

What It Takes to Raise a Child Who Prays Regularly

No one can guide your child's spiritual growth but you. Today there is a lucrative industry centered on the outsourcing of parental duties. For example, a five-day sleep training plan for infants costs around \$350. One agency charges parents \$1,250 to child-proof their home with expert latching, gating and locking, as well as lead-testing. This service includes CPR and car seat training.

The more difficult jobs cost more. Getting your kid to stop thumb sucking in two sessions will cost you a whopping \$4,300. Potty training in two weeks with a live-in instructor would cost a mere \$3,700. Teaching your child to say "please" and "thank you" and how to behave in public, shake hands, talk on the phone and hold a fork is only \$85.

This may sound funny, but the point is that too many busy, dual-career parents try to cut corners by writing a check to cover parental responsibilities. I'm surprised that I didn't find prayer training included in any of the outsourcing packages. Perhaps the reason I didn't find it there is because many parents expect the church to assume total responsibility for the spiritual development of their children. That is not the church's job!

The church supplements, but doesn't replace, home training. It comes alongside of parents to reinforce and undergird their efforts, but they must take the lead in the spiritual development of their child's prayer life.

After all, your influence over your child will be greater than that of any church, no matter how great its training. Your child is with you most of the time. They're typically only at church for 90 minutes once a week, and that hour and a half is

shrinking, because church attendance is on the decline.

Children are precious gifts God has entrusted to us until adulthood. It is our responsibility to help them develop into mature adults who have great power on bended knees. As a pastor, I am brutally aware that your words, as a parent, will mean more to your kids than mine will ever mean. Especially in their formative years they cling to your words. You cannot hold to an ecclesiastical framework that pins the work of parenting on the shoulders of spiritual leaders or the organized church. They are your kids! The final responsibility is yours!

In his book, *The Forgotten Ways* Alan Hirsch writes: "Take the Chinese [underground church] ... when most of their leaders and theologians [have been] killed or imprisoned and all access to outside sources is cut off, they are somehow forced through sheer circumstances to unlock something truly potent and compelling in the message they carry as the people of God."

What Dr. Hirsch is pointing out is that the Chinese Christians were forced to take responsibility for their spiritual formation instead of placing it on the shoulders of the organized church. The ordained clergy could not assume the sole responsibility of being "the keepers of God's spiritual secrets." The entire church had to know how to pray and train one another in the art of prayer. Consequently, the underground church in China numbers in the millions. And it is quite strong in prayer and other disciplines.

Pretend that, as a parent, you are the underground church. My role, as a pastor, is to empower you—the parent. I need your help to help you. If you accept that you are the principal prayer-trainer for your child, we will see an organic multiplication of praying parents who raise up praying children.

I don't mind that your empowerment would lead to a

decentralized church. This is what we need if we are going to impact the world for Jesus Christ. The more prayer-empowered parents there are, the more prayer-empowered kids we'll have.

Excerpted from Raising a Child Who Prays by Dr. David Ireland (Charisma House, 2016).

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