

Children and Obedience

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Obedience constructs and self-will destructs. A child has to learn to be obedient to its parents and to God. It'll remember the words of its parents all its life and will always respect its elders, and not only those but people who are younger, too. It'll be polite and careful with everyone. Unfortunately, there are very few families who bring their children up in this way.



The spirits of evil provide a distraction in the minds of our children and they try to upset them. Children have to be taught obedience, especially before they're five years old, because it's at this age that their characters are formed. So the traces of the way their characters have been shaped will remain with them for the rest of their lives. Parents should teach their children total obedience at this time of their lives. When one of the parents says something, the response should be: "Whatever you say". Today, unfortunately, parents don't know this and teach their children exactly the opposite. But then they're bringing them up...

If parents say, "Stay here" then the child should stay where it's been told

to. But the child's a child; it can't stay still in one place. What usually happens is that the parents smack the child for its disobedience. This isn't a good way to teach a child obedience. It may be that, sometimes, such a reaction is necessary, but it should be performed with love and the child should feel this love. Parents should never smack their children in anger. Because if you start chastising someone when you're angry, you'll get nowhere. You'll damage the person in front of you and yourself, as well. If you want to set someone on the right road, you should teach them and advise them. You should first humble yourself and speak to them with a great deal of love. They'll accept your advice if it's given with love. But if you want your own will to be imposed at all costs, you won't achieve anything at all. That's what makes children react badly. When a child is disobedient, the answer isn't to smack it.

Parents berate their children over the slightest things. It's as if they don't know how people can speak calmly and gently to them. When a parent has to set boundaries for a child, it should feel that, behind the strictness, there's love. It's a great mistake to punish children at the moment that they're doing wrong, because that won't do any good. You should wait for them to calm down and then, with lots of love, tell the child it's done wrong and that it has to accept some form of punishment. If the same thing happens again, then the child is given a more severe punishment and, in this way, learns.

The holy will of God works within us from our parents or through our teachers or our employers. If we need to correct the behaviour of a child, we have to do it with great love and care. If the only thing we have in mind is to change the life of the child, we've already given it a slap just with our thoughts. I've noticed this during my time as an abbot: I've often seen one of the brothers not acting properly, but at the moment when I was about to tell him off, I've felt that I'd already given him a slap.

Our thoughts can be very intrusive and have great power. This is true particularly in the case of the thoughts of parents. A parent needs to put up with much and forgive everything. We can forgive others only if we have good and kindly thoughts. If we have thoughts aimed at correcting other people's mistakes, it's as if we're striking them. Irrespective of how close somebody is to us, they'll be driven away, because we'll have given them a slap, through our thoughts. And we're of the opinion that thoughts are a mere nothing!

We punish our children, but, in fact, have no right to do so, because we've failed to teach them the right way. A lady doctor told me some time ago in a letter: "I've got a son by my husband, who's also a doctor. Our son has written off three

cars- thank God he's still alive. Now he wants us to buy him another car, but we can't afford it any more. When we get home from work he tries to get money from us, even by force. What can I do to solve this problem?" I told her that the only ones to blame were themselves. They had a son and they'd allowed him to do whatever he wanted, even from when he was very little. When he was a child, his demands were commensurately less, but now he's older, so they'd become greater. The only thing they could now do would be to give their son lots of love and care so that he might come to his senses and realize that the only thing his parents were concerned about was his own good. There's no other way except the way of love. Do you see from this example how we can improve our own lives and those of our neighbours, with our thoughts? We hope that your own efforts in this direction will bear fruit.

Kakve su ti misli, takav ti je život ((Какве су ти мисли, такав ти је живот; Our Thoughts Determine our Lives).