

Five Family Foundation Stones
... for a successful life

Intro: Every child is a powerhouse of undeveloped, unlimited potential. Our job as parents is to “unlock” that potential. We should make it our goal every day to help our children discover their abilities and to dream big dreams. And while we do, we should work to instill in them the principles that will enable them to succeed.

As parents we lay the foundation for the success of our children both spiritually and materially. Last month we talked about 5 foundation stones that we need to lay in our children’s lives in order to establish a spiritual life with God.

Knowledge of God

Accountability to God

Dependence upon God

Stewardship toward God’s blessings

Integrity with God

Now let’s consider five more principles that will set up our children for material success in life. First we need to lay the foundation stone of a:

Willingness to work

There are two things young people must know about life:

Life is not an endless playground.

Each of us is responsible, if we are able, to provide our needs in this life.

Thus, children should be trained to have a willingness to work.

The work ethic is clearly taught in Scripture.

Work is essential to happiness and the well being of people.

The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. (Gen. 2:15)

Failing to provide for oneself is sinful and typically leads to further transgression.

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

The idle mind is truly the devil’s workshop.

Make it your ambition to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business and to work with your hands, just as we told you, so that your daily life may win the respect of outsiders and so that you will not be dependent on anybody. (1 Thes. 4:11-12)

Parents who do not instill in their children the work ethic are training them to steal.

He who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with his own hands, that he may have something to share with those in need. (Eph. 4:28)

So parents should train their children at their level of capability to work and to work hard at whatever task given to them.

They need to have a part in the daily chores that go along with maintaining a household learning how to take care of themselves.

They need to be encouraged to take on part-time jobs as they become more mature to help pay their own way and gain the experience of self-discipline and personal responsibility.

To whatever extent we do everything for them and/or tolerate laziness, we will be setting up our children for failure. Help them succeed by laying this foundation stone.

Inner confidence that is grounded in trust in God

I've seen countless young people talk themselves out of success before they even gave it a chance. "I can't."

The Scriptures stress the "I can do" spirit and speaks strongly against paralyzing fear.

Jesus condemned the fear and timid outlook that would not make an effort. The one-talent man says:

So I was afraid and went out and hid your talent in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you.' (Mt. 25:25)

But the successful say, "I can do everything through him who gives me strength. (Phil. 4:13)

It is not just a matter of talking ourselves into a better outlook. It is a matter of realizing what God can do in us.

Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose. (Phil. 2:12-13).

Repeatedly the Scripture says, "He is able" and "He is faithful"

Faithful is He who calls you, and He also will bring it to pass. (1 Thes. 5:24)

Teach your children to rely upon the inner confidence that comes through trusting in God's help and strength to succeed. We need to make clear that we believe in them and that God believes in them and in that confidence they can accomplish great things.

Determination to keep trying in the face of failure

No matter what a young person aspires to do in life, he will find that it is not always easy. There will be times of defeat and failure. There will be a need for tough-mindedness and determination.

At times children may complain that what they are doing is too hard, and they may want to give in to the difficulty. We must encourage them to press harder and find the joy of determined effort that reaches the goal.

There will be times when our children's best efforts will not result in success. They will not always succeed on their first effort; and in

discouragement they may want to quit. We must urge them to keep trying.

We must help them see that they cannot rely merely upon talent to take the place of determined effort. My trumpet teacher gave me this rule that stayed with me all through my life. Success is 1% inspiration and 99% perspiration!

Just as the Christian life takes determination, so the quest for material success likewise requires the determination to keep trying.

Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. (Phil. 3:12)

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. (Heb. 12:1)

I've watched those marathon runners pressing to the finish line after running for hours; and I thought of this very passage. I cannot believe that is by nothing more than sheer determination that they reach the finish line and then often collapse.

Parents who cannot stand to see their children struggle a bit along the way and who rush to relieve them of all difficult things are making a serious mistake that will set their children up for failure in life.

Will you always be there to rescue them from problems?

Would you rob them of the satisfaction of striving against difficulty and triumphing over it?

Teach them determination; and you will lay a foundation stone that will bless them for life.

Humility that respects and cooperates with others

Though on the one hand we want our children to be encouraged and to possess inner confidence, we do not want to turn them into narcissistic monsters who think the world revolves around them.

Arrogance is the one of the most repulsive of human characteristics.

“God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble. (James 4:6)

Those who cultivate it will lead a lonely life and find it difficult to work with others. Instead we need to cultivate the humble spirit that looks beyond self-interest.

Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind let each of you regard one another as more important than himself; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. (Philippians 2:3-4)

The truth is that we rarely succeed at anything life going it alone. All along life's way we need the help and partnership of others. Humility becomes essential for our children to learn to respect and appreciate the good qualities of others and be able to acknowledge the good in others and cooperate with them.

And so as parents we need to teach humility by our example:

Avoid rehearsing the mistakes and short-comings of others, since such conversations engender pride and feelings of superiority. Instead we need to teach our children to appreciate the good qualities of others by praising others and encouraging our children to appreciate and imitate them.

They need to see a cooperative attitude in us as adults instead of an adult version of “I’ll take my ball and bat and go home.”

Generosity

The world has too much selfishness. Jesus taught a completely different attitude toward others. It related to how we regard their transgressions and needs.

“You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.’ But I say to you, do not resist him who is evil; but whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if anyone wants to sue you, and take your shirt, let him have your coat also. And whoever shall force you to go one mile, go with him two. Give to him who asks of you, and do not turn away from him who wants to borrow from you.” (Mt. 5:38-42)

And so we need to live out this kind of generosity toward others before our children.

Children need to see fathers and mothers who are generous toward them, that they may also learn to be generous.

First they need a perspective on how their life relates to the lives of others around the world. A few minutes in most foreign countries will quickly help us see how prosperous and fortunate we are to live in this great land.

Remind your children that much of their comfort and prosperity is the result of the sacrifice and generosity of others. They should acknowledge and appreciate what has been given to them through the hard work and generosity of others.

They need to see us as examples of good works toward those less blessed. And we need to let them participate with us in these things (visiting the sick, helping a needy person).

“And the King will answer and say to them, ‘Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, even the least of them, you did it to Me.’ (Matthew 25:40)

They need to see us show the generosity of forgiveness and tolerance toward the failures and wrongs of others.

Conclusion: Upon these principles we may provide the atmosphere that will enable our children to grow into their highest potential.