

## How To Obey

What constitutes acceptable obedience? “If he finally obeys after the 3<sup>rd</sup> time he was told, is that obedience? He’s still so little, you know.” “She did what I asked, but pouted the whole time - is that okay?” “He got most of it, but left some. Should I make him finish? It would be a lot easier to just finish it myself!” When I ask myself these questions, I remember one of the fundamental truths of parenting - the child’s relationship with his parent is training grounds for his relationship with his God. In other words, **would it be right if my child reacted to God the way he just reacted to my command?** The heart is the battleground. It is our responsibility to teach our child to obey us the way that the future adult ought to obey God. For an excellent example of what a person’s obedience to God ought to be and an excellent example of a child who was trained to properly respond to a command, we look to Samuel.

I Samuel 3:8 “And the LORD called Samuel again the third time. And he arose and went to Eli, and said, Here am I; for thou didst call me.”

Built on this Scripture, we developed a motto for our children's obedience. Our home's simple, three-part test for obedience is: True obedience is **right away, all the way, and with a good attitude.**

**Right away** - “And he arose”

**If you find yourself telling your child a *second time*, then you must realize he disobeyed you the *first time*.** Start from infancy expecting immediate obedience. When our children were first learning this (1-3 yrs. old), they tried the age-old tactic of stalling by asking questions. “And then can we go play?” Or, “Did Johnny have to do that, too?” Because we were still in the training stage, my guaranteed response would be, “You may ask me that after you have obeyed.” 9 times out of 10 the question was forgotten by the time the child had obeyed. As we switched over to expecting that training to have sunk in (4 yrs. old), my response would be, “Have you obeyed yet?” Past that age, any stalling questions (or any other delaying tactics) were seen as disobedience and treated as such. As the songwriter Ron Hamilton wrote, “To delay is to disobey!”

**All the way** - “and went”

**Partial obedience is disobedience.** 9 out of 10 toys picked up is not picking up. Of course, as a parent you can only expect what you inspect. Check up on the child to be sure that your command was fully obeyed. If not, follow through until obedience has been completely completed!

**With a good attitude** - “the LORD called Samuel again the third time”

The amazing part of this story to me is that this really happened with a real little

person. This child immediately, completely, sweetly obeyed a *third* time after having been told twice, “You’re just hearing things, kid” by the very person he was trying to obey! **The heart of the child is the heart of the issue.** If you obey with a bad attitude you didn’t obey. Don’t let your child get away with grumbling obedience.

What a blessing Samuel was to the nation of Israel. And what a blessing your child can be! What a blessing it will be to herself and all those around that you trained your little future wife to obey her husband in this manner. What a blessing it will be to himself and all those around that you trained your little future church member to obey the authority of his pastor in this manner. Proper obedience to authority, especially our Final Authority, God, is an essential and invaluable life skill that a parent is in a unique position to teach, so when we are tempted to ‘let it slide’ then for that child’s sake - don’t! Every time insist upon and enforce obedience - **Right away, All the way, and With a good attitude.**