

“Know the Three P’s of Parenting!”

Ephesians 6:4

Intro. – Does the name J. Paul Getty sound familiar to you? He was one of the wealthiest men of his time. At his death his estate exceeded \$4 billion in net worth. This is what he wrote in his autobiography: “I have never been given to envy... save for the envy I feel toward those people who have the ability to make a marriage work and endure happily. It’s an art I have never been able to master. My record: five marriages, five divorces. In short, five failures.” He goes on to explaining the memories of his relationship with his five sons as “painful.”

The raising of kids is no easy matter; nevertheless, when done in accordance to God’s bidding it’s rewards cannot be matched. Let’s consider what the Bible says concerning the matter of raising a family and let’s resolve to put our shoulders to doing His will in this!

Over a half a century ago a man named Spock came to the forefront. Not this Spock... This Spock. He was a medical doctor, a pediatrician. He became the high priest of *permissive parenting* when in his book entitled *Common Sense Book of Baby and Child Care* (2nd only to the Bible in sales) he advocated letting kids do their own thing. Spock fed American parents a stew mixed with thought from Rousseau and Freud. In the 1960’s the first crop of Spock-raised babies were observed by Spock. After observing them and just before his death in 1998, Spock apologized for his ideas. He said, “They were merely hypotheses not proven by experience.”

In the 1970’s, Dr. Thomas Gordon took Spock’s permissiveness to a new level. *The New York Times* described his Parent Effectiveness Training (PET) as “a national movement.” By 1976, thousands of parents were studying Gordon’s concepts in over 8,000 classes scattered throughout the nation. Gordon urged parents to “reject authority in dealing with your kids... allow them to set their own limitations...”

Thus, kids raised on *Common Sense* and *PET* grew up and have raised their own kids and now their kids are beginning to raise their kids. With almost three generations having been raised on this philosophy we now can give a fair assessment. Does the Biblical principle *you reap what you sow* ring a bell?

Purpose: to better understand God’s intention for parents to participate actively in raising kids

There are 3 styles of parenting under which all parents fall. Two of these are of the world. The other falls under the authority/wisdom of God. Let’s consider all 3 and then make the necessary application.

I PASSIVE Style

- permissive parenting is another way of describing this style of parenting – such moms and dads sit by happily oblivious to the havoc their kids are making:

A. Biblical Example of Passive Parents

1. Genesis 25:28 “Now Isaac loved Esau, because he had a taste for game; but Rebekah loved Jacob.”
2. The sibling rivalry between Esau and Jacob was started and fueled by this parental division of affection. Fights, arguments, and deceptions were the norm for this household.
3. Isaac and Rebekah were not ignorant, they knew what was taking place. But both, Isaac in particular were passive, detached and uninvolved.

B. Passive Parenting is a Paradox

1. One would think that by being passive matters would simply fade away; instead, when it comes to parenting it drops matters into an ever-deepening hole, with each succeeding generation sinking lower and lower. If you often use the term *whatever* to and around your kids = passive parent!
3. E.g. – Jacob continued the trend and did even more damage by having more kids than did Isaac.
 - a. incest, murder, rape, and constant deception characterized this household.
 - b. Jacob’s kids had so much sibling rivalry they sold one of their brothers, Joseph, into slavery.
 - c. bottom line = Jacob knew these things were going on but, aside from an occasion mild rebuke, he did nothing about it!
4. Passive parents are unwilling to pay the price of building the right *stuff* into their kids. They’re under the control of the belief that says their personal fun, careers, lifestyles, agendas, and privileges are more important than raising God fearing, God honoring kids!

C. Passive Parenting Myths

1. The notion of a *good bad child* = one writer calls this the *Dennis the Menace Syndrome* – kids are so cute carrying out their mischief and sometimes wicked ways
 - a. kids may be Dennis the Menaces, inflicting the Mr. Wilsons of the world with misery and pain, but, somehow parents aren't concerned because their kid(s) -- will turn out OK!
 - b. the same parent who will stop the universe to get their kid to a ballgame or school activity will say "whatever" when it comes to correcting and giving them spiritual directing.
2. The notion of *good no matter child* = child that will learn the right thing to do on their own...
3. The notion of the *evil of parental imposition* = "Who am I to impose my beliefs on my kids?" Parents who promote democracy in home, where kids not only get a vote they're only vote – e.g.:
 - a. if your teen wants to have sex, alcohol, drug etc. at least let them have these in the safe confines of your home...
 - b. passive parents don't impose their beliefs; instead, they turn their kids over to a toxic culture to indoctrinate them... pumping them full of its belief systems and lifestyles.

