

What Our Kids Really Need

Introduction

- A. **Proverbs 6:20-23.**
1. My youngest son graduated yesterday. One of our family traditions at graduation time is to put together a video of some of our special moments over the last eighteen years.
 2. As Heidi and I searched through our pictures and watched our videos to find things we wanted to include in Jon's video, it occurred to me that during the growing up years parents do lots of things for kids.
 - a. In those early days we do almost everything for them – feed them, change their diapers, rock them to sleep. We teach them the basics of life – how to walk and talk (sometimes regretting both).
 - b. As they get older, we build castles in the sandbox. We teach them how to ride a bike. We sit up to all hours finishing science projects and helping them learn how to reduce fractions. We sit in the hot sun for all four hours of a little league doubleheader. Sometimes we even coach the team, run all the practices and put up with delusional parents.
 - c. Then in those last years at home we go through the nightmare of teaching our kids how to drive. We battle over dating restrictions and curfews as they stretch for more freedom and we struggle to let go. We fuss about grades and college SAT scores while we worry over how we will ever pay for college.
 - d. Then, before we know it, we are sitting all teary-eyed at that ceremony, watching them walk across the stage, receive their diploma and prepare to launch them into to the next phase of life that will take them away from our home – perhaps far away.
- B. It's at times like these that we really begin to ponder what we have given our kids. Did we really give them what they need to take that next step?
1. For godly parents, we wonder most if we have supplied our kids to take the next step spiritual – to move on beyond our home and continue to serve the Lord in all they do.
 2. Of course, if they are to be ready for that moment, then we need to be asking this question all the way through the process. I want us to spend some time thinking about what our kids really need. We will do a lot for our kids during their growing up years, but what do they really need us to do, more than anything else? It's not rocket science. The answers are simply; ones we probably already know. We just need to think about them again and again.

Talk About God.

- A. Consider this admonition Moses gave the children of Israel as they were about to enter the promise land (**Deuteronomy 11:18-21**).
1. The Jews of Jesus' day completely missed the point of this passage. They would put little pieces of scripture into small boxes or phylacteries that they would literally bind to their arm and forehead. They even made them bigger to make a show of their pretend piety (**Matthew 23:5**).
 2. But they missed the point. Moses was saying that the law of God was to be kept in front of them all the time. The law was to be impressed on the heart and soul (**11:18**). It was to be taught to the children, discussed around the house constantly, in the morning, in the evening and all the time in between (**11:19**). It was to be the atmosphere that filled the homes of the Israelites.
 3. If parents would do this, it would help ensure that future generations would continue to serve God. If they would talk about God and His law all the time, there would be no need to literally write it on the walls or wear little boxes on their heads.
- B. Our kids need the same thing.
1. They need us to talk about God all the time.
 - a. We need to talk about the Bible reading at the breakfast table.
 - b. We need to text them devotional thoughts from scripture.
 - c. We need to lay scripture on their hearts as they struggle to show respect for a difficult teacher or they wrestle with how to respond to someone who mistreats them at school.
 - d. We need to make God part of the equation as they make decisions about music they will download to their ipod or what movie they will go see with friends.
 - e. Tuesdays and Saturdays should include at least a few minutes of talk about what's in the Bible class lesson.
 - f. The Sunday drive home from worship is a great opportunity to make the teaching from that day relevant to their lives.
 - g. The day should not close without some quiet moments before bed with thoughts about God, His word and how it applies to the events of the day.
 2. We talk about lots of things around the house. We talk about homework, the Astros, American Idol, progress reports, schedules, curfews, Ben's new diet... Let's just make sure that at the top of that list – the thing we talk about most – is God and His will for our lives. Our kids really need this.

Demonstrate Godliness.

- A. How many times during the growing up years do parents get this request from their kids: "Show me, daddy." "Show me how to do it, mommy."
1. A little girl sits in the kitchen watching mom make cookies and she says, "Show me how to do it, mommy."
 2. I wasn't a very bright kid. I would say things like..."Show me how to wash the car, dad." "Show me how to mow the grass."
 3. We teach our kids in different ways.
 - a. Sometimes we sit down and with our words we explain things. But other times we teach with our actions, demonstrating for our kids how something is to be done.

