

Raising Children Successfully

Raising children.

You are reading this because you are a parent. I am writing this because I am a parent. I am a father who has enjoyed raising his two children. Have I raised them perfectly? Of course not. But I do feel I have done a fairly good job at this parenting thing.

Parenting is a lifetime responsibility. Even though my wife and I are “empty nesters”, we are still parents, watching over our kids as they raise their own children (And we get to spoil our grandkids!).

My purpose is to share some basic truths, principles and practical things I have discovered over the years about being a parent. I was raised in a home broken by divorce. My mother was a single parent, raising six boys by herself (Imagine that!). With all of the pressure and stress my mom faced, she did a very good job of raising her sons. I am grateful to the Lord for my mother who took seriously her responsibility to raise up her children to be successful in life.

When our kids were born, wouldn't it have been awesome if a How To Be A Successful Parent manual was attached to their little arm? Like most parents, I learned how to parent mainly by trial and error. Being a Christian, I certainly prayed for God's help often...actually a lot! I read books on child rearing, consulted with parents who were good role models for raising children, and I learned a lot from my mistakes early on in my parenting career. I thank the Lord for helping me be a good parent who has raised two children who are my pride and joy.

I believe you want to be a good parent. So let's take a look at some things that will help you improve your parenting skills and produce the successful kids you desire in your heart.

Children: God's Gracious Gift To Parents

First things first. What do you think about children? How do you feel about kids...your kids? Let me share with you what God thinks about kids.

“Behold, children are a gift from the Lord; the fruit of the womb is a reward. Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, so are the children of ones youth. How blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them; they shall not be ashamed, when they speak with their enemies in the gate.”
Psalm 127:3-5

“Behold”...pay attention to this happy announcement from the halls of heaven. Children are a gift....a gift from God. *”The fruit of the womb”*, BABY BOYS AND GIRLS, are a reward from the Lord. A man is blessed who has a bunch of babies! (Lots of arrows in his quiver). He is honored before his peers, never ashamed of his family.

God gives children as a gift to Dads and Moms. A child is a precious gift of a life created in the image of God that is to be unwrapped and cared for during their lifetime. Children are a blessing, not a curse. A benefit, not a burden. Children are to be cherished. Treasured. Nourished and nurtured.

The world looks down on children. Murders them in the womb. Neglects, abuses and abandons them at all ages and stages of life. The Word of God, the Bible, speaks highly of children. Sanctify of life is God’s position. Children are to be desired, protected, guarded, nurtured, guided, provided for and trained in righteousness.

Do you see your child as a gift from God...at every age and stage of life? If so, how do you plan to develop and enjoy the special gift God has given you?

Parents: God’s Gracious Gift To Children

Children need parents. Fathers and mothers are so important that God expects them to be honored and obeyed by their offspring.

“Honor your father and mother, that you days may be prolonged in the land which the Lord your God gives you.” *Exodus 20:12*

“Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honor your father and mother (which is the first commandment with a promise) that if may be well with you, and that you may live long on the earth.” *Ephesians 6:1-3*

At birth, a child is totally dependent upon their parents. For everything. As they grow up, they become less and less dependent, but never totally independent. Why? Because God established a parent/child relationship based on respect and honor. If for no other reason other than the truth that God says to honor parents, children should honor parents because they gave them birth. Without a father and mother, they wouldn’t exist!

Children honor your parents. Why? Because they are your parents, that’s why! Pretty straightforward. Honoring and obeying parents is the right thing to do. God says so. And there are benefits for doing what is right regarding dad and mom. The Lord promises, yes promises, long life and prosperity to children who honor and obey their parents

Children who honor and obey their folks have a much better life than those who dishonor and rebel against their parents.

Parents, especially parents who raise their children according to the principles of God's Word, are a gift to their kids. Children are a gift. Parents are a gift. Both are priceless gifts from the heart and hand of God.

My heart breaks and aches for children without godly parents in their lives. Many of our kids are abandoned today, in the name of irresponsible, self-indulgent, self-centeredness and shirking of moral responsibility. I tell people all the time, if you don't want to be a parent, don't make babies. If you make a baby, you are a parent, and cannot escape the fact that you brought a life into the world.

Hey parent...your children need you. You are a gift to them that they cannot afford to live without.

