

Stop, Look & Listen by Laura Shaw

Actor & Comedian Ray Romano is quoted as saying, *“The more I go through parenting, the more I say I owe my mother an apology.”* Too funny and TOO true! As a mother of a post toddler, a pretty-soon-to-be-tween & a pre-teenager, I can honestly say that I don’t know what I’m doing a good majority of the time! Some days, the goin’ is pretty good. However, when “those” times come—the ones where behavior problems, entitlement issues and disrespect rise up---then I lean on the wisdom of the great parents I know who have gone before me. One of the best nuggets of advice I ever received on taming “those” behaviors was several years ago from a mother of five. She suggested starting with three things before trying any kind of punishment: 1. Get eye contact (have them stop what they’re doing and look me in the eye), 2. Cut back verbal freedom (no interrupting...stay still & listen) & 3. Require a verbal and physical response (“Yes, mom.”). After laughing under my breath at this simplistic method, I decided it was worth a try---and let me just say, I was amazed at the results! When I expected them to pay attention to me, look me in the eye, show respect in the middle of it, and then have them agree with me at the end, (as long as I applied it consistently,) we had a whole new relationship of great conversation, mutual respect & order in our household.

Could the same be true in our spiritual lives as well? One might be quoted as saying, “The more I go through parenting, the more I say I owe my Heavenly Father an apology.” The correlation is truly amazing! God is our Father, and “those” times come for us as His sons and daughters, too. Could the same three actions listed above apply in the relationship with our Father as well?

Action #1: Give Him Eye Contact

“I lift up my eyes to the hills—where does my help come from?” Psalm 121:1

“I lift up my eyes to you, to You whose throne is in heaven.” Psalm 123:1

“But my eyes are fixed on You, O Sovereign LORD; in You I take refuge...” Psalm 141:8a

“A discerning man keeps wisdom in view, but a fool’s eyes wander to the ends of the earth.” Proverbs 17:24

“Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith...” Hebrews 12:2

Point #2: Cut Back on our Verbal Freedoms

“But blessed are your eyes because they see, and your ears because they hear.” Matthew 13:16

“Be still, and know that I am God...” Psalm 46:10a

“but I have stilled and quieted my soul; like a weaned child with its mother, like a weaned child is my soul within me.” Psalm 131:2

“even a fool is thought wise if he keeps silent, and discerning if he holds his tongue.” Proverbs 17:28

“...turning your ear to wisdom and applying your heart to understanding...” Proverbs 2:2

Point #3: Grant Him a verbal & physical response

“...I answered, ‘Amen, LORD.’” Jeremiah 11:5b

“In Damascus there was a disciple named Ananias. The Lord called to him in a vision, ‘Ananias!’

‘Yes, Lord,’ he answered.” Acts 9:10b

“I will hasten and not delay to obey your commands.” Psalm 119:60

“He replied, ‘Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it.’” Luke 11:23

“This is love for God: to obey His commands. And His commands are not burdensome....” 1 John 5:3

If we can ask children to “Stop, Look & Listen” before they cross the street, maybe we can remind ourselves to do the same before we kick off the comforter. And the exclamation mark can be to end our day in obedience! This is impossible to do on our own, friends. Just as a youth needs a loving parent to help him do these things, so we need our Daddy’s help as well. When we ask Him for it, He will not disappoint us: *“‘Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit,’ says the Lord Almighty.”* (Zechariah 4:6b) By the guidance of the Holy Spirit, hopefully each of us can be heard quoting the following: *“The more I submit to His parenting, the more I say ‘Yes, Lord’ to my Heavenly Father in place of an apology.”* Amen and AMEN!