

WHAT KIDS NEED@ - Part 4

Raising G Rated Children in an X Rated World

Ephesians 6:1-4, 10-18

Celebration of the Children ' s Sabbath October 26, 2008

We have spent a lot of time with this topic, but then this is a pretty important topic. And especially today when we are celebrating the Children ' s Sabbath. How can we help our children grow to be honorable, respectable adults? So far we have established goals to help them develop the characteristics of Confidence, Character, Conviction, Compassion, and Competence. We have looked at five steps that help to get us there. Kids need belief, presence, memories, encouragement, and role models. But that is just the beginning. Kids need much more. And we continue here.

6. Kids Need Discipline.

A lot of times discipline is not the fun topic on anybody ' s list, but kids need discipline. They need boundaries. Those boundaries change as a child grows, and regardless of age, our kids find ways to push and challenge those boundaries. So we cannot have one set rule for all kids at all ages. Mark Twain said that the best way to deal with a teenager was to stick them in a barrel and feed them through a slot. And then when they get a bit older, just close the slot. But Twain ' s humor doesn ' t work. We have to think about discipline, about how to set boundaries and limits, about how, when, and where to bring punishment. To do that, we get some help from the scriptures.

The Bible tells us that discipline is guidance, not punishment. We don ' t always think about it that way, but remember that the basic word >discipline ' means to teach. And we teach them by loving them and guiding them by establishing standards, expectations, and boundaries. Discipline is a loving thing. In fact, the Bible teaches that we cannot have love without discipline. Proverbs 3 *My child, don ' t ignore when the Lord disciplines you and don ' t be discouraged when He corrects you, for the Lord corrects those He loves. Just as a father corrects a child in whom he delights.*@

Love and discipline go hand in hand. When we see a kid that ' s totally out of control, our first thought is usually not, " That kid is out of control,@ but " Where are the parents? " Now I know there are exceptions, and that all of our kids get out of control from time to time, even the best parent in the world, and I am not close to that category, can have kids who get out of control from time to time. But parents have to be involved in disciplining their kids. In fact, we are told in Proverbs 29, " *But a child left to himself disgraces his mother.*" What do children need? They need discipline. But how do we discipline without breaking their spirit or crushing their dreams. I knew a man who thought that the Bible said that we need to break the spirit of our children. No! That ' s not right. We need to feed our children on hopes and dreams, to help their lives to soar. And yet our kids do need some control. How do we walk that line? Here are some thoughts.

First, when we discipline be delicate. Bodies are fragile and spirits are even more fragile, so be delicate. Be cautious with your discipline. Ephesians 6 *Now a word to you parents. Don ' t keep on scolding and nagging your children, making them angry and resentful. Rather bring*

them up with the loving discipline the Lord Himself approves with suggestions and godly advice. Now you might have noticed that most any time when we discipline our kids, they get mad. And yet if we don't discipline them at all, they get out of control. We need to find a middle ground of loving discipline. If we don't, if we operate in the extremes, we will lose. Be delicate.

Two, don't discipline in anger. Spend a few days in a fast food restaurant, don't eat there, just observe the crowd, and you will see parents yelling, screaming, smacking, spanking and yanking. Parents are frustrated and they are disciplining in anger. And the result? Angry discipline produces angry kids. And along with the anger come humiliation, embarrassment, and violence. For when we yell and scream, kids don't hear what we are saying, but they do see what we are doing. They see that we are out of control. Then they lose respect for us. And then they lose control themselves.

Some people look to the scriptures and find, *Spare the rod and spoil the child.* A few take this to the extreme, as though it is license to beat their kids. We have to understand this in the context from which it comes. We are to use a rod as a shepherd uses a rod to guide his sheep; to keep them on the right path; to make sure that they don't wander into the wolves' den. That's what David meant when he wrote, *Thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me.* It doesn't mean that our kids are not to be spanked, because sometimes that is the best way to get the message across. But when we discipline, do it delicately. And don't discipline in anger.

The third thing to remember is to be wise. Be smart. Think about what you are doing. Think about what this discipline is teaching your kids. *If you hit your sister one more time, I'm going to smack you!* What does that mean? That if you're bigger and in control then hitting is ok and you can hit because you're in charge? Is that the point we want to make? That little rant might stop the behavior, but what are we communicating to them? Remember that discipline is guidance. It's to guide and develop our kids and to continue to teach them with our love.

One of the ways that I want to try to help you to be wise, is by sharing five questions with you. I got them from Doug Fields of Saddleback Church, but he didn't know who gave them to him, so I will give credit to Doug Fields. He said that when the time for discipline comes, ask your child these five questions. 1. What did you do? 2. Was that right or wrong? 3. How could you have handled this better? 4. Next time what do you think you could do differently? 5. Should you not handle it any better, what would be the fair and natural consequences of your action? By asking these questions, we can move from punishment to guidance, turning a problem into a teaching moment. And kids need to be taught, because kids need discipline.

7. Kids Need Affection.

Emotionally healthy kids have been given proper affection and lots of it. I've seen studies about infants who are born under difficult circumstances, like with AIDS or drug addictions. Often these children are neglected and they suffer. But if a human takes the time to hold them, to talk to them, to give them

the opportunity to bond, they do so much better. We naturally long for that human touch. And sometimes that longing is so strong that we settle for inappropriate touching. And the result is that we become emotionally distant. In particular men struggle with this. I struggle with this. Sometimes we become the emotional equivalent of a brick, hard and unyielding. And the real danger is that if we cannot find a way to be emotionally involved in the lives of our kids, we are robbing them of the affection they need, and they have to pay the price for it. And know that as I talk about this, I am talking about me. These are things that I should have known years ago, but I did not. And so I want to help you and me to know what we sometimes produce in our children when we don't give them the touch and affection that they need.

