

If We Had a Four-Year-Old Again

Thursday our granddaughter, Jane Evelyn Pope turned four. Gramma and I had a good talk with her while her dad (who is wrapped around her little finger) was taking her out for some birthday shopping (she's training him early). Four times we have celebrated a child's fourth birthday in our home. I find it difficult to believe that those four-year-old Pope children are now having children turn four. After getting off the phone with Jane, I began to think how I would rear a child who was turning four in 2011?

1. I would pray that I would be right and stay right with God.

As a parent, we have a tendency to pray more for our kids to be right with God than we pray for ourselves to be right with God. The Bible says, *"Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it"* (Proverbs 22:6). If I am totally right with God, I shall be supplied wisdom to train up my child in the way he or she should go. Therefore, it may be more beneficial to pray more for me to be what I need to be than for them. After all, more is caught than taught.

2. I would instill the value of hard work.

I would guess that a lot of the people who are protesting on Wall Street have never learned the value of hard work. Government doesn't really give jobs. Even men with business acumen are not the ultimate source of our income. God created the world and the men and women who live in the world. God also blesses those who are willing to obey Him in the matter of work. God is the Source of our income; he is the one who gives us our daily bread. *"...If any would not work, neither should he eat"* (II Thessalonians 3:10). God commanded the goof-off busybodies, *"Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread"* (II Thessalonians 3:12). In essence God was saying, don't be critical, mind your own business and work hard, this will make the difference in society.

What a blessing our children will be to their home, their spouses and one day their own children if they become hard workers.

3. I would make Bible memory required.

I would not leave this up to a child's choice anymore than I would allow my kids to choose their diet of food, bedtime and school attendance. *"Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word"* (Psalm 119:9). A child who lives under the submission to God's Word will be much more likely to obey your word.

When the parent is long gone, God's Word will still be in his or her heart to guide them and lead them in the way in which they should go. *"Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path"* (Psalm 119:105).

4. I would do everything I could to build her faith.

The Word is a faith builder and so also is prayer. I would teach my children to pray. *"But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost"* (Jude, verse 20). Prayer will build a child up! What great lessons are in store for your family as you pray the prayer of faith and God miraculously answers that

prayer. Many a youth are leaving the Church today. I am convinced that answers to prayer that were beyond coincidence will do much to bolster the faith of a child. When the kid hears the prayer request, then witnesses the prayer that is made and then has the opportunity to rejoice in the answer is going to be able to respond positively to the skeptics who will attempt to overthrow their faith.

5. I would teach her that the body is sacred.

Many a sarcastic youth will say, when wanting be involved in substance or sexual abuse, "It's my body; I'll do with it what I want." We should teach our children early they belong to God, by virtue of creation and the second birth! Since we are emphasizing Scripture memorization, let one of the early verses a child memorizes be: "*What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?*" (1 Corinthians 6:19). This could save years of grief and remorse that stems from an immoral lifestyle.

6. I would teach her to respect her elders.

The Bible says, "*Thou shalt rise up before the hoary (white or greyish) head, and honour the face of the old man, and fear thy God: I am the LORD*" (Leviticus 19:32). A child who respects age is more likely to give reverence to Him who is called, "The Ancient of Days" (Daniel 7:9, 13, 22).

Great harm is done when you take sides with your child over the requirements of a school teacher or if you mock the older preacher who preaches against sin. Don't be surprised if your children see you ignoring or making fun of authority in your life, they decide to do the same.

7. I would make salvation profoundly simple and simply profound.

Because there is a Hell to shun and a Heaven to gain, I must get the Gospel, the only plan of salvation into my children's soul. Don't think for a moment that the Devil doesn't plan and scheme to keep your children from Christ. You see, if a child from a Christian family doesn't convert, Satan has broken the cycle of sowing and reaping to the third and fourth generation. I am in favor of giving the plan of salvation again and again and again. I would have my children exclusively involved an evangelistic, Bible-believing environment. I would want them to have Sunday School teachers who are Gospelizers! The Bible says, "*But Jesus called them unto him, and said, Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God*" (Luke 18:16). Our Lord is still calling the children unto Himself. Far greater than being saved out of a life of sin is to be saved from a life of sin -- and thanks be to God, this is what happens when a child is saved.

In his book Life on the Edge, Dr. James Dobson relates how he told his son Ryan: "When the time comes, there is only one thought I want to leave with you ... hold onto it for the rest of your life. My message to you is Be There! [in Heaven] ... Don't let anything deter you from keeping that appointment ... This is the only thing of real significance in your life ... above every other purpose and goal, the only thing that really matters is that you determine now to Be There!"

8. I would daily inculcate the greatest of all commandments.

This question today is as timely as it was when originally asked by a lawyer in Jesus' day: *"Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment"* (Matthew 22:36-38). I would teach this accountability to my children until the impression is indelible. Every decision we make and the motive for all that we do should be filtered through this test: can God be glorified, would Jesus do this and is this an expression of my love to Christ?

Christ said, *"And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me"* (Luke 9:23). Loving the Lord Jesus is a daily exercise.

Next week I will finish this thought: **if I had a four-year old again** (how would I rear her).

-Pastor Pope-