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Encourage Kids to Lovingly Obey

February brings lots of talk about love, but love is more evident through our actions than through our words. Children show love and respect by obeying parents, and Christians show love and respect by obeying God's commands. God gave us his laws because he loves us, and following them helps mold us into his faithful followers.

Love is at the "heart" of all God's commandments, including his two greatest: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your strength, and all your mind" and "Love your neighbor as yourself" (Luke 10:27).

The problem is that love and obedience aren't as easy as they sound. That's because we're all sinners who put ourselves ahead of others. Having a loving relationship with Jesus Christ is the only way we can be equipped to obey God and other people. Only through knowing Jesus and his love does the law lose its sin-causing power over us. Here are some ways to share that message with your children:

- While sharing that disobedience is serious and has consequences, also emphasize that God offers us his forgiveness—and we should do the same for other people who hurt us.
- As you read and discuss the Bible with children, reflect the bulk of Scripture: God's relationship with his people, who are constantly breaking his rules but then being restored by a loving God.



The Kids' Travel Guide to the 10 Commandments (Group) is filled with insightful, fun experiences about this topic.

Thou Shalt Remember

- In a survey of 1,000 children in Britain, 28% of kids ages 11 to 16 couldn't name even one of the Ten Commandments. Only 6% of children could name all 10. (Christian.org.uk)
- Americans didn't fare any better. Out of 1,000 Americans, more people knew the ingredients of a Big Mac and the names of the *Brady Bunch* children than knew the Ten Commandments. The most-recalled commandment was "You shall not kill." (ChristianPost.com)

PowerSource

Ask God:

1. To help your children express their love for God by obeying his commands.
2. To strengthen your children's trust in God's goodness.
3. To give your children obedient attitudes toward authority.

Parenting Insights

In *With All Their Heart*, Christine Yount Jones shares some of "the sweet rewards of saying yes to God" and lovingly obeying his commands.

1. **The result of obedience is joy.** Obeying God isn't a burden. Instead, it's uplifting to work in harmony with God rather than fight against him.
2. **Obedience brings a promise of blessings.** Although we don't obey just to gain God's favor, his Word promises blessings for our reverent obedience (for example, see Deuteronomy 11:13-15).
3. **Obedience demonstrates our love.** Convey to children that consequences aren't the sole point of rules. Instead, we should obey as a loving response to God, who loves us each unconditionally—and forgives us when we disobey.

OpenTheBook

"Oh, how I love your instructions! I think about them all day long. Your commands make me wiser than my enemies, for they are my constant guide."

Psalm 119:97-98

We often think of rules and laws as necessary evils. But each of God's commands has a purpose, whether it's to keep us safe or to bring him glory. These laws guide our steps each day, like a trusted, well-worn road map.

Teachable Moments

1. **The Right Path**—Hide a Bible and make an easy map so your children can find the Bible in a few minutes. Give children the map and tell them to search for something special you've hidden. When children find the Bible, tell them that God's Word shows us what we need to do to follow him on the right path. Then read some "directions" and have children tell you if they're from the Bible or not. For example, "Love your enemies" (yes!); "Lie only if you have to" (no!).



2. **Simon Says**—With younger children, play Simon Says, giving everyone a chance to be Simon. Then discuss what it's like to give directions and be "obeyed." Also talk about what makes following instructions easy or difficult.



"So commit yourselves wholeheartedly to these words of mine. Tie them to your hands and wear them on your forehead as reminders. Teach them to your children. Talk about them when you are at home and when you are **ON THE ROAD**, when you are going to bed and when you are getting up." **Deuteronomy 11:18-19, NLT**

Talking about and following God's commands help children learn about obedience (read the Scripture in the photo above). Start a conversation with these questions:

1. How do rules help us? Why is it important to have rules in a family, in school, and in society?
2. What makes you want to obey God? What makes you want to obey your parents or teachers?
3. Why is it sometimes hard to obey? What helps you obey, especially when it's tempting not to?
4. What good things happen when you obey?

Family Experience: Awesome Obedience

Together, explore the reasons for and the results of obedience. The first experience works especially well with younger kids.