One, we produce boys who don't know how to express themselves emotionally, and 2; we produce girls who will figure out how to express themselves sexually. I look at the sexual messages that our society is selling to our daughters, to preteens, and I am appalled. It is easy to blame the companies like Abercrombie and Fitch for that. It is easy to blame the music and the media, and they are certainly not blameless in all of this. But they are successful because they are filling a need in our young ones that is not being filled. And particularly with promiscuous girls, far too often that need is not being appropriately filled because of the absence of a male role model or an unaffectionate father. The father might be in the home but the light of affection is turned off. Dads, if your son feels awkward about hugging you or telling you that he loves you, chances are that you feel the same way. That is true for me. And the really sad part is that I am better now than I used to be and I am still terrible with it. And if your daughter doesn't get the proper affection that she so desperately needs, I can almost guarantee that she will look for, and likely find it from someone else, and somewhere else.

Many of us here today have difficulties expressing affection. It becomes a hurdle that we need to overcome, and it is tough. Maybe it wasn't shown in the home. That's true in my case, and I do not blame my father for that because I know it wasn't shown in his home either. It is as though I had an affection bypass surgery, where showing affection just bypassed me and I never got in touch with it. But I am not a child anymore, and neither are you. So we need to find ways to break that affection-less cycle before it wounds and shapes another generation like it's wounded and shaped previous generations.

I realize that there is an affection piece to personality, too. Cal Cole, a retired pastor and a friend of mine, is one of the most affectionate people you could ever meet. He would greet everyone and everything with a hug. He'd hug adults, youth, children. He'd hug dogs, cats, oak trees. He'd hug everyone. In fact, in a time when we were tremendously focused on appropriate and inappropriate touch between male and female, between, adult and child, in that time when many were being taught to be suspicious of anyone who hugs too much, Cal was hurt big time. There was never the hint of anything inappropriate in Cal, but still, he felt the need to back off from who he was deep down inside. And I think that helped hasten his retirement. That's a shame, because Cal was not someone who was trying to be affectionate. That was one who is affection. And he is amazing.

That's not my personality. By my nature and my training in the home, I am much more reserved when it comes to affection. It's not that I don't like people or care about them. It's just not who I am. It's not

how I've been taught and trained. And sometimes it drives my wife, my kids, and my congregations batty. And I try to get better, I try to move out of my comfort zone, but it's tough, because I also have to be who I am. And I know that some of you fight the same battle.

I guess the point is that we all have hurdles that we have to get over. For some, maybe for many, one of those hurdles is showing affection to the people we care about. Recognize who you are and who you have been, and resolve to not make your children or grandchildren suffer because of your personality, or because of your past. Don't allow the quirks of who you are to deprive your children of the affection they need. Figure out how to get it done. Charles Swindoll writes, *It's Not About You ...* Life is not about your being comfortable and happy and successful and pain free. It's about becoming the man or woman God has called you to be. And I would add to that, as parents and grandparents, that is not about us either. It is about raising our children and grandchildren to become the men and women that God created them to be. And for that to happen, we need to show them affection, because our kids need affection.

Right now we are talking about what kids need, but don't forget that this is not just about kids. These suggestions, these rules are about relationships. And this particular need corresponds to the need to encourage our kids. Encouragement is communicating that we love our children, that we believe in them regardless of their performance. Affection shows that. Encouragement is saying I love you and I believe in you. Affection is showing that because in our world talk is cheap. And not just in our world.

1 John 3:8: *A Dear children, let us stop saying we love each other. Let us show it by our actions.* That's the point. Don't just say. Show it. Live it. This is especially true if you have teenagers close by. They need affection very badly even though they will probably deny it. But something happens when puberty hits. Parents start backing off because their kids are acting strange. Then teenagers point to parents and say, "You're weird and you make me feel uncomfortable." Which is kind of like the pot calling the kettle black. So both parent and child are creating distance between them. That's when they need affection the most. During adolescence, it's like everybody pushes them away because they are changing and we don't know how to handle it, and they don't know how to handle it, and yet in the midst of those changes, they need affection. That's the time we most need to show them the love and affection that we feel deep in our hearts.

If you don't think that's true, go to where teenagers hang out and just watch them. I go to a football game and there is a whole world going on outside the fence. Often there's a lot middle school kids. Watch those boys sometime. They're touching, bumping, smacking, bouncing off each other, jumping on each other. Why? Because they're awkward. And nobody is giving them any affection so they're getting the affection for themselves. But they don't have the emotional maturity to express it, and so they go out and find it the only way they can, by beating up on one another.

Those kids need to be connected to caring adults. If we fail to make those connections, because our kids don't know how to make those connections, or if we push those connections away, we end up pushing our kids away. And if kids, even our kids, if they don't get the affection they need and desire, they're going to look for it in other places. They will look for it in other ways. And our X-rated world

has a world of options for them. With our words, with our lives, we need to show them Romans 12, which says, *ALove each other with genuine affection and take delight in honoring each other.* Kids need affection.

It is all about raising G-Rated kids in an X-rated world. It is about developing the characteristics of Confidence, Character, Conviction, Compassion, and Competence. For that to happen, our kids need belief, presence, memories, encouragement, and role models. And now we know that they also need discipline and affection. The Lord gives us the steps to follow so we can raise our children and grandchildren, so they can become the mature people that God has created and called them to be. It is often a difficult task, but with work of our hands and the love of our hearts, it can happen. And in your life, may it be so. Amen.