

Question: What are some things parents can do to help their children have a better chance of succeeding in face of life's harsher realities? (Part 1)

When parents bless their children with unconditional love, acceptance and assurance, they give their children what has been called roots and wings. These are the people who grow up knowing where they have come from and having confidence that they can always return home to find support and guidance as needed. These roots also give them the wings to soar without fear of falling so far they cannot rise again.

However, we must not lay all the responsibility for how children handle life at the feet of the parents. Our children face many influences in addition to the family, influences that are often outside the ability of parents to control. Our children must also accept responsibility for their own choices once they are mature enough to make those choices. Having said this, I will assume that this question comes from the heart of a concerned parent who wants to give his/her child a good start in life.

Several years ago, John Trent and Gary Smalley wrote a book entitled *The Blessing*. After observing the need of children to have the approval of their parents, especially of their fathers, Trent and Smalley studied the practice of blessing of sons by the Old Testament patriarchs (Genesis 27 & 49). They identified five elements of these blessings that can help us bless not only our children but all of our relationships. Briefly consider these elements and how you can purposefully use them to bless your children.

(1) Meaningful Touch: Isaac said to Jacob, "Come near so I can touch you." He also asked Jacob to kiss him (Gen. 27:21, 26). Touching not only has symbolic significance but also physical and emotional healing power. A touch can lower the blood pressure and increase the hemoglobin that carries oxygen to the cells of the body. Emotionally, touching communicates love and acceptance. When children do not receive appropriate touching with hugs and kisses, they often become susceptible to seductions by people who will take advantage of them both as children and as adults in later life.

(2) Spoken Words: As powerful as touching is, it is inadequate without spoken words. Silence leaves our children to their own inadequate interpretations. The patriarchal blessings were not blessings until words

were spoken. When children do not receive words of blessing from their parents, they may spend their lives trying to gain acceptance and approval by extreme measures. Others may become withdrawn with feelings of unworthiness. The wise man said, “The tongue has the power of life and death” (Proverbs 18:21). One does not need to be a child to understand that critical words spoken in harsh and angry tones kill the spirit while positive, loving words of encouragement strengthen the spirit. Children need the positive reinforcement of praise and acceptance.

Be sure to read next week’s article for more of the elements of the blessing that you can use to empower your children in life.

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