How serious are you about parenting? Do you taking being a dad or mom seriously? Is raising your children a top priority for you? Do your kids know that are a high priority in your life? Would people you know say that you are committed wholeheartedly to your parenting responsibility?

What kind of a parent does God see when He looks at you?

The Biblical Goal Of Raising Children

So what in the world is this parenting gig about anyway? What is a parent's purpose? What is the ultimate goal, the end game, of child rearing? Scripture is clear about the goal of raising children successfully.

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

“And fathers, do not provoke your children to anger; but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.”
Ephesians 6:

“Hear O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord is one. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart, and you shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up. “

Deuteronomy 6:4-7

Old and New Testament both testify to one thing: Children are to be taught and trained in the ways of the Lord.

“The way a child should go” is God’s way. A biblical parent’s responsibility, duty and joy is to walk in the ways of the Lord.... and then teach their children to do the same. **Note the training, teaching, instruction, and discipline is a lifestyle.** Dads and Moms, love God and show your kids how to love the Lord. As your family experiences everyday life together, model righteous living for your children. Don’t just point the way.... show them the way. Leave footsteps their feet can follow as you walk by faith and serve the Living God as you do life with your.

Our job my fellow parents is to teach, instruct, discipline and nurture our kids in the things of God. The world system is the spirit of anti-Christ. If you don’t train your children in the way they should go, the world will. And you will not like the destination.

I love the promise of Proverbs 22:6. I have confessed, professed and leaned on this verse all of my child-rearing days and beyond. God assures us, guarantees parents, that as we train our children in the right way, they will not depart from it. Yes, they may drift and bounce out for a time. These seasons stress our hearts for sure. But when they get older, wise up, and realize what life is really about, they will return to their training in righteousness. Praise God for this promise!

What is your goal for your kids? To be good citizens? To have a successful career? To get married and have a family? To make lots of money, accumulate material stuff? To achieve fame and fortune? The above are not necessarily bad aspirations for our kids?

But what about a righteous life that glorifies God and blesses people?

As I mentioned before, I am an empty nester with two kids who are building their own nest with their own little birdies. I am deeply proud of my kids. They are responsible adults. They work hard. They love their mates and children. They are generous to people in need. They are leaders who influence others.

But most of all, on the very top of my joy and praise list, I am so thankful that they came out of my home as Christians who love the Lord Jesus Christ. They own their own faith because my wife and I taught them about Jesus. By the grace of God and with the Holy Spirit’s help, we did our best to model Christian living to them. Indeed, our family battled, wrestled and struggled with the challenges Christians face living as God’s people in a spiritually, morally hostile world. But we have prevailed. Overcome. Conquered in the name of Jesus Christ.

I am as “proud as punch” as my grandmother used to say that God’s faithfulness to His Word has fortified, strengthened, and encouraged my wife as parents to train our children in the way they should go. And I am happy to say, without reservation, they have not departed from it!

The Challenges Of Raising Children

Parenting is challenging. And every parent reading this said AMEN!

There are a number of formidable, but beatable challenges that we face as we raise our children in our current culture.

1. Spiritual warfare opposes our families. Satan hates your family and mine. The enemy of our souls knows that if he can disrupt, divide and break up families, he can destroy society. The evil one’s demonic forces (see Ephesians 6:10-20) target the destruction of parents and children. The devil is out to capture and devour our kids. Satan, who is a liar, thief, and murderer, is always stalking the next generation.

It is vital to victory over our adversary the devil that Christian families recognize the spiritual conflict we are engaged in and equip themselves with the spiritual armor God provides. *“Greater is He (Jesus) who is in us, then he (Satan) who is in the world.” (1 John 4:4).*

2. Inadequate parental role models from family of origin. There are some people who grew up in very healthy, functional families where they witnessed a loving relationship between father and mother and the kids. But a large majority didn’t. Many struggle with parenting because they had dysfunctional parents themselves. They didn’t see much that was right in raising children, and too much that was wrong. Therefore, they feel handicapped, not sure what to do with their own kids.

Unfortunately, without training, they often repeat the mistakes of their parents.

