



Judges

Idea: Nothing you do in your life will be as important as how you raise your children.

Intro: What a privilege it is to be a parent! It is a blessing in so many different ways, but one particular way is the fact that God so often uses children to open our eyes to new things. If you don't want to learn new things, don't ever have children because they have a way of teaching us more than we probably want to know. Here are a few things that I've learned from my daughters and being around children at church.

First, the aim of both little boys and girls on the potty is not good. I have also learned that a 25lb girl can eat 10lbs at dinner and be hungry 3 minutes after leaving the table. I have learned that no matter what the injury is a Frozen or Dora Band-Aid will immediately take all the pain away. Finally, I have learned that when your child fixes breakfast you treat it as if you were on the mission field. "Lord, if I can get in; you keep it down." The other day, my friend Adam posted a

picture of the breakfast his son fixed him. It was a bowl full of bagel pieces, rice cakes, Cheetos, Fritos, Jell-O, chocolate pudding, peanut butter, cheese, and topped with Kool-Aid, Propel, and pepper. Yummy!

Children teach us a lot of things, and one of the biggest things they teach us is that parenting is one tough job. A few years ago I came across a parent's job description. See if you qualify:

Long-term player needed for challenging, permanent work in a chaotic environment. Candidates must possess excellent communication and organizational skills and be willing to work evenings and weekends and frequent 24-hour shifts. Some overnight travel is required, including trips to primitive camping sites on rainy weekends and endless sports tournaments in faraway cities. Travel expenses are not reimbursed.

You must keep this job for the rest of your life and be willing to be hated, at least temporarily. You must be willing to bite your tongue repeatedly and possess the physical stamina of a pack mule. You must be willing to tackle stimulating technical challenges, as of gadget repair, sluggish toilets, and stuck zippers. You must handle assembling and product safety testing, as well as floor maintenance and janitorial work.

You must screen phone calls, maintain calendars, and coordinate production of multiple homework projects. You must have the ability to plan and organize social gatherings for clients of all ages and levels of maturity. You must be willing to be indispensable one minute and an embarrassment the next. You must assume final and complete accountability for the quality of the end product.

There is no possibility for advancement. Your job is to remain in the same position for years without complaining, so those in your charge can ultimately surpass you. No

previous experience required, but on-the-job training is offered on a continually exhausting basis.

Although you will receive no financial compensation, you must pay those in your charge, offering frequent wages and bonuses. A balloon payment is due when they turn 18 and attend college. And when you die, you give them whatever income you have left.

Parenting is not easy. It is exhausting and tough work. More often than not you learn through failure. In fact there are many days when you question why God would give children to young men and women with absolutely no clue what they're doing. Parenting has always been an enormous challenge. There is nothing more challenging, and nothing can bring more grief to you than parenting.

However, nothing will bring you greater joy and be more rewarding than being a parent. With so much at stake, it can be confusing about how to raise our children. What is the right way to raise a kid?

Inquiry: I'm confident some of you wish that the Bible had a section set aside as the parenting manual. You want step-by-step instructions similar to the instructions for assembling a bicycle. Unfortunately, God did not provide anything like that, probably because a "one size fits all" approach is not going to work for everyone. But He did give us examples of what to do and not do, and He gave us general principles to follow. On this Mother's Day, I want to help you parents out by drawing upon some principles from the examples presented in Judges. I want to give you a parent's checklist. Ultimately, we will see that responsibility as parents is to model Jesus Christ and His ways to our children so that they will want to follow Him for themselves.

1. Children need a godly example who will point them to Jesus.

In the next two months I will travel to Phoenix and Barcelona. On each of those trips, I will board an airplane and take my seat with the intention of arriving in my desired destinations. I've never got on a plane and told the pilot to just drop me off wherever he desires to go. No, I have a very definite destination in mind.

We must also have a very definite destination in mind when it comes to parenting. Unfortunately, far too many people fail to give their children a proper destination for life. Parents are pointing their children in a myriad of different directions. We want them to chase their dreams, so we point them to the MLB, NFL, NBA, Broadway, Nashville, the Olympics, and everything else out there. Parents will spend incredible amounts of money and time driving their children all over the country chasing after these dreams. And when it is all over, the only things most families will have to hold onto are a few good memories.

We have bought into the devil's lie in America. We think the best thing we can provide for our children is to give them everything they want. Therefore, we are raising kids who are committed to everything in the world except the only thing that ultimately matters. God didn't tell us to spend all our time teaching our children how to pursue things that in eternity will count for nothing. What He did tell us to teach our kids how to love the Lord their God with all of their heart, soul, and might. When they do that everything else will take care of itself.

