

THE HIGH PLAINS PREACHER

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Judgment with a Kiss

by Fr. Jim Schmitmeyer

A friend of mine invited inside his house for a cup of coffee. His four-year-old son, Ben, was standing in the corner. The boy had been assigned some “time out.” The offense: Pushing his younger brother.

My friend poured the coffee and sat down. “That’s long enough, Ben. You can go.”

Ben was embarrassed and attempted to get out of the kitchen as fast as he could. But that kitchen was small and he hugged the wall to put as much distance between himself and his father as possible.

Then my friend did an amazing thing. He reached out his arm, scooped the boy into his lap and...kissed him on the cheek!

He whispered in his ear. “You know why you were in the corner, Ben?” Ben’s face was in a pout. His father kissed him again. “Don’t be pushing your brother.” He kissed him again. “You have to listen to me and your mother. You hear?” Two more kisses.

The boy nodded, turned his face and kissed him back. Then he slid off his dad’s lap and went his way.

I’ll never forget that scene. A perfect illustration, in my opinion, of the kind of love that flows from the heart of God, a perfect blend of compassion and correction.

It is also an illustration of obedience. The boy, Ben, was learning obedience. Sadly, many adults, including myself, have a negative, knee-jerk reaction to the word *obedience* that resembles that of a four-year-old.

We hear the word obedience and, immediately, we assume the posture of Ben, that boy pouting in the corner of the kitchen, his arms crossed, refusing to even look at his Dad who just corrected him.

But “holy obedience” is different from “blind obedience.” Holy obedience is dropping our arms, stepping out of the corner of the kitchen and allowing God to scoop our soul into his lap.

Like a mother’s kiss on the scraped-up knee of a child, holy obedience is resting in the assurance that God’s correction never arrives without a kiss to soothe away the hurt, the hurt that you yourself have caused.