



RAISING KIDS THAT COUNT

Preaching and Teaching Resources

ADRIAN ROGERS





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Raising Kids That Count

SERMON REFERENCE: Proverbs 1:7-9

LWF SERMON NUMBER: #2331

Psalm 112:2 says, “His descendants will be mighty on earth; the generation of the upright will be blessed.”

As parents, our chief desire for our children should be that they love God and honor Him with their lives. The Book of Proverbs is full of wisdom for those who want to raise kids that count in the cause of Christ.

We must first give them an example: “My son, hear the instruction of your father, and do not forsake the law of your mother...” (Proverbs 1:8). Our children will learn more from our lifestyle than they will learn from our words. Good character is not so much taught as it is caught; it must be demonstrated through us.

Second, we should give our children unconditional love, regardless of their misbehavior. This doesn't mean we give them everything they want. True love is not giving children what they want, but rather, what they need.

We must give our children constant encouragement. There's a difference between praise and encouragement. Praise focuses on the accomplishments of the child, while encouragement focuses on the actual child.

Our children need to know they are not a sum of their achievements, and that we love them for who they are.

We must also give them wise instruction. Proverbs 22:6 says, “Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.” When we teach our children Scripture, it should be joined with training, so they can learn how to apply it for themselves when they are grown.

We should also give them reasonable restrictions. Adrian Rogers says, “Limitations don't bind the child; really they set him free.” When we establish restrictions, our children will naturally push against them. If the restrictions give, our children will lack confidence in themselves. This is the reason so many children are conquered by the things of this world.

We must also give them a listening ear; be ready when they're ready to talk, and make time for it.

Finally, give them a happy environment; our homes should be full of laughter, fun, joy, and silliness. Adrian Rogers says, “A vegetable plate is better than a steak dinner if you have love, joy, and happiness.”

LIFE APPLICATION

If you want to raise kids that count for the cause of Christ, remember to be firm, fair, and fun.



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1) INTRODUCTION

- a) Our chief desire for our children should not be that they are wealthy or famous, but that they will love the Lord Jesus and count in His cause.
- b) There are certain gifts that we can give our children.
 - i) Proverbs tells us about these gifts.

2) GIVE THEM AN EXAMPLE

- a) Those who do not learn to respect God will not have a modicum of genuine knowledge.
 - i) "Chains" in Proverbs 1:9 are not iron chains but beautiful gold chains.
- b) Your children will learn more from your lifestyle than from your words.
 - i) You need to give to them a godly example.
- c) You do not have to pretend perfection with your children.
 - i) If you try to pretend perfection, you will come across as a phony.
 - ii) They want you to be real.
- d) Children will watch to see how their parents handle their own mess-ups.
- e) There are many things that children cannot learn any other way than from their parents through demonstration.
 - i) Who is teaching our kids character?
 - (1) Contentment, courage, courtesy, discernment, fairness, friendliness, generosity, gentleness, helpfulness, honesty, humility, kindness, obedience, orderliness, patience, persistence, self-control, tact, thankfulness, tidiness, wisdom.
 - ii) These character traits are not so much taught as they are caught.
- f) We owe to our kids an example.

3) GIVE THEM UNCONDITIONAL LOVE

- a) Men who had fathers who did not love them do not know how to give love to their kids.
 - i) They have to be taught.
 - ii) We have to break the cycle.
- b) Unconditional love does not mean that you give a child everything he wants.
 - i) That is not really love at all.
 - ii) True love is not giving to someone what they want but what they need.
 - iii) There must be unconditional acceptance regardless of misbehavior.
 - (1) "I may not accept what you do, but I accept you."
 - (2) Kids need to know that they are accepted so that they are not afraid to come to you when they are in trouble.
- c) Love must be expressed not merely in words but also in actions.
 - i) Hug your children.



