

Tranquility in Family Life Comes When We Take Rule

Great families are no accident. God instituted the family in the Garden of Eden. *“And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth”* (Genesis 1:28). After the earth was destroyed by the flood, God started over again with a family. *“And God blessed Noah and his sons, and said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth”* (Genesis 9:1). God said to be fruitful, multiply, replenish, subdue and have dominion. God is saying, I give you my blessing; now have children, work hard and take control of life. The word “dominion” means to take rule. Let’s have great families! Although this Pastor’s Word is for all of us, I am primarily speaking to parents.

I. Let us take rule of our spirit.

The Bible says, *“He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city”* (Proverbs 16:32). If we cannot rule our temper and moods, how can we expect to bear rule over our children? If you can imagine this scene: A child is throwing a temper tantrum. The child’s voice lifts higher, echoing through a busy mall. The parent, in soft cooing tones, pleads with the child, smiling at passers-by, as the child gets louder. In just a few seconds, not minutes, the totally out-of-control parent screams, “I said be quiet!” It is so easy having the full and righteous intention on keeping your cool and then before you know it, you’ve lost it. What do we do?

A. If you know you have the propensity for emotional meltdown, pray for peace. Jesus said, *“Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid”* (John 14:27).

B. Stay away from temper triggers. Are there certain things that really bother you, get under your skin, irritate and annoy you? I still remember the wise advice I received from Dr. Jeremy Williams when I was experiencing pain in my ring finger and tried to move it a certain way. I said, “Jeremy, it hurts when I do this.” He smiled and calmly said, “Well, Pastor, stop doing that.” I laughed but followed his advice and it hasn’t bothered me since. Sometimes we are setting ourselves up by “pressing our own buttons.” You might say, “Yes, but every time I think of this--” Well, quit thinking of that. Sometimes it is just that simple. Paul told Timothy, *“But foolish and unlearned questions avoid, knowing that they do gender strifes”* (II Timothy 2:23). He was saying, “Son, don’t pick fights!”

C. Respond, don’t ricochet. We sometimes behave like bullets shot by a mad man in a canyon. We are confronted with an issue and we quickly let it be known where we stand. Stand firm if you must, but make sure that it is a hill on which you are prepared to die. Don’t die on a hill of preference; make sure it is conviction. Instead of responding instantly and fervently, meditate over it. *“A fool uttereth all his mind: but a wise man keepeth it in till afterwards”* (Proverbs 29:11). After mulling over it, respond civilly, not in a wild frenzy.

II. Let us take rule of our children.

Let’s go back to the child in the mall. If he or she is losing control and the decibel level is rising, what shall we do?

A. Speak softly. *“A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger”* (Proverbs 15:1). Find a secluded or semi-secluded place, kneel down, and get eye to eye. Stay calm; you will be surprised how many a child will follow your lead. Start talking loud and even adults will get louder; talk softly and

people, as a rule will talk softly to you. There are times when a child is incorrigible no matter how sweet you are. What can we do now?

B. Carry a big stick. Please keep in mind, I am borrowing the words of Theodore Roosevelt. I am not suggesting literally taking a club with you and your child. In the same way President Roosevelt was saying, "We are America and we have the power to restrict or inflict great discomfort to those who don't do right by our country." We, as parents, have the authority to do something about out-of-control behavior. We are commanded to do so, "*Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him*" (Proverbs 22:15). Sometimes the rod of their least expectation can do the trick. Let's

say your kid was really looking forward to that carousel ride in the middle of the mall. Go home without the ride. And don't turn around when they start begging, promising to be good. You see, you are still being controlled by them if you cave in. Let them feel the awful consequences that their temper brought. It is teaching them for life as well. The afternoon you decided to stay firm may save their job in the future. It may cause us some discomfort - maybe we weren't through shopping. Doing without something another day is worth it for your child's sake.

C. Reward good behavior. Life is so much more exciting with surprises. Let us imagine your child cleans his room or rakes the yard without being told to. On your way home later that day you stop by T.C.B.Y., pull through the drive through and purchase a white chocolate mousse with wet walnuts on top. Hand it to him and say, "Mother is proud of the way you cleaned up without being asked. *"A gift in secret pacifieth anger: and a reward in the bosom strong wrath"* (Proverbs 21:14).

I am always reminded that what God wants for all families, He requires of those in leadership: "*One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity*" (I Timothy 3:4).

III. Let us take rule of our time.

"Redeeming the time, because the days are evil" (Ephesians 5:16). Time can be a thief; take advantage of it before it robs you of some great family history in the making. One thing for sure, when it is gone we cannot bring it back, as much as we may so desire. Therefore:

A. Make time for the important. A fascinating book was written a few years ago entitled, *The Tyranny of the Urgent*. The premise is that we, more often than we would care to admit, allow the so-called urgent things to step into our daily important things and keep us from getting on with the major things of life. I love the story of a dad who promised his two sons that he would take them to the circus. As they finished supper and were preparing to get into the car and go to the circus, a phone call came and his office requested him to drop everything and come to work that very evening. Without hesitation, he declined and as he was hanging up the phone, his wife whispered, "Honey, the circus will come back to town." He calmly but firmly replied, "Yes, dear, but boyhood will not!" Bravo for Dad! He, as well as all us, needs to know how to say no to the tyrannical onslaught of the urgent.

B. Cut out or at least postpone the not-so-important. In our busy world we shall either prioritize or agonize. If you are uncertain whether you should completely leave something out your schedule, simply put first things first and if you have time to get it, you will. I struggle with time-wasting things that scream at me, demanding me to do them now. Sometimes I have to tell myself to "chill out" and get back to work on the things I really know are important. "*Jesus answered, Are there not twelve hours in the day? If any man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world*" (John 11:9). God has granted us all the time in every day to do what He wants us to do.

C. Never look at leisure with your family as a waste of time. I believe the family that prays together stays together; I also believe that the family that plays together stays together. Carve a niche in your year for a family vacation. Kids will open up during these times when they will not often do at other more normal times.

A survey showed that some dads spend, at the most, seven minutes - many days not more than thirty seconds - in the face of their children, communicating with them. There is nothing on the news, telephone or computer screen that is more important than time with your family. Even husbands and wives will get along much better if they communicate with one another. I would venture to say that in all my years of counseling, I could put my finger on a breakdown of communication as the problem for ninety per cent of marriages going sour.

It is the leisure that buys serious time with our family. People really don't care how much you know until they know how much you care.

God will bless you as you "take dominion."

Pastor Pope -

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