

have laces that need to be tied. So he sits down and begins to fumble with his laces. He has no idea how to tie a bow. He could fumble with his laces for eternity and never end up with a bow, but when you reach down to help him, he slaps away your hand. That slap is not about lace ownership; it's about self-sufficiency. He desperately wants to believe that he can do quite well without your assistance or instruction. The teenage daughter who is arguing with you as you seek to impart to her some needed wisdom is arguing because she believes in her self-sufficiency, and because she does, she thinks she already has all the wisdom she needs.

No one is autonomous. No one is self-sufficient. Everyone needs parenting care. To believe anything else is to be dangerously deluded and headed for trouble. Parents, the scary thing is that our kids buy into both of these lies. You can see it in their actions, reactions, and responses.

So What Do Lost Children Need?

Lost children need:

1. *Insight.* The problem with lost children is that they don't see themselves as lost and because they don't, they don't understand how much they need your parenting care. So our children need not just to be told what to do, but they also need to be enabled to see. We need to look for ways to help them to understand the condition of danger that causes their behavior to be disruptive.
2. *Compassion.* It doesn't make any sense to get mad at somebody who is lost. It doesn't make any sense to make it a matter of personal offense against you. It doesn't make any sense to condemn a lost person with words or throw a punishment at them and walk away. Lost people need understanding and compassion. Lost children don't need parents who are irritated by their lostness, but rather who mourn it and long for them to be found.
3. *Hope.* As our children begin to admit the condition that they are in, and as they begin to own the danger they are to

themselves, what they need to be assured of is that help is available. They need to know that not only are we not their adversaries, we are their allies. We are here to do anything we can to protect, support, and guide them. But even more, they need to know that God sent his Son to earth so that when they begin to confess their need and cry out for help, they would have just the help that they need.

4. *Rescue.* Because of all that this chapter has discussed, parenting is not a behavior-control mission; it is a heart-rescue mission. The only hope for a lost child is a radical transformation of his heart. As parents, we have no ability to change our children's hearts, but the heavenly Father does, and we are his tools in the lives of our children. So we don't settle for the announcement of rules, the threat of punishment, and the enforcement of consequences. We are looking for every opportunity to address heart issues in our children, praying that as we do, God will work the change in them that only he can accomplish.
5. *Wisdom.* Our children need the wisdom to know when to say no. A successful life is all about saying no, but not to the authorities in your life, or to the people you've been called to love, or to God's call, but no to yourself. In our children's lostness they will think things that they should not think, they'll desire things they should not desire, and they will be pulled by dangerous emotions and seductive temptations. And if they don't learn when and how to say no, they will end up living as they were never intended to live.

So parents, what's the bottom line? Well, as Jesus came to seek and to save those who are lost, he calls us to love and to rescue our lost children. We don't give way to irritation, frustration, impatience, or discouragement. We move toward our children with the grace of forgiveness, wisdom, correction, and rescue, and we pray every day that God will empower our work as parents, and that he will change our children at that deepest of levels where every human being, including us, needs to be changed.