

Why Is It So Hard to Raise Great Kids?

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"I Believe in the Church" Series

Ephesians 6:1-4

I've been doing a series from the book of Ephesians. Today, we'll be looking at a passage that concerns Fathers and children.

I don't know if there's any subject that is more guilt provoking for parents than the subject of child raising. When we honestly assess our child raising techniques, especially on those days when our kids seem to be doing very poorly, we parents feel awful about ourselves. It is extremely hard these days to raise healthy, responsible, polite, caring, hard working kids who don't just want to sit in front the television set or don't have to be dragged into doing a little bit around the house.

Most parents that I know, whether within the church or outside the church want to do the right things with their kids. I don't know any parent who says, "my aim regarding my kids is to raise a disrespectful, lazy, vulgar child who does drugs and has no conscience." But it's just so hard. It seems so very difficult these days to raise great kids. We could point to lots of factors regarding why I think this is a particularly difficult period of history to raise healthy kids.

We live in a extremely anti-family culture where it seems that everybody and everything from little league coaches to band directors to the maker of video games conspires to attack the time we have together as a family and also the environment and values that we share as a family. We know that there is a breakdown of community.

Most people in most neighborhoods do not know their neighbors well. Virtually no one takes responsibility for looking out for your child when your child is out of your sight. There is a breakdown of shared values in the community.

You may have a set of values in your home that your emphasizing with your child, but when they go over to their friends house, their friend's dad might have a pornographic magazine there, or their parents don't have a problem if they watch videos that you disapprove of. Or mom or dad is not at home and the house is available for who knows what.

We know we live in the aftermath of the sexual revolution. Kids are bombarded from the age of 3 with a message that says having sex before marriage is normal ... it is healthy ... it is good for you. I know most parents want to do the right thing by their kids. This Father's Day I'd like to share some things with you from the Bible concerning why it is so hard these days to raise great kids.

Let's ask the Lord's presence.

Ephesians 6:1-4:

Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honor your father and mother – which is the first commandment with a promise – that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth. Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.

One of the reasons it's so hard to raise good kids is because there is no rule book, no clear and simple guide for raising children. I think what most parents want is a detailed set of rules answering all of life's parenting questions. When is it okay to date? When you're 16? When you're 18? Only in their 40s and only if you chaperone them? Where should my child go to school? Christian school? Should I home school? Public school? Which Christian school? What should you do if the school is teaching something that you don't agree with? You know, they're doing some sort of values qualification with your child in 4th grade or they have a co-ed sex ed. class in the 5th grade.

What should you do? Just talk with your child? Reemphasize your values and then just send them back with a pack of wolves, or talk with the teacher, or pull your child out of the class, or call the principal? Should you get involved if your child is in a dispute with another child?

The Jews in the centuries before Jesus wanted more detailed instruction about life than what the Old Testament provided. For example the Bible said that Jews should not work on the Sabbath. But exactly is work? When the Bible says we shouldn't work on the Sabbath, what is it talking about? Is light gardening work? Is preparing a meal work? Is a 4 mile walk work?

The Bible just said we shouldn't work on the Sabbath, but we need more definition, more specificity. The Rabbis accommodated the hunger for detailed instruction. They answered every single question that could arise in life. They added rule upon rule to the biblical instruction. Then all these biblical instructions eventually got written down. From about the 3rd Century A.D. till the end of the 5th Century a multi-volume set of books was written called the Talmud, which stretched into thousands and thousands of pages.

The apostle Paul, in fact the whole Bible, has a different approach to life than the Talmud and the 50 thousand rule approach. Paul said, and I've emphasized this for a couple of weeks now, the key to living life as a Christian, in every realm of life, is being filled with the Holy Spirit. Look at Ephesians 5:18 with me. "Be filled with the Spirit." That's the key to the Christian life. Be filled with the Holy Spirit. That's not just one command among 4 or 5,000. Yes, I'm supposed to pay my taxes and be a hard worker and not gossip, but right at the top of the list is this command: "Be filled with the Holy Spirit."

This command, “Be filled with the Holy Spirit,” is the key to all the other commands. Live under the Holy Spirit’s influence. Don’t do anything to grieve or sadden the Holy Spirit. Quickly confess your sins. Obey the Holy Spirit’s promptings. If the Holy Spirit doesn’t want you to say something, feel His inner restraint. Don’t say that, don’t gossip, then don’t burst through the Holy Spirit’s inner restraints and checks. Listen to the Spirit. If the Holy Spirit wants you to apologize, listen to the Spirit. You cannot live the Christian life on your own steam, or by sheer will power, or by a desire to do the right thing, or by your good intentions.

