

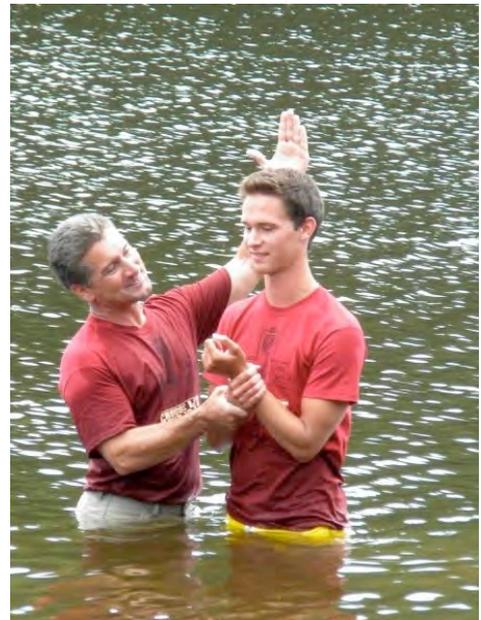
RAISING CHILDREN FOR GOD IN AN UNGODLY WORLD

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One of the greatest privileges in life is bringing a new human being into the world and then raising that precious gift from Heaven to live a self-controlled, upright and godly life. But along with that immense privilege comes enormous responsibility which requires all the intelligence, wisdom, and determination a parent can muster.

The increasing challenge of raising children for God

With each succeeding generation the task of parenting seems more difficult. We live in an ever-changing world that becomes increasingly unsafe as it careens down the path of self-destruction so aptly prophesied in the book of Revelation. Sometimes the changes are so gradual and subtle that we realize only by looking back over several decades that our society's values have eroded and coarsened. Other times we see evil directly and violently attacking and destroying us, as when Christians are persecuted for their faith, or when thousands of innocent people perish at the hands of terrorists intent on destroying a country and its values.



When we become parents, our biggest responsibility and greatest challenge is to transmit our values and raise our children to “live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope—the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ.” (Titus 2: 12, 13)

No matter how effective our parenting skills may be, though, our children are under attack. They are under attack on all sides, both from without and within.

External Attacks on the Family

Externally, our children face a world that has become increasingly dangerous, and a culture that becomes more coarse and vulgar with each passing season. If the threats of crime and pedophiles and terrorism weren't enough, our society attempts to bombard our children with counteracting influences which are disseminated extremely effectively through media. Theater, television, radio,



magazines, and now the internet scream an increasingly degraded value system that pervasively and directly conflicts and opposes Judeo-Christian ethics and values.

While talent and quality and even the promotion of family values were the benchmarks of the early years of television and radio, most of today's programmers and performers pander to the lowest common denominator of mediocrity and outright vulgarity in pursuit of advertising dollars and audience share.

Each day youngsters are confronted by hideously inappropriate speech and behavior by role models on TV, film, radio, and in the music industry. The crass promotion to children of sexuality, gratuitous vulgarity, and violence should be a huge concern of our society. This threat by the media presents one of the biggest external challenges we face as Christian parents.

Internal Threats to the Family

But we also face challenges from within our families and our church. Today our children are threatened by the breakup of the family and by a lessening of influence by our church.

The alarming results of the United States Census show that the traditional family is in serious trouble. We would hope that Christian families would be immune to such trends, but unfortunately studies show otherwise. Families are in crisis. The Christian family is in crisis. The Seventh-day Adventist Christian family is in crisis, not only because of the divorce rate within our church, but due to the decline of the church's influence on our children. Raising children who are devoutly committed to the will of God requires the combined efforts of the family, the church, and the school.

Challenges from within the Church

When there is a decline of a sense of mission within the Church it affects our spirituality and that of our children. When I grew up in the 50's, to be an



Adventist meant much more than going to church on Saturday. We lived our lives for something more important than ourselves. We had a mission, and our passion was to proclaim the Three Angels' Messages, and build on that foundation a correct understanding of Scripture that informed our lifestyle. Our

overriding purpose was to share God's love with others, and to share Biblical secrets of happiness and health and help people prepare for heaven and eternal life. A major challenge for the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the 21st century is to re-define its mission. Will we be just another denomination, or a movement of people with a mission and a destiny and a purpose: to be ready and to prepare others to be ready for the soon return of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ?

