

**“WHAT KIDS NEED” - Part 5**  
Raising G Rated Children in an X Rated World  
Matthew 18:1-6; Matthew 19:13-16  
November 2, 2008

We are finally coming to a conclusion. We have devoted a lot of time to a very important issue: How can we raise G-Rated kids in an X-Rated world? It is a most difficult task. It is hard enough just to be a parent, just to raise a child, but to add the pressure of trying to raise them to grow up to be an adult who shows the characteristics of Confidence, Character, Conviction, Compassion, and Competence, it is all that much harder. But it can happen if we give kids the things they need in life. Things like belief, presence, memories, encouragement, role models, discipline and affection. That list comes from the scriptures. And we have three more to go.

**8. Kids Need Responsibility.**

It's not possible to have Confidence, Character, Conviction, Compassion, and Competence without having responsibility. Often with kids, and particularly with teenagers, their lack of responsibility is manifested in the ABC's. Apathy. Blame. And the Care-for-me mentality.

What do you think today's generation is going to tell their kids about today's culture? It's not going to be like what our parents told us about having to walk to school, up hill, both ways, barefoot, in the snow, after milking the cows and plowing the south 40. No. Today's generation will say, "My life was so tough! When my parents sent me to my room all I had was a cell phone, an MP3 player, a computer, DVD player, and only a 19" television. And each one had a separate remote. I had to find the right remote before I could turn them on and tune out my parents. And if I was hungry I had to go to the kitchen and open the refrigerator myself. The horror of it all." As parents, as significant adults, how have we bred irresponsibility? How have we moved them towards apathy, blame, and the care-for-me mentality?

A - Apathy. What do we do? We solve all their problems. Or at least we try to. We pick up after them rather than having them do it. Rather than taking the time and energy, the whole hassle of arguing with them, we do it ourselves. We give them money too easily and then it is not very valuable to them. So our kids learn that they don't have to do much, or care at all. That's apathy.

B - Blame. Why do kids always blame other people? Let's see, I spill hot coffee on my lap and it must be McDonald's fault. A man buys a brand new motor home. Drives it for the very first time, puts it on cruise control, and walks to the back to make coffee. It's not auto pilot. It's cruise control. So he sues the dealer and the manufacturer. I have even heard of parents suing teachers and schools because their kids' grades were not what the parents thought they should be. A young girl is sent off the soccer field because she was wearing jewelry. The girl's reaction, "It was the referee's fault. He's supposed to check that stuff before the game!" When we blame others, we teach our kids to blame others.

C - the Care-For-Me mentality. The care-for-mentality happens when we as parents never force our kids to carry their own weight. Then they never learn to move from this infantile dependence to a healthy independence. They need to carry their own weight. That's part of being a responsible human being. True story I heard from the coach of a 12-year-old baseball team. First practice. Parents get out of the car, carrying the kids' gear. They go to the dug out and start unpacking. They put the spikes on the kids. Caps on the kids. Gloves on the kids. The parents are doing everything and the kids are just standing around. The coach says, "No way. Stop that. That's the kid's job, not the parents." And the parents immediately said, "We want a new coach." Unbelievable! Parents, we

need to allow our kids to take responsibility, and deal with the consequences of their actions or inaction. What if they forget their spikes? Then they miss a game. And in the scope of life that's not that big a deal. Chances are they'll never do it again. But when we continually bail them out, they never take responsibility for themselves, and it becomes a lifestyle. "Someone has to take care of me."