Hey dad...hey mom, what your kids need to see in you is a man or woman who passionately and obediently chases after God. They need to see consistently pointing them to Jesus by how you live, make decisions, and what you say.

Joshua and his contemporaries loved God. In fact Joshua declared to Israel that regardless of whether or not they followed God, he and his house would serve the Lord (Joshua 24:15). Somehow, though, there was a breakdown in the passing of the spiritual torch.

Read Judges 2:10.

It seems that those who immediately came after Joshua were not as passionate about God as he was. Therefore, the generation that arose after them completely abandoned the Lord. The torch was not passed on to them.

Dad, what are you passionate about today? Mom, what excites you most today? Be certain of this: your kids will “get it,” whatever it is. Your son or daughter will “get” what makes you passionate. Make sure it is Jesus. Your kids need to see a dad who loves Jesus. They need to see a mom who loves Jesus. They need to have parents who will point them to Jesus by how they live and the gospel they share.

2. Children need a faithful example who will teach them to believe God.

Gideon’s belief and trust in God was a continual work in progress just like ours is. He seems to have constantly second-guessed God, or more probable second-guessed his ability to correctly hear from God. For example, in Judges 6 he had some doubts as to whether or not he was speaking with an angel (6:22). Then he questioned whether or not he heard God properly in regards to going to war with Midian and Amalek (6:36-40). Then when God widdled his army down from 32,000 to 300, there was some apprehension about the upcoming battle (7:10).

Ultimately, Gideon believed God. He was faithful to the call the Lord put on his life. Gideon's example impacted his children. We see the impact in Jotham the youngest son. When Abimelech killed 70 of his brothers, Jotham rebuked his brother and the men of Shechem (9:7-21). He pointed out their lack of faith and integrity. Where did Jotham learn faith and integrity? He learned it from his father. Jotham was able to confront his wicked brother and the city of Shechem without fear because he watched his dad believe God.

Appl: Likewise, your children will learn to believe God when they see you model faithfulness.

- To your calling
- To your church
- In your giving
- To God's Word

3. Children need parents committed to fidelity who will model strength and security.

The clearest picture of the relationship between Christ and His church is the relationship between a husband and wife.

Read Ephesians 5:22-32.

In this passage Paul instructs Christian husbands and wives to love and submit themselves to one another. They are to be committed to fidelity in their marriage. Why is fidelity such a big deal? It goes back to the first commandment. "*You shall have no other gods before me*" (Ex 20:3). The person who refuses to be faithful to their spouse is first unfaithful to God. The person is not satisfied with the gift given them from God and desires to be satisfied by someone else. And when a person is

unfaithful to God they are usually unfaithful to their spouse.

Unfaithfulness in a home erodes the foundation of that home. We see this in Gideon's home. He had many wives and a Canaanite concubine. It was the son from Gideon's concubine (Abimelech) who murdered 70 of his other sons (8:31; 9:5). Gideon's sin destabilized and destroyed his children.

Appl: Your sin and its consequences are not isolated to you. The ramifications are far and wide. Often times your infidelity will become a reality in your children. Divorced parents often times have children who divorce. I'm not casting stones at those who have been through a divorce. I am simply wanting you to realize that ramifications of your decisions. Your sin today will continue to haunt your children and their children decades into the future. On the flip side, your choices today to be faithful and to love your spouse will continue to bless your children for decades. The greatest blessing is that it presents to your children a picture of the gospel.

4. Children need parents who will set them up for future success.

Read Judges 10:3-5.

Jair's 30 sons rode 30 donkeys and ruled over 30 cities. Jair set them up for success financially but also spiritually.

How can you as a parent set your kids up for success?

- Pray for and with them daily.
- Teach them to spend time with God daily.
- Lead them to faith in Jesus.

- Teach them the priority of being with the church.
We run from game to tournament to exhibition to competition, all in the name of family – and all the while neglecting the rightful place of god and His church and kingdom.
- Love them unconditionally.
- Spend time with them.
- Listen to them.
- Help them sort out their friends.
- Discipline them.
- Love their mom...love their dad.

Conclusion: Nothing you do in your life will be as important as how you raise your children. “Success” comes in all shapes, sizes, and colors. But success can be deceptive. Materialism and selfishness can masquerade as success, but please hear your pastor: dad and mom must raise their children in Christian love. Any other standard is doomed to fail. Kara and I strive to teach our girls to walk with God. We celebrate all their “successes.” We celebrate dance recitals, softball trophies, and good progress reports, but the reality of knowing we will spend eternity in heaven with our girls is the success we strive after.

Where will your children spend eternity? Have they placed their faith in Jesus Christ and received His forgiveness for their sin? Are they learning to fear God and keep His commandments?