Transmitting Godly Values to our Children

Although our world is rapidly degenerating, two thousand years ago there were plenty of bad influences for parents to be concerned for their children. According to Paul in Galatians 5, Christians then were confronted by a society filled with “sexual immorality, eagerness for lustful pleasure, idolatry [could that be compared with materialism?], participation in demonic activities, hostility, quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambition, divisions, the feeling that everyone is wrong except those in your own little group, envy, drunkenness, wild parties, and other kinds of sin.” Does that list sound familiar?

But, Paul goes on to say, “when the Holy Spirit controls our lives, he will produce this kind of fruit in us: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self control.” What a great description of a Godly person!

A Biblical Model for Character Formation

The Apostle Peter gives us a beautiful promise in 2 Peter 1 which we can claim as Christian parents: “As we know Jesus better, his divine power gives us everything we need for living a godly life. He has called us to receive his own glory and goodness! And by that same mighty power, he has given us all of his rich and wonderful promises. He has promised that you will escape the decadence all around you caused by evil desires and that you will share in his divine nature.”

Then practical Peter describes a beautiful ladder of character qualities that lead to Godliness in verses 5-7: “So make every effort to apply the benefits of these promises to your life. Then your faith will produce a life of moral



excellence. A life of moral excellence leads to knowing God better. Knowing God leads to self-control. Self-control leads to patient endurance, and patient endurance leads to godliness. Godliness leads to love for other Christians, and finally you will grow to have genuine love for everyone.”

Wow! Isn't that exciting! We can think of that ladder, that beautiful progression, as we raise our children to become Godly people. We can begin when they are very young by filling their hearts and minds with the faith-building stories of the Bible, while also teaching them right from wrong. We can use our parenting skills to help them develop self-control and patience. Peter is saying here that as we develop these qualities in our children we are actually discipling our children to become Godly, loving people. What a thrilling responsibility and challenge as Christian parents!

Of course, values are “caught” as well as “taught.” In other words, our own demonstration of what it means to be loving and Godly as parents, teachers and fellow church members will have a tremendous impact on our children.



Think of the influence we can have on our children when we become involved in outreach ministries to our community, or when we are friendly to people at church outside our circle of friends, or when we treat the business and service people we interact with through the week with integrity, kindness and respect.

But in addition to being role models for our children, what parenting skills might we employ to most effectively raise our children to become Godly, rather than having them rebel or slip away from God and the church when they become adults?

As parents we must constantly seek a balance between empowering our children, and imparting guidance and self-control. Perhaps we could see the child's development as a continuum, where at the left side, in the earliest years, our parenting style would be more directive, with a gradual increase of freedom with responsibility, so that during the teen years, we increasingly empower them to make their own choices and decisions in life. Even in the teen years, though, I believe a parent's input is important, if it is done in a spirit of friendship and counsel rather than of control. We want to provide developmentally-appropriate empowerment, with the right balance between inspirational and directive parenting.



In our roles as parents, we can be most effective if we *live* our values *and* effectively teach them to our children. Here are some illustrations from the lives of some people who have raised or are in the process of raising Godly children in an unsafe world.

Character Formation in Modern Families

Going back to Peter's ladder, let's take a closer look at each of the steps of the ladder. The first step is faith. We teach our children faith as we teach them first that they can trust us as their parents, and then as we share with them the Bible stories of God's miracle working power, and of the effects of obedience as well as the consequences of rebellion. And that leads us to the next step of Peter's ladder, moral excellence.

