

Loyalty

by Douglas Wilson

Monday's Meal is a service of The Oaks Classical and Christian Academy.

Each meal is selected specifically to feed and nourish parents for the long distance run. If you found it helpful, consider passing it along.

"...and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds..."
Hebrews 10:24

When it comes to teaching cultural standards, the task confronting parents is not to make the children conform, but rather to bring the children to *love* the standards being taught to them. But this cannot happen without loyalty, and loyalty has a genesis all its own. It is not enough for parents to have a high view of their responsibilities coupled with a strict set of standards. More often than not, this by itself simply creates rebellious children. Such "high standards" in the home are nothing more than the pressure cooker lid, screwed down tight. The devil and Adam supply the necessary heat, and after about fifteen years, the pastor has quite a mess in the kitchen to clean up.

When it comes to child-rearing, there is no substitute for grace, humility, sacrifice, kindness, shrewdness, love, tenderness, justice, and humor. The loyalty of children to parents is the fruit of the graces, and not of the externals. This is why some parents have a comprehensive "worldview" package all worked out for the kids, only to have the kids reject the whole shebang. Other parents do far less teaching, but what teaching they do is gladly received. Perhaps such parents should have taught more, but still, it is better to have all of a smaller portion gratefully received than to have all of a larger portion ungratefully thrown to the floor.

Say a father maintains that he has a biblical worldview, but others who know him would say that he is simply dogmatic and opinionated. Because he has a biblical worldview (in his own opinions) he is therefore free to cudgel the kids with it at every opportunity. If they don't like it, *they* probably have a spiritual problem. After a time, this grows up into a full-blown rebelliousness, with the father assuming that the children are rejecting "the things of God." But loyalty is a function of gratitude, and gratitude is a function of *grace*. Grace, unlike movie standards, is not a fungible commodity. Grace and peace can be multiplied to us through the ministry of Word and sacrament, as God pleases, but we cannot go buy grace as though it were a bag of flour.

We can subscribe to the right magazines, we can kill our television, we can move to the country, we can attend all the right conferences, and we can join a church where everyone else is doing the same things we are. We can fit right in there, and when the family melts down, everyone wonders how that happened because the now-melted family "did all the right things." Child-rearing as the result of grace is child-rearing characterized throughout by the *extension* of grace. All parents discipline. The thing that distinguishes them is what they discipline for and how they do it. If we have learned the nature of grace, we can see that discipline requires something of a child as a gift to him. Selfish discipline requires something of a child as a gift to the one disciplining.