

What We Love Most: Temperament and Misplaced Worship

Moms, Tots, and Beyond: April 11, 2018

TEMPERAMENT: how a person approaches and reacts to the world; tends to be innate but can be affected by environment, health, and social context

Two General Temperaments: Relationships to Authority

Compliant: agreeable, obedient, cooperative, tractable, accommodating, trainable, manageable, orderly, dutiful, disciplined, gentle, meek, mild, easygoing

- Inclined to agree with others or follow rules, sometimes to an excessive degree
- Parents may find these children to be “a joy,” and receive praise and accolades from others, may feel successful at parenting. Parents may find these children so “easy” that they get missed or overlooked, or end up relying on the child as a confidante or “mini-adult.”
- Distortion: obeying out of fear, people-pleasing, self-righteousness, or simple dedication to “the rules”—making the system work for them

Strong-willed: determined, resolute, willful, hardheaded, headstrong, stubborn, obstinate, unyielding, disorderly, oppositional, dissident, non-conformist, contrary, insubordinate, intense, spirited, passionate, bold, courageous

- Inclined to challenge the status quo; to test boundaries, especially as a means of learning or gathering information; to live at “full throttle”
- Parents may feel exhausted, with a sense of having to be “on” at all time; may experience a sense of failure, sometimes stemming from others’ judgment; and may find themselves in frequent power struggles with the child
- Distortion: I only want to obey if the command makes sense to me, if I can buy into it. Desire for mastery, control, authority, and respect.

Key Principles from Last Week

- All people reflect something of God’s character/likeness (even when marred by sin).
- God uses variety in humans’ personalities to express the breadth of His glory, wisdom, and creativity.
- All people, whether they tend to be compliant or strong-willed, need to be rescued from their sinfulness.
- God powerfully uses people of varying temperaments for His purposes.
- There are positive and negative traits associated with both compliant and strong-willed temperaments. Jesus perfectly reflects characteristics of both!

Focus for Today: Our children’s temperaments can cause them to be vulnerable to worshipping particular idols. And so can ours.

From Tripp's *Parenting*, Ch. 10 "Character"

Our children's misbehaviors flow from problems with character—which gets corrupted by the idols that they worship. "The heart of your child always lives under the rule of someone or something. And what rules the heart of your child will shape and determine how he deal with the situations and relationships of everyday life" (p. 141-142).

Key Bible Passages on Idolatry

"They exchanged the truth of God for a lie and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! . . . And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done. They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice."

--Romans 1:25

"But my people have exchanged their glorious God for worthless idols. Be appalled at this, you heavens, and shudder with great horror,' declares the LORD. 'My people have committed two sins: They have forsaken me, the spring of living water, and have dug their own cisterns, broken cisterns that cannot hold water.'"

--Jeremiah 2:11b-13

In *Counterfeit Gods*, Tim Keller writes, "An idol is whatever you look at and say, in your heart of hearts, 'If I have that, then I'll feel my life has meaning, then I'll know I have value, then I'll feel significant and secure.'"

In *The Cry of the Soul*, Dan Allender writes, "In idolatrous worship, we are exalting self-sufficiency and self-determining power. An idol is really nothing more than an object or idea or desire that allows the [creature]-creator to worship itself The great delusion of idolatry is that we can find rapture in ourselves . . . without bowing before the glory of God."

Think about humans' temperamental leanings toward compliance or willfulness, whether they are children or adults. What idols are people of each temperament prone to worship? How are they seeking to find value, significance, and security? How do they seek to find rapture in themselves rather than bowing before God's glory? (See Bible passages on the next page to trigger thoughts.)

COMPLIANT:

STRONG-WILLED:

Food for Thought as We Consider Compliance and Willfulness

“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.” --Ephesians 2:8-9

“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” --Philippians 4:13

“But he said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.’ Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me.” --II Corinthians 12:9

Encouragements for Parents of Compliant Kids (thoughts from Diane Telian)

- ❖ Don’t be too quick to assume, “I’m doing something right.” Trust the Lord rather than your seeming parenting success.
- ❖ Don’t neglect the redemptive, restorative benefits of discipline with your compliant child. Encourage healthy repentance rather than just avoidance of punishment.
- ❖ Emphasize God’s kind knowledge of His children—that “perfect love casts out fear” (I John 4:18; Psalm 139).
- ❖ Draw out “deep waters” with your compliant child, asking questions to help them put their real issues on the table with you (Proverbs 20:5).
- ❖ Help them gain freedom from the myth that their own righteousness must be sufficient—and to instead embrace the truth that Jesus’ righteousness is sufficient! Help them see that it’s okay to be in need of grace, to accept themselves as sinners who can’t rescue themselves. Help them learn the appropriateness of guilt over sin vs. the inappropriateness of shame over weaknesses/accidents/embarrassments.

Encouragements for Parents of Strong-Willed Kids

- ❖ Seek opportunities to help them recognize themselves as “God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for [them] to do” (Ephesians 2:10). They can often receive a large amount of negative feedback at home and school.
- ❖ Emphasize God’s wisdom, power, and goodness [his character], which we can trust even when His ways may not make sense to us.
- ❖ Ask God to give you special compassion and tenderness for them. Remember that they, too, have been given a difficult task of reining in a strong spirit—their own.
- ❖ Enlist them as problem-solvers, and show authentic respect for their ideas.
- ❖ Help them learn to acknowledge and accept their weaknesses and need for others’ help, as uncomfortable as that can feel for them.
- ❖ Ask God to give you gratitude for the ways that a strong-willed child will expose the idols of your own heart (reputation, rest, peace).