

Parenting Is More Than Food, Clothing and Shelter

One of the greatest joys facing couples is the prospect of becoming a parent. Along with the excitement associated with the birth of a new child, comes the responsibility to train, properly educate and instill good moral character. This is a task which requires a great deal of time and energy.

Parenting entails more than providing food, clothing and shelter. In addition to these basic necessities of life, there is the responsibility of giving your child a sound emotional foundation to enable him to effectively cope within the demands of life.

The most significant influence in a child's life is his parents. Both the church and the school function to augment and support the values that are taught at home. When the church, school, and home are in sync, they provide the growing child with a united belief system. The child will be encompassed about with role models, who not only teach, but who provide examples of appropriate behavior. When there is a discrepancy, and the views of the parents, teachers and church leaders differ, the child will usually adopt his parents' point of view, rendering all other training as secondary. Although a child acquires the knowledge of appropriate behaviors, not seeing them in practice makes compliance difficult. Hence, he will be more apt to imitate that which he sees his parents perform, rather than that which he is taught by others.

A typical example of this is the child who is shy and introverted, despite his parents expectations. Shy, introverted parents rarely have a child who is an extroverted, outgoing go-getter. Eliminating undesirable behavior is best achieved when there is an example to follow — especially when the parent is the example. Parents must keep in mind that their children may have learned their inadequacies, bad habits, and inappropriate behaviors from them.

Discipline is also a part of parenting. Parents should note that discipline is not something they do to children, but rather for them. The purpose



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of discipline is to further the development of good habits and extinguish the bad ones. Here are a few suggestions which will maximize disciplinary actions:

— Be firm, but fair. It is important that the child understands that there are consequences for disobedience. Disobedience is a choice they make. When they opt for it, they are also opting to accept punishment.

— Be consistent. This is one of the most important rules of discipline — especially when it involves small children. If children are punished on a random basis, they will be less likely to correct their behavior. They will learn to adopt an “I-will-chance-it attitude,” thinking that this may be the time that will get away with it.

— Discipline should occur as close as possible to the time of the offense. This will help the child to establish the relationship between their actions and the punishment.

— Make sure the child understands exactly what he is being punished for. This will help him understand exactly what type of behaviors you do not want from him.

— Always let children know the appropriate, as well as the alternate ways of responding to situations. Then, they will know exactly what is expected of them.

— Be as apt to demonstrate your love and concern as you are to demonstrate your authority and power to discipline. Children need to understand that it is their actions that are inappropriate, and not them as individuals. Otherwise, you may foster the development of a poor self-concept or feelings of worthlessness. If a child is uncertain about whether his disciplinarian loves him, he will question his motives.