

## SPIRITUAL GROWTH part 6: RAISING GODLY CHILDREN

“Prepare and prevent and you won’t have to repair and repent.” Someone said, “When you are thirsty, it’s too late to think about digging a well.” The time to get ready for tomorrow is today. And nowhere is this any more true than when it comes to preparing our children for life. God intends the family to be a learning center for life. You learn things in your family that you don’t learn anywhere else.

It’s at home where our kids learn...

- **LOGIC:** If you fall off that swing and break your neck, you can’t go to the store with me.
- **MEDICINE:** If you don’t stop crossing your eyes, they’re going to freeze that way.
- **HUMOR:** When that lawn mower cuts off your toes, don’t come running to me.
- **GENETICS:** You are just like your father!
- **ABOUT ANTICIPATION:** Just wait until your father gets home.
- **JUSTICE:** One day you will have kids, and I hope they turn out just like YOU...then you’ll see what it’s like!

The most powerful job in the world is not the president of the United States or the Secretary General of the United Nations. The most powerful job in the world is that of a parent. It is parents that determine the strength and future of a nation by the way they teach and train their children. Parents have the job of preparing children for life, and God is very concerned that we produce the right kind of person.

*Malachi 2:14-16, “Has not the LORD made them one? In flesh and spirit they are his. And why one? Because he was seeking godly offspring. So guard yourself in your spirit, and do not break faith with the wife of your youth.”*

E. T. Sullivan said, “When God wants a great work done in the world or a great wrong righted, he goes about it in a very unusual way. He doesn’t stir up earthquakes or send thunderbolts. Instead, he has a helpless baby born, perhaps in a simple home and of obscure [parents]. And then God waits. The greatest forces in the world are not earthquakes or thunderbolts. The greatest forces in the world are [young children].” Parents have an awesome task. I am going to mention a number of things you should teach your children.

### 1. TRUST IN GOD

As parents, it is our job to transfer our faith to our children.

*Deut. 6:5-7, “Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. <sup>6</sup> These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. <sup>7</sup> Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when*

*you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. <sup>8</sup> Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. <sup>9</sup> Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.”*

What are you doing to build faith in God into the lives of your children? In what ways are you as a family growing in your understanding of God and his love? Faith is essential in building a godly child's life.

## **2. TRUST IN GOD WHEN LIFE IS NOT FAIR**

Life is hard and often unfair. In the book of Ecclesiastes, Solomon sought to understand what the world was about, and one of the things he points out in his book is the lack of fairness in this world.

*Ecclesiastes 9:11 (NCV) “I also saw something else here on earth: The fastest runner does not always win the race, the strongest soldier does not always win the battle, the wisest does not always have food, the smartest does not always become wealthy, and the talented one does not always receive praise. Time and chance happen to everyone.”*

Solomon is saying that people don't always get what they deserve. There are some of you who deserve a promotion, but you are not going to get that promotion because somebody else who is a relative of the boss is going to get it.

If children grow up thinking life is going to be a walk in the park, they are going to become very disillusioned because that's not the way it is going to be. On the other hand, God is good.

*Psalms 73:1, “Surely God is good to Israel, to those who are pure in heart.”*

In the midst of a hard life that is often unfair, there exists a God who is good to those who love and serve Him. That's what makes life worth living. As the old song goes, “Because He lives, I can face tomorrow. Because He lives, all fear is gone....” Life is hard, but it is good because we have a God who can turn even the hardest of circumstances into blessings.

## **3. ALWAYS DO YOUR BEST AND WORK HARD**

Remember the story of the king who commissioned the wisest men in his kingdom to seek out the wisdom of the ages. They came back to him with 12 large volumes which they said contained the wisdom of the ages. The king wanted it to be reduced down, so they came back with 3 volumes, but the king thought that was still too much, so it was reduced to 1 volume, but the king wanted something that all of the people in his kingdom could remember. Finally, the wise men reduced the wisdom of the ages into 1 sentence—“there aint no free lunch.”

