

KIDS WANT PARENTS TO BE PARENTS

by Brian Burgess, Forefront Families LLC

How we love to be liked. How we like to be loved. It is part of human nature to love and be loved. When we go through adolescence we will do just about anything to gain the approval of our peers. Even as adults we will sometimes go through all sorts of gyrations, contortions and inner turmoil just to present an image that will look good to others. We may not be happy inwardly, but we want people to notice us and like what they see. We may not even be fully aware of the reasons behind why we are acting this way, but we seem driven to create a popular image that in turn will lead to people liking us.

That may be fine when, as adolescents, we are trying to find an identity. It is important that when we become adults we know who we are. We have by now worked out a set of core values that we have determined to live by. We have some idea of the purpose God created us for and we are training and practicing to move in that direction. Now we are moving into maturity and are gaining knowledge and wisdom. Some find this mature state earlier than others, while others never find it at all!

It is not OK to do everything you can to be liked by your children. Some answers you give your child may prove to be very unpopular with them. Some requests your boss makes, may not be to your liking but the boss is boss. You may be requested to do something by a police officer and you do it because that's the law. Likewise, as a parent, you know what's best for your child and none of us should be afraid of being unpopular because we made a reasonable request of our child.

In my career, having worked over 40 years with children and families, I have seen just about everything you could imagine about relationships between parents and children. Let me tell you just one story to illustrate the point. An 8th Grade girl was sent to my office for discipline. She was being uncooperative and disrespectful to a teacher. As she sat down I asked her to tell me her mother's phone number. "Mr. Burgess. It's no use me giving it to you because she won't do anything," she retorted. I asked her again, telling her that I had heard that sort of excuse many times. "Sir, you know that I haven't been in much trouble since I've been in Middle School. The few times I have had to get my mother up here she puts on a great show. She tells y'all that she will sort me out when we get home. We go out to the car and not another word is said about it." Intrigued by her story I was dying to ask her a question. "What would you like your mother to do?" I inquired. The reply reinforced what I have deemed to be true. She said, "If my mother only said no occasionally, then I'd know she loved me." Those were her words verbatim!

It is too easy to want to be a friend to our children. Initially, it seems easier. They don't want that. They want us to be a parent. Friendship comes later when our children become adults. I'm not suggesting we are not friendly and loving to our children. What I am portending is that we first and foremost be the parent. Don't give in to the mistaken idea that if you can be your child's friend, all will be sweet. It has a nasty habit of turning on you and slapping you in the face. Then you get hurt, especially when your child in adolescence turns around and rejects your 'friendship'.

Set boundaries for yourself. I encourage you to make decisions for your child's requests that are based on your core values, on what is right, what is responsible and what is best for your child. Only then will they realize that the world does not revolve around them. They will learn responsibility and become mature. Our children are too precious to be crippled by us undermining what is rightfully ours...the right to be a parent.

If you have any comments or questions on this subject, please do not hesitate to contact us at sally@forefrontfamilies.org. We invite you to also check out our website at www.forefrontfamilies.org and our blog site at www.forefrontfamilies.blogspot.com for further assistance.