My parents taught my brother and me faith and morality by giving us plenty of love and affection, spending quality time with us sharing their love and their values. My busy pastor-father made a point of taking us on regular outings, and I remember frequent trips into the beautiful countryside in the spring and summer in Texas, enjoying family picnics amidst fields of blue bonnets, beautiful green trees and luxurious botanical gardens. Dad and my pre-teen brother bought a ski boat as a joint venture, and we spent many Sundays together out on the lake. We took a vacation trip each summer, touring many of America's beautiful



national parks and great cities. Through the love and security engendered by this quality time my brother and I “caught” the basics of trust and faith.

But Mom and Dad did more than teach us by example. During our early years, they read stories to us and surrounded us with books and music that reinforced their values of integrity, respect, diligence, perseverance, hard work, courage, and trust in God. In addition to morning and evening family worship each day, where we heard inspirational, faith-building readings and learned about the beautiful doctrines of our church, my father would tuck us into bed at night with a story, often of his childhood, sometimes from The Bible Story series or Uncle Arthur’s Bedtime Stories, but always with a goodnight hug and kiss.

I remember having frequent guests for Sabbath dinner, going out with my Dad on Bible Studies in people’s homes, and participating in regular evangelistic and Ingathering campaigns. These efforts brought our own family and our church family closer together as we worked together to bring help and hope to a dying world. The evangelists inspired us and re-ignited us with passion for our mission as a church, and provided a kind of continuing education on the doctrines of our

church. My brother and I attended church schools from grade school through graduate school, and gained great strength and confidence in our beliefs and our church's mission from many wonderful teachers. What we learned at home was reinforced by our education at school and our worship experience at church.

When my son was born, my husband and I were on a very limited income. Rather than buying a TV set, we purchased a tape series called The Bible in Living Sound. As our son, Benji, listened to Uncle Dan, Aunt Sue and a host of dedicated Christian actors reenact the stories of the Bible, he was so fascinated by those tapes that he listened to them by the hour, over and over. What a great foundation for his faith! Instead of purchasing lots of toys for my son, I bought him character and faith-building books and games at Christian bookstores. And even in high school, I continued to purchase character-building books geared for teens. He read them all. When Benji was young, we continued my family's tradition of daily family worship and snuggle time together at



bedtime. I worked only a few hours a week out of the home. My husband took a day off every week and we spent it doing fun things together as a family.

We were also very involved and active in our church's ministry and mission. Benji attended an Adventist summer youth camp every summer until he became old enough to be a counselor. He joined Pathfinders. He also attended Adventist Christian schools from grade school through college, where he met his wonderful wife, who shares his passion for youth ministry.

To give us an idea of how today's families are instilling Godly values in their children, I recently interviewed three young adult sisters and a brother and his wife. The children of each of these siblings, from what I have observed over the past 7-8 years, beautifully reflect the character of Christ.

The brother and his wife, Joel and Shari, live in Georgia with their three children. They practice a family tradition of beginning the Sabbath together on Friday evening with a supper of homemade soup. This family, whose children are ages 8,10 and 11, prays together every morning and enjoys family worship each evening. For their worship they read out of the Bible or from a series such as The Bible Stories, and then discuss the concepts together as a family. “We



make spirituality a part of everyday life,” comments the father, Joel. “We discuss how we reflect God in the things we do.”

The children are limited to wholesome TV programs. Shows that do not reflect good values are banned, along with cartoons. The mother, Shari, shared that

the college she and her future husband attended showed cartoons during Friday lunches. After noticing the violence and disregard for human life displayed by these cartoons, Joel and Shari decided such programming would be off limits for their children. Instead, their children are encouraged to play outside in sports and imaginative, creative activities. “We’ve found TV to be so stifling,” says Shari. “Our kids don’t feel that they’ve missed out by having limits on their television viewing.” These parents are doing more than just preventing their children from being exposed to harmful programming. “We talk about why we don’t do certain things,” Shari explains. “Once the children visited a friend’s

home and were watching a movie. Our youngest son, Caleb, didn't feel comfortable with the content, and talked with me about it afterwards."

