

A Short Parable About Badly Behaved Children

by Tricia Berg

A young couple excitedly started their family with high hopes for a happy-ever-after ending. They did everything in their power to raise their children to know the difference between right and wrong. They carefully instilled biblically moral values in them. They set a good example. They had every reason to expect that their efforts would result in god-fearing, parent-honoring children.

However, there was another young couple in the neighborhood who also had children. Unfortunately, they didn't exercise the same diligence in their parenting. They themselves had very little character, and they passed that on to their offspring. They set the standards very low for themselves and for their children, and they were never disappointed in reaching those "goals."

The first couple repeatedly cautioned their children not to spend too much time with the children of the second couple. Their intention was not to be judgmental or unloving, but they knew that the bad habits of those unruly, wayward kids would rub off on their own beloved kids. Pretty soon they might be persuaded by peer pressure to do the same sort of nasty, delinquent things—stealing, talking back and disrespecting authority, using cuss words, experimenting with unhealthy substances, lying, cheating, vandalizing, brawling, viewing and/or listening to inappropriate media, telling or laughing at crude jokes, envying, coveting, incessantly complaining/whining, being materialistic and ungrateful, eventually participating in sexual immorality, etc.

What do you think happened? Their children ignored their warnings and became best friends with those neighbor kids. And then what? Just as feared, their behavior quickly came to match that of those children who were not raised to know better. They turned out to be more like the children of those negligent parents than their own parents. How tragic! How disheartening! And to make matters worse, other people thought ill of this couple—as though they must not have raised their children "right" or they wouldn't have turned out that way.

How do you suppose God feels when those who call themselves by His name "make best friends" with the WORLD? He repeatedly warns us NOT to do that, yet so many DO anyway! (Jam. 4:4-10, 1John 2:15-17) We're meant to be separate and not to join in the sins that the world calls "fun" and "free." (2Cor. 6:14-7:1, 2Pet. 2:19, John 8:34) Those were the sort of things we USED to do

BEFORE we came to the knowledge of the saving truth. (John 14:6, 1Pet. 4:3-5, 2Tim. 2:24-26, Heb. 10:26-31, 6:4-8, 2Pet. 2:20-22) Our freedom is from being enslaved to sin as we once were, not “free” to do what unsaved people do in their ignorance of God and His ways. (Eph. 4:17-24, Rom. 6:15-23, 1Cor. 6:9-20) We’re supposed to expect people to exclude and persecute us because of our efforts to live godly lives. (Matt. 5:10-16, Luke 6:22-23, 2Tim. 3:12-17) That would never happen to the majority of self-professing Christians, because there is no visible difference between them and the world. Something to think about...great is our reward in heaven (or not so much). (1Cor. 3:12-18, Rev. 2-3) We don’t do works to earn salvation, we do them because those are the fruits of the Spirit who indwells us. We live for God because He died for us. (2Cor. 5:14-15)

We believers in this age, both Jew and Gentile, are being grafted into the “olive tree” of Israel’s blessings. (Rom. 11:17-25) As God’s children, we’re to be “circumcised without hands” in our hearts, which is to be grieved over and repentant of our sin—starting with unbelief. (John 1:12-13, 1John 3:1-10, Rom. 2:28-29, Col. 2:11-15, Rom. 6:1-8, 1Pet. 4:1-2, 2Cor. 7:10, Acts 2:36-47) After we’re saved through grace by faith, we’re not meant to continue wallowing in the filth of those sins Jesus that took the punishment for on our behalf—we’re squeaky clean NEW creations enabled to do the works He prepared for us in advance. (Eph. 2:8-10, Rom. 3:23-26, 1John 2:2, 4:10, 2Cor. 5:18-21, Heb. 2:17-18, 2Pet. 2:20-22) Our faith is a gift from God, and true believers receive the gift of His Spirit to help them walk in a manner worthy of Him. (Acts 10:45, Eph. 4:1-8, Phil. 1:27-30, Col. 1:10, 1Thess. 2:12, 5:5-8, 2Thess. 1:11-12, Eph. 5:15-21, Rev. 3:4, John 14:15-26, 15:8-10, Gal. 5:24-25, Rom. 13:11-14)

