

# What Children Want To Tell Their Parents

**Introduction.** Animal trainers are amazing. I once read of a farmer who had trained a bunch of pigs to wait to eat their slop until he took his hat off and offered prayer. When the pigs heard “Amen,” they dove in. I personally knew a couple who have four cats and when they clap their hands, the cats go into the bedroom and go to sleep. Surely if pigs and cats can be trained to do tricks, children can be trained to be godly (Proverbs 22:6).

Raising children is the most rewarding and important task in the world. An English proverb says, “Children are a poor man’s riches.” When this great work is neglected, society suffers the consequences. If we raise a bunch of irresponsible, disorderly, disrespectful children, how can we have a strong nation? God has granted parents a privilege in bearing children, but with that privilege comes an awesome responsibility (Psalm 127:3-5).

A police detective who has arrested children for over 20 years began asking young people this question: “If your parents were here now with us, what would you like to tell them?” Their answers perfectly corroborated what we find in the scriptures about raising children. These are answers from children who are searching for something that parents were not furnishing.

## ***I. “Please Don’t Lose Your Temper With Us”***

- A. The number one statement children wanted to make to their parents was that they need to keep their cool. Children need the reassurance that comes from controlled responses. Solomon asserted this as a good general rule of life (Proverbs 15:1, 18).
- B. Our children deserve to see the example of people whose lives have been transformed by Christ, thus possessing the essential qualities of meekness and gentleness (Romans 12:1-2). When trouble arises our children can see these qualities put to the test and come to better appreciate them and us.
- C. Parents who react in rage, losing their temper, show themselves to be just as troubled as their children. Why would a child listen and heed counsel from someone like this? During troubled times, young people need parents who will remain calm to help them still the turbulent waters (Colossians 3:8). Washington Irving said, “A tart temper never mellows with age; and a sharp tongue is the only edged tool that grows keener with constant use.”
- D. Rather than demonstrating anger and hot tempers, we need to show self-control and power (1 Corinthians 9:27). Paul made use of all possible means to subdue his sinful desires. Can you think of a situation your child may face where the self-control he learned from his parent can be a benefit to him?

## ***II. “Please Show Us Who’s Boss”***

- A. Most young people want their parents to be strict. They want parents who are consistent and fair in dishing out discipline. Children need the security of specific boundaries, and they need to know there are consequences for going over the line. They don’t need a permissive best friend, they need a parent!

- B. Parents who do not discipline their children and provide family leadership demonstrate a failure to love (Proverbs 13:24). That discipline must begin while they are young and continue through the teen years (Proverbs 19:18). How does a 130-pound mother handle a 200-pound 16-year-old? By disciplining him when he weighed 20 pounds!
- C. In addition to the wisdom which Solomon received from God, he had the benefit of his ancestors' experience reinforcing these truths, such as Eli not restraining his sons, Hophni and Phinehas (1 Samuel 3:11-13).
- D. Solomon was well acquainted with the trouble a parent brings on himself and his children when discipline is not properly exercised. Most of us are acquainted with those who are setting themselves up for a life of misery and their children for failure by not restraining them and setting boundaries (Proverbs 29:15).
  - 1. It is not always easy to accept or provide discipline (Hebrews 12:11).
  - 2. But a failure to discipline will be far more bitter and heart-breaking.
- E. If you catch your kids lying, cheating, stealing, cursing, or drinking, discipline them. But also let them know that you love them, even when they let you down.
  - 1. When our children misbehave, we have an opportunity to teach them by example an important quality of God. He loved us and extended His hand of mercy while we were yet sinners (Romans 5:8).
  - 2. His love did not lead Him to overlook our sin or easily dismiss it. But it did lead Him to provide a way of escape (Acts 2:38; 3:19; 22:16). Being tough and loving are not mutually exclusive, but they compliment one another.
- F. Parents need to pray for wisdom (James 1:5-7). A wise parent will know just how far to go in calling their child's bluff. A mother of three boys told me the story of one of her sons threatening to run away from home. She asked him the reasons and then decided to join him! Needless to say he stayed at home and never used that threat again.