You need to be filled with God power. So every morning and regularly throughout the day it is appropriate for you and me, if we are Christians and if we give our lives to Christ, to pause and say to “God, fill me with Your Spirit. Cleanse the inside. I’m facing a challenging situation. I’m about to talk with an unpleasant person. I’m about to have a stressful encounter. You know I really don’t like that woman at my job. You know my tendency to get angry in traffic. You know I struggle with temptation to self-pity or despondency. Fill me with Your Spirit. Extend Your Kingdom through my life – empower me Lord.”

Being filled with the Holy Spirit is the key to being thankful, to worshiping God (vs. 19 & 20) and to submit joyfully to others. It is absolutely the case that being filled with the Holy Spirit is the key to having a Christian marriage and raising great kids in a Christian family.

Here’s the deal, I want you parents and future parents to hear this. God does not give us in the Bible a detailed list of answers to every question we have about raising our children. In the Bible we have broad principles. The details are filled in by parents who are looking to God for answers and who are filled with the Holy Spirit.

As Christians, we have to reject the rulebook, paint-by-numbers method of child raising; life is not a computer program. There is not a parenting for dummy’s guide that will finally resolve all of our questions. No 2 parents are going to raise their kids exactly the same way. No one would raise your child the way you do because no one has your personality. No one has your temperament. No one has your gift. No one has your perspective. No one has your cultural background and no kid is the same as your kid.

Some of you are laid back. Some of you are high-strung. Some of you are anxious. Some of you are accommodating. Some of you are highly directive. Some of you are thinkers. Some of you are feelers. Being filled with the Spirit is the key. God’s directions, His answers for you and for your child-raising are individually tailored like a really comfortable set of clothes. God wants to provide you with answers that fit you and fit your children and aren’t some kind of suit of armor that is incredibly uncomfortable.

Last week I said one approach to marriage that the Bible rejects is the cookie cutter approach. Every wife must behave like this and assume these roles and do these tasks. Every wife ought to be the primary cook in the home and every husband must do these other things. He must be the primary bread winner, or he must do the home repairs. The principles are clear in a marriage. A couple needs to pattern their relationship on the relationship of Christ and the church, but what the relationship of Christ and the Church looks like in your life and marriage will be different than in my life and in my marriage.

So godly Christian, Spirit filled parents will differ with each other on hundreds of issues and this is as it should be. Biblical principles are not like railroad tracks that fix trains on their rails so every train that goes down the track runs exactly the same course. I think biblical principles are more like a toboggan track. Some folks go dead center down the middle with the break on the whole way. Other people will be climbing the walls with their kids, back and forth, up and down the track as they make their way towards home.

There are principles that we'll talk about but there's no "one size fits all". There's no cookie cutter that will fit you and your family. Do you get it? Child raising takes enormous amounts of prayer and wisdom from mature friends and mature counselors. It takes meditation upon God's word and the filling of the Spirit, but there is no rulebook.

Raising great kids is hard because there are no guarantees. The biblical principles must never be applied in a mechanical way. Parents in particular fall into this trap of believing that if I do such and such, my kids will turn out perfectly.

You know, if you just do this verse in the Bible, like a nickel in a gumball machine, you put your nickel in the machine and the gumball will surely come out.

So many people make child raising seem so easy. Usually it's people without kids or with kids that are still young or they have one child who is extremely compliant. I've noticed that parents who have at least 2 children, both of whom have very different temperaments and whose kids who have gotten to age 20 found it lot different. They sound less like the world's ultimate expert, less judgmental and less sure of everything than young parents or people without kids do.

"My goodness, look at that kid who's struggling so much. Why doesn't that parent just spank the child or read *Boundaries for Kids*?"

Friends, life in this fallen world is just not that simple. We Christians, most of all, ought to stop offering these easy, quick, snap solutions and judgments. How often do we Christians, on the radio, in books and with one another, come off

sounding the smuggest and the most judgmental? We Christians, most of all ought to understand the extraordinary effect of the Fall and Sin on all of life. We Christians, most of all ought to understand how easy it is for a person to succumb to sin and to fall into bondage. We know how much rope God gives people regarding their freedom to make bad choices. We know how salvation is a miracle of God not something that a parent can program into a child at a certain age.

