

Our Kids (part 2)

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This is the second part of a series on what we can do to give our kids the best chance at a thriving, Christ-centered spiritual life. After all, this should be every Christian parent's deepest and foremost concern in raising children in the fear and knowledge of the Lord.

Practice What You Preach

"But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves" (James 1:22). It is so easy to deceive ourselves when we are not walking the walk, but we are typically not deceiving our children. They are sometimes more perceptive than anybody else, including elders or counselors. Practicing what we preach would include:

- Being involved in your own regular bible study (2 Timothy 2:15);
- Having an active prayer life;
- Extending hospitality (Romans 12:13);
- Faithful in worshipping with other Christians (Hebrews 10:24);
- Involved in saving the lost. Children are going to sense that something is wrong if we are talking about how much the world needs the gospel but they never see us personally reaching out to anyone with it;
- Rejoicing in the fact that we are saved and have a relationship with God (Philippians 4:4), rather than seeing religion as a burden;
- Rejoicing in the fact that we are members of the local church, rather than putting on a smiling face in the building and then endlessly complaining and gossiping about church members during the car ride home.

Mom and Dad Must Both Be Strong

While I do not discount the power that single parents can have in rearing amazing, godly, sweet children (some of the most amazing people have come from such circumstances), what I want to do in this section is point out a problem that can exist when there is one parent who is strong and another who is weak. Often, a man or woman will get baptized and go to a particular church simply to appease his or her spouse. This exterior, superficial religiosity may work just fine while there are no children, but it can be very devastating for a child to grow up in this uneven environment. Eventually, that son or daughter will ask the dreaded question, "Mommy, why doesn't daddy come to church anymore?" or "Daddy, is mommy going to hell because she stays home on Sunday?" It becomes very hard to convince children that God comes first (Matthew 6:33) if one of their parents is clearly not following this.

Do Not Sacrifice Their Eternal Future For The Present

When you make choices concerning such things as a career, place of work, where you live, etc., remember the impact that those decisions have upon your children.

- Make it a priority to work with an energetic and growing congregation. If circumstances do send your family to a place without a strong congregation, be the agent of change that turns around a weak congregation.
- Make the effort to get your kids to get-togethers and activities that involve other Christians their age.
- Take them to gospel meetings, youth lectureships, and organize classes for their age group.
- Limit the amount of time that you are away from them. Do not make the mistake of thinking that you are such a "cool" or talented mom or dad that you can turn out faithful children and neglect the principles in passages such as Deuteronomy 6:7. Have regular and deep spiritual conversations with your children.
- Do not turn your head when you see your children beginning to take the first few steps down the wrong path. For example, Adam and Eve's spiritual downfall didn't begin when they took the first bite of forbidden fruit. In fact, that was just the culmination of many small steps – wandering too close to the tree in the first place, listening to the serpent, looking at the fruit and pondering it, picking it, holding it, etc. Sin's ultimate deception is the belief that the steps leading up to it are entirely innocent!