

LUKE 19:1-10
 Jesus loves Zacchaeus and wants to spend time with him even though he has done wrong things.

SAY THIS:
 Who does Jesus love?
JESUS LOVES EVERYONE.

 **DO THIS:**



MORNING TIME

When you go into your child's room this month, say, "Good morning! I see my sweet boy/girl. I love you so much, and so does Jesus!"



DRIVE TIME

As you drive, encourage your child to name someone each time you say, "Jesus loves . . ." Ex: Jesus loves [sibling's name]. Jesus loves [friend's name]. Jesus loves [grandparent]. End by saying together, "Jesus loves everyone!"



CUDDLE TIME

Cuddle with your child this month and pray, "Dear God, thank You for giving us Jesus to be our friend forever. He is such a good friend! Help us be a good friend to others, just like Jesus is a good friend to us. We love You, God. In Jesus' name, amen."



BATH TIME

Add a tea set or plastic pitcher with plastic cups to bath time. Encourage your child to pour water into the cups as if he/she is pouring drinks at dinner. Talk about how Jesus was Zacchaeus' friend, even though he had made bad choices. Jesus even went to Zacchaeus' house to eat dinner with him.

BASIC TRUTH:

JESUS WANTS TO BE MY FRIEND FOREVER.

THEY MYTH OF THE PERFECT KID

By Tim Walker

We parents are an emotional, neurotic mess, aren't we? Sure, some of us are better at hiding it than others, but push the right button or confront the right issue, and every one of us comes to a point when we feel . . . helpless. Clueless. Lost.

We thought we knew so much. But there comes a point when we're not quite sure how to navigate as parents. We know we're not perfect, just ask our kids. So why do we expect our kids to be perfect? Before you shake your head and say "not me," think about this:

Do you ever see them fail?

Maybe your toddler starts pitching a fit because he wants another cookie. Or you find out your daughter is being mean to another girl in her class. Every kid will fail at some point. Why? Because they're not perfect. They will do something we don't want them to do. Or they will not measure up. Or they will make the wrong choice. Let's face it. Sometimes our little angels are less than angelic.

Do you ever expect more of your kids than what is age-appropriate?

Would you expect your three-month-old infant to be potty trained? Your 12-year-old to know how to drive a car? When it comes to my kids, my first reaction is "you should know better." And sometimes they

don't. Sometimes they don't have the life experience to know what to do in a situation. Or they've never been taught. Sometimes they just simply don't know. Your kids are in process. You are too.

Do you ever encourage them to be more perfect than real?

Is your family a place where doubt can exist? Or opinions? Do our kids feel like they need to put up a front with us? Are we communicating to our kids with our words or actions that what they believe right now (which is in process, remember) isn't as important as what we believe? Because if we don't give them space to doubt or question, belief may never become something that is internal, or personal to them.

As a parent, you know you're not perfect. You're aware of where you fall short. But the reality is your kids aren't either. Let them be human. Let them be in process. Guide them. Direct them. Instruct them. But also realize that sometimes they will act their age, and show their humanity.



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THE GOSPELS
Jesus tells 12 men to follow Him, and they become His disciples.

SAY THIS:
Who can you follow?
YOU CAN FOLLOW JESUS.

 **DO THIS:**



MORNING TIME

When you go into your child's room, say, "Good morning, sweet boy/girl! Who's ready to follow Jesus and love our friends? (Pause.) I am! I'm going to start by loving YOU!" (Tickle your child when you say, "YOU.")



DRIVE TIME

Ask your child to pick a toy friend to bring along on the car ride. Tell your child to tell the toy, "Follow me, [toy's name]." Encourage your child to continue telling the toy friend to, "Follow me to the [place where you are going]." Do this everywhere you go. Talk about how we can follow Jesus everywhere we go, too, by loving people the way Jesus loves us.



CUDDLE TIME

Cuddle with your child this month and pray, "Dear God, I want the world to know that I follow Jesus. Help me to love people the way Jesus loves me so they will know. More than anything, I want [child's name] to know I follow Jesus so he/she will follow Him one day, too. I love You, God. In Jesus' name, amen."



BATH TIME

Give your child two bath toys. Tell him/her to pick one of them to be the leader. Show him/her how to pull one across the bath water or "walk" along the side of the tub, while making the other follow. Talk about how we can follow Jesus, and the best way is by loving people the way He loves us.

BASIC TRUTH:

JESUS WANTS TO BE MY FRIEND FOREVER.