Not everyone believes that. I remember as a kid growing up watching the television show “Gilligan’s island.” The main character in the show was a guy named Gilligan who was a beatnik. For those of you who are too young and underprivileged to understand such a term, a beatnik was some sort of a precursor to a hippie. He wore a little goatee, and he avoided work at all costs. Whenever someone mentioned the word work, he would have a reaction. I’m afraid that too many young people are modern day Gilligans. They work hard at not working.

We’ve got to remember that work is God’s idea. It is not a curse; it was given to man before the curse. God’s will was for the first man to till the garden. In the book of 1Thessalonians, there were some Christians who felt that the Lord’s coming was so close that there was no more need to work. They would just quit their jobs and wait for the Lord to come back.

Paul answer that with this statement in *1 Thess 4:11-12*, “*11Make it your ambition to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business and to work with your hands, just as we told you, 12so that your daily life may win the respect of outsiders and so that you will not be dependent on anybody.*”

God’s will for your child is that he becomes a hard working person who will win the respect of those who know Him by the excellence of his work. Paul makes it even stronger in

*2 Thess 3:10, “10For even when we were with you, we gave you this rule: “If a man will not work, he shall not eat.”*

If you fail to teach your child to work, he will have missed out on something that is fundamental to his success in every area of life. Start giving your children regular jobs early in their lives so they will grow up knowing how to work.

#### **4. DISOBEDIENCE IS NOT TO BE TOLERATED**

We live in a time when children are not expected to be obedient. Instead of submitting to their parents, they argue their case with their parents. And many times parents give in to their children, just so that they won’t have to go through the hassle of endless arguments. According to the bible, parents have the right to establish rules and consequences and to expect obedience.

*Ephesians 6:1-2 [Living] Children, obey your parents; this is the right thing to do because God has placed them in authority over you. Honor your father and mother. This is the first of God's Ten Commandments that ends with a promise.*

Parents are not in charge because they're bigger or smarter or just happened to get there first. Parents have authority because God has given them His authority. In every organization, somebody has to be in charge. When you teach your children to obey you, you also are teaching them how to deal with the authority of others throughout the rest of their life. The following are some insights on teaching your child to obey you.

**a) UNLESS TOLD OTHERWISE, ASSUME THE CHILD'S HEARING TO BE GOOD**

If you were to watch many parents try to discipline their children, you might get the idea that the child has a problem with hearing. That's because the parents tell them to do the same thing over and over again. That creates an ongoing conflict until either the parent or the child wins out. Unless your doctor has told you differently, assume your child's hearing to be good and that he heard what you said the first time. You don't need to repeat it; you simply need to enforce it.

**b) DON'T SAY IT IF YOU DON'T MEAN IT**

Sometimes, in order to win the battle, the parent resorts to threats. It is no longer simply "clean up your room." It is now, "if you don't clean up your room, you are going to be grounded." Once you promise consequences for disobedience, make sure that you do what you said you were going to do. The way you follow through with what you said is teaching your child that he can either (1) beat the consequences, or that (2) consequences are real and to be feared. It would be far better to never to threaten than to not deliver what you said.

**c) ADAPT YOUR DISCIPLINE TO THE CHILD'S AGE**

Authority is expressed as a combination of control and influence. Authority based on control says, "Do what I say because I have the authority to tell you what to do. And if you don't do as I say, I will see to it that you will wish that you had. People obey this kind of authority because they want to avoid the consequences.

With authority based on influence, people follow because of the respect they have for the person leading. Parental authority in any given situation falls somewhere between those extremes.

With little kids, "authority is primarily based on loving control" - not influence. The older a child becomes, the more difficult it is to control him. You have to lead more by influence. One of the most common mistakes parents make is reversing that plan. Many parents don't exercise enough control when the child is young. One mother wrote:

"From the moment my first child was born, I was determined that she would never be denied what I considered fundamental: a parent with an understanding heart, an attuned ear, and a loving attitude. Like many first time parents, I picked up my baby at every peep. As a result, she didn't go to sleep until 2:00 in the morning and woke up several times a night for the first year. When my second child hit other children when he was two, I would say, "no, no", but then I would stroke his hair or hug him to show that I empathized with his bad feelings. When he cried for me to stay with him at night ... I stayed and stayed until I had no evening left. In short, I felt that by saying no to my kids,

I was depriving them. "Without realizing what I was doing, I was actually turning my children into little tyrants."