Not long ago I got a copy of a letter that reads, "Dear Pastor, We are members of a youth group a lot like yours. We meet every week for Bible study and fun. We're writing to tell you about one of our friends named Tessie who needs help. Tessie is a member of our youth group. She's on the cross-country team at school, in the choir, and a good student. She's very well liked. [As I'm reading this, I'm thinking what calamity has hit this kid? Cancer? Lost a leg? Dad shipped off to war? What happened?] However Tessie made a mistake last month. Tessie took her parents' car without permission and got into a wreck. She's ok. But it will cost \$2500 to repair the car. Tessie has her permit but not her driver's license so the insurance won't pay for the damage. Tessie feels really bad because she's never done anything like this before. But her parents are making her pay for the whole thing. Now she has to quit sports and get a job. She probably won't be able to go on choir tour this summer. Even when she finds a job, it'll take forever to pay off the money. Basically her whole year is ruined. We feel bad for her. We hope you do too. Please help us help her. We're writing every youth group we can think of and asking two things. One, write to Tessie even though you don't know her and tell her you feel bad for her. Two, could you take up a little collection to help Tessie pay her debt? If each student in your group could give fifty cents or a dollar it would help pay for the car and help Tessie feel better about herself. We're not asking each youth group to do a lot but we are asking each youth group to do a little. Wouldn't you want someone to do this for you if it happened to you?"

*Let me get this straight...* Tessie steals her parents' car, no license, no permission from her parents or the state, crashes, and now wants me to pay for it, and to write her a letter to help her feel better. Here's a thought, considering what she has done, she ought to feel bad. And if she truly wants to feel better, let her abide by the teachings of Proverbs 27 which says "*A prudent person foresees the danger ahead and takes precautions. The simpleton goes blindly on and suffers the consequences.*" When we don't allow kids to experience the fair and natural consequences of their actions and decisions, they remain simpletons and they will never develop a sense of responsibility. Now I know we want to help our kids out. We don't want them to hurt or suffer. Our hearts are in the right place. But our actions need to allow them to experience the consequences of their actions. Our kids need responsibility. Yeah, if they mess up at the wrong time they might miss that party or prom or homecoming. But learning to take responsibility will prepare them for life.

Along with Responsibility, **9. Kids Need Fun.**

Why do they need fun? Because this generation is totally stressed out. They are moving at a faster pace than any generation in history. And when parents begin to worry that their child might miss some opportunity in life, we schedule every opportunity just to try to expose them to anything and everything. And a little more stress, a little more pressure, a little more speed is added to the life of the child. And sometimes along the way we end up telling them that they should be having fun rather than allowing them to experience fun. You see, when fun and a little laughter is brought into their lives, it helps relieve some of the anxieties that they feel. It diminishes their fears and lessens their hostility and rage.

A joyful heart, a cheerful heart is good both physically and emotionally. Proverbs 17 "*A cheerful heart is good medicine but a broken spirit saps a person's strength. A glad heart makes a happy face.*" Personally I think we ought to take this teaching to heart. Christians ought to be modeling fun. We need to set the pace for the world because we have a relationship with God and we can

experience what true joy is all about. But some Christians have bought into the myth that the more serious you are the deeper you are. It's a myth. Sometimes the more serious you are the more boring you are! There's a lot of boring Christians around. Sometimes they show up here. Sometimes they appear in the pulpit. But we need to be a fun loving group. When I first met the SPRC, at some point in the evening every member said, "We like to have fun." And we should. And kids need to experience fun as well.

Here's two things to put on your agenda. 1. Lighten up. And 2. Schedule fun. In Ecclesiastes it says that one of the necessary rhythms of life is laughter and dance. If we want to understand life, if we want to live abundantly, meaningfully, joyfully we need to have some laughter and dance in life. Maybe physically. Definitely spiritually, we need to laugh and dance.

I value laughter in the church. Not everyone does. I do. I have been blessed to have some very personal conversations with God. Nancy has always said that is because I am not particularly perceptive or bright, and so God has to make things abundantly clear to me. But one time in prayer the Lord asked me, "Chuck, do you know why I give you these visions and personal glimpses?" And I said, "No, Lord." And He said, "Come to think of it, neither do I." And laughter just hung in the air. God has a sense of humor. And we should, too. But that doesn't mean that we don't take God seriously. I take God very seriously, but I don't take me very seriously. I know my humanity. I know my foolishness and vulnerability. And so it is OK to laugh at myself, for us to laugh at ourselves. And it is OK to laugh with God, because that's what friends do. It's OK to have fun. It's OK to laugh.

