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Why We Avoid Value Statements Like “Good Girl” or “Good Boy”

While phrases like “*good girl*” or “*good boy*” are usually meant to encourage children, they can actually be confusing or unhelpful over time.

Value statements label the **child** rather than the **behavior**. This can make children believe they are “good” only when they behave a certain way, or “bad” when they struggle. For young children—especially those with attention or emotional regulation challenges—this can increase shame, anxiety, or fear of making mistakes.

Instead, we focus on **specific behavior-based praise**, which helps children understand exactly what they did right and encourages them to repeat that behavior.

Example:

- “Good girl.”
- “You listened the first time and put your toys away—great job!”

This approach builds confidence, supports emotional growth, and teaches children that they are valued **all the time**, while their behaviors can be learned and improved.

From a Christian perspective, scripture reminds us that our worth comes from being created in God’s image and loved unconditionally (Psalm 139; Romans 8:38–39). Children—especially young ones—need to learn that their value never changes, even when their behavior does.

Instead of labeling the child, we focus on encouraging specific behaviors. This helps children understand what they did well while still knowing they are loved no matter what.

This approach teaches children that:

- Their identity is secure in Christ
- Their behavior is something they can learn and grow in.
- Mistakes are opportunities for learning, not a loss of love or approval.

By separating a child’s worth from their behavior, we reflect God’s grace while still guiding and disciplining with love. (Hebrews 12:11)