

5 Timeless Principles to Building a Christ-Centered Family

Godly families are the bedrock of any spiritual community, and having godly children is a blessing that many parents long for. The big question many are asking is how does one actually produce a godly family. Issues of parenting and family discipline are not easy to advise on, because hard and fast rules are hard to come by.

Strategies that work with certain children and certain families don't work exactly the same way with others; advice from younger parents (I am currently raising four children myself) doesn't have the blessing of hindsight, while advice from older parents has to be tempered with the understanding that parents today are parenting in a different culture to that in which the previous generation was raised.

Despite these challenges there are some timeless principles that we should not deviate from, and in examining these principles I asked my own parents for advice. For the record, they raised four children who are all serving the Lord in some capacity—my brother Wes and I have been part of the leadership team at IHOPKC for most of the life of this organization. So here is the advice from my parents.

— Jono Hall

Principle 1: Godly Families Begin with Godly Marriages

It is critical to begin with a right understanding about the subject of families and that is this—God is for family and God is for you. The Godhead is a family, and it is clear throughout Scripture that it's God's desire to extend this

family. Family begins with the marriage of a man to a woman. Marriage is a God-covenant, a God-idea—it was not just a good idea thought up by someone down the centuries. The permanency of such a covenant in an age where marriage is anything but permanent is the primary foundation to create a good bedrock for a godly family.

Principle 2: Raising Godly Children is a Parent's Mandate and Responsibility

God said to the first married couple, “Be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth” (Gen. 1:28b). As man was made in the image of God, His desire was that His offspring would also be reproduced in His image. This injunction from God has not changed. Christian couples must always be mindful that God desires them to send out kingdom offspring in His image and as lights into a dark world. This is a big responsibility that God has given to married couples.

It can never be emphasized too strongly that bringing up children in the nurture and love of God is a divine call and command. There is always a danger that couples perhaps unconsciously consider their children to be appendages and burdens which bring restrictions upon their own personal plans and lives. The reality is that in the span of eternity (and let's be honest, even the span of an adult life) the time taken to raise a child from birth to adulthood is very brief. In these years the influence that parents will have on their children, for good or bad, is incalculable. The word says, “Train up a child in a way he should go , and when he is old he will not depart from it” (Prov. 22:6). Remember—however you act as a parent will train your child.

Further, a married couple who are Christians must always be aware that it is their own responsibility as parents to bring their children up in the love and nurture of the Lord. So many couples abdicate this responsibility and seek to transfer it onto their church leaders and church communities. Other

influences can be good but cannot replace parental responsibility before God.

Principle 3: Discipline in a Godly Family

Discipleship is about living in obedience to God's will and purpose; many people find it difficult to live in obedience to God when they have never learnt to be obedient to their parents in the first place.

People often equate discipline and punishment as being the same thing; it is not. A couple must be united, one together, with the disciplines they place around their family for safety and protection. Punishment only occurs when children flagrantly disobey what they have been clearly told by their parents to do or not to do. We always found when our children understood this, there was rarely any need for punishment.

Principle 4: Maintaining a Right Attitude

One important family value which we have built in as a discipline has been that we do not argue or carry bad attitudes with each other. The child is taught from an early age to resolve conflict with a right attitude. These issues were often what we talked and prayed about at the "family altar," and this was how issues were generally settled.

Principle 5: Praying as a Family

It can be cliché but it is true—the family that prays together, stays together. Parents must pray together, as a couple and with their children. The importance of such a family altar can never be emphasized enough. Many have asked us through the years, 'At what age do you start to pray with your children?' The truth is that couples should already be praying together before the children arrive as a part of a healthy marriage, so that when children are born they are brought into the correct environment. Children should never be in an environment where family prayer is not a normal part of

family life. A family's life in God together should never be underestimated. It is the foundation of a strong family in an ungodly world.

Families who pray, pull and play together stay together and shine out as a bright light in a dark and confused world.

Question: Which of these principles would help your family the most? {eoa}

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He has been married to **Jessica**, who is originally from the London area, for nearly 50 years. Jessica has worked alongside Jim as well as being a high school teacher. They have four children who are all married and actively involved in serving the Lord in different capacities. Two of their sons Wesley and Jono have been on staff at the International House of Prayer in Kansas City for a number of years.