

May 17, 2015

## Last Day of Sunday School

Pontiac, IL has a lot parks. One of the most unique ones is called Dargan Park. In Dargan Park are three statues made out of iron. It shows the progression of life... childhood and youth, middle age, and old age.

At an early age children display a lot of energy and motion in the daily process of growing and learning. The sculpture of the child illustrates to us the early years of activity, movement, and energy.

During our middle age we demonstrate the passions of life, often with a fervor and eagerness. To some, that might suggest a time to achieve power and control. To others, it may indicate raising a family, building a future, or coming to a 'crossroad' in life. If so, it is often a time to 'find' ourselves - who we are, why we're here on earth, and what we want to accomplish. The middle age sculpture provides the reassurance during these years that life has begun to have meaning and gives us a choice, displayed in the ambiguity of the statue, as if it is reaching out to grasp the moment.

Finally, the old age statue shows us the change in physical appearance that signifies our elder years. Along with the aging process comes a level of maturity and wisdom to 'give good advice', to mentor others, and to live life to its fullest. For no matter where we are along the avenue of our 'seasons' of life, we should all know that "All Things Change And We Change With Them."

Below each statue is a saying:

Under the one that depicts youthfulness: As children, learn good manners; as young men, learn to control the passions.

Under the one in the middle: In middle age, be just.

And under the one that shows an older man: In old age, give good advice; then die without regret.

I like that. In old age, give good advice; then die without regret.

Everyone in this room will leave a legacy. The real question is: What type of legacy are you leaving? Everyone has a circle of influence. John Maxwell once said that you touch 30,000 people in the average lifetime. There's no question you're influencing people. The question is what type of influence are you leaving?

Today is the day that we celebrate our children. They have completed a year of Sunday School, some are receiving attendance awards, and all are celebrating a wonderful year of being together. As a pastor, and as a Christian Education Director (I'll speak for Danielle too...) we work and worry tirelessly over what the children will do, read, and learn in class. Not only is each day important, but the long run is equally important. At the end of THIS year, what do we hope to accomplish? At the end of THIS year, what do we hope the children will have learned... and remembered? At the end of THIS year, what do we hope the children can articulate about their faith, God, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit?

All of this hoping, worrying, and wondering, is us thinking about the legacy that we are leaving these kids, in the form of Sunday School, midweek children and youth groups, and other Christian Education programs. But let's face it. We have 1 hour a week with your children. 2 if you count church and they were actually paying attention. So if we have 2 hours a week, 52 weeks a year, we have 104 hours to make a difference in your children's lives. You on the other hand... You parents, guardians, grandparents, teachers, counselors, babysitters, and mentors.... You have the other.... (24 hours/day, minus 8 hours for sleep, minus 8 hours for school, and of course the 2 hours a week they are with us) You have 2,912 hours a year with your children. That's a lot of hours! So what is the legacy that you are leaving them? Are you thinking about it? Are you being intentional about it? Or are you just hoping it'll all turn out ok?

Our reading for today is from the book of Proverbs.

The book of Proverbs is the second book of the section called Writings in the Old Testament. Proverbs is not merely a collection of writings, but a "collection of collections" relating to a pattern of life which lasted for more than a millennium. It is an example of the Biblical wisdom tradition, and raises questions of values, moral behavior, the meaning of human life, and right conduct. The repeated theme is that "the fear of God (meaning submission to the will of God) is the beginning of wisdom". The book of Proverbs insists that seeking wisdom is the essence and goal of the religious life.

Proverbs 22.6 says, "Train up a child in the way he should go, even when he is old he will not depart from it."

The New Living Translation states it this way, "Direct your children onto the right path, and when they are older, they will not leave it."

The Message say, "Point your kids in the right direction— when they're old they won't be lost."

How are you "training up" your children? Are you directing them "onto the right path"? Have you pointed your kids "in the right direction"?

My guess is that you are trying. Few parents going into this parenting gig unprepared and with bad intentions. You have read the books, you have seen the children you don't want your children to become, and you have made a plan. After all, you'll never get where you want to go if you don't have a plan!

So how have you intentionally trained your children?

Parent's Magazine has an article called, 5 Values You Should Teach Your Child by Age Five  
Value #1: Honesty Help Kids Find a Way To Tell the Truth

The best way to encourage truthfulness in your child is to be a truthful person yourself. Consider this story: Carol decided to limit the number of playdates between her 3-year-old son, Chris, and his friend Paul. The boys had been fighting a lot recently, and Carol thought they should spend some time apart. So when Paul's mother called one afternoon to arrange a get-together, Carol told her that Chris was sick. Overhearing this, her son asked, "Am I sick, Mommy? What's wrong with me?"

