

Homegrown Kids

Part One

Ephesians 6:4
and
(Proverbs 22:6)

Introduction

On my farm in Kentucky, I love to grow tomatoes. I grow tomatoes on my farm for my personal enjoyment and not for profit. Therefore, I only grow enough tomatoes for my family and a few friends.

In Kentucky, the air temperature ranges from -5 degrees Fahrenheit in the winter to 105 degrees Fahrenheit in the summer. Our growing seasons are winter, spring, summer and fall. The growing season for tomatoes is mid-spring to mid-fall. From the middle of June to the end of November, I eat homegrown tomatoes. They are grown and harvested on my farm. But in the winter months and early spring, I have to eat store bought tomatoes. These are tomatoes that are grown and harvested somewhere else, then shipped to Kentucky and sold in a market. I buy them in the market and bring them home. Store bought tomatoes are not nearly as delicious as my homegrown tomatoes. It does not require as much labor for me to eat store bought tomatoes as it does to eat homegrown tomatoes. But I personally think the extensive labor and time to grow and eat homegrown tomatoes is definitely worth it.

There are four seasons in the growing of homegrown tomatoes. The first season is what I call the transplanting stage. The soil where the tomato plant will be transplanted must be tilled and fertilized. Then the tomato plant is carefully transferred from the container it is in to the freshly tilled soil. This is done by hand. After the tomato plant has been transplanted, it is watered.

The second season in the growing of homegrown tomatoes is the staking stage. After a few weeks, the tomato plant begins to put roots down into the freshly tilled and fertilized soil. The plant begins to grow up toward the sun. It begins to grow out as it grows up. Now the plant is ready for me to stake it. I take a metal fence post about two inches round and about six feet tall and I drive it in the ground beside the tomato plant. I take some heavy plastic string and tie the plant to the fence post. The stake forces the tomato plant to continue to grow up and not fall over and grow along the ground.

The third season is the cultivating stage. As the plant continues to follow the stake upward, little weeds begin to grow in the soil around the plant. I must remove the weeds from the soil or the weeds will take away moisture and nourishment from the plant and the tomatoes will not reach their maximum size as they mature and ripen. I must also remove the suckers that grow on the plant. These suckers actually look like leaves and will try to produce tomatoes themselves, but they will be inferior to the tomatoes that are produced by the leaves of the plant. If the suckers are left to produce tomatoes, they will rob the leaves of the nutrients they need to produce big ripe tomatoes.

The fourth season of growing homegrown tomatoes is the one I like best. It is the season of harvest or enjoyment. It's the best season because now I reap the fruit of all my labor. I begin to pick big red ripe tomatoes off of the tomato plant and bring them in the house and eat them. I love to slice them and put them on grilled hamburgers. I love to slice them and put them in salads. I love to slice them and put them on bacon sandwiches in the morning. But the best way to eat a tomato is to just wash it and eat it like I eat an apple. I love homegrown tomatoes!

Let's open our Bibles to Ephesians 6:4 and listen to Paul teach us some important principles in rearing homegrown kids.

Scripture

“Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.”

I would also like for us to turn our Bibles to Proverbs 22:6 and use this verse with Ephesians 6:4 to see how to rear homegrown kids.

“Train up a child in the way that he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it.”

There are four seasons in the rearing of homegrown kids.

The first thing I want to say to you as a parent is, “YOU ARE THE NUMBER ONE INFLUENCE IN THE LIFE OF YOUR CHILD.” The first thing you need to do is to see the big picture of rearing your child.

ILLUSTRATION: Before I start the first season of growing homegrown tomatoes, I see the end result in my mind. The end result is big red ripe tomatoes! I must know what the end result I desire is before I start.

As a parent, I need to be able to see my child as a full-grown adult. The starting point of rearing children is to see them as ‘Grown and Gone.’ Then I work backwards. I design a training program according to God’s Word that accomplishes this goal. I then look forward to reaching the goal for each of my children. I want them to become full-grown adults who live a life that brings honor and glory to Jesus Christ in Thailand.

It’s just like growing tomatoes or building a house. You have the end result in mind before you actually start. When we finish the house, we want it to look like what we wanted it to look like. We have a set of blueprints that we follow to guarantee the end result.

We need to look down the road and see who we want our children to be at age 25 and not what we want them to be! We need to think of

their character first and not their conduct. Conduct will reflect their character, but conduct cannot determine their character. Character determines conduct, so as a parent, I want to think of character first. The question I must ask is, "Who does God want them to be?"

With the big picture in mind, -who God wants my child to be as a full-grown adult-, let's dig into the first season of rearing homegrown kids.

