

## 3 Christ-like Parenting Strategies

~ from KatieWarner.com ~

When my children look at me, they should see a resemblance to the face of Christ. The way I treat them should remind them of the Father's love and care for them. The more I become like Jesus, the more my children benefit from effective, transformative parenting. But it's not always easy to be so Christ-like as a parent. I remember one particularly trying day with my three-year-old. My patience was dwindling, and in the midst of my frustration, I thought about how **incredibly patient the Heavenly Father is with me**. He never fails to be patient with me in the process of learning how to be my best self. I was reminded that *this* is how I'm called to love and parent my son, too. When sinfulness gets in the way of my parenting, I turn to these basic, yet powerful Christ-like parenting strategies to be reminded of the simple steps I need to take to be a better parent to the beautiful children God has given me.

1. **Lead by example.** Jesus offers a "new commandment" in the Gospels: "[L]ove one another; even as I have loved you" (John 13:34). As parents, we need to be the model of virtue and Christian living that we want our children to embrace. From a *very* young age, children love to mimic their parents' behavior. Make sure the kind of behavior you are exhibiting in the moments scattered throughout your day—in the car behind a slow-moving driver, in the kitchen when you're gazing over a giant milk spill, at the table when you're desperate to get the homework done, when you're tired but the toddler won't go to sleep—is behavior you want your children to imitate.
2. **Correct lovingly.** Our children need constant correction. It's a natural part of their growth process. After all, *I* still need constant correction, and if I want to grow in the spiritual life in particular, I rely on Christ's perpetual, loving correction as I stumble and fall. When Jesus encountered the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4), he lovingly called her out on having many husbands, effectively directing her to an alternative course of behavior – to live a life of virtue, re-centered around a relationship with *Him*. In the same way, I am called to discipline my children with this kind of lovingness, **not overlooking their faults, but pointing them out and then redirecting them toward the good and the virtuous**. It's the kind of love and correction that says, "I love you too much to let you go on living like this or acting like this."
3. **Show mercy.** I once heard that our job as parents, especially in the tough moments, is to give our children what they *need*, rather than what they *deserve*. Every day we are given countless opportunities to embrace mercy, sometimes in even the most challenging of parenting situations. Mercy is different than laxity or passivity. Pope Francis calls "**mercy**" **the Lord's most powerful message**. It involves a readiness to help someone in need, especially someone in need of forgiveness. When the Pharisees brought the woman caught in adultery to Jesus, asking him what he had to "say about her," he called on the angry mob to consider their own sinfulness, and then, when they had dispersed, he responded to the woman. What he offered her was *mercy*. "And Jesus said, 'Neither do I condemn you; go, and do not sin again'" (John 8:11).

Christ-like parenting is not as complicated as we might like to make it. Parenting better means being just a little more like Christ in the next moment we are given.

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