**Raising “Entitled” Children**

by

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Entitlement. It’s become such a political and divisive word. Beyond that, the word “entitled” is used as a key descriptor of an entire generation of people – Generation Y, or “Millennials” as they are commonly called. This generation – born in the 80s and 90s – is one raised on technology, well-educated, self-expressive and described by many as Narcissistic and “entitled.”

But, you can’t put too much blame on Millennials, since most of them are the product of the “Me” generation – the Baby Boomers, who came to age during a time post-war government subsidies and sex, drugs and rock-and-roll. It stands to reason that children of Boomers would inherit some of their parents’ character traits.

Most Millennials have been raised by parents who fed them a steady diet of praise. These “helicopter parents” hovered over every aspect of their children’s lives. And, all in the name of self-esteem, they constantly told their kids they were special. As a result, studies have shown, they have a need for constant affirmation. In fact, it’s been reported that some large companies have corporate “praise teams” to fill this need for constant positive reinforcement.

As a thirty-something nestled right in between Generations X and Y, I identify with certain attributes – positive and negative – of both generations. And now as a parent myself, I often wonder (scratch that, worry) what this next generation of people we are raising will be like. While I don’t consider myself “entitled,” how can I assure that my kids won’t feel and act that way?

We all want our kids to feel special. And, in the biblical sense, they are. I believe the Bible makes it clear that we are each special in God’s sight. We were each “fearfully and wonderful made” ([Psalm 139:14](http://www.crosswalkmail.com/zwdwmdrlwzwkrfltkbjqgkvgrdkfpjjfzsrgmmtplpzldpr_jjrtnjbsmbmr.html)), made in God’s own image ([Genesis 1:27](http://www.crosswalkmail.com/vmfjvmfgjrjnfygtnkbzqndqfmnypbbyrhfqvvtpgprgmpk_jjrtnjbsmbmr.html)), and we are each given a unique set of gifts and talents ([1 Corinthians 12](http://www.crosswalkmail.com/izhnhzydngnwycdfwbkqtwptyzwcvkkcgmythhfvdvgdzvm_jjrtnjbsmbmr.html)).

But our children need to understand the difference between being “special” in God’s sight and acting like the world owes you something. How can I raise my kids to see themselves as special and loved by God, but realize the world out there isn’t required to feel the same way?

Our children need to know they aren’t entitled to a job. They have to work hard to get one. They aren’t entitled to a large home or a six-figure salary. Those things are earned. Even a loving family, sadly, isn’t an entitlement; it’s a gift and a blessing. There’s really only one guaranteed entitlement, and that’s the love bestowed on us by our Heavenly Father. Remember [John 3:16](http://www.crosswalkmail.com/wzgnlzdsnfnbdjsybwqmtbktdzbjvqqjfgdtllyvsvfszvz_jjrtnjbsmbmr.html)? God so loved “the world.” That includes all 7 billion plus of us. It’s guaranteed. We’ve done nothing to earn it. It’s not because we have done something special, it’s because *each* of us is, in fact, special.

It’s like David McCullough said in that [famous high school commencement that went viral last summer:](http://www.crosswalkmail.com/edqzsprhzdzfrqhkftlwvfjvrpfqyllqdbrvsskyhydhptr_jjrtnjbsmbmr.html) *The sweetest joys of life … come only with the recognition that you’re not special.* ***Because everyone is.***

McCullough’s speech got so much attention because he gave his millennial students a “reality check.” In his “You are not Special” speech, he says, *“Contrary to what your u9 soccer trophy suggests, your glowing seventh grade report card, despite every assurance of a certain corpulent purple dinosaur, that nice Mister Rogers and your batty Aunt Sylvia, no matter how often your maternal caped crusader has swooped in to save you… you’re nothing special.”*

What’s so often missed from his address – amid describing his students as *“pampered, cosseted, doted upon, helmeted, bubble-wrapped”* – is the ultimate point he makes: none of us is special because each of us is special.

We are each special because God made us that way. This world doesn’t really owe any of us anything, but we are in fact entitled to something. It’s something God has already given us – His love. He loves us first, without many of us bothering to love Him back. It’s hard to fathom that kind of love, but it gets easier as we look through the lens of parenthood. We don’t love our kids because they’ve done something. We love because we love them.

In this season of Advent, we are vividly reminded of God’s love – which He demonstrated by sending us the gift of “His only begotten Son” (there’s [John 3:16](http://www.crosswalkmail.com/tllmzjlcmwmklpcgkbfrdksdljkphffpwvldzzghchwcjbh_jjrtnjbsmbmr.html) again). As you gather with your family to celebrate the birth of Christ, reflect on how special we must be in God’s eyes for Him to do what He did. Let’s use it as an opportunity to remind our “entitled” children of what they are truly entitled to: God’s love. If we keep our eyes fixed on that, everything else this world can offer blurs into the periphery.