3. A child’s sinful nature. We don’t have to teach children to do wrong, but to do right. Romans 3-7 makes it clear that we all have inherited a sinful nature that is self-centered. Every human being including cute, cuddly babies has a bent toward sin. I, Me, Mine and Myself is our problem. All of us would like to think that life is all about me. The strong will kids of all ages and stages exert is a manifestation of the sin nature within.

Life is not about you or me. Life is about Christ in us. Jesus defeated sin so we could be free from sin. Christians are saved and called to serve, not be served. Our life is to be one of service and sacrifice, which the Lord richly rewards.

4. The unbelieving world system is hostile toward Christians. The world, outside of Christ is not rooting for believers in Jesus. It is wholly against God's followers, not for them. Christian heritage and influence is systematically being erased from history books. Symbols of the Christian faith are being removed from the public square. The name of Jesus is being silenced at every turn. Christians are mocked, vilified, ridiculed, trash-talked and denigrated in a godless society that has lost its way.

So what does this have to do with our children? EVERYTHING!!!! What you teach and train your kids is being challenged. You and I have to deprogram our kids hearts and minds from the anti-Christian brainwashing they receive on a daily basis.

5. The worldly media warps our children's minds. The worldview through media outlets is contrary to the view of life from God's Word. Someone will influence and indoctrinate our children if we don't. The media focuses on capturing and arresting the minds of children who don't know how to think for themselves. Kids are unwitting audiences to the voice of the evil one through media that subtly and openly opposes the Word of God.

It is our responsibility as parents to watch over our children: what they watch, what they read, what they listen to, who they spend time with, what they spend their money on, and who influences their life.

6. Technology distracts children. The day we live in is a day of distraction. Technology is a blessing and a curse. Mostly a curse when it comes to distracting people from the Word of God and what really matters in life. Technology is supplanting creativity, imagination, and dreaming the dreams and visions God has for each child.

Texting, tweeting, e-mailing, Instagrams, Facebook, YouTube, Google, Pintrest, I-Phones, I-Pods, I-Pads and who knows what else will be the "have to have in gadget" in a few months. Technology is marketed to sell more than a product. Technology also sells our children philosophies, ideas, creeds, and causes that often conflict with the way we are teaching our children to conduct their lives.

7. Immoral, perverted people target and prey upon our innocent children. I don't think I have to say much here. Sexual predators, pedophiles, homosexual recruiters, and morally deviant, perverted, spiritually lost souls, have come out of the closet to corrupt the purity and innocence of our precious gifts from God.

You and I must stand firm, with bold, unshakable, immovable courage in the Lord to turn back and soundly defeat the onslaught of abominable, immoral misconduct that is targeting our innocent children.

BE ENCOURAGED! For sure, the many challenges parents face today in raising their children are real. The good news is that through Christ we are “*more than conquerors through Him that loves us.*” (Romans 8:31-39). We win in Him...always, every time, no matter what the pressure. You and I need to teach our children that they are not victims, but victorious vessels for Christ.

Are you rising up with confidence and courage to confront and conquer the challenges to your parenting responsibility.

What Children Need From Their Parents

Research tells us that the number one thing children of all ages (whether 3, 33, or 63) fear most is divorce of their parents. Why divorce? Why not nuclear weapons, terrorists, economic collapse, disease etc?

Divorce is number one because it shakes the foundation of family security. Children need loved in an environment that is secure, stable and consistent. Divorce tears the heart out of a marriage and family. Being a product of a divorce, I understand how a broken family rocks emotional security and stability. It took me over almost forty years to come to terms with and be healed from the emotional impact and wounds my parents divorce caused.

LOVE, ACCEPTANCE AND APPROVAL is the most significant need of the human heart. God designed it that way. From the very first moments of our life, we need, crave, must have, unconditional love, acceptance and approval from the most significant people in our life...our father and mother.

When love, acceptance and approval are in short supply, children suffer from low self-esteem, a poor self-image and lack of confidence in themselves.

I believe the three most important things children need to hear from parents, no matter what their age is, are these: **1. I LOVE YOU. 2. I BELIEVE IN YOU. 3. I AM PROUD OF YOU.** A child can never hear these three phrases enough. My adult children are almost thirty, and I never fail to say these three things to them as often as possible. And I am already communicating love, acceptance and approval to my little grandchildren.

