

4 Real-Life Tools to Revive Your Parenting

I am sure every generation of parenting has come with its own unique challenges.

This generation of parenting comes with challenges that previous generations have never had to face—namely devices, screens, the constant pull of the internet and how it constantly stimulates and entertains our children for us.

Screens are a non-stop battle in our home.

My children wake up and are not even all the way down the stairs before they are asking to play video games, even though every morning they get the same answer: No.

If I'm honest, I'll admit to those days when my fatigue was so overwhelming that I gave them each a device so I could rest from the constant barrage of questions and quarreling. And over the Christmas holidays, we relaxed our rules quite a lot.

Because our children spend so many hours doing school in one form or another, we didn't feel guilty for doing this, but today they both started back to school, and it's time to revive my parenting.

And I don't just mean getting back to our structure and routine. Putting the devices away and the rules back in place.

One thing I've pondered over the past several months is how often I let life happen. To be sure, life will happen no matter how intentional we are.

The question is, when life happens, do we lasso it and use it as a stepping stone, or is it using us like a pinball machine—throwing us around, left and right—while we sort of hope we land in the hole with the most points?

In a sense, I feel like lately I've been living in a pinball machine.

Here's a truth bomb for us all: Godly kids don't just happen.

They don't even happen just because they grow up in godly homes with parents who truly love the Lord.

I know this as well as anyone, having grown up in a pastor's home all my life. How many times did I see kids from Christian homes grow up indifferent to God, church, the Bible, and never truly cultivate a relationship with the Lord?

Before you assume I'm throwing all the blame on the parents, I'm not.

I know full well that as children grow into adulthood, they are fully responsible for their own decisions. However, I am wondering today if I'm doing all I can—and should—to help my children have their own individual experiences with God now, at an early age. I am convinced that if a child has a genuine experience with Jesus Christ, and as he grows continues to have experiences with Jesus Christ, it will be much harder for him to walk away in his teen and young adult years.

As a child, I had many such experiences.

I recall at age 6, kneeling at the altar weeping. I didn't know why I was weeping—I just was. I could feel the presence of the Lord, and it took my too my knees in tears. I would often weep at hearing the story of Jesus dying on the cross.

As a teenager, every year I'd have a genuine, personal experience with Jesus Christ at summer and winter camp.

These experiences served as milestones in my Christian walk, and I've often reflected back on them, especially in the darker seasons of life when I was discouraged.

So, reviving my parenting doesn't just mean reviving our daily routine or reinstating the house rules, it also means reminding myself to be intentional about guiding my children's hearts spiritually. Here's what I'm doing this year.

4 Ways to Revive Your Parenting

1. Prayer

There is nothing like parenting to drive you to your knees. Daily. Hourly. Every second.

Parenting helps me dwell at Jesus' feet, daily asking for wisdom in the broader sense of parenting, as well as in the very specific areas I see in my children's lives where they need a breakthrough. I couldn't do this thing called parenting without Christ—mainly because I'm so selfish and so broken. How on earth can I teach my children godly behavior when I'm so broken myself?

2. Remember: House rules are not just about modifying your children's behavior.

Here's the thing: good people go to hell every single day. I know that sounds harsh, even cruel, but it is true.

I don't want my children to just be good people; I want my children to be godly people. If I teach them how to behave well, but never reach their spirits, I have only done my job halfway.

But there's another thing: my oldest is like me—he is a pleaser. He will do anything within his power to make sure that people are happy with him, proud of him. Just teaching him to behave well, without ever truly guiding his spirit, will teach him that God loves him only when he does good things. It gives him a very distorted image of God.

The house rules are in place to help our home run smoothly. But my prayer for 2018 is that God will give me wisdom to know

how to use them—and those moments when my children need discipline—to help them see the spiritual reasons behind the rules.

One of the books I'm reading this year that delves into this subject so well, is *Shepherding a Child's Heart*.

3. Spending time with my children individually.

We may not be able to consistently do mommy-son dates because of the unique schedule in our home, but I do make it a point to spend one-on-one time with each child consistently.

One thing I want to do this year is use some of that time to have spiritual conversations with them, reinforcing what we're learning from the Bible and helping them connect everyday situations with God's Word and their personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

I believe that this one-on-one time is extremely powerful and helps to make abstract concepts more personal and real.

4. Bible instruction is not just about the stories.

One grave concern I have is that my children not look at Bible stories in the same way they look at Thomas the Train and Barney—as cartoons, fictional stories or fantasies. I also don't want them to see the Bible as just a storybook or church as just something we do on Sundays.

So many Christians compartmentalize their life into spiritual and secular activities: washing the car is secular but quiet times are spiritual. If the Holy Spirit dwells inside of us, everything we do is spiritual and the Bible should—in its own unique way—touch every area of our life.

I want to cultivate that understanding that biblical truths are infused into everything we do—because we don't do Christian things, we are Christians. It's our identity, it is the core of who we are.

The Bible is more than just Samson being a superhero or Jonah being swallowed by a whale. It's daily instruction for how we live our lives: its lessons on obedience, respect, humility, and loving one another.

Parenting is, by far, one of the hardest things we've ever done.

Just the time when we think we've figured it out, that we've finally broken through and we know what we're doing, things change. They grow. They hit a new milestone.

And we're thrown back to Jesus' feet crying out for wisdom and understanding in how to do this thing called parenting. And that is exactly how God designed it.

We were never meant to parent alone.

We need God's wisdom, the power of the Holy Spirit and the knowledge that we do the best we can; and then pray and believe that God's grace will flow over everything, filling in the cracks of our human brokenness. {eoa}

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