More often Joel and Shari invite their children's friends over to their home. That way, they are around to supervise and guide. In fact their theme is, "Making Family Fun." They participate in Pathfinders and go on frequent camping trips. The children are always encouraged to bring a friend.

Joel and Shari have discovered a wonderful aid in transmitting the mission and teachings of the Seventh-day Adventist church to their children in a CD series called "Pathways of the Pioneers." "We are awed by how much these pioneers sacrificed for their church, and



by the incredible courage they exhibited as they stood for their faith. As we listen to the stories on these CDs we are reminded of God's miraculous leading in the founding of our church and its various institutions," comments Joel. Shari adds, "The kids play the CDs on their own. In fact, they listened to them constantly for about three months straight. We have also enjoyed using them for worship."

One of Joel's sisters, Stacy, has discovered the benefits of prayer journaling. Because she home-schools her three children, morning worship is less hurried. The children are encouraged to have their own quiet time and to journal. "Twelve-year-old Loftin is the most consistent," states Stacy. "He sets his alarm on Sabbath morning to write in his prayer journal which I gave him for Christmas. He just talks to Jesus," Stacy shares. "Loftin usually goes to the Psalms, and then just starts writing to Jesus about that verse."

Stacy's youngest child also has her own quiet time. "When she was little," says Stacy, "Gloria would tell me what she wanted to pray, and I would write it in her journal for her. Now, at age 8, she is reading out of Proverbs, and she highlights certain passages with her yellow marker."

Last summer Stacy challenged Lewis (age 14), Loftin and a friend of theirs to read through The Prayer of Jabez. She told them, "See what it will do to your relationship with God for the next two weeks." The young people found themselves waking up each morning and looking forward to reading the book and to discovering what God would do in their lives.



I also interviewed the oldest sister Dawn, a single mother of two early-teens. I asked Dawn how she transmits her values to her teen-age children. She shared, "I pray that the Lord will help me understand my children and impress me with the right questions to ask in such a

way that my teens won't feel like I am prying." She tries to be involved with every activity, from sports to music. "We talk while we're doing dishes, we talk while we're watching TV, and discuss the issues raised by the programs we watch," states Dawn.

I asked Joel, a teacher and former academy dean, how he plans to help his children avoid experimenting with drugs. "The best thing for our children is to try to be as involved in their lives as possible," he reflected. "I had a dean who once told me that deaning, similar to parenting, is like banking. You have to make deposits in order to make withdrawals. It's that way in all relationships." Joel

sagely added, “Parents of teens need to pray that God will open their eyes to the things they need to see, and close their eyes to things they should ignore.” (I immediately thought of my son’s wild hair days in college.) “Your teen may be caught doing something that is a temporary experiment, for instance, with drugs, language or other behavior. When we’ve done our job as parents, the Holy Spirit will work on their hearts and deal with them in the right way, at the right time. When I’m in the dorm, sometimes I am awake at night, and I’ll do a room check. I usually find something that needs to be addressed. I think just my being present helps kids make good decisions when there is temptation, just like knowing that a parent is around.” Joel added, “Research shows that the teenage brain is in turmoil. The hormones are raging. Guidance from a loving, confident adult with good values is essential.



What, I wondered, could the church do to play a more important role in the lives of our youth? Joel responded, “The

church can help parents by providing activities and events for young people where families share in the supervision and planning. Teenagers are in the most social time of their lives. They want to be with other teens.”

“Also,” Joel continued, “it would be great if there were more adults in our churches who would take a student under their wings, show they care and involve them in service. We had a head elder once who put big plastic candy canes filled with candy and stuffed animals on each student’s desk every year. At our current church our pastor had the kids help him prepare and deliver

Thanksgiving baskets. He took them out to eat on the way back, and they thought that was cool.”

The Apostle Peter says that as we disciple our children in faith and morality, “a life of moral excellence leads to knowing God better. Knowing God leads to self-control. Self-control leads to patient endurance...” I asked these families how they are teaching their children self control and patience.

