

A Little Girl and Her Messy Room

A mother once told her daughter, “You have two weeks to clean up your room. When the 2 weeks are over, anything and everything that is on the floor will be thrown away or given away.” The mother hoped this would spur her child into action. The child had driven her mother to her wits end with mess, chaos, and disorganization in her room.

She gently reminded the seven-year-old every day for two weeks about the upcoming purge. The child would say, “thank you Mommy! I will do it later,” and bound off on her joyful way.

The day had finally arrived, and the mother reminded her daughter before leaving for school, “anything that is not on your bed or put away, will be gone when you come back from school today. You had better clean up before you leave.” The daughter replied, “Ok Mommy, thank you! It is all taken care of already.”

When the child went off to school, the mother hoped and prayed that the child had cleaned her room. Much to her shock and dismay, the child had only picked up a handful of toys, which she had placed neatly on her bed. Upon returning from school, the daughter ran to her room, excited to see what had happened while she was gone. Had her mother followed through? Were her toys, books, games, and clothes all gone or were they put away nicely? Much to the daughter’s shock, her mother had cleaned out her room! Almost all of her things were gone, except for the few neatly placed items on her bed.

The daughter ran to her mother wrapping her arms around her, and exclaimed, “THANK YOU MOMMY! THANK YOU FOR CLEANING MY ROOM!! Now I can play in there again.” It had backfired. The daughter was not upset, she was overjoyed!

Both the mother and daughter learned important lessons that day. One lesson for the daughter was, “you can trust what you mother says.” The mother learned that she would have to make her daughter clean her own room. With significantly less clutter in the room, the daughter had a much easier time managing the mess from then on.

Now how does this childhood story relate to our faith? There are many connections we can draw. The first being God tells us what is to come. He lays out the rules, the commandments, the expectations. One list of such rules is the 10 commandments found in Exodus 20.

Read Exodus 20, what stands out to you?

Are there things you haven’t read before, or did not recall?

Jesus boils the law down to the two greatest commandments in Matthew 22:36-40, ³⁶ “Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?” ³⁷ And he [Jesus] said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. ³⁸ This is the great and first commandment. ³⁹ And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. ⁴⁰ On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.”

Why does God give us commandments and rules? Does He simply want to control our lives and make life drudgery and boring?

Rules are often set to keep people safe. Sometimes safety is physical. Other times safety is emotional or spiritual. God calls himself a jealous God. He desires our worship. He wants to be ruler of our hearts. He wants what is best for us. If we are often wandering off into briar patches or chasing after everything that sparkles, we will not be heading in the way God has planned for us. We may be running off a cliff instead of the safe pasture He has already prepared.

Luther’s Small Catechism reminds us that the law has three uses: a curb, a mirror, and a guide. As a curb it limits or prevents outbursts of sin, helping to keep order in the world (1 Timothy 1:9-10.) As a mirror it shows us our sin (Romans 3:20; 7:7; 1 John 1:10.)

If you did not know you were sinful, would you need a Savior?

Finally, the third use of the law as a guide to direct our thoughts, words, and actions in God-pleasing ways (Psalm 119:105; Proverbs 6:23.) If you do not know what is wrong behavior, how do you know what is right? Read each of the passages mentioned above.

How does each one point to the uses of the Law? Is there one use of the law you tend to need to use the most?

The little girl in the story knew the room needed to be cleaned. She knew she could not play in such a disorganized and messy space. She knew the consequences for not doing what needed to be done, which leads us to the next lesson the little girl learned about God. She learned that there are consequences for our sins. When we know the law, but fail to keep it, it creates a mess. It creates a disaster zone.

What keeps us from a right relationship with God? Read James 2:10. What does this say about sin and our relationship with God? _____

If this is true, how do we gain a right relationship with God? Romans 5:15-21. There is a word used at the beginning of verse 15. In the English Standard Version, it is four letters long and begins with a ‘G’. How does this word impact our understanding of the restoration of our relationship with God? Ephesians 2:8; Romans 6:23

The little girl received a gift the day her mother purged her room. She received a gift of peace. We can see that from our heavenly Father as well. Apart from Christ, there is no peace. There is only condemnation. The last lesson the little girl learned that day was God can always be trusted to follow through. While her relationship with her mother was not perfect, it was still showing her how she could trust authority in her life to be consistent and faithful to their word. God tells us outright!

Read the following verses, what do they say about who God is and why He can be trusted:

Deuteronomy 7:9;

Psalm 71:22;

1 Corinthians 1:9;

Deuteronomy 32:4;

Psalm 98:3;

1 Corinthians 10:13;

Our family of origin plays a tremendous role in our faith development and understanding of God. Thankfully, our God is loving and trustworthy, even when those around us are not. The peace that comes through Jesus is so much greater than the peace given from a tidy room. He says in John 14:27 and 16:33, that the peace He gives is not as the world gives. His peace is everlasting. We do not need to fear in this world because Christ has already conquered it.

One of the lessons the mother learned that day was her word has value. We can see how God's Word is unchanging (Hebrews 13:8). Our words have value to God as well. He hears us when we pray in Jesus' name.

We can trust that He will answer us, and He will give us what we need (John 15:16; Matthew 7:11). God also shows us how much He loves us by how He cares of us, just as the mother cared for her daughter and desired her to be physically safe.

Read Deuteronomy 8:5 and Hebrews 12:7-11. What do these verses tell us about how God shows us His love, and the fruit of that love?

It's always encouraging to see how the Old Testament is quoted in the New Testament. The connection to the Hebrew people and God's people in the New Testament and then onward to us. God is unchanging, and just like the little girl and mother in the story we can always learn something new about Him when we focus on how He is revealing Himself in our daily lives.

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