Salvation is the miracle of God. We Christians, most of all should understand how active Satan is in attacking family and kids and how necessary God's grace is if anything good is going to happen in your child's life.

Marlene and I have been on both sides of the fence. We have felt like the world's greatest experts. We have felt brilliant and totally together – having all the answers when our kids were doing well. We have also felt like the world's biggest losers, total failures and completely worthless when our kids were doing poorly. I've come to the conclusion that in no place is it more important to be a Christian and to think like a Christian than in the raising of children. There is no one simple answer or silver bullet. Ah, you know, I've discovered the secret – just get rid of all artificial guys and my kid will be great. Or establish boundaries for kids or home school your children.

Christian where does your theology come in? Do you have a theology of the Fall when it comes to your child? Can your child actually be a liar? Do you have any theology of the power of the world? or of Spiritual warfare? or the mercy of God? or of prayer?

The way I've come to evaluate Christian parents now is not to ask if they have they had an easy run from beginning to end. I now evaluate Christian parents based on whether I see that they are fully committed to the process of raising great kids. There are no guarantees, no formula for making this easy, but are you committed to the process? Are you fully engaged with all your hearts? With your emotions? With your thinking? With your prayers?

Raising great kids is hard because authority is under attack. Eph. 6:1 says, "Children obey your parents in the Lord for this is right." You can underline this word Obey. In the original, it's a compound word literally meant to listen under. In the Bible, wives are never commanded to obey their husbands, but children are commanded to obey, or listen under their parents.

Listen under gives us a feeling for what the meaning of obey is. Obedience involves conscious listening. If you're not listening, you can't obey. That's why for Jews over the last 2000 years, the most important verse in the Bible has been Deut. 6:4 which reads, "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one." Listen up O Israel, Obeying demands conscious listening.

That's why parents often say to their kids, "Listen to me. Are you listening or are you just sitting there smiling while your mind drifts?" Do you tune your parents out when they speak to you? Do you hold the phone at arms length? Do you roll your eyes when they talk? Do you look around? Obeying requires you to pay attention. To listen well and to listen hard.

Obeying means more than just listening. It means to listen under, and to recognize you are under authority. One mark, according to the Bible, of a society that is collapsing is that people no longer respect authority – in particular that they are disobedient to their parents. A society that encourages wide spread disobedience is a culture in collapse. Listen to this description of a culture in collapse at the end of Romans chapter 1. Here's what Paul says, "They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips, slanderers, God-haters, insolent and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents."

Along with hating God and envy with greed and depravity, Paul puts into the list; 'they disobey their parents.' At the end of Paul's life, he said the same thing about the last days. He said, 'Mark this, there will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents.' Paul's list of the last days reads very much like these days: lovers of self, lovers of money, disobedient to parents.

There are a lot of voices in our culture that suggest that obedience to parents is utterly passé. They say obedience is a kind of medieval holdover like slavery and that the idea that children should obey their parents ought to be scrapped. In the 1970s Hillary Rodham Clinton wrote a series of law journal articles arguing that children need a new class of legal rights to make decisions, if necessary, against their parent's objections in a whole range of areas. Here's a direct quote from one of Hillary's law journal articles: "Children need the authority to make decisions concerning motherhood and abortion, schooling, cosmetic surgery, treatment of venereal disease, and employment."

Talk about an attack on parental authority. Children ought to have a legal right to choose their particular school, to go in to receive an abortion or to change their looks. Parent publications, teen magazines and especially Hollywood, not only assume rebellion, but esteem it. Why is it so difficult to raise great kids today? Look at the TV portrayal of parents. Look especially at the portrayal of fathers. According to Hollywood, I am afraid that we Dads are the most stupid, most prejudiced, most out of touch bunch of buffoons that ever walked on the face of the earth.

If it weren't for our kids and sometimes our wives, we would probably destroy the planet. From Homer Simpson to Tim the tool man Taylor, father no longer knows best, father knows least.

Over against the steady assault on parental authority the Bible says, “Obey your parents.” Why obey? “For this is right.” Because obeying parents is the way the universe has been structured by God. Because it is part of the basic rule of life. Because the world falls apart when you don’t obey.