The parents I interviewed all have used spanking as a discipline of last resort, for blatant, outright disobedience or disrespect. Once the child is in the early school years, they agreed that spankings were used much less frequently, if at all.



When a parent resorts to frequent spankings, this may indicate the need for a more creative approach to discipline. Stacy’s son, Loftin, happened to be listening in on our conversation. “Now that we’re older,” shared Loftin, “we get privileges taken away more likely than being

spanked.” When I asked him to elaborate on which privileges, he said, “It might be no TV or no computer or no dessert for a week. And if I tease my sister I have to play with her all day, whatever she wants to play.”

Stacy shared how her father handled this form of punishment: “My Dad always came in and talked with us, then tested his belt on his arm before he spanked us. Then he would pray with us. I always felt sorry for what I had done after Dad disciplined me.” Loftin shared what happens when he or his brother or sister are

due for a spanking. “We go in the guest room, and Mom puts us on her lap and hugs us before she spans us.”

Shari noted that her mom was firm and consistent. “I knew what to expect, and I knew what my parameters were. Somehow this translated in my mind to, ‘She really loves me.’ My mom never lost her temper. She never blew up.

“Speaking of not losing your temper,” I said, “how do you teach your children patience?” Stacy reflected, “When I see the children getting impatient, I talk about Jesus. ‘How would He handle this?’ I ask them. If they are impatient with me, I say, ‘That is not being respectful.’ They immediately feel bad about it.”

Third sister Velvet’s early-teen, Kaleigh, added, “When I get mad I go into my room and blow up. Then I start thinking, ‘Why am I so mad?’ I just talk to my self about how I shouldn’t have gotten so mad. Then I eventually feel better.”



“And how do you instill self-discipline,” I wondered? Most of the parents use lists, but one noted that it is a matter of personality as to how effective a list might be. “Kaleigh has a hard time getting a list done. She is more motivated to exercise discipline by the reward of getting privileges,” revealed Velvet.

The three sisters and their sister-in-law, Shari, agreed, “We love being parents because our kids are disciplined. They are fun. When you can have 20 people in your house for a week (referring to their family reunions) without having blowups, you’ve accomplished something. We work together, play together and

pray together. The kids are not rowdy. They obey. We don't allow our kids to be disrespectful. We teach them to say, "Yes, please," and "No, thank you."

Stacy added, "I let my children know I have struggled with the same issues, that I'm not this perfect person, expecting them to be perfect. Last Saturday night my husband, Howie, let our oldest son Lewis go with him to the video store to rent a movie for the children to watch while we had to be gone. They left the store empty handed because there was nothing to rent that Howie felt would be appropriate. Lewis was upset,

because he wanted to see a movie rated PG13. They didn't have time to go to another store. When we left," shared Stacy, "Lewis was really mad and wouldn't speak to us. I said, 'Lewis, honey, I know you are upset because you were looking forward to watching a



movie. God has put Dad and me in charge of what goes into your mind. Is that movie something you want to put into your mind? I'm not saying that your Dad and I have not watched a bad movie, but we knew Jesus was not in the room while we were viewing it. The more I get to know Jesus, the more uncomfortable I am watching something that would make Him sad.' Lewis slammed the door," Stacy continued, "and Howie sternly told him to go to his room for the rest of the evening. Halfway to our appointment Howie called him on his cell phone, admitted that he had over-reacted, and apologized. He let Lewis come down and watch a Christmas special."

"I remember that when my Mom apologized to me," one of the sisters added, "all the anger I felt toward her melted away."

Our beloved Apostle Peter concludes the rungs in his ladder by stating, “and patient endurance leads to godliness. Godliness leads to love for other Christians, and finally you will grow to have genuine love for everyone.” (II Peter 1:5-7) “How do you teach your children to be unselfish, kind and loving?” I asked the parents. They said it was easier for some than for others. “Some personalities are naturally more giving,” stated Velvet. “Kaleigh is naturally unselfish, while Breck and Aubrey have had



to learn it from their older sister and their parents. Kaleigh is always planning and saying things like, ‘Let’s take cookies to the neighbors.’ She loves to give.”

