports back, the parent needs to go inspect the child’s work.
This helps a child develop a reasonable standard—the child will know what the parent expects by what we inspect.
Don’t make the standard too high—the child sees a critical parent who cannot be satisfied.
Don’t make the standard too low—it teaches the child that any job will do
Col 3:23 And whatsoever you do, do *it* heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men...

Release

The “release” is the fun part.

The parent tells the child, “Thank you...you have done a good job. You are now free to go.” Children need that release for affirmation and approval from us. A parent can say things like “I’m glad you did that for me.” Or, “that really helped me.” Or “you have done a good job and I am pleased with you.”

This way you end on a positive note. Resist the urge to give another job.

However, if you do have several jobs that need to be done, tell your child up front that you have a series of jobs. So, when you inspect and release from one job, you can then give them the next job.

In Matthew 25:14-30 in the parable of the talents, Jesus teaches his disciples about responsibility. In verses 28 and 29 Jesus says, “Take the talent from him and give it to the one who has the ten talents. For everyone who has will be given more, and he will have abundance. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him.”

Principle: Children learn what you expect by what you inspect.

Principle: A release gives children freedom in their hearts.

Conclusions

Take time with your children to build new habits.

Explain to them the changes you plan to make in your own behavior.

Affirm in them the things that they are doing well already.

Help them understand why you want to make some changes.

Be sure to pray for your children.

Pray that God will change them deeply.

Pray that God will change their hearts

A word to parents/children in “non-traditional” families: God used people in non-traditional families to do great things for Him...some examples are Moses, Joseph, Daniel, Queen Esther... God had a plan for them, a special purpose for them. Remind your children that God has a special purpose and plan for their lives.