Paul goes on to say, “Honor your father and mother which is the first command with a promise ... that it might go well with you and that you might enjoy long life on the earth.” It’s hard to know exactly what he meant by “the first command with a promise,” but maybe it meant that this command is first in importance, first in significance for children and there’s a promise attached to it. Wherever you see family break down, inevitably you’re going to find societal break down. Crisis in education, crimes, drugs, and virtually every social pathology that you can name is directly related to the breakdown of the family. Even more specifically, it is related to absence of dads in the home.

Paul says, “that it might go well with you.” This relationship of parents and children is fundamental to life going well. The breakdown of the family in America has led to the breakdown of everything else. In 1900, the percentage of all American children in single parent families was 8.5%. By 1960, it had increased to just 9.1%. Now it’s estimated that by the time a child reaches age 17, at least 50% of all children in America will not live with both natural parents. This is just the result of divorce. Right now the leading cause of fatherlessness is out of wedlock births. 40% of all births in the United States, including more than 70% of all minority births in the United States are to unmarried moms. Paul says, “Obey your parents that it might go well with you.”

How long does obeying parents last? Both Jewish and Christian scholars have answered with a sliding scale. In early childhood, a child is called to obey their parents in virtually everything. As a child matures toward adulthood more independence of thought is appropriate and right in the Lord. But the responsibility to honor our parents remains forever. You might say, are you saying Rich, that all we need to do is somehow restore the 2 parent family and all will be well?

Of course not! It’s hard raising great kids because parents are sinners. One of the questions that often arise as people maturely think about their responsibilities to honor their parents is, how do I honor much less than perfect parents?

Any of you have parents who are less than perfect? Any of you have parents who drive you crazy? They often say the wrong things, things that make you feel awkward, the little comments about the choices you’re about to make? “Your clothes seem a little tight, darling. How much weight have you put on this winter?” You hear a comment like that and suddenly all the years you spent earning your Master’s Degree mean nothing. You’re reduced back to childhood. Who cares about the fact that you’re an electrical engineer or you have a

counseling practice or that you are the number one sales person in your office. You shouldn't be eating such a big piece of pie.

They say it in just the right tone of voice too, "Joan, are you sure you should be eating that? Go right ahead. Oh, you've broken up with another boyfriend. I can never keep track of all of your relationships." Little role of the eyes. "It's obvious that you've disappointed your parents again. Of course, your sister Sue is going to be celebrating her 20th anniversary this year. Susie always did so many things well. Did I tell you that she just bought a new Corvette? Oh let me tell you what your brother Jim just bought me for my birthday. Jim just buys the best gifts. Look at these pearls, I was so surprised! Your brother is the best."

Your mom, your dad, they brought you into the world and then it seems they've devoted the last three decades to driving you crazy. Any of you here experience this? Experienced the barbed comments, the looks, the comparisons with your brother or sister? I have a friend whose mother came to the hospital to visit her on the day she went in for an operation on her stomach. Her mother brought in a 5 course Chinese dinner. A couple of hours before she's going in for a stomach operation, mom brought in a 5 course Chinese dinner. And then she couldn't understand why her daughter was so upset.

Any of you live like that? The gift you buy is always wrong no matter how much you spend it's never as good as your siblings gift. Christmas rolls around, Spring Break, Summer vacation, weddings, funerals and you've got to see them all over again. Distance doesn't relieve the problem. I remember Jane Fonda's scene in the movie On Golden Pond. It was a powerful scene regarding her dad, Henry. I don't know if it was autobiographical. At one point she says to her mother, "How is it that I live 2,000 miles away and Dad is still controlling my life?"

How many of you have had the blessing of being raised in a home where Christ was the center? where your mother and father loved each other? where they expressed affection and guidance to you appropriately? where discipline was biblically based? Bless you ... Pray for the rest of us!

How do you honor parents who have hurt you? One possibility for honoring a parent who has hurt you is by being honest. You take another person seriously when you are honest with them. A way to honor a parent is to have a full, frank discussion. A discussion where there is an acknowledgment of responsibility, where forgiveness is asked for, you cry, you hug and you go into the kitchen and have a bowl of ice cream together. Some of you say, that's not possible. I've tried the honest approach and just got killed with it.

