

Priority Parenting

1. What makes parenting difficult these days?

- a. changing society roles and rules, the continuing promotion of the “prince/princess syndrome”
- b. repeating patterns from our own parental structures
- c. reacting out of fear
- d. pridefully promoting your children as a display of your own standard of holiness
- e. disunity between parents on parenting style and practice

2. Models of Christian parenting. What type of house are you raising your children?

a. The “greenhouse” Trying to maintain a safe and sanctified environment for children. Separating children from all worldly influences that might damage a child’s developing conscience and moral innocence, *“I want you to be wise in what is good and innocent in what is evil” Romans 15:19.* Danger of trending towards legalism.

- Little or no television or media, avoiding anything violent and/or sexually explicit [Star Wars and Snow White are no-no’s]
- Standards can become legalistic and self-righteous
- Children’s playmates must be from like-minded families, evangelism becomes secondary to personal holiness
- Parents are cautious about allowing children to participate in church events/programs, especially youth group (sometimes “anti-church”)
- Children spend more time with parents than friends
- Maintain a high-level of authority and control throughout the parenting process
- Typically home schooled and sometimes “anti-school”

b. The “open house” Trying to give children freedom to live in the world and learn about it first-hand. A kind of “more grace less holiness” mentality, *“All things are lawful for me, but not all things are profitable. 1 Corinthians 6:12.* Danger of trending towards license/liberty.

- Unguarded television and music, allowing more violent and sexually explicit media
- Parental standards can be too loose, leading toward licentiousness
- Children choose their playmates without parental oversight, evangelism is encouraged, personal holiness is less emphasized
- Parents encourage children to participate in church events and programs
- Children spend more time with friends than parents
- Parents tend to use more influence than authority in the parenting process
- Children are typically private or public schooled

c. The “gated house” Trying to train children to live in the world but not of the world, *“I do not ask You to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil [one].” John 17:15.* Attempts to guard against worldly influences that might damage a child’s conscience, yet assumes the presence of a sin nature regardless of how well you may protect/separate. Danger of being confusing.

- Limited television and secular media, allowing some, age-appropriate violent and sexually explicit media [Harry Potter and Gladiator may be no-no’s]

- Standards can become legalistic and/or licentious
- Children's playmates are from both like-minded and lost families, there is attempt to balance evangelism and personal holiness
- Parents require children to participate in age-graded church events and programs
- Children spend approximately equal time with friends and parents
- Parents graduate from authority to influence over the parenting life-cycle
- Typically home or private schooled, occasionally public schooled

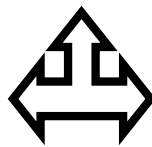
3. With all the responsibilities that parents carry, what's most important?

- a. Focusing on your child's behavior?
- b. Focusing on your child's future?
- b. Focusing on your child's heart (mind, will)? This must be the priority as parents.

The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart. The evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For out of the overflow of his heart the mouth speaks.
Luke 6:45

5. Training children to develop an "upward" & "outward" orientation

- a. If God exists as our Creator and Sustainer and Jesus Christ as our Redeemer, then our first priority is to live for God and live in light of His existence.
- b. The greatest of commands, "Love God with all of your heart, soul, mind and strength" (upward orientation) and "love your neighbor as yourself" (outward orientation).



6. Parents are God's delegated authority

- a. Parents have the authority to act on behalf of God and must teach their children to obey so they can understand their need to be obedient to God and to honor God.

Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honor your father and mother (which is the first commandment with a promise), so that it may be well with you, and that you may live long on the earth. Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. Ephesians 6:1-4

- b. God gives children parental authority as a means of provision, protection and instruction. A consistent, parent-controlled family frees each child to be a child. The parent does not need the child's permission to act on behalf of God.
- c. A parent's training and discipline of a child should reflect what God has called the parent to be rather than forcing a child to submit to the parent's own personal agenda.

d. Parents should train children to understand God's standard for their behavior and point them to the knowledge, mercy and grace of God shown in Jesus Christ.

*He who ignores discipline despises himself,
but whoever heeds correction gains understanding. Proverbs 15:32*

7. Communication tools for training a child's heart

a. Instruction: Teach your child the Bible on a regular basis. Take advantage of those "teaching moments" where your child's heart is open for instruction. Use these opportunities to apply biblical principles.

b. Affirmation: Tell your child when he or she is thinking and behaving rightly.

c. Encouragement: Support your child's ability to make the right choices for the right reasons. Motivate them towards what is good and what brings glory to God.

d. Warning: Tell your child of impending danger because of their heart attitude or behavior.

e. Correction: Help your child to conform to the right standard/rule. Love your child enough to consistently and compassionately correct them.

f. Rebuke: Express a sense of alarm at something your child says or does that is wrong or sinful.

g. Entreaty: Urging a child to avoid sinning and to love others as they love themselves.

h. Prayer: Seek God's help for you as a parent. Intercede on behalf of your child.

i. Accountability: Invite your local church to assist you and come alongside in your parenting. Ask your friends to point out weaknesses in your parenting. Be humble enough to ask for help.

*Train up a child in the way he should go,
Even when he is old he will not depart from it. Proverbs 22:6*

1. Am I encouraging my children to spend too much time in outside activities so that they can "keep up" with other children? Am I caught up in a "success or acceptance syndrome"? 1 John 2:15

2. Am I encouraging my children to focus on their self-esteem more than esteeming others. Am I caught up in a "self-love syndrome"? Rom. 12:3

3. Am I encouraging my children to see church attendance, prayer and Bible study merely as a ritual? Am I caught up in a "religious routine syndrome"? Matthew 6:1

4. Am I encouraging my children to be well-behaved so that others will be impressed and so I will not be embarrassed? Am I caught up in a "self-righteous syndrome"? Ephesians. 6:6

Philippians 2:3,4 Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves ; do not [merely] look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.

1. Helping them to understand

- a. Parents need to assist their children in understanding what is going on inside their hearts: their motives, desires, wants and needs.
- b. Before asking, “Why did you. . .?” ask questions that will give you information that you can use to address their hearts, “What happened, what were you feeling, how did you feel afterward, etc.” Try to discern the inner conflict.
- c. Parents need to help their children understand where temptations come from and how to avoid saying “yes” to these temptations
- d. Communication is a part of your child’s discipleship

2. Counting the costs

- a. Children require time and flexibility. It is more than rules, correction and discipline. Communication also requires encouragement, understanding and instruction
- b. Parents must seize upon “teaching moments”
- c. Parents need to become good listeners when their children desire to share from their heart
- d. Quality communication cannot be scheduled, but it can be captured