### **III. "Please Light A Candle For Us"**

- A. Children are looking for a genuine spiritual dimension in their lives.
  - 1. Those parents who have the spiritual interest and foresight to "bring them up in the nurture (providing with tender care which includes education, training and discipline) and admonition (literally a putting in the mind; a warning or reminder which will correct but not provoke) of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4) will provide the needed "candle."
  - 2. A big part of this process will involve sparking the spiritual curiosity of our children so they will develop into lights of the world (Matthew 5:16). Our children need to be nurtured and fed a steady diet of good spiritual food.
- B. God called on the fathers of Israel to provide their children with a knowledge of Him and His ways (Deuteronomy 6:7-9; Psalm 78:1-8). God calls on fathers to teach their children important spiritual lessons.
  - 1. They need to know that God made them and life is sacred.
  - 2. They need to know of His Son who loved them and died to redeem them.
  - 3. They need to know of His church and the function which they can have in it.

- C. We need to give our children something for which they can strive. They really want you to be a parent, someone to which they can look to. We need to be examples of mature, steadfast children of God.
  - 1. It is sad to see some children so completely wrapped up in sports that their role models are ungodly people (Cody Pack and LeBron James) instead of righteous examples like Joshua, Jesus, Paul, Ruth, Lois, and Eunice.
  - 2. You show me children who truly have these people as their role models and I will show you a battle that is half won. They say you cannot lead a horse to water and make him drink, but you can give him salt and he will find water.
- D. Can we say, as Paul did to the Philippians, “join in following my example” (Philippians 3:17) to our children? Our children need and deserve godly parents.
  - 1. What do you think a child will do when he sees his father waiting on the Lord’s table on Sunday and then cursing on Monday? Children are like sponges, they will soak up anything.
  - 2. Children need to see parents who love each other (Ephesians 5:25; Titus 2:4). There are tragic, unbelievable consequences of divorce. And moms and dads better remember that their future impacts their children’s future as well.
  - 3. What kind of example have we presented? Determine to fulfill the role which you have chosen for yourself! Socrates said, “Let him that would move the world, first move himself.”

#### **IV. “Please Be Honest With Us”**

- A. Children want to be told the truth. They know when you are telling the truth and when you are not. All children want their parents to be real and trustworthy. Do not sugarcoat the world or sin — tell them like it is.
- B. Honesty is an important quality in any relationship, but it is especially needful in raising children. It has been a basic expectation of man from long ages past (Exodus 20:16). It is also in the law of Christ (Colossians 3:9). Dishonesty is an abomination (Proverbs 11:1; 12:22). You are under just as much obligation to tell the truth to your children as it is to tell the truth to everyone else.
- C. I keenly feel the need to protect children from inappropriate actions when they are too young, but we have to be truthful with them about immorality and false doctrine. Make your appeal to the scriptures, not the wisdom of man.
  - 1. Show them in the Bible where certain actions are forbidden. Be truthful to them about their accountability to God. Again, don’t be permissive!
  - 2. Show them how to handle difficult teenage situations: social awkwardness, breakups, the workplace for the first time, bad grades, bullying, etc. Your outspoken honesty may prevent them doing harm to themselves.
- D. Parents need the trust and respect of their children if they are to lead them. Trust once broken by dishonest parents may not be repairable.
  - 1. Samuel was a great example of integrity (1 Samuel 12:3-5). Dishonest parents will raise dishonest children. Hypocritical parents will raise hypocritical children.
  - 2. Sam Houston said, “I would give no thought of what the world might say of me, if I could only transmit to posterity the reputation of an honest man.”

**Conclusion.** Our children's souls count! They are not just another number. We certainly have a daunting task before us, but armed with the "sword of the Spirit," we can be parents our children will want to hear, follow and obey. When parents work hard to ingrain good habits, good morals, good attitudes and good works, they have good reason to believe their children will grow up to be good. "The potential possibilities of any child are the most intriguing and stimulating in all creation" (Ray L. Wilbur).

Hebrews 11:7 tells us Noah saved his house and we can too. God is the perfect parent, but Isaiah 30:1 says His children rebelled against Him. We are all going to make mistakes and we may even have children who will not listen no matter what we do. We can only pray that God will forgive us if we have made mistakes and have hope that one day rebellious children will repent and come to their senses.