- ii) Today's generation associates physical touching with sexual intimacy.
 - (1) They need to see beyond this.
 - iii) Charles Swindoll wrote, "Unaffectionate dads, without wishing to do so, can trigger their daughter's promiscuity."
 - (1) Parents should not hold back their affection.
 - (2) Demonstrate love and affection to both sons and daughters.
 - iv) They will emulate your example when God gives them their own family.
 - d) Show your love to your children by sympathy.
 - i) You may think that the problems your kids have are not big problems compared to your, but they are big to the kids, and that is what matters.
 - ii) Cry with the when they hurt.
- 4) GIVE THEM CONSTANT ENCOURAGEMENT
- a) In Proverbs 3:21-26, Solomon is encouraging his son.
 - b) When we regularly encourage a child, we are giving that child confidence.
 - i) We are blessing that child.
 - (1) One of the most common requests we have of our heavenly Father is to be blessed.
 - ii) Children need to be blessed by their earthly father.
 - (1) It needs to be encouragement.
 - c) Children need encouragement like a plant needs water.
 - d) Rather than trying to catch children doing something wrong, try to catch them doing something right.
 - i) Let your speech be positive, not always negative.
 - e) There is a difference between praise and encouragement.
 - i) For example, praising a child for making all A's or winning a game.
 - ii) When we encourage, we might say, "We did not win the game, but I saw you really trying. Thank you for that."
 - f) Encouragement says, "I love you and am grateful for you, not necessarily because you achieved, but because of who you are."
- 5) GIVE THEM WISE INSTRUCTION
- a) The "her" in Proverbs 2:4 refers to knowledge.
 - b) Wise instruction is always joined to training.
 - c) When children are small, it is important to have family worship.
 - i) An easy form of family worship is to let a child pick a Proverb for the day, read it, and then let the child explain what they think it means.
 - (1) Then everyone else can join in and discuss it.
 - ii) When children learn the Proverbs and have to think about what they mean, that is distilled wisdom.
 - d) No one ever learned how to play football merely by reading a book.
 - i) You have to train to play football.
 - e) The prime educational institution is the home.



- f) Many of today's church kids cannot say that an objective standard of truth exists.
 - g) Many young people in churches today do not believe that there is a fixed standard of right and wrong.
 - h) Many of these same kids reason this way: just because it is wrong for you, does not mean that it is wrong for me.
 - i) Many Christian parents believe that it is a disgrace that the Ten Commandments are not allowed in schools, but they do not have them in their own homes.
- 6) GIVE THEM REASONABLE RESTRICTIONS
- a) We encourage our kids to set goals for themselves, but we also need to give them limitations.
 - i) There are some things that need to be denied.
 - (1) God put Adam and Eve in the Garden, and He gave them some restrictions.
 - b) Limitations do not bind a child; they actually set them free.
 - c) When you give a child limitations or restrictions, he will push against them.
 - i) If the restrictions give way, then that child will have no confidence.
 - (1) The child will feel unloved if those restrictions move.
 - d) If we do not put limitations on a child, they will allow someone else to do so.
 - i) No limitations on a child implies that we have rejected that child.
 - e) There is no need to make a lot of little rules.
 - i) Make a few big ones, and keep them.
- 7) GIVE THEM A LISTENING EAR
- a) "Infirmity" in Proverbs 18:14 means "weakness."
 - b) We must be willing to listen when our children want to talk.
 - i) We have to be ready when they are ready, and we have to make the time.
 - c) Never be too busy to listen to your child, especially a teenager.
- 8) GIVE THEM A HAPPY ENVIRONMENT
- a) A vegetable plate is better than a steak dinner if you have love, joy and happiness.
 - b) Let your home be filled with laughter and fun.
 - c) When raising kids: be firm, be fair, be fun.
 - d) The Bible warns against coarse, unclean laughter.
 - e) God believes in laughter.
 - i) "Isaac" means "laughter."
 - f) We need to learn to laugh at ourselves.
- 9) CONCLUSION
- a) Your home does not exist so that you can have a business, your business exists so that you can have a home.
 - b) God wants everyone to have three homes:
 - i) A family home.
 - ii) A church home.



