

“WHAT KIDS NEED” - Part 3
Raising G Rated Children in an X Rated World
Deuteronomy 6:4-8; Jeremiah 31:31-34
October 12, 2008

Home computers have given us access to information that would have been nearly impossible to find just a few years ago. Unfortunately, the home computer has exposed our children to all sorts of things, often way before they can mentally or emotionally process what they are seeing. And some of those things they should never be exposed to. And yet in this X-Rated environment we are trying to find ways to raise G-Rated kids. We know the characteristics that we want them to develop. Things like Confidence, Character, Conviction Compassion, Competence. But how can we make that happen?

There are 10 things that our kids need. They need belief, the belief that we think this relationship is important. They need presence, that our time and our energy might show them that they are a priority for us. Kids need memories, positive memories that can allow them to grow with a sense of stability and assurance. And kids need encouragement - the support that says we love them not because of what they do, but because of who they are and whose they are. They are our children, and they are the children of God. That is where we begin. And then

5. Kids need role models.

Good kids have good adult role models. All studies point to this fact whether a child grew up in a Cambodian refugee camp, an urban housing project, or on a farm in York County. If they are healthy, they have had adults, and often adults beyond their parents, who were cheering them on and modeling what an adult is suppose to be.

There's two types of role models. There's the *parent* as role model and then there is *others* as role model. Let's start with parent. Parents need to remember that they are being watched by their kids. Parents are the number one influence in the life of their child because that child is continually watching their values, beliefs and actions. Kids watch how we talk to one another, how we treat people, what we do with our finances, how much alcohol we drink, how we resolve conflict, how we treat strangers. It is like we are being wired, under surveillance 24/7. Doug Fields of Saddleback Church warns parents that we are always under the great risk of identity theft because our children are trying to steal the best part of our identity. If we want our kids to develop the 5 C's of Confidence, Character, Conviction, Compassion, and Competence, then they have to see those characteristics exhibited in us. We can try to teach them all day long, but we won't get through to them until we live it.

There are two things we must remember as parents, grandparents, and significant other adults. We need to model integrity. Most studies today show that students cheat more than they used to.

Why are kids cheating more? Is education tougher than it used to be? Some of the tests I’ve seen from a century ago, the expectations of students then and now, there is no comparison. It is not tougher. But it is a lot easier to cheat. Papers can easily be bought over the Internet. Cell phones make it possible to take a picture of the test then transmit that picture to others. All sorts of things make it easier to cheat. But the biggest problem, is that children have been taught how to lie and cheat in their home. They’ve seen mom and dad stretch the truth or flat out lie and compromise their integrity when the truth becomes uncomfortable.

Hearing that is a bit uncomfortable because we don’t think that we really do that all that much. But the phone rings and a voice cries out, “If that is so and so, tell them I’m not home.” Or we screen it through the answering machine or caller ID, to just let the machine pretend we are not home. How about “We’re going to stop here, but don’t tell your mom..” Or “If they ask your age, tell them you’re 11. I don’t want to pay full price.” Or, “I can tell the IRS I really gave the church this much. I pay too much in taxes all ready.” Do we really need more examples?

The fabric of our society is woven together with thousands of these little lies that lead up to one big integrity problem. One of the lies of our culture is that a lie is only a lie if we get caught. Guess what? Our kids are catching us all the time. To kids, integrity is important. And it is very important to God. 1 Chronicles 29 *“I know my God that You test the heart and are pleased with integrity.”* God loves integrity. God loves people of integrity. And when we violate our integrity, we need to acknowledge it and apologize. An apology is an act of integrity, whether it is to our kids or to others with whom we have a relationship.

As parents, grandparents, as significant adults and friends, we need to model integrity, and we need to model faith. That is the second thing to write down. And when we model our faith, we deepen our faith. Some might think that they don’t have enough faith to model. We cry out like the father of a hurting son saying, “Lord, I believe. Help my unbelief.” Well the truth is that if we model the faith we have, our faith will grow. And our kids need to see us growing in faith.

When I talk about deepening our faith I’m not talking about simply showing up for church and having a picture of Jesus above your fireplace. And in saying that I do know that for some, particularly those with little ones, say anyone in your household under 20, or those of you dealing with the physical struggles that often come with age, coming to church is not a simple thing. It is tough to get up and get moving, or to get others up and moving. And there is the temptation to just sit at home and watch Hagy, Stanley, or Osteen while lounging around in your pajamas. And for those of you stuck in that temptation, maybe deepening your faith, growing your faith does begin with just showing up at church. But spiritually, don’t limit yourself to just coming to church. As parents and grandparents, we have a responsibility to pass the baton of faith to our children, and to our children’s children.

