

The Value of a Child

Psalm 139:13-16

¹³ For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. ¹⁴ I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. ¹⁵ My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth, ¹⁶ your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.

Psalm 127:3-5

³ Sons are a heritage from the LORD, children a reward from him. ⁴ Like arrows in the hands of a warrior are sons born in one's youth. ⁵ Blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them. They will not be put to shame when they contend with their enemies in the gate.

Theme: Every child is unique and special.

1. Have an attitude of thankfulness.
2. Teach children that they are valuable and special.
3. Consider each child's unique needs and abilities.
4. Make each child feel special.

Assignment: Make a list of the qualities and abilities which make your child/children unique and special.

Respecting Our Children

Matthew 18:10

"See that you do not look down on one of these little ones. For I tell you that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father in heaven.

Mark 10:13-16

¹³People were bringing little children to Jesus to have him touch them, but the disciples rebuked them. ¹⁴When Jesus saw this, he was indignant. He said to them, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. ¹⁵I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it." ¹⁶And he took the children in his arms, put his hands on them and blessed them.

Theme: As human beings, children deserve respect.

1. Prepare the child ahead of time.
2. Be sensitive to the child's feelings.
3. Build a relationship of trust with the child.
4. Encourage the child to develop his or her abilities.

Assignment: Choose one area in which you want to show more respect for your child (e.g. preparing them ahead of time, thinking about their feelings, etc.). Notice when these opportunities come up, and try to show your child respect more often.

The Importance of Discipline: Basic Principles

Proverbs 13:24

He who spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is careful to discipline him.

Ephesians 6:1-3

¹Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. ²"Honor your father and mother"--which is the first commandment with a promise-- ³"that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth."

Hebrews 12:11

No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.

Theme: When we discipline our children in love, they learn obedience and respect, which are two key qualities for their healthy development.

1. Distinguish between childish immaturity and willful disobedience.
2. Clearly communicate the boundaries.
3. Maintain control.
4. Follow through with the consequences.
5. Be sure to forgive.

Assignment: It is important to recognize our weaknesses and to set some goals. Identify the specific problem, and set a goal to change in that area.

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Balancing between control and love | <input type="checkbox"/> Being consistent or following through |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Distinguishing between childish immaturity and willful disobedience | <input type="checkbox"/> Controlling your emotions of frustration or anger |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Setting boundaries and deciding appropriate consequences for misbehavior | <input type="checkbox"/> Forgiving your child after an offense |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |

The Importance of Discipline: Effective Methods

Proverbs 22:15

Folly is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of discipline will drive it far from him.

Theme: The methods of effective discipline will vary, depending upon factors such as a child's age, personality, and environment.

Birth to seven months

Eight to fourteen months

Fifteen to twenty-four months

Two to three years

Four to six years

Six to eight years

Nine to twelve years

Adolescence

Assignment: From the principles you've learned, think about how you might need to change your methods of discipline to be more effective. Also, for the next class, be prepared to share a situation that you are experiencing with one of your children. As a group, we will discuss how to deal with these real-life situations.

Dealing With Anger

Ephesians 4:26

"In your anger do not sin": Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry.

Proverbs 15:1

A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.

James 1:19-20

My dear brothers, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, for man's anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires.

Theme: As we focus on our child's real needs and control negative influences in our lives, we can decrease the intensity and frequency of our angry responses.

1. Understand what is behind your anger.
2. Stop and think before you respond.
3. Be proactive rather than reactive.
4. Adjust your expectations to fit your child's needs and limits.
5. Choose your battles.

Assignment: When do you get angry at your children? (Think of specific situations.)

- When they disobey
- When they are irresponsible
- When they don't meet my expectations
- When I am tired
- When I am busy
- When there is tension in another relationship (e.g. spouse)
- Other _____

Try some of the ideas you learned today and see if it makes a difference in how you respond to your children.

