

3 Practical Ways to Raise Your Children Into Leaders

There are numerous programs available geared toward developing dynamic leaders, and some can be beneficial. Although I have helped develop many leaders during my career as a university teacher, IHOPKC's marketplace ministry leader and as a coach, my most valuable lessons about developing leaders have come from God. As He entrusted my husband and me with two daughters to love, raise and usher from babyhood to adulthood, I have learned invaluable lessons in leadership from being their mother.

Over the years, people have asked how we raised our daughters to become such effective communicators and leaders in their lives and in their careers, despite life's hardships.

You may never feel fully qualified to be a parent or a leader of others. The weight of shaping another life is huge! We certainly didn't know what we were doing. In desperation, we latched onto this verse early in our parenting days: "Look, children are a gift of the Lord, and the fruit of the womb is a reward" (Ps. 127:3).

Since God gave us gifts in the form of human lives to develop, we expected He would show us how. And He did.

In this blog, I will unpack three keys to raising up courageous leaders based on experiences we have had both at home and professionally—but mostly at home.

1. Develop Courageous Leaders in Real-time; Life Lessons Speak

Include young leaders as you go about your life. They are watching and listening.

Whether you are a parent, a teacher, a youth minister, a pastor, a community mentor, a worker in the church or a business owner, you can be sure potential young leaders are being influenced by your life. The first question to ask is, "What does my life and example say about how to make a difference in the world?"

One day, I became keenly aware that my children were being molded by what I said and what I did. I was working at Brazosport College in Lake Jackson, Texas, at the time, and our young girls often overheard me conducting business as a teacher and leader of business programs. As children do, they would dress up like Mom, put on my pumps, confiscate some lipstick from my bathroom and set up their offices at the kitchen table, complete with play phone, assorted papers and a stapler.

One day I overheard our youngest daughter pick up her phone and answer.

"Businessport College. How can I help you?"

"Oh, I see ..."

"Well ..."

"Let's just 'pay' about that."

The r's weren't rolling just yet at the age of 3, but more importantly, she had the courage and confidence to pray with her "team member" who had a problem because she had heard Mom do it.

The power of example—a life lived out loud—speaks volumes, beyond any parenting or leadership book or seminar, molding young leaders around us who are forming opinions, receiving impressions and drawing conclusions about life and all the possibilities.

We often held small groups in our home in which our own daughters would be included. They overheard discussions,

prayers and mentoring conversations. Now we see our grown daughters exercising the wisdom of leadership, first learned as children, in their lives and work as communication/training professionals today.

These lessons apply to our teams, churches and work. I make it a practice to include emerging leaders in settings where they could observe leadership in action, complete projects that stretched their skills and learn in real-time.

2. Identify Opportunities to Make a Difference; Set Goals

Those who understand that they can affect outcomes are prone to lead with a courage that overcomes circumstances.

One of the most important lessons any young leader needs to experience is the power of recognizing an opportunity and doing something productive to make a difference.

When our oldest daughter needed money beyond her allowance for a special purchase, instead of telling her to wait until the next month, we helped her set a goal for the extra income. Then we showed her how to figure out how many extra hours of babysitting she would need. Together we prayed for the jobs to come in. The phone started ringing, her eyes lit up and she not only knew God answered her prayer, but she learned a lifelong principle of goal-setting with prayer.

I teach goal-setting as a basic life skill for leaders at every age; many times even a seasoned leader needs to go back to the basics of identifying opportunity, making a plan and creating a solution.

The difference between a visionary and a leader is that while a visionary dreams dreams, a leader executes the vision. Vision without implementation is exhausting: "Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but when the desire comes, it is a tree of life" (Prov. 13:12).

We are living in a time where the misuse of technology threatens to rob our young leaders of creative thinking and problem-solving experience by substituting reality with a make-believe world of movies, games, internet searching and other distractions.

The battle over the destiny of a life is real, and the enemy will employ any and all tactics to separate us from the belief that our children have a destiny and that we can shape outcomes with God. The developing leader learns to access technology merely as a tool and a valued resource but to reach for God as the source of all wisdom and understanding.

Empowering young leaders to move a goal or a dream into action and bring results is a core principle of leadership that travels with a leader over a lifetime.

3. Protect Identity; Build Courage to Process Hard Things

It is essential to help emerging leaders view life's challenges in a redemptive way; this perspective helps to protect identity.

Whether experiencing hardship, hearing difficult and conflicting messages from those around them or facing trials, the young leader needs a set of beliefs anchored in the truth of God's love and upon His Word.

A foundation or mindset that God is for us—that He has insight to share in every situation—equips and informs a young mind to figure out the world, understand who they are in it and know how to respond in life's challenges with peace and courage.

Jesus is a good leader and tells us, "I have told you these things so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But be of good cheer. I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).

Troubles and suffering in life are opportunities to know God better. It's not that we won't have any trouble—quite the contrary. We will have trouble, but God is with us.

Our youngest daughter was diagnosed in first grade with a medical condition that required her to perform a blood test several times a day. Disease is something that strikes at the core of identity every time. We soon heard from her teacher that she was exercising her entrepreneurial bent by giving her friends blood tests for \$1 at lunch every day. This was an empowering decision in such a little girl, made for a mighty woman who knows how to face adversity and find opportunity today.

We are entrusted to develop leaders who know their identity in Christ and can recognize opportunity to make a difference in the world. These are the leaders people are searching for today.

For more on biblical leadership lessons, [click here](#).

Linda Fields, director of the Joseph Company, blends her humble upbringing as a preacher's kid and her wealth of experience in business, training and ministry to serve believers who are called to fulfill their mission in the marketplace. With True Tribe, a simple mentoring system designed to unlock and launch one's next level, Linda helps train men and women to live out their spiritual destinies within their professions. As a woman, a wife, a mom, a glass-ceiling smasher, business owner and coffee aficionado, Linda is at home in the boardroom, the classroom and the prayer room doing life with Jesus, her mentor and friend, as they help others pursue their dreams.