

5 Words That Can Shape Your Parenting

I learned much of what I know about parenting after I was a parent. Thankfully, my two boys are model young people. I would say I have two of the greatest young men as sons that any parent has ever seen. (Biased, aren't I?)

But seriously, we have seen good fruit from our labor as parents. I believe that is in part because we followed certain principles. Again, we learned as we went, and it was purely the grace of God, but we were intentional.

These principles can greatly increase your success as a parent, in my opinion. This comes not only from my personal experience, but also my training as a counselor and my observation of and counseling with hundreds of parents through the years of ministry. Keep in mind that principles are not promises or guarantees, but I believe you have a better chance of success if you follow good principles than if you do not.

Here are five words that can shape your parenting:

1. Plan. Most of us have a plan for other areas of our life, but not for our family. Plan a strategy for raising children the way you want them to go. We had a personal parenting plan. You can read it [here](#). We re-evaluated every year and made individual plans for each child based on their needs at the time. Do you have a plan?

2. Protect. It is critically important to protect your relationship with your children so you can maintain influence over them for the rest of their life. This is not accomplished by giving them what they want but by gently balancing discipline with love. Are you willing, for example, to say no or to make them wait for something, even when it is uncomfortable and unpopular with them (and their friends)? Do

you work to build their trust in you as much as their obedience to you?

3. Control. This one gets me in trouble with some parents, but that happens when they don't understand the magnitude of their parenting role at an early age. There is a time to gain control over a child's actions. It's when they are very young—when they are learning all the basic things of life we take for granted. I encourage independent personalities, but you don't have to let them throw a temper tantrum, for example. When is that an acceptable response as an adult?

You can make a 4-year-old attend Sunday school even when he would rather not, for another example. Are there times you don't want to go to work? What do you do in those times? There should be an element of control for a child not old enough to choose wisely and then a gradual release of authority given as they get older.

Too many parents allow too much freedom early and then try to get control back when the child tries to be an independent teenager. It should be the opposite. You are training a child in the way he should go. Take advantage of the years where they desperately need and will comply with your wisdom.

4. Invest. Children require an intentional investment of time and energy over time. Having children who grow up well does not usually just happen, but it is as a result of the right investment of parenting. We have children for such a short window of opportunity. We can't waste that time with opportunities that only produce temporary rewards or pleasures. Which has more importance: your work, your hobby ... or your children? Do your actions portray your answer?

5. Model. You cannot expect children to learn principles you are not willing to model for them. Children should not be held to higher standards than you hold yourself. Are you living a life they can follow to turn out the way you want them to be?

Are there any words you would add?

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