

2

FRIENDS FOREVER

The Point

Disciples have a loving friendship with Jesus – and that love prompts obedience.

What You'll Need

Paper and Pencils

2 Bibles

2 Key blanks from the hardware store

(Buy just the blanks; don't have the keys cut)

Alt – picture of a key blank on your phone from Google images

A key from your keychain (car, house, whatever)

The **BLUE** is YOU!

For you, parent:

Think of a time when your child was small that she disobeyed a rule and headed straight toward disaster. Maybe she was drifting into dangerously deep water at a neighbor's pool, chasing a ball that had bounced into the street, or slipping out of a seat belt to reach a dropped piece of candy.

You called out in a voice that froze your child in her tracks, and a tragedy was averted. That part's good: You kept your child safe.

But it's even better when our children choose to obey us when we aren't around to shout out warnings – when our children obey not out of fear that we'll catch them doing something wrong but because they love us and want to please us.

Obedience motivated by fear works only when we're lurking in the background, ready to pounce. But obedience motivated by love holds firm when your child is out of sight. It holds firm when others are cheating or compromising, when others bully or lie.

God wants us to obey him, but out of love – to be drawn to his character out of love, not fear. That's the relationship he wants with us because that's the relationship he offers us: that of a loving father who expects obedience – but obedience for all the right reasons.

SAY: It's hard to take adults seriously sometimes, isn't it? Adults don't always do what they ask *you* to do, like taking out the trash, cleaning their rooms, or obeying. You have to obey a lot of people. Who are all the people you obey?

Give you child time to respond

I'm an adult. Who do you think I have to obey?

Give you child time to respond

I obey my boss at work. I obey police officers and firemen. I obey the people I love when they ask me to do things, as long as they're good things to do. But most important, I obey Jesus.

Obedying Jesus is especially tough because he asks me to do things like be kind to people who aren't kind to me and care for people I don't even know.

But here's a great reason to take Jesus seriously: He did everything he asks us to do – even the tough stuff.

He loved people even when they were mean to him.

He was patient with his friends even when he had to repeat himself again and again.

He felt pain – more pain than I've ever felt – when he hung on the cross.

He even died, like we'll both do one day.

And he did all these things out of obedience to God, his Father.

Have your child look up and read aloud John 14:23-24.

Discuss:

Do you always obey people because you love them?

Why else might you obey someone?

Which do you think is most important: loving Jesus or obeying him? Why?

Why do you think Jesus asks people who love him to do what he says?

Jesus wants us to obey him, but not just because he's so powerful. He wants us to obey because we love him, because we trust that he loves us and wants what's best for us.

Disciples are followers of Jesus, and that means we need to obey Jesus. But not because we're afraid. Instead, he wants us to obey out of love!

HOUSE RULES

According to lots of websites, it's against the law in Massachusetts to have a duel with water pistols and in New York City for citizens to say hello to each other by putting their thumbs to their noses and wiggling their fingers. But even though

those laws may be written down, people aren't often arrested for breaking them. There are rules, and then there are rules – really important rules that count!

Give your child a pencil and a sheet of paper. Keep a pencil and paper yourself.

I want you to think of the seven biggest, most important rules in our house – the rules that get you in real trouble if you break them. Write them down on your paper. I'm going to write down the seven rules I think are most important in our house. Then we'll compare our lists and see if they're the same. And no cheating – I won't look at your paper, and you can't look at mine.

Ready? Let's take three minutes to write down the rules.

After three minutes, put down your pencil and ask your child to do the same. If your child couldn't come up with seven rules, that's fine – work with what you have.

Let's compare lists.

Switch lists and see how many rules are the same on your lists.

Ask your child to explain why he selected the rules he listed. Ask if he believes each rule is a good or bad one, and why. What makes it a good or bad rule?

Do the same with your list.

When you've finished, lay down the lists.

I don't want you to obey the rules in our home because I can punish you if you don't obey. I'd rather you obey rules because you love me, because you trust that I want what's best for you.

When we obey only because we're afraid of punishment, as soon as the person who can punish us is gone, we quit obeying. I want you to obey me because you love me. Jesus wants you to obey him for the same reason.

Make It Mine

Here's what's tricky about obeying because of love: it looks just like obeying because you're afraid of being punished. Like lots of discipleship stuff, this is a matter of the heart. This week let's work on heart stuff. That's why this week I want us both to carry these key blanks.

Show your child a key that's been ground to open a lock. Ask your child to compare the key blanks and the "cut" key.

Your key blank won't open any locks because it hasn't been fitted to the tumblers inside a lock. For it to work on our house or a car, it has to be shaped a certain way. Your key looks like it should work, but it won't. Sometimes we look like we're obeying for the right reason, but we aren't.

This week when you need to obey someone and when I need to obey someone, let's put our hands in our pockets to feel our key blanks. They will remind us we can choose to obey for the right reasons – like loving or honoring the person asking us to obey.

And as we practice obeying for the right reasons, God will shape our hearts to open to him.

Discuss these questions with your child:

Are you naturally obedient, disobedient, or somewhere in between? Why do you answer as you do?

What will be hardest about obeying this week? Why?

Choose a project from the "For All the Right Reasons" section) that fits your child. Or work to accomplish a project selected by your child.

Do you think that just because you're the grown-up you're off the hook with obedience? Far from it.

Adults struggle with obeying God, too. Every disciple deals with a desire to simply forget what God wants us to do and do our own thing, on our own timetable.

Take seriously your role as a disciple and disciple this week. Carry your key blank, and let it remind you that while you can obey for many reasons, only one lets God do the work he wants to do in us.

And pray for your child, whether your child thought herself disobedient, obedient or in between.

What does your child's answer say about her self-image?

How can you help her celebrate the times she's obedient?

Pray

Dear God, it's strange to think of how you came to earth and had to decide to obey, just as we do. You obeyed your Father out of love, not obligation. Help us obey in the same way, fueled by the same motive. Amen.

For All the Right Reasons

Objective:

To practice obedience with people in order to be better able to obey Jesus.

Of the three below, choose the one that best suits your kids/family:

1. Chart time!

Ask your kid to think about what he will be asked to do at your house in the coming week and then to create a chart listing those things. Rather than calling this a “chore chart”, label it an obedience chart.

The goal is for them to own this process and see it as practice for obeying Jesus. Help your child brainstorm common requests (picking up clothes, cleaning a room, dishes, etc). Avoid the temptation to pile on tasks; rather, encourage your child to list what he recalls. Then acknowledge tasks, check them off as completed. Lavishly heap praise on your child for obeying.

2. Team up with your kid(s) to do a two-hour obedience marathon. Make a joint list of tasks that you’ve been asked to do, and then pick a two-hour session in which you attempt to accomplish as many of them as possible together. Generate a list of small, ongoing tasks. Painting a room is probably out, but you might include cleaning, yardwork, or running errands. After the two-hour obedience marathon, sit down with a treat and talk about how it felt to obey by choice. Discuss how otherwise boring tasks can be fun when you’re anticipating how pleased the person who asked you do to them will be.

3. Together, select someone who normally has requests for one or both of you. It may be another parent, a neighbor who needs help, or a teacher. Decide to honor every request this week – and to do your best to obey the person the same way you’d obey Jesus. This will require ongoing communication (not a bad thing!) and some joint effort. If your child is asked to pick up his room, do it together. If you’re asked to take out the trash, do it as a team. You’ll model obedience. You’ll have more time with your child. Plus, you’ll make someone very happy!