Think about your childhood. How often did you hear these phrases? I didn't hear them enough...especially from my father. I did not hear my father say that he loved me until I was 37 years old. I know now that he loves me and is proud of me, but I really needed to hear it when I was growing up. I grew up with a lot of self-doubt, fearing rejection and failure.

As a parent, never tell your children that you don't love them. You didn't want them. They will never be good enough. They are a loser. You never do anything right. Or, why can't you just be like your brother? These phrases and others like them will stab your kid's heart and wound him or her for life if you are not careful. I know because as a Christian counselor, I meet with adult children who cry their eyes out telling me about the insensitive, cruel things parents said to them.

In his best-selling book Right From Wrong, author/speaker Josh McDowell made a statement that has stuck with me for years. He said **“Rules without relationships equals rebellion.”** Is that profound or what? Hits the nail on the head in raising children successfully.

As a parent, you can have a huge rule book for the kids to follow. But if you haven't established a relationship with them based on unconditional love, acceptance and approval, they will rebel, bounce out, and defy you. It's just like the Bible. God's rules in His book are easy to obey when we have a loving relationship with His Son Jesus. Rules can be so cold. A relationship warms them up.

God has set boundaries, through commandments and principles (rules if you will) to bless us. **But the blessing of boundaries comes through relationship.** Some parents are rule rich and relationship poor with their kids. And they wonder why a battle of the wills takes place with regularity in their homes.

Here's a rule of thumb for our homes: **Healthy relationships make for healthy, happy homes.** Children are healthy when parents are healthy. Spiritual, emotional, relational, AND physical health must be modeled by parents. .

So how is your relationship with your child? What is your relationship like with your parents? Need some healing and restoration? **It is a fact that children heal when parents heal.** When we get better, they respond in kind. I am so thankful I opened my heart to God's healing, restoring and renewing love so my kids wouldn't have to go through what I did growing up.

Begin today to lavish your kids with LOVE, ACCEPTANCE AND APPROVAL.

General Guidelines For Raising Children Successfully

- * Unconditional love is a must in parent/child relationships.
- * Children respond positively to lots of attention and affection from their parents.
- * Win your child's heart by being a parent who loves their child with God's love.
- * Treat each child as a unique, precious individual created in God's image.
- * Ask God for the key to your child's heart.
- * Expect and earn respect. Never tolerate disrespect. Respect in...disrespect out.
- * Inspect what you expect.

- * Listen to your children at all ages and stages. Value them by listening.
- * Discipline with love, never in anger. Redeem the discipline moment.
- * Children need their parents to be a united front regarding rules and discipline.
- * Be sure children know where the behavior boundaries are.
- * Say what you mean, mean what you say.
- * Always be consistent with discipline. Inconsistent discipline confuses children.
- * Make discipline and correction appropriate to the offense.
- * After discipline, reassure your child of your love and that you believe in them to behave better next time.
- * Apologize and ask forgiveness of your child when you are wrong.
- * Always make right what has been done wrong by showing your child what is right.
- * Teach your children how to forgive and to receive forgiveness.
- * Give children the benefit of the doubt as much as possible.
- * Teach your children to share with their siblings.
- * Don't expect children to act like adults emotionally.
- * Never ask your children to do something they are not mature enough to do.
- * Create family traditions that will have your children wanting to return home.

Twelve Tips For Training Your children

- ✓ Pray for and pray with them.
- ✓ Share God's Word (the Bible) with them on their level of understanding.
- ✓ Confess daily God's promises over your kids.
- ✓ Take your kids to church. Teach them how to worship God.
- ✓ Listen to your child. Intentionally interact with them, even when it is inconvenient for you.
- ✓ Release your child into the hands of the Lord. They belong to Him He loans them to us.
- ✓ Be positive with your words toward your children.
- ✓ Manage your emotions in a healthy manner around your children.
- ✓ Reward your children for good behavior in meaningful ways they will remember.
- ✓ Teach your children to share with their siblings.
- ✓ Model for your children how to forgive and how to seek forgiveness from others.
- ✓ Create family traditions that will bring your children back home.

Teach/Train Your Children About Your Christian Faith

In II Timothy 2: 5, Paul, a spiritual father to Timothy, writes to his son in the faith to remember how his mother and grandmother had taught him about being a Christian.