Stacy added, “When I bake bread I make a few extra loaves and always give them

to our neighbors. I also love to leave treats for our mail lady. Our mom always saved her mayonnaise jars, and whenever she made soup, the children went up the road to the neighbors and took them a loaf of homemade bread and a jar of soup. We always did that, even when we were poor.”

Shari shared some of her ideas for teaching her children to be unselfish and kind: “The children and I wrapped 40 Steps to Christ books with a ribbon and took them to all our neighbors. Also, we frequently have people over for Sabbath dinner, not just our close friends.”

As a first step, a foundation, for teaching their children to genuinely love other people, these parents are giving their offspring plenty of love, affection and positive attention. “My children, including my pre-teen and my teen, still ask me to come and sit with them on the couch,” responded Stacy.

“Joel gives a back rub every night to each child, and he rubs my back, too!” enthused Shari.

Velvet revealed, “Even though we have family worship together, the children still want to pray in their own beds individually. We lie down beside them and end up visiting with them before the prayer. We can talk any time,” Velvet continued, “but that is the best time, when we’re alone with each other and we can just talk.

On Friday evenings we do a little music and have extra cuddling.”

“Yes,” Velvet’s teen daughter, Kaleigh, added. “On Friday nights we all get into Mom’s bed, and we rub her feet with lotion and brush her hair while she reads to us.”



Joel admitted, “My dad didn’t spend as much time with me as I would have liked. So I am trying to be very careful to spend time with my kids. We go out on individual dates. The child gets to choose what to do, and what vehicle we will take. This is not a reward. Whether times are good or bad, we go. That way I’m not giving them the message, ‘I’ll spend time with you if you are good.’”

All of the families I interviewed attend a Seventh-day Adventist church regularly with their children, some of whom have made the decision to be baptized. I asked recently-baptized Kaleigh how she chose to make her public commitment.

“I always knew I loved Jesus,” she stated. “There was a call at a Youth Festival I attended a couple of years ago, but I was hesitant to come forward. Then, several months later, there was another call and a friend of mine went up. I went up with her. It was the first commitment I had made in public. Before, I had believed, but I realized it was my turn to make my own decision. I wondered



sometimes, ‘Am I really a Christian?’ because Mom and Dad had decided for me up to this point. Now I feel I’m closer to God, because I made my own decision. I’ve started journaling and spending more time with Him.

Yearly Christian summer camp attendance has also powerfully influenced Kaleigh’s spiritual development. “I love Big Lake Youth Camp,” says Kaleigh. “When I’m up there, I like to go to the cove alone, because it feels like I’m really close to God there. At Big Lake it is so peaceful, so away from the world. The lake and the mountains are so beautiful, and on Friday night we sing and sing. Being a Christian is cool.”

Loftin made his decision to be baptized at age nine. “I was singing in a praise team in church,” he shares. “I felt like I was getting closer to God every time I went up. We had a candlelight communion service on New Year’s Eve, and I felt I wanted to get baptized. Dad was leading out on the praise team and I was up there with him. I said to myself, ‘Something is different tonight.’ I heard the

words of the song we were singing for the first time. . . 'Your eyes are on the Sparrow.'”

The next day Loftin asked his parents, “What do I need to do to be baptized? This whole weekend has been different for me.” He met with the pastor for Bible studies. His parents told him, “It’s your decision. You can be baptized whenever you’re ready.”

“I’m glad I waited until I was ready,” Kaleigh broke in. “I felt really peaceful, like I could walk on air. I was ready to give my heart to Jesus, and to live for him. I knew there would be a time when I would feel ready. I knew it had to be my own decision or it wouldn’t be meaningful.”

