

Principles Of Parenting

Introduction. We have all seen them or read stories about them: parents who behave badly at their children's sporting events. There have been countless articles written, including one in *Psychology Today*, rebuking this ludicrous behavior which includes cursing, spitting, arguing, and fighting.

Ambitious parents are nothing new. But sometimes we are ambitious for the wrong goals for our children. As a result, we emphasize everything wrong in the goal of eternal life. In every materialistic society, parents need help which is why we are going to study principles to follow and mistakes to avoid as we raise our most precious possessions (Psalm 127:3).

I. Principles To Follow

A. Read the Bible.

1. Skepticism is rampant in our society and there is no sign of it getting better.
 - a) It has invaded every discipline relating to belief in God: history, biology, geology, astronomy, and archaeology. Your children will meet other children who are skeptics. As they grow up, the skeptics they encounter will become more educated and therefore more formidable.
 - b) Eunice and Lois made the difference in Timothy's life (2 Timothy 1:5). He knew the scriptures, and therefore was able to obey the scriptures and be strong against the issues of life (2 Timothy 3:15; cp. Acts 16:1-2).
2. Think of how many books are produced and read in the world each year. The latest best-seller is sure to generate excitement.
 - a) Do our children see us give as much attention to the Bible as we do to other books? Do we read it regularly to our children?
 - b) In many homes the Bible is merely a decoration. Pick it up and instill it in your child (Psalm 19:7-11; 78:1-8; 119:11).

B. Pray fervently.

1. It is interesting how the religious world promotes a "National Day of Prayer" and "Meet At The Pole."
 - a) When the storm came on them, the heathen were praying and Jonah was sleeping (Jonah 1:4-5).
 - b) A lot of people in false religions are praying — are we (Psalm 5:3; Luke 18:1; 1 John 5:14)?
2. It is crucial for your children to see you pray.
 - a) Approaching the "throne of grace" at meals, bed time, and during troubled times provides tremendous spiritual training (1 Thessalonians 5:17; Hebrews 4:16).

- b) Pray to God for your spiritual blessings, your physical blessings, and that you will all get to heaven together (Matthew 6:9-13).
- C. Use your money wisely.
 - 1. Studies have shown that people with a religious background give significantly more to charitable causes than atheists and agnostics.
 - 2. We do not have to debate if we are richly blessed or not: we are. Will our children see us using our prosperity to glorify God (1 Timothy 6:17-18)?
- D. Nurture a good relationship with brethren.
 - 1. Strong affection should exist between brethren.
 - a) When you are negative, critical, and harsh against your brethren, you are poisoning your children (cp. Romans 12:10; 1 Peter 1:22; 2:17).
 - b) The brother or sister you run down in front of your children might be the one that converts them or brings them back to God when they get older.
 - 2. Parents can really make a difference in helping their children develop good attitudes toward God's people and consequently the church.
- E. Set a good example.
 - 1. Society is full of self-indulgent, greedy, immoral, irreligious parents who are wringing their hands about their children (Ezekiel 16:44).
 - 2. Parents who glorify immorality, who gossip, and who get angry at family and church members should not be surprised when they see the same in their children (cp. 1 Timothy 4:12).

II. Mistakes To Avoid

- A. Not spending time with your child.
 - 1. Parents assume their children do not want to spend time with them, but going for walks together, grabbing coffee to "catch up," going to the movies, etc., are all simple investments that children secretly want and look forward to.
 - 2. When you do not carve out time to spend with your child, you are communicating that you are not interested in them, and they get the message, consciously or unconsciously (Ephesians 5:15-16).
- B. Letting your child's activities take top priority for your family.
 - 1. Parents want to provide their children with experiences and opportunities they never had growing up, but our child's wants and needs cannot be allowed to overwhelm the family's wants and needs.
 - 2. Parents need to prioritize investing in their relationship with God, themselves, and each other (Colossians 3:1-2). A hectic schedule will slowly grind down your entire family, and teach your child that

“the good life” is a hyper-active one, not one with time to meditate about God and His goodness.

