

OBEY WITH A HAPPY HEART

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Samuel was an important priest and prophet in Israel. He was a great leader and example because he obeyed God above all else. He was faithful when others, like Eli's sons and King Saul, were not.

The first time we read about Samuel's obedience, he was still young. He was awoken at night by someone calling his name. He ran to Eli. Imagine that: A child coming right away when being called! When Eli denied calling him and sent him back to bed, Samuel went without complaining and arguing. This happened three times! No whining. Are you picturing your kids? Or yourself? I know I would have been grumbling after the first time.



Finally, Eli realized it must be *God* calling Samuel and instructed Samuel to answer. Samuel followed the instructions and obeyed God too. Samuel's obedience to Eli was a forerunner to his obedience to God. Similarly, when our kids learn to obey parents and other trusted authority figures, being obedient to God into adulthood will not be a stretch for them.

Samuel's obedience established his ministry. Because of his willingness to obey, he shone like a star amid a "crooked generation" (Philippians 2:15) and restored truth, justice, and purity to the temple.

What are some ways to establish a heart of obedience in our children?

Model: How we respond to authority will affect how obedient our kids are. Do we grumble about our bosses? Do we ignore traffic laws or make excuses for why they do not apply to us in certain situations? How do we talk about our own parents and other authority figures in front of our kids? And do we make an effort to live according to God's Word? We are their example of obedience.

Encourage: We can encourage our kids to obey by noticing and rewarding quick obedience. When my son was a preschooler, we hit a patch where he obeyed slowly. Whenever he did obey right away, I drew a little heart on his hand and sealed it with a kiss. He loved the acknowledgment and showed off the hearts to his dad. As a bonus, the collection of little hearts was a reminder to obey throughout the day.

For older kids, praise quick obedience. Point out when obedience leads to positive results and connect the dots between frustration, anxiety, and procrastination.

Celebrating "good listening" at any age is essential to establish the habit of obedience.

Empower: Sometimes kids need visuals like calendars, checklists, or reminders to help them obey. Empower your kids by helping them set up the tools they need. Clear expectations and reasonable timelines are also helpful for longer, multi-step tasks. Giving two choices (both leading to your desired result) empowers your children, helps you avoid power struggles, and makes it easier for them to obey.

Pray this parent prayer: "Lord Jesus, thank you for the perfect example of obedience you set. We praise you for clear directions in your Word on how we should obey. Please help us be good role models of willing obedience. Help us lead our children to obedience to establish their ministries, like Samuel, so they may grow in favor with others and be powerful leaders in your kingdom, shining like lights amid their generation. Amen."

Want to do a deep dive? Check out Family Fire's article [What's a Parent to Do: How to Get Kids to Obey](#).

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