We have heard from parents who are currently fighting the fight, raising their children to be Godly in an unsafe world. What are some common themes from these moms and dads that would

shed light on our question, “How do we raise Godly children in this unsafe world?” Each of the mothers of the four families I interviewed chose to stay home with their children during their formative years. All of the parents actively pursue a happy, secure



family life for their children, with much quality time together, and vigorously seek to transmit their values through teaching, discipline and example. Each family shelters their children from harmful media. Each encourages their children’s friends to come over and come along on outings so they can continue to provide supervision and good parenting during their children’s social times. They are each actively involved in their respective churches, and attend regularly. The children either attend a church school or they are home schooled. The parents

are not afraid to talk with their children about important issues, including their relationship with God. Because they have had these kinds of conversations with their children from the earliest years, they find it natural to continue to converse about spiritual and moral issues as their children reach their teen years. Each family has empowered their children to make their own decision to become church members. The children are each valued, loved and respected.

Recently, Velvet and her husband left on a business trip while her father Roger stayed with the children for a few days. He tells of one precious family tradition the children continue while the parents are gone. "Each evening, the family prays together in a circle, holding hands. After the prayer they start swinging their hands, then little two-year-old Colton jumps into the middle of the circle saying, "Family hug." The rest of the family then put their arms around each other and laughingly draw into a close circle, with Colton in the middle shouting,



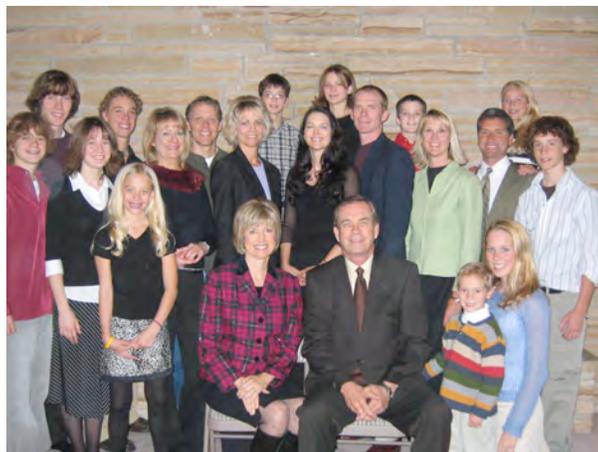
"Tighter, tighter!" With that kind of love and security and peace and happiness, I know those children will grow up to love and serve our precious and wonderful Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, and that they will be dedicated servants in sharing his good news and helping others prepare for His soon return.

Has the art of raising Godly children changed much since we were children, or since I raised my son in the late 70's and 80's? While these parents are following the same basic principles my parents and I both adhered to in raising our children, changing times require certain adjustments in our parenting techniques.

Raising Godly Children in the New Millennium

Certainly parents are finding an increased need for vigilance and oversight due to the increasingly pervasive filth saturating the media, and because of amplified wickedness and perversion in our society. The media and many other forces in our society have created an increased focus on materialism, which seeks to enthrall each of us in its endless spotlight on acquiring and possessing *things*, distracting us from life's truly important values, and directing our attention to ourselves and our own circle of family and friends. We tend to think more about what we don't have, and what we'd like to acquire, rather than being grateful for what we have and eager to share our bountiful resources with people who are less fortunate. Along with the coarsening of society and the media, and a focus on materialism, has come an erosion of values. Counteracting these forces requires, as we said at the beginning, "all the intelligence, wisdom, and determination a parent can muster."

But today's Christian parents are assured of God's wonderful promise in 2 Peter 1: "As we know Jesus better, his divine power gives us everything we need for living a godly life," and, I might add, for being effective parents. The Biblical ladder we have examined in 2 Peter 1, the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5, the armor of God in Ephesians 5, inform us of qualities that have proven over the centuries to be enduring and effective as we, through power of God and the Sword of the Spirit, seek to raise Godly children in this unsafe world.



Powerful Tips with Proven Success for Christian Parents Seeking to Raise Godly Children in an Unsafe World.

Before children are born, ideally:

The couple finishes their education and the wife works 5-7 years before having children. The couple lives on one income and saves the rest so that Mom can stay home when the baby is born, and remain home at least until the children reach school age.