Communication: Encouraging Cooperation

Proverbs 12:18

Reckless words pierce like a sword, but the tongue of the wise brings healing.

Proverbs 17:22

A cheerful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones.

Theme: When we use positive communication patterns instead of negative ones, our children will be more likely to cooperate.

1. Describe the situation rather than blame or accuse.
2. Use "I" messages.
3. Give a challenge.
4. Give a choice rather than a command.
5. Spend time with your child.

Assignment: Begin noticing the negative communication patterns you use. Then based on the points you learned today, try to change them into positive patterns.

Communication: Acknowledging Feelings

Proverbs 18:13

He who answers before listening-- that is his folly and his shame.

Proverbs 20:5

The purposes of a man's heart are deep waters, but a man of understanding draws them out.

Theme: A child who knows that his feelings are heard and understood is more likely to respond positively, and to be able to deal with whatever the problem is.

1. Listen with full attention.
2. Acknowledge the child's feelings with a word or two.
3. Give the child's feelings a name.
4. Encourage the child to let go of negative feelings.
5. As the parent, you still have the last word.

Practice: How would you respond to your child saying the following?

1. "I hate piano. I want to quit!"
2. "It's not fair. Just because I was two minutes late for practice, the coach made me run laps."
3. "_____ is always getting into my things. I wish I didn't have a brother!"
4. "The party was boring. It wasn't any fun at all."
5. "I don't want to invite _____ to my party."
6. "I don't ever want to go to school again!"

Assignment: Practice understanding and accepting your children's feelings.

Communication: The Power of Praise

Ephesians 4:29

Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.

Hebrews 3:13

But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness.

Theme: A child needs to be encouraged through praise to value his God-given personality, with its unique blend of gifts and abilities.

1. Have realistic expectations.
2. Give your child room to fail.
3. Don't compare your child to others.
4. Tell your child what he is doing right.
5. Set the child up for success.

Assignment: The next time you're tempted to criticize your child for something, *stop*, look for something positive in the situation, and encourage him instead.

Encouraging Independence

Proverbs 22:6

Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it.

Proverbs 6:20-23

²⁰My son, keep your father's commands and do not forsake your mother's teaching.²¹Bind them upon your heart forever; fasten them around your neck.²²When you walk, they will guide you; when you sleep, they will watch over you; when you awake, they will speak to you.²³For these commands are a lamp, this teaching is a light, and the corrections of discipline are the way to life

Theme: A child who is trained in wisdom and given the freedom to make choices, experiencing both good and bad consequences, is more likely to grow up to be a responsible adult who knows how to make wise decisions.

1. Allow them to do things for themselves and give them the freedom to make choices.
2. Teach them that with freedom comes responsibility.
3. Permit them to wrestle with their own problems.
4. Let them learn from their own mistakes.
5. Instill values in them that become their own.

Assignment: Think about the following questions:

- How often do you do things for your child that he should be able to do for himself?
- How often do you allow your child to try new tasks?
- How often do you give your child choices?
- Do you often tell your child what to do when he has a problem?
- Do you tend to rescue your child when he makes a mistake?
- Do you discuss the reasons for rules with your child?
- Are you teaching your child important values that will help him in life?

Which of the above areas is the most difficult for you? Is there something you should change?

Facing the Challenge of Parenting Adolescents

PART TWO: RESPONDING TO ADOLESCENT BEHAVIOR AND EMOTIONS

Proverbs 4:23

Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life.

Colossians 3:12-14

¹² Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. ¹³ Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. ¹⁴ And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

Theme: Adolescents need a great amount of love, understanding, and encouragement, as well as positive guidance from their parents in order to get through the challenging stage of adolescence with a healthy attitude.

1. Look at their hearts.
2. Exercise extra patience with their struggles and difficulties.
3. Show them respect and dignity.
4. Require respectful behavior from them.
5. Keep the lines of communication open.
6. Let go!

Assignment: From what we've learned today, identify the changes you need to make in order to get along better with your teenager.