Your child takes his cues from you, so it's important that you try to avoid any kind of deception, even a seemingly innocuous one.

## Value #2: Justice Insist That Children Make Amends

At a recent family gathering, Amy and Marcus, 4-year-old cousins, were making castles out of wooden blocks. Suddenly, Amy knocked over Marcus's castle, and he started to cry. Witnessing the scene, Amy's father chided his daughter and ordered her to apologize. Amy dutifully said, "I'm sorry."

Saying "I'm sorry" is pretty easy for a child, and it lets her off the hook without forcing her to think. Having a child make amends in a proactive way conveys a much stronger message. By encouraging your child to make such gestures, you emphasize the importance of treating people fairly-an essential value that will one day help him negotiate the complicated world of peer-group relationships.

## Value #3: Determination Encourage Them To Take on a Challenge

Five-year-old Jake showed his mother a drawing that he'd made with his new crayons. "That's very bright and colorful," she told him. "Nice job!" The child then ran to his room and dashed off another drawing to bring to his mom for praise-then another and another.

"Each one was sloppier than the last," his mother said. "I didn't know what to say." A good response might have been: "Well, Jake, that drawing isn't as carefully done as your other one. Did you try your best on that?"

## Value #4: Consideration Teach Them To Think about Others' Feelings

Anne was frustrated because her daughters, ages 3 and 4, ended up whining and fighting every time she took them grocery shopping. "I finally told them that we needed to figure out how to do our shopping without everyone, including me, feeling upset," Anne says.

The mom asked the girls for suggestions on how to make the trip to the grocery store a better experience for all. The 4-year-old suggested that they bring snacks from home so they wouldn't nag for cookies. The 3-year-old said she would sing quietly to herself so she would feel happy.

Do these small problem-solving exercises actually help a child learn the value of consideration? You bet. Over time, even a young child sees that words or actions can make another person smile or feel better, and that when she's kind to someone else, that person is nice to her. This feedback encourages other genuine acts of consideration.

## Value #5: Love Be Generous with Your Affection

Parents tend to think that children are naturally loving and generous with their affection. This is true, but for loving sentiments to last, they need to be reciprocated. It's chilling to realize that over the course of a typical busy day, the phrase "I love you" is probably the one that a child is least likely to hear. Let your child see you demonstrate your love and affection for the people in your life. And, of course, don't let a day pass without expressing your affection for your child himself.

You have 2,912 hours a year with your children. That's a lot of hours! So what is the legacy that you are leaving them? What are you teaching them? How are you training them up? Are you thinking about it? Are you being intentional about it? Or are you just hoping it'll all turn out ok?

Here at Brodhead United Methodist Church we are thinking about it! We are intentional about it!

We take Proverbs 22.6, "Train up a child in the way he should go, even when he is old he will not depart from it" seriously!

Our Christian Education director has handpicked our curriculum, after a lo(oo)t of research! The curriculum is strongly Bible based. It is geared so that all children get the same lesson each week. So if you have 3 children in different classes, they all come home with the same stories. Then you can talk to them on their levels. Sunday School is structured so that our children will go through the whole Bible in 3 years! So by 6th grade, our kids will have heard most of the Bible stories 2 times! They are even learning to use their Bibles and say the books in order. One of our 4th graders can recite 22 books by name!

We have 2 hours with your children. And we intend to make the most out of them. We want to "train up a child in the way he should go." We have thought, and continue to think about the legacy we leave your children. In fact, every time we brain storm, things change and improve. Next year we will change our Sunday School curriculum to one that is written for the Bibles our children get in 3rd grade! We are moving our youth groups to accommodate growing needs. (p.s. we need a middle school leader for next year) We are also hoping to provide a Bible Study on Sunday mornings for young adults! (p.s. we would need a leader for that as well)

We all have a great sphere of influence. We leave a legacy, whether we know it or not. Whether we are intentional about it or not. Whether it is good or not. What is the legacy you leave for your children, those younger than you, and those around you?

Here at Brodhead United Methodist Church, we strive for Open Hearts, Open Minds, and Open Doors. Our Christian Educational programs want to reach your children and bring them in a closer relationship with God. They do this through programs that touch on all 5 senses. As Danielle would say, "there's nothing better than an edible lesson." We know that we will leave legacy. Your children will carry the legacy we leave. So we are serious and intentional about everything we do.

But you spend more time with them that we do. You, as parents, grandparents, mentors, leaders, and neighbors. What will they remember about you? What will they remember FROM you? What is the legacy that you will leave? Will it be good or bad? That all depends on how intentional you were about it!

"Train up a child in the way he should go, even when he is old he will not depart from it." Every word and action that you do, is training a child around you. What is the legacy that you are leaving? Amen.