

Godly Parenting: How to Avoid a Jaded Heart

There's nothing scarier than parenting.

Well, except maybe public speaking in your underwear—but seriously. More than anyone else on the earth, you as a parent have the most influence on the lives of your kids.

I've only been a parent for four years, but I've found parenting is mostly about getting out of the way. I can screw things up more often than not.

I've seen both extremes. Some parents are completely unavailable and distanced. They don't seem to care. They leave parenting up to daycare, nanny's, the nursery or even kids ministry. The other extreme is being so hard on your kids that you crush every ounce of pure, innocent life they have.

And let me tell you, kids are amazing. The longer I live, the more I want to be more like my kids. I want to get rid of the hardness of heart, jaded attitudes, hidden sins and just jump into life with every ounce of passion I possess.

- I want to be less cranky and more compassionate.
- I want to be less domineering and more delightful to be around.
- I want to be less worried and more awake to the wonder of it all.

Kids are so precious. Much of the time our frustrations as parents are because of how they inconvenience and interrupt our adult lives. We want them to respond like we would, after a lifetime of learning. But they are experiencing the world in wide-eyed wonder. The smallest details are fascinating. They don't always know the proper way to act.

Parents, let's teach and train but also watch our moods.

Create an atmosphere in your home where kids aren't just told no and commanded all day. Smile, be patient and enjoy the mystery of life with them.

Psalm 100 helped me understand this further.

The Exclamation Point Life

We had a chat this weekend as a worship team about being *jaded*. As part of the discussion we referenced Psalm 100. It's interesting how many exclamation points are included in the ESV version. Check this out:

*"Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth!
Serve the Lord with gladness!
Come into his presence with singing!
Know that the Lord, he is God!
It is he who made us, and we are his;
we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.
Enter his gates with thanksgiving,
and his courts with praise!
Give thanks to him; bless his name!
For the Lord is good;
his steadfast love endures forever,
and his faithfulness to all generations."*

I've never seen so many exclamation points in my life. As writers, we try to avoid them because too many can be a sign of self-indulgent writing. The power is in the words, not the embellishments, they say.

But these are commands that cannot be avoided.

Am I making joyful noises to God? Am I serving the Lord with gladness? Do I come into His presence with singing?

Much of the time, my interpretation of this verse would read:

*"Make a somber, serious noise to the Lord, all the earth.
Serve the Lord with gladness when people are looking."*

Come into His presence with criticism, comparison and self-centeredness."

How do our hearts get so jaded? It's almost like we become too analytical—we'd rather observe what's going on than be a part of it. We observe the kingdom of God, talk about it, but our hearts are disconnected.

It reminds me of the Pharisees. These were the religious leaders of the day. The kingdom of God was among them and they didn't see it. They chose not to notice. They were too busy observing and criticizing and feeling threatened.

Are you one of them? I think I am much of the time.

My kids aren't that way. Tyler isn't afraid to sing and shout. In his mind, dance moves are always a good idea in any situation.

So how do we avoid a jaded heart? By being vulnerable. Even if you've had your heart broken; even if you've been let down. You can't live on the outside looking in. It's time to go for it.

When you wake up in the morning, choose to be vulnerable with God. Read the Word. Pray. Seek His face.

When you worship, choose to be vulnerable. Engage. Lift your hands. Sing. Shout. Dance.

Kids aren't afraid to go for it. We learn that later in life. We get hurt, we hide, and before you know it, your life is closed off.

Learn to laugh again, to sing again, to dance again, to live fully alive. It's better that way. {eo}

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