

Ten Things Wise Parents Do

by Dr. Paul A. Kienel, Founder & President Emeritus, ACSI

Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it" (Proverbs 22:6). Without question, this is the Bible verse most often quoted with reference to raising children. The question is, just how does one go about training a child" ..the way he [or she] should go"? At the risk of over simplification, permit me to suggest ten things wise parents do.

1. They pray for their children.

Never underestimate the power of parental prayer. Parents who pray for their children acknowledge that the task of raising them requires wisdom beyond their own. Let your children hear your prayers for them. In time those prayers will be regarded as an important family legacy.

2. They express love often to their children.

Most adult emotional problems stem from a childhood where parents failed to express love to their children. In one way or another wise parents tell their children, every day, "I love you!" Children should never leave home without those words ringing in their ears.

3. They figure out the God-given "bent" of their children.

Every child is a special creation of God. He is unique from the number of hairs on his head to the prints on his fingers and toes. No person in the world is exactly like any other person who is now living or who has ever lived. In other words, each one of us has a "bent" of our own. It is the duty of parents to custom-make their child training patterns to fit the unique characteristics of each of their children.

4. They avoid shallow communication.

Some parents communicate with their children at the level of "yes," "no," "don't do that," and "because I told you so." Those words are useful and sometimes adequate but if we are to show a proper respect for the intelligence God has given our children they need to know "why" and "why not" Explanations and reasons are important to children even as they are important to adults.

5. Wise parents have their children foremost on their mind.

The words we say reveal what is on our mind. Therefore, if we never talk to our spouse or our friends about our children it is clear evidence that other things have priority in our thoughts. It is imperative that we think deeply and often about the spiritual and physical well-being of our children.

6. They train their children.

Every Biblical command relative to the training of children has been given to parents. training includes education. Therefore, the schools and the teachers who teach children should be an extension of a parent's beliefs. That is why so many Christians feel strongly about Christian schools. There is another dimension of training, however, that can only be accomplished at home. Wise parents personally train their children on the important issues of life. They do so, of

course, in a manner that is appropriate for the age level of their youngsters. They talk to their children about how good and gracious God is, about personal salvation, the great worth of the church, the dignity of work and the importance of leisure. They talk about individual relationships, finances, personal integrity, family values, personal habits, manners and a host of other life patterns so essential for a meaningful life.

7. Wise parents control the family's use of television and the internet.

They simply do not allow the family's TV and the newest nemeses, the Internet, to usurp their parental role as the principal trainer of their children. It's a serious matter. Without parental control of these "time eaters," children become junior couch potatoes.

8. They build relational bridges.

Wise parents associate with family members and friends whose lifestyle is a positive example for their children. They build a relational bridge by speaking positively about their children to these friends and family members. When children have a positive reputation in a circle of people who are meaningful to them they attempt to maintain acceptance with that group. This important group dynamic becomes a valuable source of stability for children and young people.

9. They inspire hope in their children.

Most children are dreamers. They think about their future. Often their dreams need the tempering counsel of their parents. But wise parents never destroy hope. They talk with "dreamer" children and discuss a variety of ways they can achieve their goals and in so doing honor Christ with their lives. Wise parents help their children lay foundations for success which includes a quality Christian education.

10. They discipline their children.

All would agree that the parents of John and Charles Wesley were wise parents. You will recall their sons were the great British evangelists of the eighteenth century whose ministry spread spiritual revival throughout Europe and America. On discipline Mrs. Wesley said,

The first thing to be done is to conquer the children's will and bring them to an obedient temper. For neglecting timely correction, they will contract a stubbornness and obstinacy which is hardly ever conquered; and never without using such severity as would be as painful to me as to the child. Whenever a child is corrected, it must be conquered; and this will be no hard matter to do, if he be not grown headstrong by too much indulgence. Self-will is the root of sin and misery. No indulgence of it can be trivial, no denial of it unprofitable.

Her words will sound harsh to some these days but they are fundamental to sound discipline. There are other things wise parents do but these ten suggestions will be a good start. My prayers are with you.