The first season of rearing homegrown kids is the transplanting season. (This stage takes place from birth to two years of age.)

Remember, in growing tomatoes, this is the stage when we take the young plant out of the container it was in when we bought it, and transplant it into the soil of our farm. In this stage, I do everything for the young plant because it cannot transplant itself. As a farmer, I never complain about doing everything for the young plant because I see the big picture. I see the tomato plant as a mature plant that produces big red ripe tomatoes for me to eat! I know there will be a season of me enjoying the fruit of all my labor.

From birth to two years of age, you must do everything for your child because they cannot do anything for themselves. Without you, your child would die. In this season of doing everything for them, you must keep the big picture in mind. There will be a season when they can do everything for themselves that you are doing for them now.

This is what Paul and Solomon are teaching us in these two passages of scripture. In Ephesians 6:4, the phrase "bring them up" looks forward to them not always being where they are as children, but to the day when they are adults. They are growing up. In Proverbs 22:6, "even when he is old" refers to when the child is a full-grown adult. Both of these verses teach us that there must be a big picture in mind. The big picture is when they can do for themselves all the things we must do for them in the transplanting stage. The transplanting season, birth to two years of age, is the only season when we do everything for the child.

Men you must understand that you will feel like you have lost your wife in this season of life. Your wife is now a mom. And being a mom takes priority in her life. But if you parent correctly in this season, you will get her back soon. If you do not parent correctly, it will take longer for you to get her back or you may never get her back.

ILLUSTRATION: Many pastors should change the marital vows that they have a man and woman exchange during the wedding ceremony from "till death do us part" to "till children do us part!" When the child comes out the mother's womb, it does not take very long for him to believe he is the center of the universe. Everything seems to revolve around him as a baby. He seems to be the center of mom and dad's world. All he has to do is cry and everyone comes running to see what he wants or needs.

In this season, a child learns that to get what you want all you have to do is be in a state of unhappiness. Getting what you want solves your problem of unhappiness. This season cannot last forever! I repeat, THIS SEASON CANNOT LAST FOREVER!

Proverbs 22:15 teaches, *"Folly is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of discipline drives it far from him."*

In Kentucky, we call the two-year old stage of childhood "the terrible two's!" It doesn't take a child long to reveal that they are sinners, not little angels. A parent never has to teach a child to do wrong, because they are born knowing how to do wrong. A parent has to teach their child to do right. It's why we have to childproof our house. It's not to protect the things in the house from harm but to protect the child from harm.

Ask yourself this question, "Do you still want to be doing what you are doing now for your two year old when they are 18?" Do you want to still be making their bed, fixing their milk, picking up their toys? This is why we only do these things for them while they

cannot do it for themselves. This season must come to an end! It's the only stage where we will do everything for them.

The second season of rearing homegrown kids is the staking season. (This stage takes place from two to three years of age.)

Between age two to three, we must begin to transition them from thinking they are the center of the universe to understanding that they are a part of something bigger than themselves. They are part of a family. At age three, we are going to drive a stake in their world! The stake is going to be the discipline and instruction of the Lord (Ephesians 6:4). We are going to start teaching them they cannot grow up the way they want to, but they must grow up the way God wants them to. In this season of their very young life, the child must begin to learn that there is a consequence to their wrong choices. A parent must begin to get control in this season of their young life or the parent will lose control forever. The problems most parents have with teenage children do not start in the teenage years but started in the staking season. Moms, you cannot let people tell you the early years are the enjoyment season. The early season are when you work really hard at being a parent and then you will enjoy your child all of their adult life.

- **I Can Do It!**

Now, remember, at about age two, a child starts telling you when you try to do something for him that "I can do it!" The only problem with this is that your child wants to do it his way and not your way. As you transition your child to do it your way, you are putting him on the road to one day want to do things God's way.

Conclusion

Parents, I hope that you can now see the big picture of rearing homegrown kids. Instead of seeing your child for who they are right now, try to the best of your ability to see them as a full-grown adult. Ask yourself, "Who do I want them to be?" before you ask, "What do I want them to be doing?" If you have a child that is birth to two,

ask yourself, "What am I doing now for them that I do not want to be doing for them when they are fully-grown?"

Will you make a commitment that this is the only stage where you will do everything for them? We do not want them to still think they are still the center of the family as they grow up. Will you begin to get your stake ready that you will begin to drive into their life when they turn three? Do you understand that the stake is the 'discipline and instruction of the Lord?'

I need you to make a commitment also to come back next week as we talk about the season of staking in rearing homegrown kids.