There are lots of parents, lots of us who are unable to say, "I was wrong, I am sorry." There are lots of parents, who, when you bring up an issue will see things as an attack on them.

And you know if Christ is not the Lord of your parents, then you ought not to expect that there will be a clear understanding about confession and repentance and forgiveness. We Christians ought to understand that when Christ enters a person's life, He changes us. But apart from Him, we are naturally defensive and rationalize our faults. You can honor your parents by forgiving them. Do you recall my talk on forgiveness? It doesn't take a full acknowledgement of responsibility to forgive someone and to let him or her off the hook.

At a minimum you can honor the less than perfect parent by refusing to fight with them. If you are regularly drawn into argument, you have the power to stop that. You can honor your mother and father by refusing to fight with them.

At a minimum, you can honor the less than perfect parent by refusing to gossip about them. I know over the years I have found myself critiquing my parents and gossiping about my parents and that is wrong. Even as an adult we are called to honor our parents.

The text goes on and switches its audience from children to parents. It says in verse 4, "Fathers do not exasperate your children. Instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord." You know, child raising is hard because kids are people and parents often forget that.

It's always important to place biblical statements in the context of the cultural setting in which they are written. You can understand a lot more if you know some background. In this case the statement "Fathers do not exasperate your children" is put by some translations: don't provoke your children to laugh, don't irritate, don't pick at your children.

It's such an amazing contrast between this Christian admonition and the first century Roman law concerning father – children relationships. Under Roman law, the father of the home had absolute power over his children, absolute unreserved unqualified power over his children. A father could imprison his child, he could put his child in chains, and he could beat his child. He could even put his child to death and no one could stop him, even if his son or daughter were an adult. A father often decided under Roman law and Roman custom whether their newborns would actually live or die. If a newborn was deformed or appeared weak, a father would often have one of his servants drown the baby.

Because of the low value put on girls, fathers would often decide to leave their baby girls outside to die of exposure. Children in the Roman world were seen as possessions, property, cattle, or a piece of furniture. In contrast, the New Testament makes an amazing assertion. It says, "Kids are people not property." The feelings and the limitation on parental authority is the direct result of Christian teaching and Christian influence in society. Children are people and as people, kids have feelings. Fathers, Mothers, do not irritate your children. Do not pick at them. Do not drive them crazy by little comments and little digs. Don't create resentment.

You know, parental discipline starts with self-discipline. If we parents don't want to create resentment by our discipline, then we should start by disciplining ourselves. One of the world's experts on business management, a man by the name of Peter Drukard, recently wrote an article in the *Harvard Business Review* in which he said the key to managing employees is self-management. A supervisor needs to start, not by managing other people, but by managing himself or herself, by managing your moods, managing your time, managing your tendency to meddle or interfere or micro-manage.

I would say the same thing regarding disciplining children. A key to disciplining children is first disciplining yourself. How many times have you watched a parent (maybe you) totally lose control or fly into a rage? How often have you seen a parent punish or say something absolutely hurtful in a fit of anger? I still recall sitting in a church as a 19 year old and in front of me was a young mom with a 3-year old who was crawling around on the pew. He was jabbering like 3-year olds do, looking around. She said, "Shut up." When he didn't and kept jabbering, she took his head and slammed it into the wooden pew. My heart just went into my throat. I was about to jump over the pew and strangle that mom. I couldn't listen to the sermon. All I could think about was this poor child getting whacked around.

Mothers, Fathers, if we want to learn a secret about discipline then discipline yourself. Parents who get out of control, who scream their heads off and who run around hitting create resentment in their children.

Now I'm not suggesting and don't hear me say that every rebuke needs to be said in a calm, easy-going, melodic voice. "Sweetie, don't light the sofa on fire anymore." Sometimes a stern and loud rebuke is in order. But you can create resentment, irritation.

Another thing that provokes children is unreasonable discipline. When the punishment doesn't fit the crime. I remember one of my kids regularly getting detentions in their Christian school because they didn't have their pencil out at the beginning of class. Discipline gossip, discipline rebellious attitudes, discipline sin, but when a child gets grounded for a week at home or at school for some minor infraction, the only thing that happens is that the child becomes resentful. What they experience is simply the imposition of superior power. You just get to do this, the child thinks, because you're bigger ... not because I was wrong and you were right.

