

I am sure every parent has said it. And as a consequence every child has experienced it. And, no doubt, every child then repeats it when they become parents - but what is the point?

I'm thinking of the question, "What do you say?" The parent, almost hovering over the child, waiting for and urging them to say the appropriate magic word. There are three magic words.

After receiving a gift - the magic word is, "Thank you." Sometimes the person giving the gift doesn't let go until the child says it! Does this really teach the child to be thankful - or merely teach them to say things they don't really mean? And from the perspective of the person giving the gift does the "forced" gratitude actually mean anything?

After asking for something - the magic word is, "Please." Again, sometimes the request is denied until the equivalent of "Open Sesame" is uttered. Only then does the child gain access to the cave of wonders. Have you noticed this backfires. Children, and even some adults, think that if they say please long enough, saying it 3 consecutive times for emphasis, or even make it a "pretty" please, they will eventually get what they so desperately want.

And perhaps the hardest one of all, after they've done something wrong, "Now what do you say?" You can tell this is the hardest one because you often have to spell it out for them, "Say sorry!" Body language and tone often completely contradict the word that comes out of the mouth. And even if it appears sincere what really matters is the attitude of the heart. And if the heart is truly sorry would an apology need to be demanded or forced? And again, from the perspective of the one aggrieved, what is the value of a begrudged sorry. Does it make the hurt any less? Does it make it easier to forgive? I don't think so.

As I said, "what is the point?" Or more specifically, "What does this really teach our children about how to speak and interact with others?" And, on a far deeper and spiritual level, "What dangers are there in the effect this will have on them when they want to interact with God?"

Our Father God wants us to say Sorry, Thank you and Please. But he wants us to learn to say them in the right way.

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