

5 Keys to Raising Kids That Love God

I didn't grow up in a Christian home and knew nothing about parenting. My husband, Jerome, also didn't grow up in a Christian home although his grandmother was a devout, godly woman. We became parents in our 30s and although we loved kids, we were clueless about parenting.

Today, we have three kids: 12-year-old D'Andra, 16-year-old Alex and 19-year-old Chris. They aren't perfect or super-spiritual, but the bottom line is that they love God. They are regular church attenders and Alex and Chris both help lead worship.

How we managed to raise kids that look forward to going to church is beyond me. But here are 5 things that we did from the time they were babies to foster a love for God and His people.

#1 Love God yourself.

The man answered, "'You must love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your strength, and all your mind.' And, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'" Luke 10:27 (NLT)

Please know that we are not super-spiritual parents. We lose our temper, we make mistakes and have failed. But through the weak moments that our kids have witnessed, we always go back to the foundation of the Bible and prayer. We've been examples of repentance and humility when we lost our tempers. We've been the first to ask for forgiveness and the first to lay our lives down for them.

Our kids know that we love God. We love what He stands for and His word. We read our Bibles and we pray regularly. We have

tried to model for our children how to love Him by loving people.

#2 Make your children a priority.

“Children are a gift from the LORD; they are a reward from him.” Psalm 127:3 (NLT)

I’ve seen parents put the ministry or church activities in front of raising their kids. The pastor or children’s ministry leaders are not responsible for imparting Biblical principles and attitudes into their lives. God gave you the responsibility for teaching them about Him.

When D’Andra who has special needs was born, I adjusted my volunteer activities because she needed more attention than my sons. I stepped out of the prayer ministry and several other volunteer activities to be more available for my daughter. Today she asks me every morning if there’s church tonight. She can’t wait to go to church.

Alex was a strong-willed toddler. I once showed up at church and volunteered to give him to the ministry like Hannah gave Samuel up to serve the Lord. I’ll never forget Pastor Diana Trout telling me that God gave Alex to me to raise. “If you can work with his strong will now, he will be a great servant for God,” she said. Alex leads worship for the youth group and I’ve seen him exhort his peers to love God. Alex’s strong will under the hand of God is forming Alex into a voice for God.

Making Chris, Alex and D’Andra a priority meant I couldn’t do some things that I wanted to do. I couldn’t run for office, write a screenplay or work in a demanding time-consuming executive job. I laid down my life and my dreams for them.

#3 Connect with a community of faith.

“And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another, especially now that the day of

his return is drawing near.” Hebrews 10:25 (NLT)

You need relationships to raise kids that love God. John 13:35 says that they will know you are my disciples by your love for one another. Your children need to see your faith in action with other people. They need to see you reaching out and serving people.

We have always had ministry students stay with us or hosted people in our home. Since I moved a lot when I was growing up and had to constantly adjust to new people, I wanted to raise kids that were comfortable in any social situation. Our church is multi-generational and encourages mentoring type relationships.

Our teenage sons had a great conversation with one of our friends who is in her 50s. She said she enjoyed talking to our sons. They can talk to adults without any fear or intimidation. I believe being in a community of faith with different generations and ethnic groups is essential for success in life.

#4 Talk about your faith.

“And you must commit yourselves wholeheartedly to these commands that I am giving you today. Repeat them again and again to your children. Talk about them when you are at home and when you are on the road, when you are going to bed and when you are getting up.” Deuteronomy 6:6-7 (NLT)

Your children need to hear your “war” stories. I’ve told my children about how God provided when I was in college with no financial support from my parents. They have heard the stories of how my husband slept in a lawn chair in an apartment with no furniture when he was helping to start a church.

Everyday, I tell them nuggets of what I’m learning from the Bible. The Bible is a living, active force in our daily lives, not just a bunch of cute stories. After church, I’ll ask them

what they got out of the message. I want to hear what they have to say and there is no right or wrong answer. I just want to hear their hearts.

#5 Attend a church that believes the Holy Spirit can move through children.

But Jesus said, "Let the children come to me. Don't stop them! For the Kingdom of Heaven belongs to those who are like these children." Matthew 19:14 (NLT)

I've heard Pastor Luis Reyes who ministers to thousands of children every week in Chicago say that you can tell the temperature of a church by the children. My husband and I chose our church because of the children. When my husband saw kids raising their hands and worshipping God, he said that we needed to move to Kansas City to join this church.

I don't know very many fathers that would leave a nice home, a high-paying job and friends to join a church because he's concerned about their future. I'm thankful that my husband was willing to drop his nets and follow God for the sake of our kids. The church we attend believes that there is no junior Holy Spirit. They believe that the Holy Spirit is just as active in the children as in the adults.

Children and teenagers are given opportunities to minister and the ministry has the same level of excellence as far as leadership, facilities and resources as the ministry to adults. I've seen children preach, prophesy and pray. I've received prayer from my own children that brought healing. When your children are in a place with no spiritual limits, you will be amazed at what God does through them.

Raising kids that love God will be the hardest thing you've ever done in your life. You will have to pay a price and sacrifice your own dreams. But when D'Andra asks me if there is church tonight or I see my sons helping to lead worship, it is well worth what we gave up.

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