- iii) A heavenly home.
- c) Jesus is the greatest home builder.
- d) Satan is the greatest home wrecker.
- e) Jesus is the key to all three homes.



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Would you find the book of Proverbs? We're going to be in the book of Proverbs all together, so get it, lay it out in your lap and study these verses with me. We're talking today about "Raising Kids that Count." One of my life verses from the book of Psalms is this, Psalm 112 verse 2, "The generation of the upright shall be blessed." And I have held God to that promise, that God will bless my children. My chief desire for my kids is not that they be wealthy, not that they be famous, not that they always be praised or whatever, but that they will love the Lord Jesus Christ and count in His cause, kids that will count for God.

Now may I ask you a question? How would you like to have a gifted child? Now, I know all of us think our children are gifted, especially our grandchildren, but how would you like to have a gifted child? Well, that's a doable thing. You just make the gifts. I want to talk to you today about some gifts that you can give to your children. The book of Proverbs tells us about these gifts, so let me mention seven of them, if you'd like to have a gifted child, okay? If you'd like to have a kid that counts or kids that count, not that can count, but that count, that will amount to something.

The first thing you ought to give them is you need to give them an example. Notice in Proverbs chapter 1 verses 7 through 9, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge." Now if they don't learn to respect God, they're not going to have a modicum of genuine knowledge. "But fools despise wisdom and instruction. My son, hear the instruction of thy father and forsake not the law of thy mother, for they shall be an ornament of grace unto thy head and chains about thy neck." Now kids, he's not talking about an iron chain to drag you around with, he's talking about a gold chain that will be something beautiful.

And then Proverbs chapter 20 and verse 7, "The just man walks in his integrity; his children are blessed after him." Now I'm going to tell you something, folks, your kids are going to learn more from your lifestyle than they're going to learn from your words. You need to give to them a godly example. Now if that makes you nervous, let me tell you something, you don't have to pretend perfection. You know you're not perfect and I've got news for you, they already know you're not perfect. And so if you try to pretend perfection, you're going to come across as a phony. Your kids don't want to know that you're perfect. They want to know that you're real. Your kids want to know that you are genuine. They're going to be watching you to see how you handle your mess-ups. Do you ever mess up? Nod your head. There is not a parent here that doesn't mess up.

I heard about a man one time, he was going to rob a bank. He was an old farmer, couldn't pay for his food and seed and everything else. His wife was sick, his kids needed tuition. He decided the only thing he could do was rob a bank, he'd never robbed a bank, but he studied about it, thought he'd know what to do. So he got him a bag, got him a rusty old gun, wrote a note, and wrote on there, "Don't mess with me. This is a stick-up. Give me all your money." And he went to the teller, and got all



confused and handed the teller the gun, pointed the bag at her and said, "Don't stick with me, this is a mess up."

Well, a lot of us just mess up. We just mess up. And our kids want to know how do you handle your mess ups? How do you handle your failures? How do you handle your problems? That'll be better to them than your phony perfectionism. Share with your kids. Give them an example. You know, the real problem, is about the time you're experienced being a parent, you're out of a job, isn't that right? And so, the two hardest times, I guess, of life are middle age and teenage, and somehow God puts them together. But give your kids an example. Your kids are going to learn more from your example than from your words.

I found out, when I was a grown man, I was mispronouncing a word over and over again, I had done it all of my life. I just constantly mispronounced. Finally, somebody called my hand on it and said, "Why did you say that word that way?" I said, "What way?" And they said, "You said, so-so." I said, "No I didn't, I said so and so." They said, "That's what I said you said." I was hearing it one way in public, but I was saying it another way and thinking I was saying it the right way. And I said, "Did I really say that that way?" He said, "Yes you did. Say it again. Listen to yourself carefully." And I said, "That is amazing. I am a grown man, I've been through seminary, and I have all of my life thought I was saying that word correctly."

