

The Gospel Unashamed

"From the cowardice that shrinks from new truth, from the laziness that is content with half-truths, from the arrogance that thinks it knows all truth, O, God of Truth, deliver us."

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~ All articles are written by George L. Faull, Rel. D. unless otherwise stated ~

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Parents: Your Children Should Not Be Your Friends

--By John Rosemond

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When Baby Boomers get together, we often talk about our observations of parenting in these postmodern times, one of which is that today's parents seem, as a rule, to want to be liked by their children, to want to be their children's friends. That, we agree, is very odd. What is lacking in the life of an adult that they want to be liked by a child? we ask.

Furthermore, what could it possibly mean that a child – an emotionally immature, ignorant (no matter how smart) human being – likes you? Or, at any given moment in time, does not?

Well, to begin with, it means to the parent in question that he or she is doing a splendid job. Being liked by one's child is the measure of a parent these days, or so it seems. If you are liked, then you need correction and you will know when you have corrected yourself sufficiently when your child begins to like you, or like you again.

It is indeed odd that grown-ups – think in those terms. (If you happen to be one of the parents in question, and you are offended at my characterization of you, fine. Offense may be prerequisite to your coming to your senses.) "What is so

bad about wanting to be your child's friend? the reader may ask. It is an excellent question with at least five bads:

First – a parent's task is to raise a child out of childhood into adulthood.

To accomplish that requires a parent who acts capable of the heavy lifting often required. The parent-friend lowers himself to his child's level (the child, after all, cannot rise to the level of the adult), thus rendering himself so incapable.

Second – a parent who desires, above all else, wonderful relationship with one's child is incapable of delivering effective discipleship.

Discipleship, if it is properly corrective, does not make the recipient feel warm and fuzzy toward the agent of correction. That is contrary to the intent of having a wonderful relationship, because the overarching Rule of such is "Thou shalt never make thy child upset at you."

Third – and for the reason immediately above the parent in question allows himself to be manipulated by his child's emotional output, which becomes, over time, more and more uncivil.

Said parent interprets his child's emotional outbursts as evidence (a) he has done something wrong and needs to correct it or (b) that something is wrong in his child's life and he needs to discover it and fix it.

That boils down to the child being in COMPLETE CONTROL of the relationship. The parent-child relationship, therefore, is inverted, which is bad for both parties.

Fourth – we have defined a co-dependent relationship in which said parent becomes an enabler.

In this case, the job of the adult enabler is to always make sure his child is happy. "What's wrong with that?" a reader shouts. Because that is not in your job description, which ways you are to prepare your child for responsible living in the real world, and the real world is full of disappointment, failure, loss, and other stuff that isn't "happy".

Accepting those realities is to become emotionally resilient, and emotional resilience is key to personal satisfaction. It is more important than success.

Truly happy people are not in co-dependent relationships with dedicated personal enablers. People who are being enabled have not had to accept full responsibility for state of their lives. Their enablers are the responsible parties.

Fifth – enabled people almost always think of themselves as victims.

Enabling always fails. No amount can defeat life's realities. So, enabled people are unhappy; either angry unhappy or depressed unhappy. All of which is why I am convinced that the post-1960's

phenomenon of parents trying to be their kid's friends is a major contributor to childhood, and especially adolescent, mental health problems.

If you think you can defend your attempt to be your child's friend, I'd love to hear from you. Email me at radio@rosemond.com. If I use your defense in a future column, rest assured I won't use your name.