

Greg Laurie: What Kids Need Most From Their Parents

Over the years as a pastor, I've talked with people on their deathbeds and have often heard the same thing from parents: If they had it to do all over again, they would spend more time with their children and their spouse.

And, of course, they always add, "I would have been closer to God."

You don't have to wait until your deathbed to realize how important your family is. One father whose children were grown and out of the house looked back and made this statement:

"My family's all grown, and the kids are all gone. But, if I had it to do all over again, this is what I'd do: I would love my wife more in front of my children. I would laugh with my children more—at our mistakes and our joys. I would listen more, even to the littlest child. I would be more honest about my own weaknesses, never pretending perfection. I would pray differently for my family—instead of focusing on them, I'd focus on me. I would do more things together with my children. I would encourage them more and bestow more praise. I would pay more attention to the little things like deeds and words of thoughtfulness."

He concludes, "If I had to do it all over again, I would share God more intimately with my family; every ordinary thing that happened in every ordinary day I would use to direct them to God."

Your Greatest Accomplishments

When the dust settles and all is said and done, when you look back on your accomplishments in life, your family will be one of the most important things you had a part in. Sure, you can

look at a successful career. Sure, you can look at other accomplishments. But your children who carry on your name and your family legacy into the next generation—and into the next one—will be some of the greatest accomplishments of your life.

How important it is for parents to realize their children are a gift to them from God. Psalm 127:3-5 (NLT) says, “Children are a gift from the Lord; they are a reward from him. Children born to a young man are like arrows in a warrior’s hands. How joyful is the man whose quiver is full of them! He will not be put to shame when he confronts his accusers at the city gates.”

During the social experimentation of the 1960s, we did away with the so-called nuclear family, laughing at such a concept and finding new ways to express it in the name of being progressive. And now we’re reaping the inevitable results. We’re seeing the folly of it.

Studies have shown how wrong this approach has been. Harvard University sociologists Sheldon and Eleanor Glueck developed a test to determine whether 5- or 6-year-olds would become delinquent. Their test, which proved to be 90% accurate, found there were four primary factors necessary to prevent juvenile delinquency: 1) the father’s firm, fair and consistent discipline; 2) the mother’s supervision and companionship during the day; 3) the parents demonstrating affection for each other and for their children and 4) the family spending time together in activities where all participate.

Quantity Time

Your kids need you—not just in the early years but throughout their years at home. You’re impacting them. They need an on-hand mom and the active involvement of a father.

When my wife and I had our first son, Christopher, we were very young. Cathe was 19, and I was 22. We didn’t live in a nice home. We didn’t have nice things. In fact, our furniture

had the stuffing coming out of it. One person would give us one thing, and we'd find another thing at the Salvation Army. We tried to fix things up and make them look as nice as we could. We didn't have much food in our refrigerator. We actually had to finance a television set—a miniature black-and-white TV that cost \$105. We financed it for \$6 a month. But my wife was there at home for our son for those very important years of his life.

The concept of quality time is nothing more than a myth. Children need quantity time. They need hands-on involvement from both parents.

Maybe you're thinking, "Don't lay a guilt trip on me. I'm busy." We're all busy. Are you saying that you could not make more time to be with your children? You might find that if you simply eliminated a couple of things, a lot of time would open up.

I wonder how much time parents waste watching television or checking their social media when they could sit down with their children and play a board game or simply talk. It's all a matter of priorities.

Don't Forget the Goal

Once it's over, it's over. We can't regain that time again. We can't go back and fix things. That is why parents should take the time now to do everything they can to impact their children. Establish parameters for them. Give them discipline. They need parental leadership. They may resist it at the time, but they will be grateful for it later.

Some things are taught, and some things are caught. Some things are given by instruction, and other things are caught by example. Children will observe their parents. They want to know what their priorities are and what is important to them.

It isn't teaching children through rigid, unbending dogmatism

but through explanation and example. That starts in a parent's own relationship with God.

Are you setting an example? Do you need to make some changes in your life so you can be an effective example and leader?

Andrew Murray wrote, "The secret of home rule is self-rule, first being ourselves what we want our children to be."

It shouldn't be our goal, however, to mold our children into our image. Our goal instead should be to mold them into God's image.

They are not ours to keep; they are ours to nurture. We are not to teach them to be dependent on us for the rest of their lives. Rather, we're to teach them to be independent—and more importantly, dependent on God. {eoa}

Greg Laurie is the senior pastor of Harvest Christian Fellowship with campuses in California and Hawaii. He began his pastoral ministry at the age of 19 by leading a Bible study of 30 people. Since then, God has transformed that small group into a church of some 15,000 people. Today, Harvest is one of the largest churches in America, and consistently ranks among the most influential churches in the country. As of 2017, Harvest has joined in affiliation with the Southern Baptist Convention.

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