

If We Had a Four-Year Old Again (Part 2)

As our granddaughter, Jane Evelyn turned four years old last week, I became rather vicarious in my wonderings -- if I had a four-year old again how would I rear her? Last week I said: 1. I would pray that I would be right and stay right with God. 2. I would instill the value of hard work. 3. I would make Bible memory required. 4. I would do everything I could to build her faith. 5. I would teach her that her body is sacred. 6. I would teach her to respect her elders. 7. I would make salvation profoundly simple and simply profound. 8. I would daily inculcate the greatest of all commandments (loving God with all her heart).

Continuing our thoughts in this vein:

9. I would teach her to be kind.

The one verse my wife quoted over and over and required our four kids to memorize while growing up was Ephesians 4:32, *“And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you.”* Kindness is almost a forgotten virtue.

Sometimes after being encouraged not to be mad with someone who offended them, people will sometimes say, “I don’t get mad, I get even.” This is no way to live. Children need to know that vengeance belongs to the Lord, not us: *“Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord”* (Romans 12:19).

One of the great blessings you can give is to rear a forgiving child. You have done her future husband a great favor, for if she learns to forgive, she will be easy to live with.

A kind person makes a great parent. No matter what age a child becomes, home is a welcome place to come if there is a kind parent waiting for them there.

One reason we trust God is because He is mercifully kind. *“But I have trusted in thy mercy; my heart shall rejoice in thy salvation”* (Psalm 13:5). You are not only doing your child’s future family a service, but all of society in which they influence. *“Charity suffereth long, and is kind...”* (I Corinthians 13:4). Teach her to love being kind and to enjoy being kind. God loves it! Let us love the things and people God loves, *“Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy”* (Micah 7:18).

10. I would make our home a finishing school.

A finishing school (or charm school) is defined as a private school for girls that emphasizes training in cultural and social activities. We ought not to feel like we have to send our children off to an organization to teach our kids good manners. By the way, good manners are just as needful for boys as for girls. We ought never give the guys “a pass” on politeness simply because they are supposed to be rough and tough. May it be said of our boys what Carl Sandburg said of Lincoln, “He was a man of steel and velvet.” Love is polite, has good manners and is not rude. Love responds appropriately in every

situation. *“Charity...Doth not behave itself unseemly...”* (I Corinthians 13:5). *“Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another”* (Romans 12:10). I would teach my daughter when the pie is split, take the smallest piece. I would teach her to let others go first in line, in traffic and in taking turns. The Bible calls this *“..in honour preferring one another”* (Romans 12:10b).

I would insist on addressing those in authority with a heart-felt, “Yes, sir, yes ma’am, no sir or no ma’am.”

11. I would reward good reading habits.

Reading expands the vocabulary and frame of reference. Sometimes kids get into trouble because of idleness. It has been said, “An idle mind is the Devil’s playhouse.” Show me an avid reader and I’ll show you a great conversationalist. When a kid reads the classics, they have entered a realm of great thinking. To stimulate kids to read, I would reward their efforts by first utilizing extrinsic motivation, i.e., awarding them something that appeals to their senses such as monetary reward or time in gaming or extracurricular activity with friends such as a really fun sleep over. Then I would graduate to rewarding them intrinsically, i.e., showing the value and worth of something by teaching them to read great wholesome books because it will make you a better Christian, a better person and a better citizen. Paul’s dying request was, *“The cloke that I left at Troas with Carpus, when thou comest, bring with thee, and the books, but especially the parchments”* (II Timothy 4:13). It’s amazing that although Paul was confined and incarcerated, he knew there was a measure of freedom, if he could just read. A well-read person is a free person! I promise you, your kids will love you for making them read after they grow up.

12. I would love them unconditionally.

This will be something that is “caught” more than “taught.” If we want our kids to love without any strings attached, then we must love them in the same way. This is the way God loves us. Calvary was the purest expression of this love. There is nothing you can do that will more prepare your daughter for the future than to exhibit this kind of love. It is not earned, it is not deserved, it is given from the kindness of your heart.

Love is a decision. We love on purpose. God loves on purpose; He is not controlled by a whim or fancy, neither does He stop loving when we do not come through. He loves us to the end. *“...When Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end”* (John 13:1).

Let us teach our children to love unconditionally; it will bring a great response. We respond to God’s decision to love us: *“The LORD did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because...”* (Deuteronomy 7:7). God responds to our decision to love Him: *“Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him: I will set him on high, because he hath known my name”* (Psalm 91:14).

13. I would teach them to do all for the glory of God.

I would drill this principle into the heart and mind of my daughter. I would teach her to ask herself before she does anything, "May I do this for the glory of God?" "...*Whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God*" (I Corinthians 10:31). As our children were growing up, I would often quote the opening lines of the Westminster Confession, "What is the chief and highest end of man? Answer: Man's chief and highest end is to glorify God, and fully to enjoy him forever."

Living for the glory of God as a goal removes us from living a selfish existence and sets us up for God's favor.

For those of you still rearing your children, please know Mrs. Pope and I are praying for you. May God give you wisdom.

-Pastor Pope-