Deuteronomy 6. *“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your heart. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home or when you walk along the road, when you lie down or when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads.”* We connect them to our foreheads as a symbol of knowledge, knowledge about the will and way of God that we can teach our children. Connected to our hands as a symbol of what we do as people of God. We are called to pass on the knowledge of our faith and our actions in faith to our kids. It is not a matter of showing them that we are perfect Christians, because there are no perfect Christians, just like there are no perfect parents. But then, kids don't need to see a perfect dad. They just need to see is a dad who loves God and wants to live his life under the direction of God. Kids don't need a perfect mom. They need to see a mom who loves Jesus and doesn't compromise her life because of her commitment to Christ.

Over the years I've talked to a lot of parents, and there is one line that just drives me crazy. That is when they say, “I don't want to impose my faith on my children. I want them to decide on their own.” And I want to say, “I guess you don't dress them either because you don't want to impress your sense of style on them. And don't feed them, because they may not like things that you like. Wait til they can choose. And you better not bathe them because cleanliness is next to Godliness and you don't want to impose that on them. No standards of spiritual cleanliness. No standards of physical cleanliness.”

Some parents may say that they don't want to impose their faith on their kids, but that is an impossibility. Parents are the number one influence on the lives of their children. And if our kids do not learn about God, about honoring Christ from us, chances are they will not learn it anywhere. Then this noble concept will be a guarantee of a life apart from Christ, and that is no life at all. Now there is something called free will. Nobody can take that away. So ultimately the child will choose. My question is, parents, if you're a Christian, why would God be an option in your home? It's your home. You're paying the bills. You're putting food on the table. You're making rules. I probably understand better than anybody that sometimes kids don't want to go to church. I have a family full of preacher's kids and you know what you've heard about them. And there have been times when I didn't don't want to go to church. But there is a lot better chance of a kid making a connection with God while he or she is being forced to go to church rather than staying at home and sleeping in. What is more important for your kids, having the choice, which you can't really take away anyway, or being connected to Christ.

There is one role model that we all have. His name is Jesus. He came from heaven to earth to show us how to live; how to grow; how to love. He came to fulfill the prophecy from Jeremiah 31, *“I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. No longer will a man teach his neighbor, or a man his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest,” declares the LORD. “For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.”* Look at the

extreme that Jesus went to just to get to know us, to write His law and His love within our hearts. As role models for our children and grandchildren, who want to give them the best opportunities in life, can we do any less than show them Christ in our life, and encourage them to accept His law and His love within themselves?

One thing that kids get at church is a variety of role models. Remember I said there's two parts of role models. Parent as a role model, and then others as role models. Every kid needs other significant adults in their life to be role models. And this church has an army of people who are investing themselves into the lives of our children. We see it at Sunbeam Station and Vacation Bible School. We see it during Story Time and Sunday School. We saw it at the Family Fun Fest and through all sorts of events. We've got all sorts of children and youth here, and all sorts of adults who help them and watch over them. And we can always use more. More children. More youth. More caring adults. Among our Core Values is Missions, reaching out to share the love of God. A great way to fulfill that core value is by working with children and/or youth; a great way to invest your life is to become a role model for some young ones.

One group that could use some help providing role models would be single parents. I said before that I do not know how they do what they do. Ideally a home would have two role models built in but that is not always the case. Maybe you could be helpful to single parents who are trying to raise some G-rated kids. In this election season there is some talk about being pro life. A great way to show that would be by investing your time and energy in the life of a child, by helping a single parent by being a role model for a child.

It is all about raising G-Rated Kids in an X-Rated world. It is a very tough task, but by following the teachings from God, it is possible. We find ways to develop the 5 C's of Confidence, Character, Conviction Compassion, Competence. And for that to happen, our kids need belief, the belief that we think this relationship is important. They need presence, giving them the time that shows them that they are a priority for us. They need memories, positive memories that can enable them to grow with a sense of stability and assurance. Kids need encouragement - the support that says we love them not because of what they do, but because of who they are and whose they are. They are our children, and they are the children of God. And kids, all kids from new born to 99 need role models. That will help get us to where we want to be, and in your life, may it be so. Amen.