Then one time, and I straightened it out, I made myself say it rightly. And then one time I was at home with my dear precious mother, and I listened to her, and she said the same word the wrong way. Now I listened to my brother; he said the same word the wrong way. I listened to my sister; she said the same word the wrong way. And I realized my dear, sweet, sainted old mother had infected us with a bad word. Not an ugly word, just by being there and absorbing a word as a child, I heard her say this word, not an ugly word, just simply a very common word that she mispronounced.

Now, folks, we owe to our children an example. Did you know there're a lot of things that they can't learn any other way, they can't really learn in Sunday school, they can't learn in public school, they've got to be demonstrated. Now what are we interested in with our kids? Well, sports, grades, physical health, popularity, ability. But who is teaching them character? Let me read some character traits to you. Contentment; now they're not going to go to school and learn Contentment 101. I mean, they don't get that in college. Courage, courtesy, discernment, fairness, friendliness, generosity, gentleness, helpfulness, honesty, humility, kindness, obedience, orderliness, patience, persistence, self-control, tact, thankfulness, tidiness, wisdom. Where they going to learn these things? These things are not so much taught as they are caught. We owe to our kids an example.

Now, number two; not only give to them a godly example, but give to them unconditional love. Now write these things down. I'm going to give you seven of them. You want to have a gifted child? Give him unconditional love. Look in Proverbs chapter 4 verses 1 through 4, "Hear ye, children, the instruction of a father and attend to know understanding, for I give you good doctrine. Forsake ye not my law," yes, that's fine, good doctrine, teaching, law, yes, but notice this, "for I was my father's



son, tender and only beloved in the sight of my mother. He taught me also and said unto me, 'Let thine heart retain my words, keep my commandments and live.'"

Do you know, we need to give to our kids love that is absolutely, totally unconditional. I've noticed that men who had fathers who did not love them do not really know how to give love to their kids; they have to be taught. And we have to have a generation of men now who are going to mentor some other men who never had a father to actually give them love and to show them unconditional love. We have to break that cycle.

Now unconditional love doesn't mean that you give to a child everything he wants. That's not really love at all. True love is not giving to someone what they want, it is giving to someone what they need, but there must be unconditional acceptance, regardless of the child's misbehavior. I may not accept what you do, but I accept you. They need to know that enough, so that when they are in trouble, when they do misbehave, they'll still come to you. They'll still come. They won't be afraid to come to you. Now if they don't have a sense that my dad loves me no matter what I do, my mom loves me no matter what I do, they're not going to share their mess ups with you, there needs to be that unconditional love.

And do you know, that love needs not to be merely in words, but it has to have some physical attachments to it. We have to be constantly touching them and hugging them and holding them. Now your big old teenage boy, he'll act like he doesn't want that, but do it anyway. It's biblical. Luke chapter 15 and verse 20, when the prodigal son comes home, his father sees him, falls on his neck, hugs him and kisses him. I saw a bumper sticker that said, "Kids need hugs, not drugs." They need somebody to physically teach them about this love that is a very physical thing. We have a generation of kids today who associate physical touching with sexual intimacy. They need to see beyond this. They need to be touched affectionately and supportively and playfully and tenderly. If they don't get that, they're not going to feel your sense of true love. Let your kids see you and your wife, you and your husband hugging one another, not just simply romantically, but let them learn how to be touched.

Charles Swindoll, whom we all love, wrote this. I want you to listen to it. "Many a young woman who opts for immoral sexual relationships does so because she can scarcely remember a time when her father so much as touched her. Unaffectionate dads, without wishing to do so, can trigger a daughter's promiscuity. All of this leads me to write with a great deal of passion. Dads, don't hold back your affection. Demonstrate your feelings of love and affection to both sons and daughters and don't stop once they reach adolescence. They long for your affirmation and appreciation. They will love you for it. More importantly, they will emulate your example when God gives them their own family."

