

Building Hope For Today

Principles of Good Parenting (Part 2) By Bob Good, M.A., ThM, LPC

In our last issue we looked at some tough questions parents need to ask themselves about their parenting skills. To continue, let's look at the actions and attitudes that make up good parenting.

#1-The Buck Stops Here

What this means is that you are not your past. If you experienced an unhappy childhood, you do not need to be defined by it now. As an adult, you must make the conscious choice to put your past where it belongs—in the past. You can say to yourself, "No matter what happened to me, I survived, I am still here, and it is over now." Choose to be a better parent to your kids than what was given to you. Be the parent you wish you had (If you were blessed to have great parents who gave you something good to model, then count your blessings). But even good parents make mistakes. None of us are perfect and we can always try to do better with our own kids. If you were abused emotionally, physically, or sexually, you can not allow that abuse to continue into the next generation. If you experienced abandonment, neglect or indifference, you don't want to repeat those hurtful behaviors on your own children. If you suffered with a parent who raged, who had problems with alcohol or drugs; you shouldn't pass that suffering on to the next generation. It is easy to think that because you were wronged, it excuses your own bad behavior or seem-

ing inability to stop the cycle. But there is no excuse for doing to your kids what was done to you. You must stop the patterns and be a better parent than that. Of course this is easier said than done. There are many degrees and types of unhappy childhood with repercussions ranging from dysfunctional to debilitating, and you must determine and seek the level of help you need to heal and move on. Do whatever it takes.

#2-You're a Parent, Not a Friend

To be a good parent you have to model the characteristics of a good parent. *The number one good parenting skill you can have is to simply act like one!* In other words, in order for your kids to respect you, you must give them a person worth respecting. I am not talking about the respect a child should show an elder. I am talking about true, heart-felt respect. Kids are not stupid, and they can spot a fake easily. *Kids don't respect weakness.* It scares them. As a parent, you are the boss, you are in charge and you must act like it, even if you don't feel like it. Expose your weak or doubting moments in private, with your partner, but never in front of your children. They need to be able to count on you as the one who makes decisions and runs the show. It is frightening to a child when they perceive that you don't know what you're doing. So be strong in their presence, and most importantly, show a united front from both parents. Disagree with your mate or fight in private, but be a good parent, the stalwart, wise par-

ent your child can trust and count on in public. This is a tough thing to do when we have self-doubts, and all parents do.

#3-Practice What You Preach

The best quality of a role model is to live what they teach. The admonition, "Do as I say, not as I do" doesn't hold water anymore, and it never did. Children today, as they always have, learn by example, **by watching your behavior.**

Kids may or may not listen to your words, but they *always pay attention to your actions.* The best quality of a role model that you can have is to walk your walk and talk your talk. Anything less just doesn't cut it

#4-When a Routine Life Isn't Boring

One of the best things you can do as a parent is provide a daily routine for your child.

Imagine being a young child where virtually every minute of every day is a learning experience. New and different things are coming at you all the time and you are bombarded with stimuli that requires processing. This is a big job for a little kid! As an adult, most of the stimuli in our daily lives is familiar and known to us. We have already processed it before (such as operating the toaster or coffeemaker in the morning, driving a car, knowing which roads to take to get us to work, and so on.)

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But for a very young child nearly everything in their world is something new, including their own bodies. They must learn language, motor skills, and toilet training, to name a few.

What they most certainly do NOT need is more uncertainty brought on by the disorganized and hectic lifestyles of their parents. What they do need is routine, structure, schedules and rules. Children thrive on knowing what their day is going to be like. A daily routine for your child provides them with something they can count on, something that is constant and steady in a sometimes scary world. When a kid can count on the important parts of his day (mealtime, bathtime, bedtime, etc.) always being the same, then he doesn't have to worry about what's going to happen at any given time and is free to spend his day learning and exploring his world.

Conversely, when there is no routine for a child (as, for instance, when he sometimes goes to bed at 7:30 pm and sometimes goes to bed at 11:30 pm, or he sometimes eats dinner at 5:00 pm and sometimes not until 8:30 pm), then he spends his valuable learning time wondering whether or if he will eat when hungry today or be able to sleep when tired tonight.

Chaos in a household is a waste of time for everyone. *Having a schedule for the routine things frees up time for everyone in the house to do things that are more important, and more fun.* Having and sticking to a daily routine for your child allows him to feel safe and secure in the knowledge that the important things are taken care of for him, and that there will always be things and people he can count on in an otherwise unpredictable world.

#5-Don't Deprive Your Child of Discipline

Fair and consistent discipline is the single greatest favor you can do for your child. Children need you to define their world for them. They need to know why "A" is okay but "B" is not. They trust you to impart the rules, manners, codes

of conduct and standards of behavior that are acceptable based on the value system and beliefs of their family.

When you deprive a child of discipline, you are denying him one of the single most effective means of learning how to get along in the world. Multitudes of parents fall short in this area and need to be reminded, in no uncertain terms, who is in charge of the family. Hint: it's not the kid!

