

# Sending Them Out

Almost everything seems life-threatening to a newborn baby, especially when you're a first-time parent. A loose blanket in their crib, a small toy, stairs, pets, coffee table corners, and especially the dreaded electrical outlets all seem to pose a mortal danger to small children. You might wrap your child in bubble wrap if it wasn't such a potential choking hazard! But it doesn't get easier as our kids grow up. There's always danger lurking around the next corner. Though "helicopter parenting" is tempting, someday they'll need to face difficulties without you. So, as we prepare to send our kids out into the world, how do we empower them and guide them through life's obstacles?

**The Big Idea:** Though our role in our children's lives will change, we're still uniquely qualified to guide, direct, and encourage them once they've left the house.

## Guiding Through Trouble

**We can't protect our children from every danger in the world.** Our kids, like all of us, may travel *"through the valley of the shadow of death"* someday (Ps. 23:4). We may grieve over the life they've chosen, as David did with Absalom (2 Sam. 19:4). Maybe we'll mourn for the treatment they've unfairly endured, like Mary at her son's crucifixion (John 19:26). With storms on the horizon, let's build our homes on solid ground now, shepherding and shaping them according to the Lord's pattern.

Be there for them, always available to step in and help when they're ready for our support. Our kids should know that we'll **always** love them, no matter the mistakes they've made or the situation in which they've found themselves. Remember how the prodigal son's *"father saw him and felt compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him"* (Luke 15:20)?

But here's some good news: we have a helper who cares about them even more than we do. So get on your knees every day, pleading for his protection over them, as Job did for his children (Job 1:5). When we feel powerless to step in and rescue them, call on the Almighty Father to *"keep them from the evil one"* (John 17:15).

*How will you respond when your child fails their tests?*

## Lasting Direction

**God made our kids for his glory, not ours.** Though we're glad they belong to us, we want them to belong to him. As Hannah said, *"For this child I prayed, and the Lord has granted me my petition that I made to him. Therefore I have lent him to the Lord. As long as he lives, he is lent to the Lord"* (1 Sam. 1:27-28). Hannah didn't know who Samuel would become or his significance in God's work. But she dedicated him to God and instilled a sense of identity as God's servant.

God knew our kids before we did, forming them *"fearfully and wonderfully"* in the womb. All their days are in his book (Psalm 139:1-5, 13-15). He's the source, the vine that'll make their lives fruitful. And as they abide in him, he'll answer their prayers and keep them in his love (John 15:4-10). When they believe God works mightily in them (Eph. 3:20; Phil. 2:13), it changes how they see themselves.

Devote your kids to God in your heart, training them in his way, surrendering their future to his care, and praying for his will to be done in their lives. We're stewards entrusted with these precious souls, readying them for life beyond our care. So as we receive children *from* the Lord, may they give themselves *to* him.

*Do you see yourself as a steward, preparing your kids for life without you?*

## **Joyful in Obedience**

**What a gift — when a "son" or "daughter" becomes a "brother" or "sister" in Christ.**

Imagine the day we serve our King alongside them as adults!

While hopefully, everyone loves their kids, maybe not everyone likes them. Some children grow up and become people you don't admire or enjoy being around. That's why we work every day to bring them under the shepherding and shaping influence of God. Faithful children don't happen by accident but by continually placing the Lord above all in a family's life (Titus 1:5-6).

Sometimes we're the bad guy, saying "no" until they learn to say it for themselves. Rather than treating our kindergarteners like buddies, we invest in disciplining them while they're small so that eventually, we can enjoy friendship with healthy, spiritually developed adults. Don't rush the process! And so we send them out into the world — not to leave us forever, but to build their own lives and families on what we've given them. We want to share our lives with their families because that's our family.

As parents, we look down the road beyond the piano recitals, report cards, and career decisions. It's fun to see our kids succeed, but life is full of hard choices. They need to know that if they lose their soul, they've lost everything (Mark 8:36). So keep the faith and remind them every day about the greatest gift ever given: salvation in Jesus!

*Will your kids become people you enjoy being around?*

## **Conclusion**

Because parenting is such an important job, let's keep our focus on the ultimate goal of salvation for our little ones. May the Lord bless us all to raise up another generation of dedicated believers to serve him with everything they have!