

10 Keys to Motivate Your Child to Give Their Best

Grace, truth and peace be with you.

Please allow me to muse with you on the vexing question of how to get children to give their best.

If we are to parent our children the way God parent's us, then we must learn to be our children's greatest cheerleaders!

Motivating your child to give their best is not the same as always being number one on the podium. An incidence in the 1992 Barcelona Olympics 400 metre men's semi-final best illustrates this point.

British Athlete, Derek Anthony Redmond tore his hamstring in the 400 metres semi-final but continued the race limping and, with assistance from his father, managed to complete a full lap of the track as the crowd gave him a standing ovation. Although Redmond was disqualified and listed as "Did Not Finish" due to the outside assistance finishing the race, the incident has become a well-remembered moment in Olympic history, having been the subject of one of the International Olympic Committee's "Celebrate Humanity" videos and been used in advertisements by Visa as an illustration of the Olympic spirit and featured in Nike's "Courage" commercials in 2008.

To motivate your child well, you must start by accepting him/her as Christ accepts us. "Accept one another, just as Christ accepted you" (Romans 15:7 NASB). That is, unconditionally! That will mean celebrating their being created in the image of God more than any effort they make; and celebrating their effort more than their achievement!!!

In Jesus's parable of Talents in Matthew 21:14-30 the two servants that traded with their talents (two and five) both received exactly the same rewards: "Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord." (Verse 21, 23

NKJV). The third servant was damned for making no effort!

So, what are the keys for motivating our children to give their best?

1. Unconditional acceptance. Every meaningful relationship is built on the solid foundation of acceptance. Apostle Paul's exhortation: "Accept one another, just as Christ accepted you" (Romans 15:7) is totally indispensable. When you accept your child as being created in the image of God then you will start honouring and partnering with the God who is at work in your child's life. Acceptance is the first building block of life. You accept before you love. You are most likely to destroy a life you do not accept. Unconditional acceptance creates in the child a sense of "I'm someone of great value."
2. Use sounds of acceptance. Your child need to hear you expressing your acceptance of who they are. "...faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." (Romans 10:17) This must be unhinged from any form of performance. It is about their value as persons. Statements like "If I have a choice, I will always choose you as my son/daughter!" "I'm so glad to have you as my son/daughter." "You have such a caring heart." Remember NO BUT, WHEN OR IF. Always endeavour to meet the child where they are before taking them to where you need to take them.
3. Discover and understand your child's bent ("...the way he should go" (Proverbs 22:6)). This will take real diligence in praying for and observing your child. Then tailor your nurture of your child according to "their bend." No short cuts. Remember that each child is different and no one size will fit all. Taking active interest in your child's interests tells them that you care and

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- that they could talk to you about things that matter to them.
4. Discover passion. Stand firmly with your child on their journey toward discovering their passion. Resist the temptation to micro-manage this process or to cast them in your own mould. Every child has been wired by God according to His purpose for them.
 5. Set goals. Challenge your child to set inspiring targets. Then encourage them to set goals (a list of sequential little steps they need to take to achieve their targets). The target need to be attainable and must require effort reach.
 6. Be excited. Showing excitement in their effort inspires more believe in your child. Fear is a universal reality for all humans including your very self. When we have someone expressing true faith in us often inspires us to break through the limitations, we or others have place on our lives. Your child is as human as you are and also needs genuine encouragers and cheerleaders. God even thinks so in Hebrews 12:1-2.
 7. Reward your child's hard work and celebrate successes within reason. Rewarding effort is vital in building your child's sense wellbeing. Be deliberate to set them up to succeed at some meaningful tasks. It helps to cultivate a healthy sense of "I can."
 8. Make things competitive. Encourage healthy competition even in your rough and tumble play with your toddler. However, make sure you keep your focus on the positivity and strength in your child and never on any real or perceived negativity or weakness in the competitor.
 9. Keep positive. As the number one mentor of your child, help to draw out of them the great things you can see in them which they cannot see right now. Allow them to ride on your shoulders. That the child cannot fully see what they can become does not mean that the seed of that greatness is not already in them. It is there right now! Cultivate it positively. Never give up on your child.
 10. Kingdom benefits. Let your child know that it pleases God when they give the best in every situation. "By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so, you will be My disciples." (John 15:8 NKJV) "And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ." (Colossians 3:23-24 NKJV)

God bless you abundantly.

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