The word *WHATEVER* is the buzz word for the passive parenting style!

II POSSESSIVE Style

A. Parenting by Being Over Protective

1. This is when parents are too involved, so intertwined with their kids' lives that the kids have little if any breathing room... Parents have a tough time letting go...
2. Good way to illustrate this is a common scenario taking place daily in our nation:
 - a. parents get a divorce and kids are involved
 - b. one of parents gets custody and the other gets visitation rights – parent with visitation gets kids for every other weekend and in order to compensate for their lack of together time, this parent gives them a theme-park lifestyle surrounded by the latest and greatest toys/gadgets...
 - c. parent with custody has kids come home from Disney weekend and now their back to homework, house chores = i.e. the monotonous daily routine. This parent frets they now are the heavy...; so, they decide to lighten up and kids end up with two lenient, indulgent parents.
3. Here's another good illustration – In 1991 a Wanda Holloway asked her brother-in-law to hire a hit-man to kill the mother of a girl who was competing with her daughter for a spot on the same Texas cheerleading squad. Holloway wanted the mother killed because she determined the competing girl would be so upset by the murder of her mother that she would drop out of the competition. Both girls were thirteen at the time. Holloway became known as *The Texas-Cheerleader-Murdering Mom*. Her story spawned two movies: *The Positively True Adventures of the Alleged Texas Cheerleader-Murdering Mom*.

B. Parenting by Provoking

1. Our text gives a warning and advice for passive and possessive parents – parenting styles that provoke their kids to wrath/anger
2. Passive parents do so through their neglect and putting down of their kids. Possessive parents do so through their suffocating indulgence on the one hand and unyielding grip on the other...

Possessive style of parenting is wrong simply because it is at the base of provoking anger/wrath in kids.

III PARTICIPATING Style

- rather than being passive or possessive, biblical parenting is participatory in nature. The point of our text gives direction to this being the style of parenting we should seek. Note following 3 principles:

A. Kids Need to be AFFIRMED

1. Comedian Eddie Cantor use to say that every time he looked at the FBI's 10 Most Wanted List, he thought, "If we'd make them feel wanted earlier, they wouldn't be wanted now."
2. Our text is simply saying to parents, "Let your kids know now that they are on your "wanted list" by telling and showing them so – i.e. by affirming them!

B. Kids Need to be APPRECIATED

1. Learn to not take for granted your kids presence and contributions to the whole family unit...
2. Nothing cheers a person in a nursing home like a little one... older adults appreciate little ones...
3. Point out to your kids their strengths and express your appreciation to God and to them for it!

C. Kids Need to be shown AFFECTION

1. When kids are little parents find it easy to do this – that is showing affection...
2. When they get older it's vitally important that parents find age and gender appropriate means of showing physical affection...

Conclusion: Dr. Phil Littleford and his twelve-year-old son, Mark went fishing in Alaska. They boarded a little pontoon plane to take them to various places to fish. Joining them on this fishing trip were the pilot and another fisherman. At the end of one day when the foursome went to the plane to take off for base camp, they discovered the tide had washed the plane onto rocks. They couldn't take off, so the group decided to spend the night. They cooked fish and had a great night together in the wild. The next morning they awoke and saw the tide was up. They loaded the plane and took off. They discovered however too late that one of the pontoons had been cracked by the rocks and had filled with water. The plane plummeted back into the icy water. All four survived the crash. The pilot and the other man swam for shore and made it. Dr. Littleford and his son, Mark, dived in and headed for shore. Phil Littleford was a strong swimmer and could easily make it to shore, but Mark was struggling to swim against the riptide. The two men on shore watched Phil swim back to his son. There was no way the father could swim and pull the boy against the tide, so the dad simply held his boy. Slowly, they were carried away by the current. Their bodies were never found. ~~Coast Guard said the boy's smaller body would have gone to sleep first from hypothermia and then the dad's.~~

What would you have done if you had been this dad? Most if not all parents, would have done the same thing without giving it another thought. If then, we are so willing to die for our kids, how come we are so unwilling to do what it takes to build the right stuff into their lives?

Passive parents practice laissez-faire parenting, reluctant to pay the price of getting involved. Possessive parents practice parenting by control and manipulation and often unwilling to make the sacrifices necessary for genuine relationships. Participating parents practice parenting by grace. They understand better and better that it took the Cross to win grace for humanity. They in turn are willing to take up their cross and follow Christ in extending what it takes to raise kids to be God fearing, God honoring individuals!