Love them unconditionally. Show it by touching, show it by sympathy. When they have their problems, and friend, they have their problems. Now you may think that the problems that kids have are not big problems compared to your problems. They're big to the kid and that's what matters. And cry with them when they hurt, when their little, grade-school romances break up. Be concerned about them with all of these things. When a pet dies. Did you ever attend a funeral for a turtle or a



dog? We've had some of those at our homes, and I know what it is to hold a grown daughter in my arms, and literally cry with her as she cries. Show them sympathy. The point I'm trying to make is this, that not only do you need to give them an example, you need to give to them unconditional love. Got it? Say, "Got it."

Okay, now. Number three; you need to give to them constant encouragement. Listen to Proverbs chapter 3 verse 21 to 26, "My son, let them not depart from thine eyes, keep sound wisdom and discretion. So shall they be life unto thy soul and grace to thy neck. Then shalt thou walk in thy way safely and thy foot shall not stumble." Do you hear the encouragement here? "When thou liest down thou shalt not be afraid. Yea, thou shalt lie down and thy sleep shall be sweet. Be not afraid of sudden fear, neither of the desolation of the wicked when it cometh, for the Lord shall be thy confidence and shall keep thy foot from being taken."

Now here's the wisest man who lived, purely human outside the Lord Jesus, who was Solomon, and can you see the sense in which he's talking to his son and who is encouraging his son. You bless your children with encouragement. When you regularly encourage a child, what you're doing is giving to that child confidence. And confidence is so needed. What you're really doing is blessing the child. Over and over again we ask our Heavenly Father what? What is the one thing we probably say more than anything else when we pray to our Heavenly Father? "Oh, God, bless me. God, bless me." You want your Heavenly Father to bless you. I'm telling you, your child needs a blessing from his earthly father. And that blessing is encouragement.

Children need encouragement like a plant needs water. Somebody gave me a house plant. I put it in my study. It was beautiful for about a week and a half, and then I looked over at it and it was drooped over. I thought, "What happened to my plant?" I said, "Well, come to think of it, been two or three weeks, I haven't put a drop of water on it." I went, got a Styrofoam cup and poured about three or four cups of water on it and I'm telling you in several hours that plant was standing upright. Encouragement is to a child what water is to a dehydrated plant.

Encourage them. Rather than trying to catch them doing something wrong, try to catch them doing something right! Let your speech not always be negative. Let it be positive. Now I want to tell you something. There is a difference between praise and encouragement. A lot of us think we're encouraging a child when we're praising a child, and we may really be discouraging a child by praise.

Let me show you the difference between praise and encouragement. Praise said, "Son, you got all A's. I'm proud of you." Or, "Son, boy you really did great in the game. We would've lost the game, had it not been for you. Son, you're really a great athlete," and you praise him. What are you saying to that child really? You're saying, "You know, my dad is really proud of me because of what I do." Now suppose sometimes he doesn't do so well. Suppose sometimes he does not achieve, suppose he doesn't make straight A's. Now what does that say to his mind? You see, that's praise.

What is encouragement? Encouragement might be say, "Son, we didn't win the game, but, son, I saw you were really trying. Thank you, son, for that." "Well, you didn't make straight A's. I'll tell you one thing you have done; I saw you study, you did your homework and I'm grateful for that. I really believe that you tried as best you know how." Do you see the difference? Now, it may be a subtle



thing, but learn to encourage these kids. Encouragement says, “I love you, I’m grateful for you, not necessarily because you achieved, but because of who you are.”

Bill Glass was a great football player in my generation. Bill Glass goes into prisons and many times he’ll ask those prisoners a question like this, “How many of you had a father who said to you, ‘You will never amount to anything. One of these days you’re going to end up in prison.’” Almost every one of them lifted his hand. Almost every one. “You’ll never amount to anything; one of these days you’re going to end up in prison.”

