

Some Thoughts on Parenting

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1. Your spouse is your most important relationship in this world. Don't forget that the most important relationship in your life, under God, is your relationship with your husband or wife. Your children will only be in your home for a season, but your spouse will be there for life. You and your spouse are the relational center of the home. So nurture your relationship with your spouse above all else. Putting your spouse above your children, teaches them two very important lessons. First, it teaches the kids that they are not at the center of the world, which is a very important lesson for them to learn before they actually get out into the world. Second, it teaches them to look for spouses that will cherish them before any other relationship. If you want your children to marry well, then you must model love and devotion to your spouse above any other relationship. Malachi 2:15 says, "And what was the one God seeking? Godly offspring. So, guard yourselves in your spirit and let none of you be faithless to the wife of your youth." Notice the logic of that verse. God wants godly offspring; so, be faithful to your spouse.
2. Discipline and patient instruction go together. Spanking is a very important part of parenting (Prov 13:24; 22:15; 32:13-14; Heb 12:5-11), but I've seen some parents spank their children without any explanation or teaching. All that does is exasperate a child and provoke him to anger. The Bible says, "The rod and reproof give wisdom" (Prov 29:15). Both the rod and reproof (or correction, instruction) are necessary. So when you spank your child, be sure to talk to him, and explain what you're doing. Make sure he understands that you're spanking him because he's broken one of the Ten Commandments, and only because you love him, not because you're angry. When you discipline your child, be sure to talk to him about Jesus, the cross, forgiveness, repentance and eternal life, even if he doesn't fully understand these things yet. Teach your child to confess sin and to ask for forgiveness from his parents and from God. The goal of our instruction is repentance, faith, and love, not just behavior modification.
3. Discipline and lots of love go together. In some homes, the parents seem so busy that they hardly express love for their children, and it seems to the kids like the only time they get any attention is when they've done something wrong. They get the idea that they're an annoyance to their parents, rather than the precious blessings they are. So, parents, love your kids lavishly! Tell them how much you love them, and tell them often. Tell them when they've done well. Give your kids lots of big hugs. Play with them. Compliment them sincerely. Encourage them heartily. Celebrate them with hearts full of love. The culture of your home needs to be one of abounding love, full acceptance, and joy in your children. Your kids desperately need to know that no matter what they do, no matter what sins they commit, no matter what happens in life, you love them freely and unconditionally, and that your love for them is not conditioned upon their behavior. This is how you live out the gospel in your parenting. "In this is love, not that we have loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another" (1 Jn 4:10-11). We are to love others the way God loves us: in a fundamentally unconditional way. God calls us to change, but only after and while He loves us.
4. Cherishing your kids for their own sake is as important as teaching them the Bible. Catechizing your children, doing family worship, having serious conversations, and teaching the Bible are all very important parts of parenting (Eph 6:4). Don't neglect these things! But cherishing your children in love,

for their own sake, is just as important. Your children should never get the impression that all you want from them is to learn the right things, say the right things, and act the right way. Children are not “projects” of their parents. Children should never feel that their parents want them to be good kids so that their parents will feel honored. Children are wonderful gifts from God who bear His image. So, love your kids way God loves you, and God loves you because He loves you (Deut 7:7-8). His love isn’t based on anything in you. So make sure your kids know that you are honored to be in their presence, that you treasure them for who they are because God made them that way, and that it’s a privilege to be their parents. That’s how Jesus treated the children in His life. “He took a little child and had him stand among them. Taking him in his arms, he said to them, ‘Whoever welcomes one of these little children in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me does not welcome me, but the one who sent me’” (Mk 9:36-37).

5. Be patient with yourself. Finally, remember that you are not and will never be a perfect parent. As much as you love your children, God loves them more. He is their hope, not your parenting. God saves children, not because of the parenting skills of their parents, but in many ways, in spite of them. He uses crooked sticks to draw straight lines, and He uses very imperfect parents to accomplish His purposes among our children. Also, never forget that parenting is as much about your own sanctification as it is about training your children. God is teaching parents grace, humility, patience, and perseverance through parenting, and His goal is our sanctification. So, be patient with yourself and with God’s work in you. God is shaping you in His time and through His grace as you try to be faithful to Christ and keep His commandments. We usually grow slowly. So preach the gospel to yourself faithfully. Confess your sins to God and to your children, and do so often. Persevere in love, one day at a time. “I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. I do not nullify the grace of God, for if justification were through the law, then Christ died for no purpose” (Gal 2:20-21).