

Rules For Rearing Kids

God has blessed our church with children! It seems every Sunday we are finding out somebody else is going to have a baby. Just recently we discovered the Jameses are going to have twins. God has smiled on our church with precious children. *"...For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more"* (Luke 12:48). Every week I am realizing the responsibility we have as the community of Christ to teach our people the basics. Sometimes we get so wrapped up in soteriology (study of salvation), ecclesiology (study of church), and eschatology (study of end times) that we forget to address some practical points that many are crying out for in our churches, such as "Please help me rear my kids!" Now we never will abdicate the study of theology; we shall by God's grace always let the doctrines of the Bible be our staples. As in grocery shopping we are going to keep getting the bread, milk and eggs. But in this Pastor's Word I want to take a stroll with you down a lane that I don't often go with you - we are going to check in on the diapers and school supplies, if you please. I am not an expert. My children range from 23 years to 31 years. My grandchildren range from 0 months to almost 6 years. I know I could have done better in so many areas. And in these next few lines I intend to share with you not only what we did, but what we might have done better. I love my children and grandchildren better than life. I want for them a deep, passionate love and walk with God, the will of God, joy in marriage and the blessing of God to rest upon their own children. Here are some verses I am claiming: *"In the fear of the LORD is strong confidence: and his children shall have a place of refuge"* (Proverbs 14:26). *"Children's children are the crown of old men; and the glory of children are their fathers"* (Proverbs 17:6). *"The just man walketh in his integrity: his children are blessed after him"* (Proverbs 20:7). My prayer is that I shall walk in integrity and that always our home will be a place of refuge for our kids, no matter what age they attain. I pray that when God lays this life of mine down, our progeny will have crowned Jesus Lord of their lives and picked up the devout Christian tradition that my wife and I received from our parents. This leads us naturally into simple rules to keep in mind when rearing children:

1. Maintain Christian traditions.

Please allow me to begin by saying, I am not talking about a Pharisaical or worldly tradition that is unbiblical and unspiritual, *"Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ"* (Colossians 2:8). I am talking about the admonition Paul gave to the Thessalonians when he said, *"Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle"* (II Thessalonians 2:15).

I encourage you to form a tradition of regular church attendance. Be in the house of God Sunday morning, evening, and Wednesday evening. Don't miss unless you are providentially hindered, such as sickness (and I mean really sick); minor things should not count. You may never know in what service God is going to speak to your or your child's heart about in the matters of salvation, service and dedication.

Develop a tradition of family devotions. There will always be times when devotions are not as interesting as they could be, but you are setting precedence. The family that prays together stays together. Again, as in the matter of regular church attendance, bringing God into our daily life sets our kids up for an expectation of communication with the Almighty! *"And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus"* (II Timothy 3:15).

2. Live a life of obedience yourselves.

How do we get a child to drink his or her milk? We must drink our milk as well. It doesn't work to say, "Don't do as I do; do as I say." More is caught than taught. Let us live by example. When our Lord taught humility, He did so by example and then said, "*For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you*" (John 13:15).

If we want our kids to have a personal walk with the Lord, we had better have a strong personal devotional life. Kids despise hypocrisy. They see through it, and reject your admonitions many times on the grounds since you don't, they should not either. How dare you scold your child for smoking one of your cigarettes, taking a sip of your beer, or watching one of your dirty videos! If it's not good for the kids, it's not good for you! "*Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal? Thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery? thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege? Thou that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the law dishonourest thou God?*" (Romans 2:21-23). Let us practice what we preach.

3. Make much of Jesus.

The Bible says, "*And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence*" (Colossians 1:18). Let us allow Christ to be first in all our activity. Whether at church, at the ball field, the grocery store, a friend's house or school, let Jesus be Lord. "*For consider him...*" (Hebrews 12:3). This phrase means, "Give thought to Jesus." When we read Scriptures we should look for Jesus, "*Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me*" (John 5:39).

Make wanting to know Jesus and love Jesus attractive. Our Lord said, "*And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me*" (John 12:32). At every available opportunity let us lift up the Savior Who was lifted up for our sins. Just imagine our children saying, "...*Sir, we would see Jesus*" (John 12:21). Making much of Jesus and teaching God's Word should be as natural in our house as eating, bathing and talking: "*And ye shall teach them your children, speaking of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, when thou liest down, and when thou risest up*" (Deuteronomy 11:19).

4. Address disobedience immediately.

The ways of Satan never change. One of his most effective tools is procrastination. He usually doesn't tell people not to be saved, he says don't be saved today. Often times the more we procrastinate, the more likely right will not be done. Allow this scenario to play in your mind: your child really acts up in a public place. It would not be appropriate to make a scene in front of everyone. Pull the child aside, immediately, let them know that this behavior is not acceptable and it shall be dealt with at home and furthermore, the discipline will be even more severe if this behavior continues. If the child's misbehavior escalates, there will be times when everything stops and you go home and deal with him or her with a heart-to-heart talk with the removal of their normal pleasures. It is important to make the consequences of disobedience more uncomfortable than the happiness derived from disobedience. It is so tempting to want to be popular with our children, but is more important to be their dad or mom than to be their pal. You can be their pal later. Someone must insist that they mind and God has assigned this task to you. "*Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it*" (Proverbs 22:6).

If we don't deal with disobedience while it is still fresh in offence, we are allowing their young hearts to be set on evil, as the Bible points out, "*Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil*" (Ecclesiastes 8:11).

I want to continue these thoughts next week. Therefore, stay tuned!

- Pastor Pope -

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