Friend, give them an example. Give them unconditional love. Give them encouragement. Now it’s time to give them wise instruction. Look in Proverbs 2 verses 1 through 7. Here’s the instruction, listen to it, “My son, if thou wilt receive my words and hide my commandments with thee so that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom and apply thine, thy heart to understanding, yea, if thou criest after knowledge and liftest up thy voice for understanding, if thou seekest her,” that is knowledge, “as silver and searchest for her as for hid treasures, then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God. For the Lord giveth wisdom, and out of His mouth cometh knowledge and understanding. He layeth up sound wisdom for the righteous and He is a buckler to them that walk uprightly.” And then the corresponding passage, Proverbs 22 verse 6, “Train up a child in the way that he should go, and when he is old he’ll not depart from it.” Now, we give them wise instruction. But wise instruction is always joined to training.

By the way, when your children are little, it’s always good to have family worship, to start the day with the Word of God. Now my wife and I’ve tried all kinds of things with our kids for family worship. I want to give you one of the simplest, easiest forms of family worship. I don’t know why I didn’t discover it a long time ago. It is such a blessing.

We just let somebody choose a proverb, one of the little children old enough to read. Or a grown child. Choose a proverb. And they take the Bible and choose a proverb. They can do it at random or at, like sometimes they do a book of Proverbs is basically the same as the number of days in the month. Choose a proverb from that particular day. If it’s the seventh, choose from the seventh chapter of Proverbs, and read a proverb, just one, and let that child explain what he thinks that proverb means. Then everybody else just talk about it for a few moments. It is so simple. But what you’re doing, when those children are learning those proverbs and having to think about what it means, that is distilled wisdom. That is something that’s just a nugget of truth that they can carry with them to school and to work. But what I’m trying to say is, give them wise instruction, but let that instruction be joined with training. Train up a child.

Now I used to play football. You say, “You probably played without a helmet.” I used to play football. I’ll guarantee you one thing, friend, nobody ever learned how to play football by merely reading a book about it, right? You have to train to play football. You have to train to learn particular things.

You ever watch a man train a dog, a hunting dog? Watch a dog that has been trained. That is an amazing thing. You have to train a dog. I saw a man downtown, he had a dog on a leash, a little stick, he had a bird on a thing. I thought, “My goodness, I wonder if he has any kids? Wonder what he does



with his kids?" If a man spent that much time with his kid as he does with his dog, I don't know, but probably that man ties his dog up at night and lets his kids run wild. Train, train, give instruction. Line upon line, precept upon precept. The prime educational institution is the home.

Did you know sadly we have a generation of kids today who don't even know right from wrong? They really don't. Josh McDowell said this, and he's talking about church kids. Listen to this. According to his research, this is frightening. Listen to it, "57% of our young people cannot even say that an objective standard of truth exists." That's church kids. "More than half of them don't even believe that there is a fixed standard of right and wrong. And 85% of our kids are liable to reason like this; 'Just because it's wrong for you doesn't mean that it is wrong for me.'" Over half, 55%, agree with this statement. 'Everything in life is negotiable.' There's in their mind no distinction between a fixed standard of right and wrong that's given in the Ten Commandments.

Let me ask you a question. How many of you think it's a disgrace that the Ten Commandments have been taken from the walls of America's schools and some are trying to remove them from public places? Most of us would agree with that. Second question; how many of you have the Ten Commandments posted in your home? Don't answer that, it'd be too embarrassing. Third question; how many of you parents who grouse about your kids not being able to read the Ten Commandments in school, know the Ten Commandments? There are some of you, if I were to pull you out, you couldn't name the Ten Commandments in order if I gave you a Ferrari. That's right, you couldn't do it. "Oh, our kids need to know, our kids don't know the difference between right and wrong!" How are they going to learn it if we do not give them wise instruction and that instruction is joined with training? And the secular humanists have taken us over.

Number five; give them reasonable restrictions. Now underscore the word reasonable. Proverbs 6 beginning in verse 20 to verse 23, "My son, keep thy father's commandment and forsake not the law of thy mother. Bind them continually upon thine heart and tie them around about thy neck. When thou goest it shall lead thee, when thou sleepest it shall keep thee, when thou wakest it shall talk with thee. For the commandment is a lamp and the law is light and the reproofs," notice this, "the reproofs of instruction are the way of life." Now, we set goals for our kids, at least encourage them to set goals for themselves, but we also need to give them limitations. There are some things that need to be denied. There are restrictions.

