

# FIGHT FOR THEIR HEARTS

BY REGGIE JOINER

I DISTINCTLY REMEMBER HAVING A CONVERSATION WITH MY OLDEST DAUGHTER ONE NIGHT WHEN I WAS TUCKING HER INTO BED. IT WAS ONE OF THOSE DAYS WHEN SHE HAD GOTTEN IN ABOUT AS MUCH TROUBLE AS A FIVE-YEAR-OLD CAN. RIGHT BEFORE I TURNED OUT THE LIGHTS, I WAS COMPELLED TO ASK HER THIS QUESTION: "DO YOU THINK I LOVE YOU MORE WHEN YOU'RE GOOD OR MORE WHEN YOU'RE BAD?"

SHE IMMEDIATELY RESPONDED, "YOU LOVE ME MORE WHEN I'M GOOD!" MY HEART SANK WHEN I REALIZED THAT WAS HER PERCEPTION OF OUR RELATIONSHIP. I TRIED TO APOLOGIZE TO HER AND STARTED THAT NIGHT REPEATING TO HER OVER TIME, "I HOPE YOU WILL ALWAYS REMEMBER THAT I LOVE YOU THE SAME WHEN YOU ARE GOOD OR BAD."

IT'S SO EASY FOR US TO MAKE THE RULES MORE IMPORTANT THAN THE RELATIONSHIP. IT'S IN THE TONE OF OUR VOICE, OUR BODY LANGUAGE, AND OUR EYES. IF WE ARE NOT CAREFUL, DISAPPOINTMENT IN OUR KIDS' BEHAVIOR CAN BE TRANSLATED INTO THEIR HEARTS AS REJECTION.

THE TRUTH IS OUR CHILDREN WILL ALWAYS CHALLENGE THE RULES AND DEBATE OUR REASONING, BUT WE SHOULD STRIVE TO PARENT IN A WAY THAT WILL NEVER ALLOW THEM TO QUESTION HOW MUCH WE LOVE THEM.

LOOKING BACK NOW, I REALIZE I NEVER EXPLAINED THE RULES SO CLEARLY THAT MY CHILDREN AGREED AND SAID IN UNISON, "OH, NOW WE UNDERSTAND, FATHER! YOU HAVE EXPLAINED IT SO WELL. WE WILL DO EXACTLY WHAT YOU SAY." IT IS NATURAL AND NORMAL FOR KIDS TO CHALLENGE THE PROCESS. AS THEY MOVE TOWARD INDEPENDENCE, IT WILL HAPPEN MORE FREQUENTLY. THAT'S THE PROBLEM WITH RULES — YOU CAN ALWAYS DEBATE THEIR RATIONALE. BUT, YOU CAN'T DEBATE A TRUSTED RELATIONSHIP.

UNFORTUNATELY, MOST OF US PARENTS ARE BETTER SKILLED AT FIGHTING TO WIN THE ARGUMENT THAN WE ARE AT FIGHTING TO WIN THE HEART. THE RULES YOU GIVE AND THE REASONS BEHIND THEM WILL CARRY MUCH MORE WEIGHT WHEN YOU COMMUNICATE IN A STYLE THAT VALUES THE RELATIONSHIP. IT'S ONE OF THE MOST POWERFUL THINGS A PARENT CAN DO.

**SUPER  
KIDS**  
SK

**MEMORY VERSE**  
**BE STRONG AND COURAGEOUS.**  
**DO NOT BE AFRAID.**  
**FOR THE LORD YOUR GOD**  
**GOES WITH YOU.**  
**DEUTERONOMY 31:6 NIV**

**KEY QUESTION**

**WHO IS ALWAYS  
WITH YOU?**

**BOTTOM LINE**

**GOD IS ALWAYS  
WITH ME!**

**STORY FOCUS**

**I CAN BE COURAGEOUS!**  
**RAHAB AND THE SPIES**  
**JOSHUA 2:1-22**

**BASIC TRUTH**  
**GOD LOVES ME.**

**CUDDLE TIME**

**CUDDLE UP AND PRAY**  
**"DEAR GOD, THANK YOU FOR GIVING**  
**ME (CHILD'S NAME). I LOVE HIM SO**  
**MUCH AND KNOW THAT YOU LOVE HIM**  
**EVEN MORE! WE KNOW YOU ARE ALWAYS**  
**WITH US, HELP TO REMEMBER THAT SO WE**  
**CAN ALWAYS BE BRAVE AND DO WHAT**  
**YOU WANT US TO DO. IN JESUS'**  
**NAME WE PRAY.**  
**AMEN."**

**FOLLOW US!**

**@WATERSKIDSNA**