C. Spoiling your child.

1. We are all tempted to think that loving our kids means doing all we can to ensure they have all the opportunities and possessions we did not have growing up. This is a terrible assumption to make.
2. There are two types of access that can really set you back in life if you get them too early: (1) access to too much money and (2) access to too many opportunities. Parents hurt their children by spoiling them in these ways (Mark 10:35).

D. Permissive parenting.

1. Permissive parenting (i.e., providing little direction, limits, and consequences) is on the rise because many parents of the current generation are confused as to how to discipline their children (Proverbs 29:15).
2. If we practice a permissive parenting style we are abdicating our God-given responsibility to provide guidance, nurture, limits, discipline, and consequences to our child (all of which help them flourish long-term).

E. Trying to be your child’s best friend.

1. Your child does not need another friend — they need a parent. Even through their adulthood, your child needs a dependable, confident, godly authority figure in their life (Ephesians 6:4).
2. As parents we are called to bring God’s rule into our family’s life. That cannot happen if we are busy trying to befriend our children. Of course, be friendly to your children, but they have lots of friends — they only have one set of parents. Be the parent your child needs.

F. Holding low expectations for your child.

1. Johann Goethe wrote, “Treat a man as he is and he will remain as he is. Treat as man as he can and should be, and he becomes as he can and should be.” We rise to the level of expectation we perceive from others (Hebrews 6:9).
2. During the teenage years, it is important to slowly put to death the perception that your child is still “a kid.” They are emerging leaders, and if you treat them as such, they will take that mantle on for themselves. They can be moody, self-absorbed, irresponsible, etc., but they can also be brilliant, creative, selfless, and mature.

G. Not prioritizing church involvement.

1. No child’s faith can thrive without participating in the work of the local church. What you sow determines what you reap. If you want

- to reap a teenager who possesses strong faith, do not settle for a casual commitment to the church (1 Corinthians 15:58).
2. In order to accomplish this, the work and worship of the church has to be a non-negotiable part of your child's life, and that means it takes priority over homework, sports, or any other extra-curricular commitments.
- H. Outsourcing your child's spiritual formation.
1. While church involvement is crucial, this is not the only source of your child's spiritual development. As a parent, you are the key spiritual role model for your child (1 Chronicles 28:9-10).
 2. You are charged with teaching your child what following Jesus means, and while a congregation can be a support to that end, it is only that: a support.
- I. Not expressing genuine love to your child.
1. Very few parents actually express genuine love to their child. It is easy for parents to only see how their child is irresponsible, failing, immature, etc., and become a nagging voice instead of an encouraging one.
 2. Do you set aside time to tell your child how much you love and admire them? Do you write letters of encouragement to them? Do you spend time together and share what positive elements you see developing in them?
 3. Your child will not ask you for it, so do not wait for an invitation. Say something encouraging every day that builds them up (they get enough criticism as it is). Pray every day for them and ask God to help you become a person in their life that He uses to develop them (Acts 11:23).
- J. Expecting your child to have a devotion to God that is not within you.
1. Parents want their children to have a genuine faith. However, when it comes to faith, most of what we learn is caught and not taught.
 2. Every day you are teaching your child what being a disciple of Jesus looks like "in the flesh." Even if you have the "right answers" as a parent, if your own spiritual conduct is weak, your child will unconsciously follow you and be condemned by it (Revelation 3:15-16). Trying to follow Jesus "from a distance" is an enormous mistake you cannot afford to make.

Conclusion. Children come to us like an empty sponge — what will they soak up? Present them with thoughts, deeds, and teaching that will shape them in the proper way (Proverbs 22:6). Work to avoid mistakes and help save the coming generation. You cannot replace a child. If you neglect your car or house, you can buy a new one. But where do you go to replace a lost soul (Matthew 16:26)?