Now we have a society today that believes that's wrong, but I want to say that God had some children. He put them in the Garden of Eden, and God gave them some limitations. God gave some restrictions to His original pair, Adam and Eve. Limitations don't bind the child; really they set them free. When you give a child limitations, restrictions, he will push against them. If they give, that child will have no confidence whatsoever. He will feel unloved if those restrictions move, and if you don't put limitations on him, he will allow somebody else to do the same thing. It is an amazing thing. No limitation on a child implies that you have rejected that child and that's the reason so many children are conquered by somebody else.

Now, limitations today are looked on as something bad, but they're not. And sometimes we as parents need to stop trying to win popularity contests and just simply say, "There are some



restrictions.” Now don’t make a lot of little rules. Make a few big ones and keep them. As a matter of fact, I tried, when I was preparing this message, I tried to think about what the big rules were in our home. And basically only two; basically only two. But they were iron-clad. Number one; no dishonesty. Don’t you ever lie to me! That’s wrong! No dishonesty. Number two; no disrespect. And especially you better not disrespect your mama while I’m around. Now there are some things I’ll look the other way, there’s some things I’ll wink at, there’re some, but don’t tell me a lie. No dishonesty and no disrespect!

Now there are some subsets of those things, but have some limitations. Have them real. Talking about no disrespect, one of our deacons here in our church, and I’ll not call his name because one of his kids is involved, but one of his kids sassed his mama. I like what this deacon did. He said to that boy, teenager I believe, he said, “Son, you’ve sassed your mother. And you’ve sinned against God when you did that, and that’s between you and God. You’ll have to get it right with God. And you’ve sinned against her, and that’s between you and your mother, and you’re going to have to get it right with her.” But I say, he said something else, and I like this. Said, “Not only is she your mother, but she’s my wife, and you can’t talk to my wife that way.” I like that. “She is my wife! And I’m not going to have any man, you or anybody else, disrespecting my wife.” I bet he didn’t do it again, for a short time anyway. All right, now, you owe to them restrictions. And find out what they are.

Now next, give to them a listening ear. Proverbs 18 verses 13 to 15, “He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is a folly and shame to him. The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity,” that is, his weakness, “but a wounded spirit, who can bear?” I mean if a child’s spirit is broken, it’s terrible. “The heart of the prudent getteth knowledge and the ear of the wise seeketh knowledge.” You have to be willing to listen when they want to talk.

Now many times they won’t talk. Our oldest son, and he’s a dear kid, I love him. But there were times when he was like The Sphinx. And he just wouldn’t talk. And then suddenly, and it’d always be after midnight, he’d open up and talk and talk and talk and talk and Joyce and I’d say, “This is a golden moment,” and we’d sit there and listen. You have to be ready when they’re ready, and you have to make time.

Take that daughter, that granddaughter on a date. Go out; take them out to a meal. One of the best things to do if you have a kid that just won’t open up to begin with, take them on a drive. Drive a hundred and fifty miles and neither one of you have to say anything. Then suddenly it will begin to happen, where you can talk and listen to these kids. Make it happen, be ready, don’t be in a rush, listen to them. Never be too busy to listen to your child, especially a teenager.

I must rush past that to get to the last thing. Give them a happy environment. Listen to Proverbs 15 verse 13 to 17, “A merry heart maketh a cheerful countenance, but by sorrow of the heart the spirit is broken. The heart of him that hath understanding seeketh knowledge, but the mouth of fools feedeth on foolishness. All the days of the afflicted are evil, but he that is of a merry heart hath a continual feast. Better is little with the fear of the Lord than great treasure and trouble therewith. Better is a dinner of herbs,” that’s a vegetable plate, “where love is, than a stalled ox,” that’s filet



mignon, “and hatred therewith.” That’s what he’s talking about. A vegetable plate is better than a steak dinner if you have love, if you have joy, if you have happiness.

