

Fair & Loving Discipline

In my work, I deal with many children who are "survivors." Before coming to us, they were denied many of the good things in life. And they've learned to compensate... to deny that it matters. Some, for various reasons, have had to do without. But, others have parents who have mistakenly tried to discipline by dangling desirable things before them only to pull them away when the child fails to measure up to some impossible standard. They say, "If you are good, I'll take you to Disney World."

At first, the child tries to please his parents with all his heart. But it doesn't take too many times of having the prize jerked away at the last minute for the child to realize that it just wasn't ever a possibility. They were just using it to manipulate him. In time, he becomes bitter and decides within himself that it really doesn't matter if he ever gets whatever reward they've dangled in front of him this time. He becomes a survivor... one who can live without whatever good thing he is perpetually denied. And he makes up his mind that this particular person (and perhaps, all others) will never hurt him that way again.

It should not surprise us that the same scripture that says, "Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord," also says, "Fathers, do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged." Colossians 3:20&21

How can we raise children who are obedient and self-assured? Our Heavenly Father teaches us that children respond to loving discipline when it is fairly and consistently applied.