

Four Priorities for Parents

Intro: In keeping with our theme, “Putting first things first.” I want to focus on one of the priorities we talked about last week—“taking care of our families.”

As parents we must making taking care of our children an important priority; but the job is not easy. In fact, we could say being a parent is challenging, gratifying, humbling, educating, and intimidating. John Wilmot said, “Before I was married I had three theories about raising children. Now I have three children and no theories.

After a few years of parenting, you may feel the same way. But the best thing we can do is learn from God’s word and the experience of those who have been faithful and successful, learning from them how they have applied the principles of God’s word in parenting their children.

One key to good parenting is establishing good priorities. Let’s talk about four priorities for being a better parent. Make it a priority to...

Be your child’s best friend.

First I should say what I don’t mean by that. I don’t mean that we should act like children to get our children to like us. I don’t mean surrendering the authoritative role God has given us. What I do mean is that we need to build a relationship of affection and closeness that will enable us to communicate freely with our children from childhood through adolescence. that they may encourage the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, (Tit. 2:4)

The word Paul uses for love has connotations of both affection and friendship.

Regrettably the line of communicate between parents and children can break down over time. That possibility was manifested in a survey of teens several years ago. When asked what they did when they have a problem or to whom do they turned in a time of crisis, their answers were astounding:

The most popular choice was listen to music, the second choice was to talk to a peer, and the third was to watch TV. Amazingly talking to mom was down the list at number thirty-one, and talking to dad was forty-eighth.

Stats like this reveal a failure of parents to develop a strong bond of trust and communication with their children that lasts.

So then we need to develop to develop good communication with our children from the beginning. Here are some of its features:

Loving and respectful (Considers the needs and feelings of others)

Free-flowing (Those in the relationship feel comfortable expressing themselves).

Honest? (It is possible to speak truthfully without feeling threatened or the communication being cut off).

Open (It addresses the needs and concerns of all in a relationship. Children should be able to approach us about whatever their needs or concerns dictate.)

Edifying (The goal of all communication should be mutual understanding and growth through that understanding with each person knowing how to please or meet the needs of the other person or how to respect their wishes. Through good communication conflict and problems can be solved.)

Good communication requires not only “quality” time, but also “quantity” time.

It is important for parents to spend time with them to play, to have fun together, and to listen when they are ready to talk. It is easy to say, “Don’t bother me right now; I’m busy.” Do that enough and they will say, “I need to talk to Dad (Mom); but he/she’s busy.”
So be available. Ask questions. Listen carefully. Respond with love.

Be your child’s cheerleader

I chose this word carefully because it may best express the attitude that parents need toward their children. Have you ever thought about the attitude displayed by cheerleaders?

Cheerleaders celebrate every victory, large or small. Every first down is cheered.

Cheerleaders urge greater effort when weakness is demonstrated. The other team may be running over the defense; but they keep on cheering them on-- “hold that line”.

Cheerleaders never quit believing that their team can win. The score may be 40 to nothing at the end of the third quarter; but the cheerleaders are still urging their team to win.

It is this quality of encouragement that parents must have toward their children. It is the power of using our words to edify and nurture their good qualities.

Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, that it may give grace to those who hear. (Eph. 4:29)

Praise them for every victory, large or small.

Urge them to keep trying when they fail.

Don’t ever give up on them!

There was a mom who just had a terrible son. And a friend said to her, "I don’t know how you put up with him; if he was my son I wouldn’t have anything to do with him." And the mom said, "Yes, I would too, if he was your son, but you see he’s my son, and I’ll hold onto him and love him, and hope and pray that someday he’ll come back to his senses

Finally use your common sense. Genuine and honest praise can build a child’s self-confidence and sense of value; gushing praise untempered by realism and honesty can create a narcissistic monster.

Be your child's moral teacher

All throughout Scripture we're encouraged to be a voice for truth with our children.

Correct your son, and he will give you comfort; He will also delight your soul. (Prov. 29:17)

And, fathers, do not provoke your children to anger; but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. (Eph. 6:4)

Parents, if you are not clearly outlining your values and morals as the foundation of your children's lives, then you must ask yourself, who will?

And the answer is: unspiritual sources like friends, TV and other media.

We can't afford to pass the moral education of our children to reprobate sources.

Early moral training gives us the best hope for lifelong self-discipline and spirituality.

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

The Hebrew word for train is "chanak." It could be translated "dedicate" or "train." The word has a cognate in Arabic that is intriguing. It was used to describe the actions of a mid-wife who after helping to deliver a mother in childbirth would dip her finger in a paste made of dates and rub it on the gums of the newborn baby to create thirst and start the baby's feeding instinct. (Charles Swindoll. You and Your Child.

There is nothing that a child needs more than the nourishing truth of God; but we must skillfully work to create a thirst for God by presenting it in ways that are attractive and desirable.

Take active steps to insure that they know the truth about everything! And do your best to make it sweet to them!

Be your child's protector

Sometimes we have to protect them from their selfishness.

The rod and reproof give wisdom, but a child who gets his own way brings shame to his mother. (Prov. 29:15)

Consider a couple of renegade boys in the Bible (Hophni and Phinehas)

"For I have told him that I am about to judge his house forever for the iniquity which he knew, because his sons brought a curse on themselves and he did not rebuke them. (1 Sam. 3:13)

Then later Adonijah committed the consummate action of rebellion in Israel, seeking to become king of Israel in defiance of his father David's clear directive.

Now Adonijah the son of Haggith exalted himself, saying, "I will be king." So he prepared for himself chariots and horsemen with fifty men to run before him. And his father had never crossed him at any time by asking, "Why have you done so?" And he was also a very handsome man; and he was born after Absalom. (1 Kings 1:5-6)

Sometimes we have to protect them from the natural human tendency of taking the easy way out.

Say “no” to the easy path when the hard path produces the greater growth

Sometimes we have to protect them from the lure of involvement in constant activity without time to do important things.

Say “no” to wasted and inefficient use of time

Sometimes we have to protect them from the messages of false teachers that surround them that they don't know are dangerous.

Discipline your son while there is hope, and do not desire his death.

(Prov. 19:18)

Say “no” to the herd mentality

Say “no to evil media influences

Conclusion: When we follow the principles of God's word, we are rewarded with a happy relationship with our children and a sense of satisfaction in their spiritual and earthly accomplishments.

A wise son makes a father glad, but a foolish son is a grief to his mother.

(Prov. 10:1)

He who begets a fool does so to his sorrow, and the father of a fool has no joy.

(Prov. 17:21)

Remember the story of the little boy that went into the store and told the grocer that he needed a box of tide. What do you need a box of tide for, and the little boy said I'm gonna wash my cat. Son, he said, I think tide is a little strong for a cat. But the boy was insistent so he sold it to him. A week later the boy was back in the store. The grocer saw him and said, "Son, how's your cat doing." My cat's dead, he said. Well, the grocer replied, I told you tide was too strong for him." Oh I don't think it was the tide, said the little boy, I think it was the spin cycle that did him in.