Some have trouble accepting that. Maybe you grew up in a church where you never laughed. Grimace was the look of choice. But that is not the God I know. Some believe that there is a God in heaven whose hand always holds a ruler, just waiting to smack our knuckles. But I prefer a picture that I have seen of the laughing Christ. Jesus came that we might have life, that we might live in the abundance of life. And that means that we are to have fun. Remember that one of the big complaints about Jesus and His disciples was that they were always enjoying themselves. They were always having a good time. And we should, too. And it is important because kids need fun. And finally,

#### **10. Kids Need a Peaceful Home.**

Not a perfect home but a peaceful home. But peacefulness in the home is a pretty high goal. In our house we only have two of us, not counting the cats, and still it gets hectic. "This has to be cared for. Who is going to take care of that? What meetings do you have this week? Where do you have to be then? Do you have money for gas? Do we have all the ingredients for whatever we are having for supper? How about doctors? Dentists? Vets? Parents? Kids? Calendar?" All sorts of confusion is regularly on display without kids in the picture most of the time. And the more kids we add, the confusion increases exponentially. But all of that is from my point of you. The real question is, will our kids describe the home as being peaceful?

Why is a peaceful home important? Because kids are battling all day, every day. They're battling an X-rated culture, language, and values. They're battling bullies and peer pressure and even their own body image. They need to come home to a place where they can retreat, drop their battle gear, and be in a shelter where they can just be themselves; where they are loved, known, and cared for. If a kid knows that he's going home to a safe, peaceful environment, he is better able to handle the stress and pressure, the put downs and temptations, and all the things that our X-rated culture provides. They can handle it better if they know that a safe sanctuary is waiting to receive them.

What does a peaceful home look like? That's tough to describe because it is not about how big a house is, the stuff inside it, or even its location. It is all about the environment inside the home, about characteristics and attitudes. It is discipline without a lot of yelling. Boundaries without a lot of

rules. It is a place where friends are welcome just to hang out. It is about committed relationships between parent and child, and if possible, between mother and father. It is a place of freedom from comparisons to other siblings; a place where kids can be themselves without pretending; without putting up a false front. It starts there.

Okay. That's the goal, but how do we establish that home? First we need to recognize that often we are at war in three different areas. We are at war with God, with others, and even within ourselves. Once we admit that, we can begin to rectify it. We are at war with God, seeking our own way and will over that of the Lord. But in Colossians 1 we read, *"By Him [Jesus] God reconciled everything to Himself. He [God] made peace with every thing in heaven and on earth by means of His blood on the cross."* What that means is that we don't have to be at war with God. When we accept the reign of Jesus in our life, we are given the gift of the Holy Spirit. If God's Spirit lives in me, I can be at peace with God, and I can start to build a home in peace. We hear the same message in Romans 8, *"If the Holy Spirit controls your mind there is life and peace."* Peace is possible in our homes, if we have peace with God in our hearts. And how do I get that?

Romans 5:1: *"Therefore since we've been made right in God's sight by faith, we have peace with God because of what Jesus Christ our Lord has done for us."* That is Christianity in a nutshell. We can have peace with God because of all that God in Christ has done for us. To get that peace, I only have to accept that grace. And once I accept peace with God, I can learn to find peace in myself. After all, God has accepted me. Why should I turn around and condemn me? I need to allow the Spirit of God to transform me into the likeness of Christ, and that takes some time. But if I am in Christ, and Christ is in me, I can be at peace with myself. And when I find peace within myself, it becomes a whole lot easier to offer peace to the people around me. I can have a home at peace, and that's good, because that is what kids need.

It is all about our desire to raise G-Rated kids in an X-Rated world. It is about helping our children develop the characteristics of Confidence, Character, Conviction, Compassion, and Competence. To get that result, there are some things our kids need. Things like belief, presence, memories, encouragement, role models, discipline, affection, responsibility, fun, and a peaceful home. It will not come easy, but then parenting has never been easy. But just like the gift of life that Jesus has given to us is worth the cost, it is worth our cost to give our children and our grandchildren the gift of growing into maturity as people who can change this world for the better. After all, that has always been our hope and prayer. And armed with these teachings from God, and with Christ in our life, in your life, may it be so. Amen.