What happens in a lot of situations like that one is that ten years down the line, when it becomes obvious that the child is not turning out the way we hoped, we start to ratchet up the control, and that only produces anger.

*Ephesians 6:4, "Fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath: but instead bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."*

#### **d) MAKE LOVE MORE POWERFUL THAN DISCIPLINE**

I have said it hundred times, but I'll say it again. "Rules without relationship equals rebellion." You can do all that I have said so far, but if you don't add in the element of love, it won't work. The truth is that your child should be more concerned about disappointing you than he is about being disciplined. That only happens when there is a strong, loving bond between parent and child. That kind of bond does not come easily. It is the result of much time together in a loving environment.

### **5. GODLY CHARACTER IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN TALENT**

Our world applauds the handsome, the beautiful and talented. At the same time we are doing our applauding, many of those people are living immoral lifestyles. Many are addicted to drugs or alcohol and don't know the first thing about how to live life. If you're going to applaud your child because he did well in the baseball game, be sure that you equally applaud him for keeping his room clean and fulfilling the responsibilities that have been given as a member of the family.

#### **a) INTEGRITY**

*Proverbs 10:9, "The man of integrity walks securely, but he who takes crooked paths will be found out. "*

A life of integrity means living a life of honesty and truth. Children need to be trained to know that they are never alone. Whatever circumstances they may be in, there is an all-knowing God watching their every move.

## **b) SELF ESTEEM**

Have you ever been to a carnival and gone through the house of mirrors? You look in one mirror and you look like Refrigerator Perry, in another mirror you look like Jolly Green giant, yet in another a munchkin.

Imagine you were to take these special effect mirrors and put them in your home, and everyone in your home thought they were a short, no necked three foot tall munchkin.

How would they feel about themselves?

In a very real sense, parents are the mirrors in the lives of their children. If our kids look into our eyes and see love, tenderness, acceptance, approval there is a strong possibility that they are going to grow up feeling valued and important. We need to send the message to our kids that they are important and valuable, not only to us, but much more so to God.

## **c) DISCIPLINE**

When Solomon wrote the book of proverbs, he began by stating his purpose for the writing a book. He said in

*Proverbs 1:1-3, "The proverbs of Solomon son of David, king of Israel: for attaining wisdom and discipline; for understanding words of insight; for acquiring a disciplined and prudent life, doing what is right and just and fair;*

Learning to live a disciplined life is very important. Tom Landry used to say, "Our job as parents is to get our children to do what they don't want to do so they can do what they want to do for the rest of their lives. Someone has said that "discipline is foregoing the immediate in order to guarantee the ultimate." It's saying "no" now in order to say "yes" later. It is through discipline that we learn to do things, not because we feel like doing them, but because they are the right things to do.

One of the great things about discipline is that it is transferable. If you teach your child discipline to get up in time for school each day, that discipline can be transferred so that he will get up in time for work each day. If your child is disciplined enough to persevere on a track team, that discipline can be transferred to persevering through a hard and seemingly impossible course in college. If your child is disciplined enough to not fight with his brothers and sisters, he will probably be disciplined enough to not fight with his

spouse. Discipline should be a way of life for your child so that it will be a way of life when he is an adult.

Do what you need to do, and do it now. Your kids aren't going to be with you forever. Parenting is just a season of life. Someday the kids are going to grow up and you may be thinking, "**Someday things are going to be a whole lot different.**"

- The kitchen will be incredibly neat.
- The garbage disposal won't get choked on rubber bands or paper cups.
- Getting ready for church will be a breeze and will take less than 30 minutes.
- Someday when the kids are grown up, the instrument called the telephone will be available to adults. It won't be hot from being held two hours. It won't look like it's growing from a teenager's ear. It will simply hang there silent and amazingly available.
- Someday when the kids are grown I'll actually be able to see through car windows. Fingerprints, tongue licks, sneaker foot prints, will be conspicuous by their absence.
- Someday when the kids are grown we'll return to normal conversation where we can actually complete an entire sentence without interruption.

Someday when the kids are grown, things will be a lot different. In fact, the entire house will be quiet and calm and filled with memories. **And we will probably wish we had it to do over again.**