

Rules For Rearing Kids, Part II

Last week we started this essay on “Rules For Rearing Kids.” As we continue this subject, please know I have bathed these thoughts in prayer. I want to remind you that I am still a learner. We learned so much while we were rearing our kids and we are still watching, observing and trying to hear the voice of God in these really important matters. I leave you with three more considerations and challenges.

5. Oversee all activity.

I hear the complaints now. How in the world can I be expected to know where my kids are and what they are doing 24/7? We know the truth is kids can slip around our sometimes perceived and conceived devices, but we should try to oversee them and all they do. This includes the friends they hang out with, the entertainment they are involved in, their pastimes, school activity and their cell-phone and computer life.

I John 2:15 through 17 says, *“Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.”* Please make note of the phrase: *“For all that is in the world...”* The world has drawn up sides against God and His people. The pull of the world, the flesh and the Devil has never been stronger than in these days. The ubiquitous nature of evil’s lure comes through the cinema, television, radio and internet. The temptations offered through the medium of the internet have grown exponentially in recent years. Experts in the field have alerted us repeatedly to beware of child predators who stalk sites like MySpace and now even Facebook. According to an article I read from The New York Times, there has been some concern from parents who, because of the more strict nature of Facebook, will allow their kids an account and now there has been some evidence that predators have hit these more tame sites while “on the prowl.”

Please hear me out, youth of Christchurch and readers from the Body of Christ at large; we cannot be too cautious in these days in which we are living. If your parents strictly monitor your cell phone usage, internet surfing and Facebook or Twitter activity, then give God praise they love you enough to enforce disciplinary discretion. If you have parents who forbid you to not use a cell phone without their direct designation, please see their heart of love behind it. If Dad and Mom forbid you to register on Facebook or Twitter, please don’t be mad at them. I understand. It is better to be too strict than not strict enough. I can now hear some youth say, “But you don’t trust me?” The truth is I don’t trust the nature of the flesh. My wife and I put up barriers around our activity, even at our age. At our home we have system called Clear Play on our video player. We have adjusted it to filter out every obscene word, Lord’s name in vain and sensual activity. One evening we were getting ready to watch a video and we did not have confirmation that the filter had downloaded. I was in the mood for a good shoot ‘em up, when my wife said, “It’s not working; I’m not watching.” I said, “But it’s just a war film.” And I love what she said, “It doesn’t matter, I am not taking a chance.” I love this attitude! I stood rebuked! Why see how much we will allow before we turn the wrong off? Let’s not take the chance. And one more thing about a parent who says no to your desires - it may not be that they just don’t trust you. The main motivation may be they do not trust the wicked people out there who want to take advantage of your innocence. Again, I ask you to see their heart behind their actions. I do not buy into the philosophy that we need to expose our kids to the wrong, to help them know what they are up against. You don’t have to lift up the sewer lid to see if the sewer stinks! So I commend the parent that fights to keep his child’s innocence. It is Scripturally commanded as well: *“...I would have you wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil”* (Romans 16:19). There is no virtue in

examining evil in the name of being aware when we have verses such as: “*And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them. For it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret*” (Ephesians 5:11 and 12). “*Abstain from all appearance of evil*” (I Thessalonians 5:22).

6. Congratulate good behavior.

I believe in our child rearing experiences, I was quick to catch our kids in the wrong and deal with it immediately. If I had it to do over again, I believe I would have been just as quick to look for the times they were obeying and doing right and then make a big deal of it. Catch them doing right and praise them!

Recently we were in special meetings with a dear pastor friend who has a large family. We were impressed with something that happened that went under the radar of the casual observer. Their little girl of nine was sitting with her friends on the front row in church when Mom realized that she and her friends were having a great time visiting. To keep the child from having a temptation to cut up during the ministry of the Word, the mother brought it Dad’s attention, so that he might order the daughter to sit with her mom. Dad did and very sweetly the girl left her friends and came back to Mom. After the service at supper, her daddy leaned over and quietly addressed his daughter. He called her name and said how proud he was that she had obeyed without getting angry and now on the morrow he intended to take her to get a new stuffed toy. This is rewarding for doing right. The dad appealed to her intrinsic nature by giving her an extrinsic gift. What a good lesson the little girl was learning; it pays to do right! God takes the same attitude: “*...If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the LORD thy God, and wilt do that which is right in his sight, and wilt give ear to his commandments, and keep all his statutes, I will put none of these diseases upon thee, which I have brought upon the Egyptians...*” (Exodus 15:26).

7. Let them go when it’s time to let them go.

The Bible says, “*To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven*” (Ecclesiastes 3:1). “Laissez-faire” is a French expression that is often used in economics describing abstention by governments from interfering in the workings of the free market. Literally rendered in English it means, “allow to do.” It is the policy of letting things take their free course, without interfering. There comes a time in rearing children when we must (if we are to ultimately succeed) incorporate the “lasses-faire” policy. We do this first in installments. Perhaps it is when they are not doing well in a certain subject and you keep “bailing them out” to keep them from failing. A child will never learn the subject when you keep doing the difficult requirements for them. Sometimes they will never learn the material until you allow them to fail.

A child will never learn to ride the two-wheeler until you let go of the back seat that you’re holding for them to stay up. We must allow them to fall before they will ever learn to balance. So under the proper supervision, we oversee and monitor them while they are younger. These words may sound rather paradoxical from our earlier point, but I want to take a little more time to deal with this subject. Next week we want to deal with when to let the child make his/her own decisions, when does the child come of age and how to let the child go. This is perhaps the hardest thing you’ll ever do as a parent. Let’s talk about it next week.

- Pastor Pope -

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