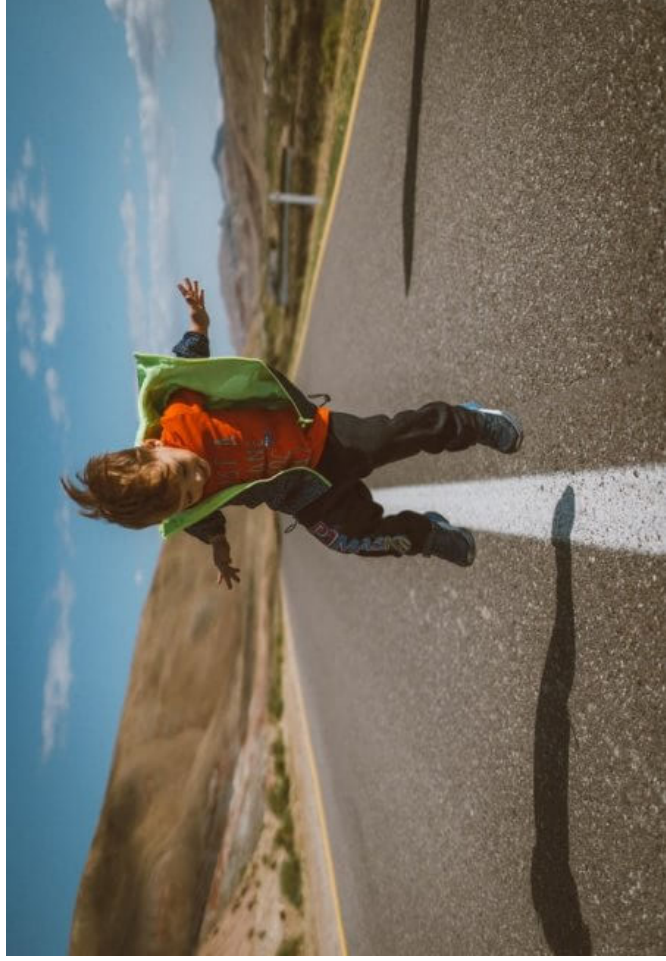


3 ways we parents wrongly teach kids to earn God's approval



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As parents we hate to see our kids live with the burden of trying to gain approval. Or worrying if they are going to be accepted by their looks, their dress, or their performance. Or struggling with the pain of wondering if others will love and accept them.

As Christian parents we know we have a message of approval, so we declare that message to our kids. Messages like, "God loves you, period. There is nothing you will do that will make me love you more than I already do. You don't have to earn God's love or my love; you already have it." Those are the messages we so badly want our kids to hold tightly to in a world filled with the pressure to achieve and fit in.

We declare those messages because we believe them. We know those messages personally. We know we are loved. We know we stand right before God because of Jesus' sacrifice for us. The glorious good news of the Christian faith is that because of Jesus we are approved by God and don't live with the impossible burden of earning God's approval. We now live because we have already been approved—not so that we will be approved.

Yet even in the midst of our good and true declarations, we do subtle things that undermine the message we are declaring. We often contradict the message of grace or cast doubt on the good news that our kids are already approved. Here are three ways we wrongly teach our kids that they have to earn God's approval:

1.) We find our approval in their performance.

If parents find their worth in how their kids perform on a field or in the classroom, then how can those kids be expected to find their worth in something else? If parents find approval from their peers based on what college their high school senior gets accepted into, then how can we think those high school seniors aren't

going to find their approval in their college acceptance process? Our kids often mirror back to us our own struggles, and if we are still seeking to earn approval through the things of this world, that message is heard loud and clear by our kids.

2.) We need their approval.

If we need the approval of our kids to feel alive and important and as if our lives matter, then our kids will inevitably sense that in us. They will sense our striving for their approval and wonder what is lacking in our lives that causes us to need them to like us. One of the best ways to teach our kids to live from a posture of already being approved by God is for us to parent from a posture of already being approved by God. When we parent with the humble confidence that our identity is secure no matter how our kids behave, we give our kids a picture of resting in the approval that has already been given.

3.) We teach character over Christ.

If we approach the Bible with our kids as a moral guide to learn character traits, we teach them the Bible wrongly. The Bible is fundamentally one story about God coming to rescue us because we cannot rescue ourselves with our moral character. Yes, there are great lessons in the Scripture, but the main hero of the Scripture is Jesus.

Sadly, people can use the Bible to teach kids to behave rather than to teach them the beauty of Jesus. And teaching our kids to behave apart from their hearts being transformed by Jesus is to enslave them with commands they will be unable to follow and character traits they will be unable to emulate. They must meet Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith. They need to see that Jesus came here for them and did not give them a map on how they could earn His approval.

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Note from Eric: To help parents teach their kids that they are already approved because of Jesus, I am excited to introduce a kids book that I wrote with my daughter, Evie. The name of the book is *[The Quokkas, the Snails, and the Land of Happiness](#)*. It is a parable about the grace and approval we receive when we trust Jesus and the freedom we now enjoy by not living for approval. You can pre-order the book on Amazon [here](#).

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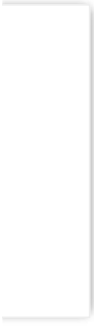
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