Let your home be filled with laughter and fun. So many times kids asked my kids, “What’s it like being raised in a preacher’s home? Does your father go around the house preaching all day long? What’s it like?” I dare say that our home is far above the average in laughter and fun and joy and silliness.

Let me tell you how to raise kids. Be firm, be fair, and be fun. And don’t be ashamed if you have a sense of humor. Psychologists tell us that a good sense of humor is one of the highest signs of intelligence. And laughter lubricates the home, and let your home ring with laughter. This verse talks about those that have a broken spirit. When the string is snapped, the spark, the zest, the enthusiasm, the fight is gone. Now I’m not talking about coarse, unclean laughter. The Bible warns in Ephesians 5 verse 4, “Neither filthiness nor foolish talking nor jesting which are not convenient, but rather giving thanks.”

You say, “Does God believe in laughter?” Let me give you a verse. Genesis 21 verse 6, “And Sarah said, ‘God hath made me to laugh so that all that hear will laugh with me.’” God gave her a son. Do you know what she called her son? Isaac. Do you know what Isaac means? Laughter. And by the way, learn to laugh at yourself; learn to laugh at your problems. You’ll have plenty to laugh at.

When I was a kid down in Florida, we had a terrible hurricane to come through and my dad was out there with the other men nailing up plywood on the windows and doing all this stuff and the wind was chilled. And my dad came in, and he shivered and all the electricity was off, and my dad came in the house and shut the door against the wind. I’m a little boy there, eyes wide, wondering, “Is our house going to blow away? Is this it?” My dad so cold. He looked at my mother and said, “I’d give five dollars for a cup of coffee.” My mother went to the tap, filled the pot with water, put it on the gas stove, made him a cup of coffee. He forgot we had a gas stove. He looked at her, reached in his pocket and gave her five dollars, and we just had a big laugh, just a big laugh. Just a time of tension, just learn how to laugh.

Friend, listen, you can have a gifted child if you’ll give a child these seven gifts, and I promise you on the authority of the Word of God, it’ll make a difference in your home. I thank God for a Christian home. I don’t know of anything any better than a Christian home. Your home doesn’t exist so you can do your business; your business exists so you can have your home. And may I tell you this, that God ideally wants everybody to have three homes. You know what they are? A family home, a church home, and a heavenly home. Jesus is the greatest home builder. Satan is the greatest home wrecker.

God wants you to have a family home. Now maybe you’re an orphan, maybe you’re divorced, maybe you’re separated. Then you need some friends who’ll be sort of a family to you. That’s one of



the good reasons we have Bible Fellowship classes in churches, but you need some kind of a family home. And then you need a church home. You need a place with your brothers and sisters in Christ.

And then you need to know that you know that you know that when you die you're going to Heaven, to the Father's house. Now Jesus is the key to all three. You have to know the Lord Jesus Christ.

Would you bow your heads in prayer? Heads are bowed and eyes are closed. If you'd like to receive Jesus Christ, I invite you to pray this prayer after me. Now don't just repeat words, make it your prayer, "Dear God, thank You for loving me. I need to be saved. I'm a sinner. I'm lost. My sin deserves judgment, but I need and I want mercy. Lord Jesus, thank You for paying for my sin with Your blood on the cross. Thank You that You suffered, bled, and died for me that I might be saved. Thank You, Jesus. Lord Jesus, I open my heart, I receive You now by faith as my Lord and my Savior. Come into my life, forgive my sin, cleanse me, forgive me, save me." Pray it from your heart. "Save me, Lord Jesus."

Did you ask Him? Then thank Him for doing it. Pray this way, "Thank You for saving me, Jesus. I receive it by faith and that settles it. You're now my Lord, my Savior, my God, and my Friend. And Lord Jesus, I will not be ashamed of You. I will make this public. In Your name I pray, Amen."



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