

LOVINGKINDNESS AND TRUTH

I just finished watching my two-year-old grandson for a few days while his parents took a little vacation prior to the arrival of his little sibling. I love my grand-children to the moon and back. I am the typical doting grandmother. I fix the foods they like; I allow them liberal snacks. I carry them, even though it taxes my physical strength to do so. I tickle, and make funny faces and silly sounds. I blow "wet willies" on their bare bellies when I change diapers. I play with them (even though playing with cars and trucks and trains could not possibly be more boring). I talk to them and try to decipher what they are saying to me -- no easy task sometimes.

But I also have to draw the line at times. My grandson knows from experience that Nana means what she says when she says if he does something again, she'll spank him. Consequently, when I instruct him about how he needs to behave when we're out, he generally obeys, as much as a mischievous two-year-old can. He knows that Nana loves him *and* that Nana speaks the truth.

Seventeen times in the Old Testament God is referred to as the God of lovingkindness and truth. The primary reference is Exodus 34:6, where God passed by Moses and proclaimed His name: "The Lord, the Lord God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth." Many of the other references are in the Psalms where the writer declares the greatness of God's lovingkindness and truth (Psalm 57:10, 86:15, 108:4, 117:2). They are abundant, above the heavens, reaching to the skies, everlasting.

Still other Psalms recount how God's lovingkindness and truth intersect with our lives. Psalm 25:10 says, "All the paths of the Lord are lovingkindness and truth to those who keep His covenant and His testimonies." As we believe and act in accordance with the truth we find in God's word, we are kept in the path of His lovingkindness. Psalm 26:3 is the testimony of a godly man who sees the connection between walking in God's truth and seeing His lovingkindness in action. "Your lovingkindness is before my eyes, and I have walked in your truth." In Psalm 40:10 David shows us that it is not a private matter. "I have not concealed Your loving-kindness and Your truth from the great congregation." We do a grave disservice if we only share God's love with people and not His truth, as well. Psalm 40:11 says, "Your lovingkindness and Your truth will continually preserve me."

God's lovingkindness and truth are inseparable. We cannot – we dare not – think we can receive His love and ignore His truth. What kind of grandma would I be if I loved, fed, snuggled, and played with my grandchildren but never disciplined them for willful disobedience or admonished them about how to behave? The world is full of dangers for little ones who aren't aware of them. God's word has warned us of the dangers of sin; we are not unaware. How can we expect to see His lovingkindness if we refuse to obey His truth? God loves us; this we know. We must also know that God speaks the truth, and we ignore it at our own peril.