Infancy, Toddlers, Preschoolers

- Breastfeed the baby when possible.
- Teach your child to love and trust the Lord Jesus from birth.
- Get rid of the TV set and invest in rich spiritual resources which will entertain the children AND teach them great values and Biblical truths.
- Make Family Fun. Play together, pray together, eat together, “hang out” together. Dad, take one day off each week in addition to Sabbath to take the family on outings and do special things together.
- Take the children to Sabbath School and church regularly. Encourage them to “give their hearts to Jesus” at every opportunity at Sabbath School and Vacation Bible School.
- Enjoy family worship together each morning and evening. Make Friday night special. Begin family traditions, including special foods for Friday night and Sabbath.
- Make being a Christian fun, and being an SDA Christian exciting. Begin focusing the toddler on doing things for others. Involve the child from preschool through high school in weekly ministry / mission projects.
- Teach the child from infancy obedience and self-control.
- Shower the child with love and affection, and quality time.
- Begin reading quality, character-building books to your toddler.
- Develop age-appropriate reward and penalty systems.
- Begin teaching your child their purpose in life, their destiny, how to love Jesus and others, how to keep the Sabbath, how to tithe, principles of self-management, delayed gratification, money, time and property management.
- Help your child view their body as God’s temple with regard to what we put in our minds, diet, dress, body-piercing. Help them develop an aversion to tobacco, alcohol and drugs.
- Teach your child good health habits and provide a balanced vegetarian diet.
- Affirm your child; always look for ways to build them up rather than criticize.



Additional tips for Elementary:

- Enroll child in SDA Christian school, or home-school.

- Maintain contact with child's teacher, and ensure that child is working at grade level.
- Work closely with the teacher on discipline problems.
- Begin music and/or sports lessons, and enforce regular practice times.
- Invite your child's friends over; supervise the fun.
- Take the family on camping trips and family oriented vacations.
- Get involved in Pathfinders, Sabbath School.
- Send the child to a good Christian camp each summer.
- Attend every game, every performance, every parent-teacher conference.
- Give the child increasing freedom on things like what to wear to school and how to wear their hair.
- Actively listen to your child. Talk with your child. Share your values, live your values.
- Encourage the child to sign a pledge of lifetime abstinence from harmful drugs, alcohol and tobacco.
- Closely monitor all contacts with media, including print, TV and internet.
- One parent should be home when the children are home from school.
- Avoid having your children spend the night with other friends.
- Teach your child caution and rules for dealing with strangers, or with anyone, including family friends, seeking to engage them in inappropriate behavior.
- Begin age-appropriate sex education in the early school years, utilizing some of the excellent tools that are available.



Additional tips for High School:

- Continue to educate your teen in a Christian setting.
- Continue contact with teachers, principal, especially if your child is in crisis.
- Help the teen learn consequences for their actions. Let them experience decision-making in non-crucial areas.
- Teach your teen, "with freedom comes responsibility."
- Get involved in an ongoing mission project with your teen.
- Always know who your teen is with, and when they will return. Enforce curfews, with perhaps one hour later each year of high school on Saturday night.
- Continue to be present and involved in your teen's life. Take a genuine interest in their friends.
- Actively listen whenever your teen wants to talk. Share your values in a non-threatening way.
- Discuss issues with your teen, including drugs, alcohol, pre-marital sex, and value choices with regard to media.
- Prepare your teen for dating and marriage. Talk about the qualities to look for in a mate. Also those qualities that should serve as warning signs.
- Encourage your teen to experience various work settings after school.

- Beginning in elementary school, help your child look forward to attending an SDA college by starting a college savings fund to which the child contributes regularly.
- Provide interesting biographies of sports figures and other teen type heroes who are or have become Christians.
- Invest in a Teen Bible. Utilize other Christian resources for teens.
- Pray without ceasing, and claim God's promises.



Sequel: Roger's grandchildren are now mostly in their teens and twenties. In 2011 his two eldest granddaughters married Godly men--Praise the Lord!



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