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Fostering Caring in Children

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In our achievement-based society, it is easy to raise children to be successful and forget that we must also raise them to be kind. Even children recognize this trend, with research demonstrating that 80% of children believe that their parents are more concerned with them being successful or happy than them being kind to others (Making Caring Common Project).

Of course, children will learn some kindness (hopefully!) from a loving environment and a natural inclination to care for others. But by following a few proactive steps laid out by the Making Caring Common Project, we can help to nurture this virtue.

Make caring for others a priority: Encourage children to balance their own needs and desires with the needs of others.

- o Example: If a child wants to back out on a commitment to a volunteer activity or even social engagement, ask them to consider whether they will be letting others down.



Provide opportunities for kids to practice caring and gratitude: To be caring, selfless people, children need to make generosity a habit. Through repetition, adults can help make a caring attitude in children second nature.

- o Example: If a younger sibling needs help brushing their teeth or getting seconds for dinner, offer an older child the opportunity to be a mentor. This behavior shouldn't be rewarded, but rather a regular part of family life—each family member pitching in to help another.

Expand your children's circle of concern: Children should learn to care for more than just the people who they know intimately. This can include people who aren't in their social circle, people who have different cultural backgrounds and even people in foreign countries.

- o Example: Facilitate times when children can show generosity to the wider community. This could include giving to foreign missions, volunteering at a soup kitchen or even just inviting a child outside of their group of friends to a birthday party.

Be a strong role model and mentor: We can't just teach children about the virtue of generosity—we have to practice it ourselves.

- o Example: Regularly volunteering at Church or in the community will demonstrate that we don't just talk about caring for others, we actually do it.

Guide children to manage destructive feelings: Generosity is often quelled by feelings such as anger, shame or jealousy.

- o Example: A child may have been hurt in the past by being excluded from social activities by his or her peers. As a result of that hurt, they might be tempted to strike back by excluding others. By helping them examine their feelings, hopefully they can be persuaded to rise to a higher standard and treat others the way they want to be treated.

(Material gleaned from [The Washington Post](#), based on the [Making Caring Common Project](#))

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What is Your Opinion?

What is one way you can live out the message of Good Friday?

- Forgive someone who has hurt me in some way.
- Pray for the strength to let go of a grudge or anger.
- Encourage a loved one to embrace kindness and reconciliation.
- Allow my own suffering to join with the suffering of Jesus.
- I'm not sure.

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