

JACK'S CORNER

QUESTION: My son only thinks about himself. He is constantly "bored" and can't seem to stick with anything. He wants everything "now." I'm afraid he's becoming a monster! I have loved him every way I know how. What can I do?

ANSWER: You have identified some **common characteristics of many well-to-do suburban kids**: a preoccupation with self ("the world is here for me" attitude), a need to be constantly entertained, a desire for instant gratification, a disinterest in long-term goals, and an attitude of entitlement.

In our love for our children, and in our desire to give them good things (often things we never had), we often fail to give them a chance to develop the character qualities that come from a life of hard work and struggle.

Believe you are loving your children well by insisting on the following:

1. **Commitment** to God, family, school, friends and work. "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength and love your neighbor as yourself." (MK 12:30-31).
2. **Living for others** by self-sacrificial servanthood. "The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve." (MT. 20:28)
3. **Perseverance** in accomplishment in both activities and relationships. "Let us run with perseverance the race that is marked out for us." (HEB. 12:1)
4. **Responsibility** for one's own happiness. "Happy are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness." (MT. 5:6)

Convince your children that commitment, living for others, perseverance, and responsibility are important by **modeling them yourself**.

Specific actions would include the following:

1. Seek frequent opportunities to **give to others in a hands-on way**. This is especially important to do as a family when the child is young.

2. **Don't let your children quit** when they have made a commitment. Help them experience the satisfaction and accomplishment of "sticking it out." Empathize, commiserate, but don't let quitting become the easy out.
3. Provide the opportunity of **long-term projects**. Prepare them for a world where "instant gratification" is not always the norm. Being able to provide every material want, doesn't mean a parent should.
4. **Don't habitually rescue** your children from consequences. They will become morally bankrupt. Accountability molds godly behavior.
5. Don't take responsibility for your child's happiness. **Challenge your child to live with the attitude of Christ** and happiness might just come along in the process.

The older your child is, the harder these things are to implement. You must believe in their value, draw strength from your faith, and model the character of Christ.

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