- b. When it comes to teaching God's word to our kids, we teach it in both ways. Moses told Israelite parents to teach their children – to talk about it all the time (**Deuteronomy 11:19**). But through our own lives – the way we live before them every day – we are showing them how to be godly. Jesus says that disciples are a light to the world (**Matthew 5:14**). But that light never shines brighter than it does before our children.
- B. Consider what an awesome opportunity we have to demonstrate godliness before our children.
1. Every day I have the opportunity to live **Ephesians 5:25** before my sons – to show them in a very practical way what it means for a man to love his wife as Christ loved His church.
 2. Every day mothers have the opportunity to live **I Peter 3:1-6** before their daughters – to show them in a very practical way what it means to truly be submissive to a husband, to put on a gentle and quiet spirit.
 3. Every time we get in the car I have the opportunity to live **Romans 12:14-21** before them – to show them how to return good for evil.
 4. Every Sunday morning I have the chance to live the spirit of God's people described in **Isaiah 12:5-6** as they praise God and shout for joy. I have the chance to show them what it means to love the Lord and worship Him passionately.
 5. Every drive home from worship offers me an opportunity to live **James 1:22** – to show them how I plan to be a doer of the word as I discuss how I will apply what I learned from the Bible study.
 6. Every day I have the chance to live **Proverbs 4:23** as I change the channel on the TV to protect the purity of my heart.
 7. And the list could go on and on...
- C. Of course, a dreadful possibility lurks out there.
1. I may not teach my kids these things by the way I live. In fact, my life may be saying just the opposite.
 2. If we are hypocrites – actors, one kind of person at the worship and a different kind of person the rest of the time, our kids know it better than anyone! What is sad is that, if mom and dad are hypocrites, kids often conclude that all disciples are hypocrites.
 3. I have this awesome opportunity to teach so many right lessons simply by doing the right things. Our kids need us to demonstrate godliness.

Correct Bad Behavior.

- A. It is one of our most unpleasant and important duties as a parent.
1. It would be great if raising kids only involved ball games, baking cookies together and daily family devotions.
 2. The problem is that sometimes our kids do the wrong thing. It doesn't make you a bad parent. We need to quit making this all about us! Everyone's kids do the wrong thing at times. The important thing is that we respond in the right way.
 3. The Old Testament judge Eli did not respond in the right way. His sons were evil and he did not rebuke (**I Samuel 3:13**). I don't think that the problem is that Samuel was okay with their evil. He clearly wasn't (**I Samuel 2:22-25**). He just didn't respond in the right way. He didn't step in and put a stop to this evil behavior. As a result, his sons did horrible things and ultimately brought God's judgment against his house.
- B. The right way to respond to bad behavior is with correction (**Ephesians 6:4**).
1. First, I need to acknowledge that their behavior IS wrong. I know it's hard to admit when our kids are wrong. It embarrasses us and makes us feel like a failure. But if we defend our kids when they are wrong, we will be a failure (**Proverbs 29:17, 13:24**)! So get over it; accept that your kids have messed up and start fixing it.
 2. Second, I need to teach my kids that their behavior is wrong. Sometimes kids do the wrong thing because they don't know better. When this is the case, they need instruction. For example, little kids have to be taught to share toys and say "thank you".
 3. Third, when they know better and still do wrong, I need to punish them. It's up to us to teach our kids that crime does not pay. When you do bad things, bad things happen to you (**Proverbs 22:15**). I want my kids to learn that lesson from me. If I don't teach it to them, someone who does not love them like I do will teach it to them (a boss; a landlord; a police officer; a judge).
 4. Fourth, I need to reinforce my love. Discipline should always be driven by love for my kids, not out of anger over their offenses. Be careful about this. Say the words – make sure they understand that you're imposing the punishment because you love them and want them to have a great life and go to heaven. It's hard to argue with that.
 5. Fifth, be a grown up; be a parent. Kids aren't going to like discipline; who does? They may get angry with me and pout for a few hours...or days. Some parents are intimidated by this possibility and back away from giving kids the correction they need. We need to get over that or we will end up hurting our kids; and they will hurt us (**Proverbs 29:15**). Because I am my sons' dad, sometimes I have to do things that they don't like. Sometimes they get mad at me...and that's okay. They get over it!

Conclusion: Seize The Day!

We have this brief season of life to have our kids around us all the time. We need to seize the moment (**Ephesians 5:15-16**). During this time we will do a lot of things for our kids. We need to make sure we do the things that matter most. This begins with my own relationship with God (**Deuteronomy 6:5-6**).

- David A. Banning