“For I am mindful of the sincere faith within you, which first dwelt in your grandmother Lois, and your mother Eunice, and I am sure that it is in you as well. “

Please note “*sincere faith*” in Christ was passed down through three generations: Grandma Lois, Momma Eunice, and son Timothy. Each generation taught the next one about Jesus and the Christian life. Passing our Christian faith to our kids is like running a relay race and handing the baton off to the next runner.

If you are a committed Christian, who is sincere about your faith in Christ, your greatest responsibility and duty is to teach your children about Jesus Christ and the Christian lifestyle.

May I suggest a few simple thoughts for influencing your kids for Christ?

- **Know what you believe and why you believe it.** Have you nailed down what the Bible says about a personal relationship with our Creator? Is your theology, doctrine and practice biblically sound? Can you explain from scripture what the Christian life is about? Do you know how to answer the spiritual/moral questions your children will have?

Our children don't need our opinion...they need the truth of God's Word. Know the Word of God. Study your Bible. You can't share and show your children what you don't know. (II Timothy 2:15, II Timothy 3:16-17).

- **Let your kids see you worshipping, praying and reading the Bible in public and private.** Don't just tell them to praise God, pray for others and read scripture. MODEL IT FOR THEM. Show and tell works well with children of every age.
- **Be who you say you are. Do what you say you do.** Be a person of spiritual integrity. NO HYPOCRISY IN YOUR HOME. Don't act like a saint at church, then behave like the devil at home. Kids, especially teenagers, see right through hypocritical behavior. Adolescents have keen radar for false living.
- **Trust God to use you to lead your children to Christ at an early age.** Research tells us that 85% of all Christians were born again before the age of 18. So, after 18, very few people come to the Lord. That stat should shake and wake us up to the importance of reaching our kids for the Lord as soon as possible.

What is the point if we lead other people's children to Christ and we neglect to win our kids to the Lord?

- **Attend church regularly with your children.** Take your kids to church. Don't send them. Establish a good, Christ-centered, Bible-believing, outreach oriented church home for your family. Don't talk about church...do church. Teach your children the importance of fellowship with other believers in Christ (Hebrews 10:23-25).
- **Expose your children to Christian role models.** Take them to hear speakers, to read books, to listen to messages and songs from proven, credible, Christian authors, speakers, sports figures, entertainers, etc. Our children need to see Christianity being lived out by all types of people.

Remember: Kids love heroes, so we better put some Christian heroes before them.

***** My faith in Jesus Christ is the single, most important thing in my life. Christ is my life. I have abundant and eternal life through Him. My sins are forgiven and I am headed for heaven because Jesus shed His precious blood on a cruel cross and rose from the dead to deliver me from the power of sin, death and the grave.*

For this, I am forever grateful, and am delighted my kids have received Jesus as their personal Lord and Savior. I have passed the Christian baton to my kids and I believe they will pass it on to my grandkids.

The Blessings and Joy of Raising Children Successfully

Here is my personal list of joy and blessings in raising my children. I will call this my "fruit" list, my rewards of child rearing. Bear with my humble bragging for a moment.

- ✓ Our children are Christians who love and serve the Lord Jesus Christ.
- ✓ Our kids are teaching my grandkids about the Lord.
- ✓ Our children are mission minded. They share their faith with people who need the Lord. They give of their time, talent and treasure to Christian outreaches.
- ✓ Our kids are involved in actively serving in the programs of their local churches.
- ✓ Our children walk by faith, trusting the Lord to meet their every need.
- ✓ Our children love and serve their marriage partners and children.
- ✓ Our children are responsible adults and citizens who hold down jobs, pay their taxes and support our men and women in uniform.
- ✓ Our children honor and respect proper authority.
- ✓ Our children honor and respect their aging parents!
- ✓ **And last but not least for me, personal satisfaction that we did many things right with God's help.**

Why don't you take a moment or two to draw up your list of joys and blessings? Or maybe make a list of how you would like your children to turn out down the road.

Summary And Application

You have read all of this material. Bottom line is this: Your children are a precious gift God has entrusted to you for training them in the way they should go. You have the privilege and responsibility to raise them up to live a righteous life in Jesus Christ. In so doing, you will insure for them a life blessed by God, and a life that God can use to bring his blessing to others.

So, get work on being a better parent! Start today, with God's help, to raise your children successfully.