

8. Raising your children in God's way-Part 1

November 22, 2009

A group of expectant fathers were in a hospital waiting room, while their wives were in the process of delivering babies. A nurse came in and announced to one man that his wife had just given birth to twins. "That's quite a coincidence" he responded with a big smile, "I play for the Minnesota Twins!" A few minutes later another nurse came in and announced to another man that he was the father of triplets. "That's amazing," he exclaimed, "I work for the 3M company." At that point, a third man's face became extremely pale and fell off his chair and sat on the floor. Somebody asked him if he was OK. "No," he responded, "I happen to work for 7-11."

When I buy an electronic item from WalMart, it comes with a manual to show me how to use it. But my daughter Michelle didn't come into this world with a 'how-to-raise-this-baby' manual 28 years ago. I was 25 years old and I was a half scared to death and excited and totally ignorant about raising a child. I wish I had been a Christian, then. If I were, I could have used the Bible, especially the Book of Proverbs as my manual to raise her. To God be the glory, she turned out to be a fine young godly woman now.

I think that I am ready to be a grandpa. My wife told me that until I actually get to have my own grandchild, I can play with all the babies in our church.

Let's learn how to raise our children in God's way. Some of you may say, "My children are all grown up." Then, you can help your children to raise their children to be godly. Or some say, "We don't have children of our own," then, go steal somebody else's kids. No, just kidding.

Seriously, I believe that Christianity in America is one generation away from its extinction. I know that Jesus wins in the end according to the Book of Revelation, but it doesn't mention anything about America in those end time prophecies. If we don't raise our children with godly principles and Christian values according to the Word of God, the future of America is nothing but dark, carnal and demonic.

A. GOD'S WAY FROM THE BEGINNING

Proverbs 22:6 Train up a child in the way he should go, And when he is old he will not depart from it.

It has been said that it is easier to build a child than repair a man. I believe that the Lord entrusts us with children to raise them in His way from the beginning.

My words are dedicated to all of you who have the opportunity to make an investment in a growing child so that he or she might someday be whole and healthy, secure and mature. Granted, yours is a tough job. Relentless and thankless... at least for now. When the older people like me have a tendency to say young parents, "Enjoy, they grow up so fast," you are thinking, "If you enjoy so much, why don't you change diapers 50,000 times a day, clean up their mess and chase these kids around the house all day long?"

But nobody is better qualified to shape the thinking, to answer the questions, to assist during the struggles, to calm the fears, to blow cool air and kiss the owies, to administer the discipline, to know the innermost heart, or to love and affirm the life of your child than you.

When it comes to “*training up the child in the way he should go,*” you’ve got the inside lane, Mom and Dad. So, take it easy! Remember “*children are wet cement.*” They take the shape of your mold. They’re learning even when you don’t think they’re watching. And those little guys and gals are plenty smart. They hear the tone of your voice as well as terms of your words. They read looks as well as books. They figure out motives, even those you think you can hide. They are not fooled, not in the long haul.

The two most important tools of parenting are time and touch. Believe me, both are essential. If you and I hope to release from our nest fairly capable and relatively stable people who can soar and make it on their own, we’ll need to pay the price of saying “No” to many of our own wants and needs in order to interact with our children. And we’ll have to keep breaking down the distance that only naturally forms as our little people grow up.

Time and touch. Listen to your boys and girls, look them in the eye, put your arms around them, hug them close, tell them how valuable they are. Don’t hold back. Take the time to do it. Reach. Touch.

This concept of spending quality time is a cop out and lame excuse of the parents who are too busy for their own things. When you are tempted to get involved in some energy-draining, time-consuming opportunity that will only increase the distance between you and yours, ask yourself hard questions like, “Could my time be better spent at home?” and “Won’t there be similar opportunities in the years to come?” Then turn your attention to your boy or girl. Hold nothing back as you renew that precious relationship.

B. FIVE AREAS OF TEACHING

1) Teach them to stand alone.

Proverbs 1:10-19 My son, if sinners entice you, Do not consent. 11 If they say, “Come with us, Let us lie in wait to shed blood; Let us lurk secretly for the innocent without cause; 12 Let us swallow them alive like Sheol, And whole, like those who go down to the Pit; 13 We shall find all kinds of precious possessions, We shall fill our houses with spoil; 14 Cast in your lot among us, Let us all have one purse”-- 15 My son, do not walk in the way with them, Keep your foot from their path; 16 For their feet run to evil, And they make haste to shed blood. 17 Surely, in vain the net is spread In the sight of any bird; 18 But they lie in wait for their own blood, They lurk secretly for their own lives. 19 So are the ways of everyone who is greedy for gain; It takes away the life of its owners.

This portion of the first chapter in Proverbs highlights the need to teach our children the importance of having biblical conviction and being willing to stand up for them – when if that means standing alone. Not popular, not fun, but it is the right thing to do.

The most influential people in your children’s lives, especially for teenagers, are their friends. Their peer group pushes them with relentless pressures to conform and follow the pack.

Proverbs 13:20 He who walks with wise men will be wise, But the companion of fools will be destroyed.

Changing friends is a painful and difficult experience, but parents can do at least two things to encourage their children to take that step on their own. Don’t think that

your children will be more than happy to change their friends. Remember, the time you spend with your children each day is less than they spend with their peers at school.

