

Session 6

Teaching Children to Accept No as an Answer

Summary of the Video (from the Leaders Guide, page 32)

Everyone has to learn to live within limits and it's best when children learn it young. Accepting no as answer teaches children the valuable heart-quality of contentment. Children have many manipulative techniques to challenge a no answer including whining, badgering, and arguing. If you see these bad habits in your kids, this session will show you exactly what to do to bring about the change both you and your kids need.

Introduction

*Children need to learn how to grieve in the small things in life. When they are told "No" to a request, children grieve over the loss of something anticipated or wanted.

Teaching Children to Accept No as an Answer:

*Children are always asking for something and our default answer is "Yes" because we want to give our children things. But, sometimes we have to say, "No". Some children cannot accept No for an answer and that is a heart issue.

*Children need to learn to live within limits. When children get a No answer, they are disappointed and they do not know how to handle disappointment. Children not handling disappointment appropriately will abuse their parents and damage the relationship. They have to learn how to grieve appropriately and "let go".

In I Kings 21:1-4, God tells the story of King Ahab who wanted Naboth's vineyard. When Naboth said, "No", "So Ahab went home, sullen and angry because Naboth the Jezreelite had said, 'I will not give you the inheritance of my fathers.' He lay on his bed sulking and refused to eat." Sounds like a spoiled child's response --this is how some of our children react when being told no.

We need to teach our children what Paul learned: "I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do everything through Him who give me strength." (Philippians 4:11-13) Contentment can be learned, and that is good news!

We want our children to press on and persevere against obstacles, but there needs to be a balance. It is good to continue against all obstacles until it harms the relationship. Children need to learn the difference between ambition and demandingness. Parents need to point it out to their children and teach them the difference.

Three Symptoms of Demandingness:

Arguing—It starts off innocently...the child asks, “Why?” The parent gives an answer, and the child says, “But” and the arguing continues. The next thing you know you have been arguing for 10 minutes. Remember it takes two to argue.

Consider the example of Lydia and her son Jackson: Jackson gives some information and asks for something, Mom says, “No.” Then Jackson gives more information and Lydia changes her mind and says, “Yes”. Lydia realized that this was becoming a pattern with Jackson whenever he asked for something: Jackson expected Lydia to *always* change her mind. To break this pattern, Lydia decided not to answer right away but ask for more information first. Lydia postponed her answer until Jackson gave the complete proposal with all the information. “Jackson, is there anything else you need to tell me so I can make a good decision?” Then Lydia would give an answer.

For children who have problems with arguing, help them see the difference between the issue and the process. The issue is what they are asking for. The process is how we treat one another. Sometimes a parent might say something like “Because of the way you are treating me in this request with your arguing, I am not going to change my mind.”

Badgering—A badger is an animal that burrows and claws its way to its goal. That is the way some children treat their parents when they receive no for an answer. Another word picture would be a “woodpecker”—child pecks, pecks, pecks at us over and over again. The goal of badgering is to wear us down and often it works. So, we finally give in. That is a mistake because it encourages the badgering. We need to teach our children some social cues—behavioral signs that let them know they have crossed the line and their behavior has become rude. A parent could use the word picture saying, “It feels like you are running me over with a truck.” Or, “It feels like you are pecking at me.” Children need to learn how they are being perceived.

Whining -- Whining is more about the sound than the actual words being said. -- “like fingernails being scraped over a chalkboard.” Children get what they want because whining is so irritating.

All three of these techniques (arguing, badgering and whining) work! Some ways for parents to counterbalance these is:

- 1.) Say No more often. (not less often as you might think)
- 2.) Establish firm limits and do not change your mind.
- 3.) Teach children about contentment (remember Philippians 4:11-13)

Ways to do this

- 1.) Help children understand the level of emotional investment they put into their requests.
*Analogy of bank savings— In counseling, Dr. Turansky asked the boy about what he was saving. He had saved around \$500 in bank for a major purchase. Dr. Turansky asked if he had any money at home. “Yes, about \$1 in my drawer.” Dr. Turansky asked him how he would feel if someone stole his \$500.00, “Terrible”. How would you feel if someone stole your \$1. “I wouldn’t like it, but it wouldn’t be too bad”

*Helped the child differentiate \$1 requests from \$500 requests. “When you ask for things, think about whether your request is a \$1 request or a \$500 request. Don’t get upset when you ask for things that aren’t very important.”

2.) Number scale—“One” requests are minor wants; “Ten” requests are very important. But some children feel every request is a ten. Help children evaluate their own request. Parents can’t say yes to every request because many aren’t good for them.

3.) Talk about wishes, desires, demands—Kids need to learn to move their demands back to desires or wishes.

4.) Have kids bring requests to parents in the planning stage, not in the decision stage. After much planning, the child’s emotional investment is great (anticipation has built up). This helps the child think ahead and involve parents early in considering what they want.

Teaching our kids to live within limits

If we can’t live within dietary limits we get fat or unhealthy.

Likewise, without a budget--- we get into debt.

Living within limits is important for all of us to learn. (Do we show children how we live within limits?)

Final Thoughts:

Contentment with what we have is peace—this is a wonderful gift we give our children.

Parents often feel bad if we see our children are disappointed. However, if we act out of this emotion and give in to this we can create demanding children. We must resolve to do the hard work of teaching contentment (not being solely committed to making our children happy, but committed to making them holy.)

Sometimes we get too intense in our parenting and need to stop—settle down.—God wants to work in *our* hearts, as well as in the hearts of our children.