Those who refuse to obey God, but insist upon using their freedom in Christ to bring dishonor on His household will answer to Him for that. (1John 2:28-29, Heb. 3:5-6, 12-13, 14, 13:5-6, 1Pet. 1:14-19, 2:9-10, 11-12, 1Thess. 4:2-5, 6-8, Heb. 10:29, 30-35, 36-38, 39, 12:14-27, 28-29, Rev. 2-3, 2Pet. 2:17-18, 19, John 8:31-36, Rom. 6:11-13, Titus 3:3) If we LOVE Him, we will accept the discipline of our heavenly Father, sovereign King, almighty God, Creator and Lord of all, and we’ll use our freedom for His glory. (Heb. 12:3-13, John 14:15-26) He doesn’t force us to believe OR to obey, but we use the free will HE gave us to demonstrate what or who we love most. (1John 5:3, 2Cor. 5:14-15, John 15:12-17)

Let’s try to remember that loving and caring about anything or anyone more than God is idolatry. He is to be first, and rightly so! (Matt. 10:37-39, Mark 12:28-34) And how can we love God if we don’t even KNOW Him? Let’s read our Bibles for ourselves and let the Holy Spirit guide us into understanding what God is like and what His will is—then He will give us the desire and the power to do

it. (Phil. 2:12-16, Rom. 12:1-2, Titus 2:11-15, 1John 2:26-29, John 14:15-26, Rom. 6:4-7, Col. 3:5-17, Eph. 4:20-32, Gal. 6:15)

"Therefore say to the house of Israel, Thus says the Lord GOD: It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am about to act, but for the sake of my holy name, which you have profaned among the nations to which you came. And I will vindicate the holiness of my great name, which has been profaned among the nations, and which you have profaned among them. And the nations will know that I am the LORD, declares the Lord GOD, when through you I vindicate my holiness before their eyes. I will take you from the nations and gather you from all the countries and bring you into your own land. I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules. You shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers, and you shall be my people, and I will be your God. And I will deliver you from all your uncleannesses. And I will summon the grain and make it abundant and lay no famine upon you. I will make the fruit of the tree and the increase of the field abundant, that you may never again suffer the disgrace of famine among the nations. Then you will remember your evil ways, and your deeds that were not good, and you will loathe yourselves for your iniquities and your abominations. It is not for your sake that I will act, declares the Lord GOD; let that be known to you. Be ashamed and confounded for your ways, O house of Israel. Ezekiel 36:22-32 (Also see John 4:21-24.)

"For my people are foolish; they know me not; they are stupid children; they have no understanding. They are 'wise'—in doing evil! But how to do good they know not." Jeremiah 4:22

Yet I planted you a choice vine, wholly of pure seed. How then have you turned degenerate and become a wild vine? Jeremiah 2:21

Let me sing for my beloved my love song concerning his vineyard: My beloved had a vineyard on a very fertile hill. He dug it and cleared it of stones, and planted it with choice vines; he built a watchtower in the midst of it, and hewed out a wine vat in it; and he looked for it to yield grapes, but it yielded wild grapes. And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah, judge between me and my vineyard. What more was there to do for my vineyard, that I have not done in it? When I looked for it to yield grapes, why did it yield wild grapes? Isaiah 5:1-4

He put another parable before them, saying, "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field, but while his men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat and went away. So when the plants came up and bore grain, then the weeds appeared also. And the servants of the master of the house came and said to him, 'Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have weeds?' He said to them, 'An enemy has done this.' So the servants said to him, 'Then do you want us to go and gather them?' But he said, 'No, lest in gathering the weeds you root up the wheat along with them. Let both grow together until the harvest, and at harvest time I will tell the reapers, Gather the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barn.'" 36 Then he left the crowds and went into the house. And his disciples came to him, saying, "Explain to us the parable of the weeds of the field." He answered, "The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man. The field is the world, and the good seed is the sons of the kingdom. The weeds are the sons of the evil one, and the enemy who sowed them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are angels. Just as the weeds are gathered and burned with fire, so will it be at the end of the age. The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will gather out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all law-breakers, and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear. Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43 (Also see Matt. 13:47-50, 13:, 18-23, 5:29-30.)