As parents, we want as much as possible, to have our child in his or her more honest moments think to themselves, even if they don't say it, I blew it. My parents are right to get angry. I respect them for their decision. I don't like this discipline, but I respect it. Unpredictable discipline exasperates. If the parent overlooks certain behaviors 10 or 15 times and then flies off the handle that

creates resentment. When mother and father simply are not in agreement that creates irritation. I've watched children do well in homes that were easy going and lenient. I've watched children do well in homes that were somewhat rigid or a little strict. What I've never seen a child do well in is an inconsistent environment, where there's vacillation, where it's unpredictable. Fathers, do not exasperate your children. Don't drive your kids crazy.

Child raising is hard because parents often forget that kids are people. It's an interesting novel by a woman by the name of Edna Furber called *Giant*. It tells a story of this Texas oil millionaire named Jordon Benedict. He owns a million acre cattle ranch. He's absolutely furious because his little son Jordy, who is age 3, is afraid of horses. The father dresses him up in full cowboy regalia, puts him up on a horse and Jordy cries to be taken down. His father is disgusted with him and just humiliates him. The father says, "I rode before I could walk." His wife, Leslie says, "Well, that's fine, but that was you. This is another person, maybe he doesn't like horses." His father says, "He's a Benedict, and I'm gonna make a horseman out of him if I have to tie him to a horse to do it."

The wife screams, you've been playing God so long, you think you run the world. Jordan Benedict says, "I run the part of it that's mine." His wife responds, "He's not yours, he yours *and* mine. He's not even ours ... he's himself."

We Christians would say, our child is not just himself or herself. Our child belongs to God. Kids are people.

Finally, I think for many of us, raising kids is so hard because we don't have any clear goals in mind, or in the heat of the battle, our goals get really fuzzy. The apostle Paul says, "Don't exasperate your children" in verse 4, "instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord."

People spend all kinds of money raising horses, training dogs or growing flowers & plants. We Christians have a larger responsibility in raising children. In the training, he's talking about the whole process of cultivating a child's mind, spirit, and morals. He's talking about the training and admonition of what we speak to them by way encouragement, reproof and instruction of the Lord.

These three words at the end of verse 4, "of the Lord" are the key to setting goals for your family. If your family does not follow Christ, then I'm not sure how you come up with a clear target to aim at in terms of the raising of your children. I know every parent wants their child to be respectful, hard working, and responsible. But very often if you talk with parents who are not followers of Christ, there is almost no clear target concerning what it is they are trying to do with their children.

They might say something like, "I just want my kids to be happy and healthy." Parents often feel bullied by the societal message that they shouldn't impose

their values on their children and that their children should be free to explore and to choose their own value system. Paul says, Parents, there is a clear target.

You ought to have in mind a clear picture of what you are aiming at if you want to raise great kids. Bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord. Here at Vineyard, we don't baptize babies; we wait for a child to be able to make their own confession of faith publicly. We dedicate children in the same way that baby Jesus was dedicated at the temple, to God.

I often say to parents who are coming forward to dedicate their children, "Do you accept the responsibility to be the chief discipler of your kids? Do not pass off the responsibility of teaching your children about Christ to the church or to Christian school or to Sunday school. Do you parents accept the responsibility to bring into your home the reality of the Christian life?"

What does that mean? To parents, you pray with your children. You protect your kids as much as you can from everything that seeks to steal your child's heart and affection from devotion to Christ. Anything that leads your child to sin you warn them about. In your home, you don't simply evaluate things based on what everyone else is doing. Instead, evaluate things as a person who is filled with the Spirit and is seeking God's mind in the Bible.

Ask yourself different questions, not is everyone else doing it, but will this contribute to the spiritual well being of my child, not only in this world but in the next? There is so little that a church can do with 1 or 2 hours a week of contact with your child. Apply the sermons, apply what you're learning in the Bible – with an aim clearly in your mind that your goal as a parent is to turn your child into a thorough going follower of Jesus Christ. That's my target. I want my child to be a disciple of Christ, someone who seeks to obey Jesus in every area of life.

It's hard raising great kids. God knows that I know it well. It is hard. It's a roller coaster. Sometimes you're up, sometimes you're down, and sometimes you're all over the place. Parents, don't loose heart. Hang in there. Stick with the process. There's nothing nobler than us being able to one day stand before the Lord holding the hands of our children.

Let's pray.