- **Extreme Blessings**—Form two groups: a "happy group" and a "sad group." Say, "When you hear your group name, show your emotion." (Practice a few times.) Say, "Everyone wants to be blessed by God and be happy. No one likes being sad. People will try anything to be happy. They sometimes even disobey God by stealing, lying, or being selfish. But doing these things only makes them sad."



Have family members form one group. Say, "The Bible tells us that extreme obedience to God brings us extreme blessing or happiness." Read aloud Psalm 119:34-35. Ask, "Why do you think this person wanted to obey God? Doing what God says to do makes us happy. Let's all show by our faces that we want to choose obedience and happiness."

- **Love Rules**—Together, create an imaginary dangerous mission for your family to go on. Then set guidelines to protect one another (for example, "Don't feed the alligators"). Say, "God loves us so much that he gave us protective guidelines, the Ten Commandments, for our mission on earth." Read aloud Exodus 20:1-17. Then reword each commandment to explain why it's a loving rule from a loving God. For example, "Because I want you to be protected from religions that would mislead you, don't have any other gods except me." End in prayer, asking God to help you all obey him out of love.



What's Playing at the Movies

Movie: *Percy Jackson and the Olympians: The Lightning Thief* (Feb. 12)

Genre: Fantasy, Adventure

Rating: not yet rated

Cast: Logan Lerman, Pierce Brosnan, Uma Thurman

Synopsis: Chris Columbus directs this adaptation of the popular children's book series. A modern-day teenager learns that his father is the greek god Zeus—and right now the gods are angry. Greek mythology comes to life with *Harry Potter*-esque adventure as Percy and his friends solve a powerful mystery.

Discussion Questions: How have your parents shaped you? What do you think your life would be like if you had different parents or a different family? Why do you think people used to have so many gods? Read 1 John 5:21. How do some people worship lots of "gods" today?



What Music Is Releasing

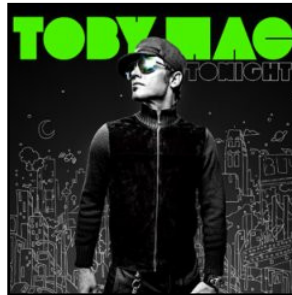
Artist: TobyMac

Album: *Tonight*

Artist Info: Grammy-winning Christian pop and hip-hop artist TobyMac (Kevin McKeehan) was one of the first Christian rappers. He was part of the trio DC Talk, and as a soloist he's had six number-one singles. His music provides a positive alternative to secular rappers such as Drake.

Summary: TobyMac's fourth studio album is a mix of pop, rock, hip-hop, and funk. The first single, "City on Our Knees," hit number one shortly after its August release. In it, TobyMac sings, "If you gotta start somewhere, why not here? If you gotta start sometime, why not now?"

Discussion Questions: How well do you manage your time? What are some things you tend to put off, and why? Read Matthew 25: 13. How does being a Christian affect your priorities?



What Games Are Out

Title	Content	Rating & Platform
<i>Mario & Sonic at the Winter Olympics</i>	Players go through trial runs and then compete in sports such as snowboarding, bobsledding, and ice skating.	E; Wii
<i>Polar Panic</i>	Players navigate through mazes of snow and ice to rescue bears and protect the environment. Mild cartoon violence.	E; PSP, Xbox 360
<i>The Legend of Zelda: Spirit Tracks</i>	In the franchise's newest installment, Link travels via steam train. Players solve puzzles and problems with inventive gameplay.	E; Nintendo DS

GAME RATINGS KEY: EC=Early Childhood, E=Everyone (ages 6+), E10+ (ages 10+), T=Teen (ages 13+)



Culture & Trends

What's happening right now that may affect your children and family:

- Personal safety is more evident than ever before in children's movies. More characters are wearing seat belts and helmets and using crosswalks. (Associated Press)
- U.S. children are more likely to grow up with a pet than with both of their parents. (The Child: An Encyclopedic Companion)



Quick Stats

- Schoolwork and tests are kids' biggest problem. If they had five minutes to talk to President Obama, children said they would ask him to help ease their burdens at school. (Highlights magazine)
- Immunization rates are on the rise, with about 72% of children fully immunized as of 2008. Among only children, 81% have had all their shots. (Reuters)