As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy." And if you call on him as Father who judges impartially according to each one's deeds, conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile, knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot. 1 Peter 1:14-19

And now, little children, abide in him, so that when he appears we may have confidence and not shrink from him in shame at his coming. If you know that he is righteous, you may be sure that everyone who practices righteousness has been born of him. 3:1 See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him. Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure. Everyone who makes a practice of sinning also practices lawlessness; sin is lawlessness. You know that he appeared

in order to take away sins, and in him there is no sin. No one who abides in him keeps on sinning; no one who keeps on sinning has either seen him or known him. Little children, let no one deceive you. Whoever practices righteousness is righteous, as he is righteous. Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil. No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God's seed abides in him, and he cannot keep on sinning because he has been born of God. By this it is evident who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil: whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother. For this is the message that you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. We should not be like Cain, who was of the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own deeds were evil and his brother's righteous. Do not be surprised, brothers, that the world hates you. We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers. Whoever does not love abides in death. Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him. By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers. But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth. 1 John 2:28-3:18

This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us. 2:1 My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world. And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments. Whoever says "I know him" but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him, but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. By this we may know that we are in him: whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked. Beloved, I am writing you no new commandment, but an old commandment that you had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word that you have heard. At the same time, it is a new commandment that I am writing to you, which is true in him and in you, because the darkness is passing

away and the true light is already shining. Whoever says he is in the light and hates his brother is still in darkness. Whoever loves his brother abides in the light, and in him there is no cause for stumbling. But whoever hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes. 15 Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world. And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever. 1 John 1:5-2:11, 2:15-17

You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. Or do you suppose it is to no purpose that the Scripture says, "He yearns jealously over the spirit that he has made to dwell in us"? But he gives more grace. Therefore it says, "God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble." Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Be wretched and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you. James 4:4-10

But God's firm foundation stands, bearing this seal: "The Lord knows those who are his," and, "Let everyone who names the name of the Lord depart from iniquity." Now in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver but also of wood and clay, some for honorable use, some for dishonorable. Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from what is dishonorable, he will be a vessel for honorable use, set apart as holy, useful to the master of the house, ready for every good work. So flee youthful passions and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart. Have nothing to do with foolish, ignorant controversies; you know that they breed quarrels. And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil, correcting his opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth, and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, after being captured by him to do his will. 2 Timothy 2:19-26

Do not be deceived: "Bad company ruins good morals." Wake up from your drunken stupor, as is right, and do not go on sinning. For some have no knowledge of God. I say this to your shame. 1 Corinthians 15:33-34

Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness?

What accord has Christ with Belial? Or what portion does a believer share with an unbeliever? What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; as God said, "I will make my dwelling among them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Therefore go out from their midst, and be separate from them, says the Lord, and touch no unclean thing; then I will welcome you, and I will be a father to you, and you shall be sons and daughters to me, says the Lord Almighty." 7:1 Since we have these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God. 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1

For the time that is past suffices for doing what the Gentiles want to do, living in sensuality, passions, drunkenness, orgies, drinking parties, and lawless idolatry. With respect to this they are surprised when you do not join them in the same flood of debauchery, and they malign you; but they will give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead. 1 Peter 4:3-5

Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, while evil people and impostors will go on from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work. 2 Timothy 3:12-17

Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds. They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart. They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity. But that is not the way you learned Christ!—assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus, to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness. Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another. Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and give no opportunity to the devil. Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need. Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building

up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you. Ephesians 4:17-32

Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. On account of these the wrath of God is coming. In these you too once walked, when you were living in them. But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth. Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator. Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all. Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. Colossians 3:5-17

For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another. But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life. The saying is trustworthy, and I want you to insist on these things, so that those who have believed in God may be careful to devote themselves to good works. These things are excellent and profitable for people. Titus 3:3-8

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