

Text: Proverbs 22:6

Theme: Parenting 101- A Starting Point

June 19, 2016

How many of you as parents received a parenting book with the arrival of your first child? How many of you received a revised parenting book written specifically for your second child? As parents, it would be great if each child arrived with their own parenting book, but it doesn't work that way. Parenting is an art that we develop by trial and error. Thankfully, our God offers us some guidance in His Word. Today, as we consider a few parenting or even grandparenting basics, we consider our theme: Parenting 101 - A Starting Point.

I. Although God created parents and children, parenting is one of life's most challenging tasks. A. Aware of the challenge, what are some parenting basics? 1. Start early. King Solomon in all his wisdom pens these words, "Train up a child." In essence, he says, "Start immediately. Don't wait for the perfect moment because there will never be a perfect moment to train up a child." How quickly do habits become habits? As parents, our God says, "Don't wait for habits to be created that you have to undo. Create the right habits from the very beginning. Be My parent by starting early and devoting your life to the art of training."

2. Expect God to do the miraculous. In our Gospel, we encounter a rather strange event, a man possessed by demons, yet a man Jesus miraculously heals. Maybe life is different at your house, but I've never been able to perform a miracle or even anything close to it. Miracles are in God's category. Miracles are God stepping into our imperfect world to demonstrate His incredible power. As parents, we need miracles. As grand parents, we still need miracles. We need God to step into our situations and do what we can't do. I don't know the particulars in your house, but I know that we need to believe in and expect God to do what God does best, to do the miraculous.

3. Run to your Rock. In our Introit, the Psalmist writes, "Be to me a rock of refuge, to which I may continually come." Why do we need a Rock of refuge? Because we don't have all the answers. It's okay to cry out to Him saying, "Lord, I don't know what to do. Show me Your plan. Show me what to do next," because as we do, God smiles and says, "Thanks for asking. I have given you the task to train up a child, but, as I did so, I expected you to come running, to acknowledge your dependence on Me. Because you realize that you need Me, your children and grand children will likewise realize, by your example, that they need Me as well!"

4. Utilize your resources. It doesn't take long to realize that we are unqualified to train up a child, that, left to ourselves we are practicing the art by trial and error. But parenting isn't a sole activity. God didn't give you the precious gift of a child and say, "Okay, you're on your own. You figure it out and I'll check back in twenty years to see how you've done!" Instead, with our task, God has provided resources, invaluable resources found in other people, found in our parents and grandparents, and also found in His Word. Whatever the resource, God gently says, "Use what I've set before you. It will help you to train up a child in the way that he should go!"

5. Be their example. As Jesus walked the earth, how many examples did He provide? How many learned vital information simply from His example? Examples are powerful. Oftentimes, examples are more powerful than words. As you train up a child, God is waiting for you, your children are waiting for you to be their example.

Do as I say not as I do doesn't work and it never will work because God created us to learn by example. You might not have all the right words. Maybe you didn't have access to a wealth of information prior to becoming a parent. Whatever the case, God says, "Do what I have given you to do. Be the best example you can be and I will bless your efforts!"

6. Never give up. In our Introit, the Psalmist writes, "You who have made me see many troubles and calamities will revive me again." As parents, we've all been there. We've all had moments where we wanted to walk away, to throw in the towel and surrender to defeat. If Jesus were walking among us, He would say, "Welcome to the real world. You are only human, yet, no matter what the moment brings, don't ever give up because I am with you. I have not and will not forget you. I know the plans I have for you and for your child and they are good plans. Come to Me; lean on Me; don't give up on the most important task I have placed into your hands!"

7. Keep praying for them and for yourself. If you looked at every instance in the Bible, how many times would you find one of God's people praying and instantly receiving an answer? Now, how many times would you find them praying for months or years and finally receiving an answer? Prayer is not magic. It's not like McDonalds where they see how quickly they can fill your order. Prayer doesn't work that way, but prayer does work. As parents and grandparents, as aunts and uncles, pray for your child and keep on praying and while you're praying, pray for yourself because God does amazing work through those who trust their lives to His care.

8. Find opportunity for praise. In our Introit, it says, "I will praise You." Yet, as we praise our God, He desires that we also offer praise to our children as His precious gift. God surely deserves our praise, but that doesn't negate the value of praising our children. I haven't looked at the statistics, but I shutter to guess how many kids come to school every day who have not received a single word of praise before they arrived at the school doors. Kids aren't perfect and they won't act perfect, but there are moments when we can and should praise them and those moments, in the mind of God, need to occur not on rare occasion, but frequently.

9. Accept your limitations. When a grown child allows the world to influence them in ways beyond our control, we, as parents and grand parents, need to do one thing we are often reluctant to do - We need to accept our limitations. We can't be a protective umbrella for our kids forever. We do our best, but as they become adults, we gradually retract our umbrella and allow some raindrops to hit them in the face. When we've done our best, God says, "Leave the rest in My hands. Do what you can from a distance, but accept your limitations. They must learn to go it alone or they will never learn how to become the parents of the next generation."

10. If parenting were simple, God wouldn't have given you the task. Aware that every child arrives without a parenting guide, do what God asks of you, "Train up a child," and then, allow God the privilege to do the rest. Amen.