

12. The rules of engagement of godly living – Part 5

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Children are gifts from the Lord. As precious as they are, they require a great deal of care and attention. 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.

I believe that Christianity in America might be 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. WHAT CHILDREN SHOULD DO

Colossians 3:20 Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is well pleasing to the Lord.

Paul has in mind children who are still in their parents' household and under their authority. For these, they must not only honor their father and mother, but they must obey in all things.

The child who does not learn to obey his parents is not likely to grow up obeying any authority. He will defy his teachers, the police, his employers, and anyone else who tries to exercise authority over him. The breakdown in authority in our society starts from the breakdown of authority in the home.

For the most part, children do not create problems. Actually, they reveal them. Parents who cannot discipline themselves cannot discipline their children. If a father and mother are not under authority themselves, they cannot exercise authority over their own.

B. WHAT PARENTS SHOULD DO

Colossians 3:21 Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged.

"Do not provoke your children" is a commandment to parents, and how often it is disobeyed! Too often, parents automatically say, "No," when their children ask for something, in reality the parents should listen carefully and evaluate each request. Parents often change their minds and create problems for their children, sometimes by swinging from extreme permissiveness to extreme legalism.

Fathers and mothers should encourage their children, not discourage them. One of the most important things parents can do is spend time with their children. Discouraged children are preys to satan and the world. When a child does not get encouragement from his parents at home, he will seek it elsewhere.

Parents also need to listen and be patient as their children talk to them. A listening ear and a loving heart always go together. Life is not easy for children, especially Christian children. It gets even worse when Christian parents compare one child with another sibling and thereby set up an unnecessary competition in the home.

Their problems might seem small to us, but they are quite large to them. Christian parents must listen carefully, share the feelings and frustrations of their children, pray

with them, and seek to encourage them. Home ought to be the happiest and best place in all the world, not Disneyland.

C. GOD'S WAY FROM THE BEGINNING

There is one Book in the Bible that especially talks about how to raise our children in our God's way. Of course, it is the Book of Proverbs.

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. 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 to young parents, "Enjoy, they grow up so fast," you are thinking, "If you enjoy so much, why don't you change 10 diapers a day, clean up their mess and chase these kids around the house all day long?"

But nobody is better qualified to shape their thinking, to answer the questions, to assist during the struggles, to calm the fears, to blow cool air and kiss their 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 your 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.

The concept of spending quality time is a cop-out and lame excuse of the parents who are too busy with their own things. When you are tempted to get involved in some energy-draining, a time-consuming opportunity that will only increase the distance between you and your children. 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.

D. 5 AREAS OF TEACHING

1) Teach them to stand alone.

Proverbs 1:10 My son, if sinners entice you, Do not consent.

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 the wrong.**

Psalms 73 does an excellent job of teaching us not to envy those who break the law but to consider the consequences of their actions.

Psalms 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.

If your children talk about drinking alcohol or have already experienced it, take them down to downtown Tucson, like Santa Rita Park on 22nd street where a bunch of drunken homeless people hang around. Let them see the end results of drinking alcohol. But you cannot do that if you yourself drink as well.

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.

- It starts from your own relationship with your God. When your young children see it, they also desire it.
- If they treasure your counsel as children, then treasuring God's counsel comes in an easy transition for them.
- You must help them see the value of other people's corrections, 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 on 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 and God-given drives. You should not ignore, downplay, or make a federal case out of it.

Chat rooms, text messages, social media, 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.

4) Teach them how to handle money

We need to teach our children about the 4 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.

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.

- 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 newlyweds who had very expensive fancy 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 of 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.

E. 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.