CATCH THEM DOING IT RIGHT

By Reggie Joiner

As parents, sometimes we are so busy focusing on correcting negative behavior that we forget to acknowledge the things our kids are doing right. But reinforcing the positive behavior we see in our kids is usually a much more effective way to steer them the right direction. And it goes a long way in fighting for their hearts. Here are a few tips:

Be Specific

It's easy to say something general to a kid like, "you have a great attitude." But when a compliment is too general, it doesn't mean as much. Kids want to know you care enough about them to notice specific things they do. So take the time to point out something that is definitive, especially if you hope they will repeat it.

Acknowledge Effort

Look for ways to praise kids for improving in an area or because they worked hard at something. When you encourage effort or determination, you are helping them build a strong work ethic. When you compliment your kids for things they really didn't do, you run the risk of creating an inflated ego.

Establish a Pattern

I know a mom who used dinnertime once a week to tell her kids something positive she had noticed in them that week. Her son secretly told me it was his favorite time of the week. That's because

most of us crave affirmation at some level. Sometimes it helps to establish routine times when you know you will have a consistent opportunity to affirm your kids.

Stretch Your Vocabulary

Words are more powerful than most people imagine. So what we say to our kids over time really does matter. Here are a few phrases to get you started.

- You have really improved . . .** *(encourage them to keep growing.)*
- I love the way you . . .** *(it will encourage them to celebrate their uniqueness.)*
- I noticed how you . . .** *(It will encourage them to demonstrate character.)*
- Thank you for . . .** *(It will encourage them to express gratitude.)*
- I can tell how hard you worked . . .** *(It will encourage them to develop responsibility)*
- I bet one day you will . . .** *(It will encourage them to find hope.)*
- I like hanging out with you because . . .** *(It will encourage them to value relationship.)*
- You have helped me learn . . .** *(It will encourage them to show respect.)*



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MATTHEW 26:20-50;
27:1-2; 28:1-7

Angry men hurt Jesus so bad
that He died, but Jesus came back,
just like He said He would.

SAY THIS:

Who is alive?
JESUS IS ALIVE.

DO THIS:



MORNING TIME

When you go into your child's room, say, "Good morning, friend! I'm so glad God gave you to me to be my son/daughter and my friend. God gave us Jesus to be our friend, too!"



DRIVE TIME

As you drive, take turns with your child naming friends. Some of them should be the same. After all, family can be friends, too! Talk about how Jesus wants to be our friend. In fact, Jesus wants to be our friend forever!



CUDDLE TIME

Cuddle with your child this month and pray, "Dear God, thank You for giving us so many great friends. Thank You for (list friends with your child). Most of all, thank You for giving us Jesus to be our friend forever. We love You, God. In Jesus' name, amen."



BATH TIME

While bathing your child, play a game where your child closes his/her eyes, you count to three, and then your child opens their eyes when you say "three." When your child opens their eyes, say, "Jesus is alive!" Play again and again as long as your child is having fun.

BASIC TRUTH:

JESUS WANTS TO BE MY FRIEND FOREVER.

PERFECT EASTER EGGS

By Sarah Anderson

My husband often tells me "the happiest and healthiest people are those whose expectations meet reality." I frequently need reminding of this. I live in expectation—playing things out in my head of how I would like them to unfold. The problem is, as you might imagine, the more expectations I have, the more likely I am to be disappointed when they aren't met.

Last Easter, I had expectations which seemed harmless enough. My husband had come across an egg-dyeing method involving silk ties and twine. Though craftiness deficient, even this seemed simple enough. I imagined our experiment unfolding like the pictures online promised. We included my two-year-old in the process, hyping it up, promising beautiful eggs when we were finished and he waited patiently for the great unveiling.

But when we unwrapped the first egg we were—disappointed. It was not some psychedelic paisley print. It looked exactly like it did when we first put it in the vinegar. Considering my son was in the throes of the terrible twos, I did not expect this rather anticlimactic reveal to go well. But when we took a deep breath and turned to Asher to navigate his unmet expectations he simply stared wide-eyed. "Look!" he whispered in unabashed astonishment, "It's a white one!"

Unwrapping a perfectly white egg, I observe my little boy and his effortless expression of wonder. It was an Easter weekend miracle—at least to an innocent toddler. To me, these white eggs were a failure. To him, they were perfection.

My kids are teaching me—whether I like it or not—that **when I let go of my tightly held plans, I am more free to see the world as they do.**

Magical. Enchanting. An extended invitation to be present, thankful and captivated by the gift of what we do have, instead of lamenting what isn't.

So this Easter, while trying to . . . get out the door to church, smooth dresses, wipe dirty mouths, break up arguments and appear as cool, calm and collected as you wish you felt, . . . take a moment to enjoy the white eggs in your life.

Your expectations may not be met, but you may just find yourself happier and healthier than if they had been.

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