

***Question: What are some things Jesus would say to a young couple in today's world who has just been blessed with their first baby?***

The birth of a child is a wonderfully exciting time; but it is also a fearful time as we contemplate the world and the life that lies ahead for that child. The psalmist said that children are a heritage from the Lord (Psalm 127:3). Thankfully, the Lord who gives us this blessing is also ready to help with the nurture of each child. Long ago, a man named Manoah prayed: "O Lord, I beg you, let the man of God you sent to us come again to teach us how to bring up the boy who is to be born" (Judges 13:8). When it comes to rearing children, we do not need to "go it alone." We, too, can seek the wisdom of God through prayer.

Give your child the security of a loving home and the self-confidence to face life by showing they are loved and valued. The disciples of Jesus thought he was too busy or too important to be bothered with children. But Jesus said: "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these" (Matthew 19:13-15). He demonstrated how much he loved and valued children by taking time for them even in his busy life as the Son of God. In the same way, parents should model how to live by guarding against allowing their social life or even their job to interfere with their time spent with their children.

Another important way of demonstrating love for your child is found in how you discipline. Good discipline first involves instruction and example. When there is adequate positive training and modeling, corrective discipline is seldom needed. Give your child a sense of self-discipline for life by proper discipline when he or she is young. After all, the Bible teaches that "the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and he chastens everyone he accepts as his son" (Heb 12:6 NIV).

In addition, Jesus would de-emphasize materialistic values and emphasize unselfish compassion for others. The apostle Paul said, "Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others" (Philippians 2:4). He then pointed to the example of Jesus who emptied himself and came to earth to humbly serve our needs. It may be more difficult for children to learn these values if they are constantly showered with the latest toys, clothing styles, TV in their room, cell phones and almost every gimmick they

might desire. Jesus would have us to teach our children to “not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal” (Matthew 6:19), and that “it is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35). They need to see how “godliness with contentment is great gain” and that “people who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction” (1 Timothy 6:6-10). Help your child to appreciate the importance of things that money cannot buy like friendship, loyalty, love, mercy and sharing.

Above all, nurture your child “in the training and instruction of the Lord” (Ephesians 6:4). This will provide a set of priorities and rules that will protect and guide your child into a truly good and blessed life. The God who created us knows how to live in the world he created. Teach your child to trust God’s wisdom and word. Of his commands, the Lord told Israel: “Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates” (Deuteronomy 6:6-9). As a family, read and pray with your child at home. Also, find a good church with people who will help you model and teach God’s word to your precious child. It is the most loving thing you can do for your child.

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