

5 Things I Would Do Differently If Raising My Family Again

What would I do differently I were raising my family again? I've been asked several times recently for my advice on raising a family.

The only advice I have is from personal experience. My boys are grown; they're on their own, self-sustaining and independent young men. But everyone who knows them is impressed with my two adult sons. They are incredible.

I've been honest with all of them. My wife, Cheryl, is too when she's asked. It's all been grace.

I do have the opportunity, however, of looking back on that experience. Parenting looks different to me now than it did then. Isn't that how all of life works? We can only see what we can see, and when we are in the middle of something, it's harder to see the whole picture.

If I had it to do over, I'd do some things differently. Not everything. I have great adult children. The best, in fact. Seriously. Let's compete. I'll win.

Okay—it's not a competition, but if it were—just saying. But, if I had it to do over—I'd do a few things differently.

Here are 5 examples:

- 1. I would control earlier.** I've said this before and I get push back, but so much of life is built upon those beginning years. And every parent knows things that are best for the child early, that the child may not choose correctly if left on their own. You have much control early in life. Parents often act like they have no control, but they do. I'd control

what they watch. What they listen to. Whether they attend church—or not.

I know—bad dad. You may not think you can, but you can. There will be days when you can't—and shouldn't try—to control them. While you can—do! I don't know that age when you have to move from more control to more influence, but I know it isn't 3. I'd give them a strong foundation to pull from their rest of their life.

2. I would limit outside interruptions. There would be less travel ball and outside activities. And just less everything where lots of other people were involved. I know; that would be unpopular. Families are always on the go it seems. But I'd make sure there was less time with a coach and more time with us, the parents.

And that's just it. We are the parents—and those parenting opportunities pass too quickly anyway. It seemed the dynamics of family always changed when others were around. It often became more about others than about us as a family. It's harder to really parent well in those settings. I'd be more selfish with our family time so I could increase our individual time with our kids.

3. I'd be more selfish with my time too. My personal time, my play time and my work time. I'm not saying that would be popular with my friends or even with my work, but I would be more concerned with my influence on my kids than what other people think.

4. I'd plan our week around church. Okay, you think this one is self-serving to me now. I know it's not as culturally relevant anymore, but I've never met a family who was sorry they did this (including us). I've met several families who, when it was too late, wish they had.

5. I'd get less upset about minor annoyances. Each of my boys did things that upset me at times. And, I often overreacted.

(Please don't tell them—although they've outgrown them.) Like squeezing the toothpaste tube in the middle or always waiting to go to the bathroom to the most inopportune time—even though we asked a dozen times before. (See, minor.)

But, they have outgrown them. And, it wouldn't matter anyway. They are minor now and, looking back, they were minor then. I would react differently to the minors, so I could major on the majors—things like character—that really matter, then and now.

Those are quick thoughts. Parenting is hard. I'd never want to put more pressure on a parent than they already feel. Each parent has to own their parenting.

But, quick thoughts are needed in parenting. Parenting happens fast, but the results of parenting last generations.

Ron Edmondson is the senior pastor at Immanuel Baptist Church in Lexington, Kentucky. For the original article, visit .