- **Teach him what a good friend really is.**

Write out a list of these qualities, and have him evaluate his present friendships in light of them. Then have him set his sights on the type of friends he would like to have.

- **Remind him of the consequences of wrong.**

Psalm 73 does a good job of teaching us not to envy those who break the law but to consider the consequences of their actions.

Psalm 73:2-3 But as for me, my feet had almost stumbled; My steps had nearly slipped. 3 For I was envious of the boastful, When I saw the prosperity of the wicked.

Psalm 73:17-19 Until I went into the sanctuary of God; Then I understood their end. 18 Surely You set them in slippery places; You cast them down to destruction. 19 Oh, how they are brought to desolation, as in a moment! They are utterly consumed with terrors.

Psalm 73:27 For indeed, those who are far from You shall perish; You have destroyed all those who desert You for harlotry.

If your children talk about drinking alcohol or have already experienced it, take them down to downtown Tucson, like the 6th Avenue Park where a bunch of drunken homeless people hang around. Let them see the end results of drinking alcohol.

If your children are getting into sexuality, you and your children should do some research on the internet about sexually transmitted diseases and pregnancy. Let them see that it is not all fun and games.

2) Teach them to be open to God's counsel

Proverbs 3:11-12 My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord, Nor detest His correction; 12 For whom the Lord loves He corrects, Just as a father the son in whom he delights.

Along with the ability to stand alone, our children need to learn what is involved in being open to God's counsel and reproof. A tender and open heart toward God is one of the hallmarks of a true believer of Jesus Christ regardless of age.

First, it starts from your own relationship with your God. When your young children see it, they also desire it. Second, if they treasure your counsel as children, then treasuring God's counsel comes in an easy transition. Third, you must help them see the value of other people's correction, such as, their teachers, coaches, and grandparents.

Another important thing is your testimonies of what God has done in your life. Share with them in a simple and short story format instead of a long lecture style. Sharing with our children about the ups and downs we experienced when we were their age is a powerful parenting tool. It helps them see us as real people, not just distant authority figures. It also builds some important relational bridges, such as empathy and identification, between generations within the family.

3) Teach them how to deal with temptation

You cannot watch TV programs in any given day or evening without seeing some sort of sexual innuendoes or scenes nowadays. Young men and women, including young

teenagers, are encouraged to have sex before marriage. To these Hollywood people, that is normal and practicing abstinence from sex before marriage is old fashioned and abnormal.

When a young girl does not have or feel the love of her parents, she will look for love from all the wrong places. The daughter who is on her way to a life of promiscuity and ultimate emptiness can be detoured by showing her the true love of God through you.

To help prepare them for this battle, provide them with appropriate training concerning the development of their bodies and their normal, God-given drives. You should not ignore, downplay or make a federal case out of it.

Chat rooms, text messages, social networking sites and Skype are providing the technology predators use to lure children when their parents aren't watching. According to online security experts, one out of five kids, ages 10 to 17 were solicited sexually. And the worst part is that 75% of those kids never tell their parents about it.

If your children understand the depth of the meaning of sexual love; if they can successfully form healthy and emotionally intimate relationships; and if they can truly know that people are people of value made in God's image, not simply objects of pleasure – then they will have a greater chance of resisting temptation and avoiding the heartaches it holds for themselves and others.

4) Teach them how to handle money

We need to teach our children about the four basic areas of financial responsibility:

- **Giving:** They should learn to honor the Lord with their income by making giving number one on their priority lists, especially giving to the poor. Our daughter Michelle has been tithing since she was a little girl and she still does.

Proverbs 3:9-10 Honor the Lord with your possessions, And with the firstfruits of all your increase; 10 So your barns will be filled with plenty, And your vats will overflow with new wine.

Proverbs 22:9 He who has a generous eye will be blessed, For he gives of his bread to the poor.

- **Earning:** In order to give, they must learn a skill with which they can derive an income.

1 Thessalonians 4:11 that you also aspire to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you,

- **Spending:** The woman in Proverbs 31 exemplifies how to wisely spend and invest money. I've seen and heard about many newly weds who had great wedding ceremonies on their credit cards and started their new life together with debts piled up high. Something is wrong, don't you think?

- **Saving:** Our children must also learn the importance of providing not only for today but for tomorrow's needs too. Also, if they learn to save up for the things they want and need, they'll avoid the trap of deep credit card debt that has caught so many young people today.

Proverbs 6:6-8 Go to the ant, you sluggard! Consider her ways and be wise, 7 Which, having no captain, Overseer or ruler, 8 Provides her supplies in the summer, And gathers her food in the harvest.

5) Teach them the value of hard honest work

Proverbs 13:4 The soul of a lazy man desires, and has nothing; But the soul of the diligent shall be made rich.

Someone did a survey among the teenagers in America. The question was "If you'd like to have two things, what would it be?" The majority's answers were fame and riches.

It is a grave mistake to give, give, give to a child without allowing him or her to experience the value and reward of hard, diligent work. Parents, give your children specific jobs to do around the home. Help them find ways of earning money and sharing in the expenses of their education. That will help prepare them for living on their own.

C. A REMINDER

There is no shortcut in raising our children.

A lot of time, a lot of hugs and kisses, a lot of love for your children – all of these in God's way.