There is, today, a pronounced breakdown of authority in the family structure. Many kids rule their household's roost as timid parents look on helplessly. I'm not sure when the prevailing attitude of giving in to your kid's every whim became what seems to be the norm, but that practice is wreaking havoc on untold numbers of families.

When you acquiesce to a child's every demand, you render him powerless to differentiate between needs and wants, you strip him of his independent ability to think and to provide for himself (if and when he ever leaves the nest) and are really creating a monster of epic proportions. **Discipline for a kid is as essential as water. Don't deprive him of it.**

To be effective, discipline must be three things: **Fair, Firm and Consistent.**

Fair means consequences for actions should be appropriate. For instance, "You forgot to take out the trash, so you are grounded for a year", isn't fair. Raging, screaming, hitting and irrational behavior when punishing a child isn't fair. Fairness means that there are clear and logical consequences for a child's failure to behave appropriately and that these consequences are known and understood beforehand. When a child breaks the rules, she knows exactly what will happen to her as a result. For instance, if it was clearly communicated to the child that she would lose after-school television privileges if she did not finish her homework first, and she chose not to finish her homework, then it is perfectly fair and reasonable to follow through with the consequences

of that action and prohibit the television viewing.

Firm means follow through. **Discipline means nothing if it is not carried out!** The parent must set the consequence for a particular behavior and then mean it. If you threaten to punish and then don't follow through, all you are doing is confusing your child and telling him that *your word means nothing.* Children don't respect weakness in a parent. This is an ancient instinct from our primitive days when being weak meant not surviving. You must project an air of authority even if that is difficult for you, as your kids will not respect you if you don't.

Consistent means **all the time, no matter what!** *I can not stress enough how important this last one is,* and it is also the hardest of the three! If you punish your kid for an infraction of the rules only randomly or at your whim and neglect to punish for the same infraction at other times, you are sending very mixed messages to your kid. What happens is that your child learns that your word is dictated only by your mood, level of tiredness or frustration on any given day. What you say is not something to be trusted and counted on, it is something to be manipulated. What this waffling tells your child is that if they just wait for the right moment, when you are distracted or exhausted or overwhelmed, that they will be able to wear you down until you give in and give up. This is not the precedent you wish to set.

Good discipline is essential and kids need it and want it. They feel safer and happier when their households are predictable and when Mom and Dad are people they can trust to do what they say they will do. Do not skip this step, as many parents do these days. *Start now, right from the beginning, and get this step right.* You, your child, and everyone who will ever know your child will never regret it!





Love & Intimacy by Michael Dawson, LPC-Intern

Marriage statistics can be down right depressing! Just 2 years ago, Life Innovations published in their newsletter that 90% of people get married once, but the "average" divorce rate continues to be 50% and rises significantly higher with subsequent marriages; less than half of all couples will celebrate their 25th anniversary; and the 7-year itch leads to divorce in the 8th year.

The **good news** is there is hope for married couples; and with focus on love and intimacy and intentional effort, marriage can be the most meaningful and enjoyable relationship two people experience. So, what is love, what does it look like and how do you cultivate it? God's word of course, outlines many things about love. 1 Corinthians 4: 13ff gives us a good view of love: it is patient, kind, does not envy or boast, is not proud, rude, self-seeking or easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs and it always protects, trusts, hopes, and perseveres. The Bible also shows us in principle that love is a choice since God chose to love us first even though we were unlovable. In marriage, love can be seen like this: when the satisfaction, security and the personal growth of your spouse becomes as significant to you as your own. **Intentionality is the key.** When couples lessen the energy toward the relationship, it is easy for emotional drift to take place and feelings of closeness, intimacy and support to diminish.

John Gottman, a marital researcher, says couples who remain in long-term committed relationships maintain a five-to-one ratio of positive to negative behavioral exchanges. These are demonstrated in simple, small, daily actions that affirm the relationship such as: acts of kindness, politeness and basic consideration of the other's needs, acts of sacrifice, conversation, romantic expressions of affection and sexuality, thoughtfulness, compliments and support in difficult times. These simple behaviors can lead to intimacy.

Intimacy is feelings in a relationship that promote closeness and a connection. When couples share meaningful parts of themselves, they are partaking in a dynamic process where they become close and explore their similarities and differences in feelings, thoughts and behaviors. Intimacy means you can risk and will not be destroyed. It means partners will work with each other in a way that allows them be uniquely special and valued. It is safe- both to agree and to disagree; there is acceptance, support and commitment. Olsen & Shaefer say intimacy is the experience of sharing and being close in a variety of areas including: **Emotional Intimacy:** feeling close, sharing openly with support and genuine understanding; **Social Intimacy:** having common friends and a supportive social network; **Sexual Intimacy:** receiving and sharing affection, touching, physical closeness, and/or

sexual activity; **Intellectual Intimacy:** sharing ideas, talking about events in one's life, or discussing job related issues, current affairs; and **Recreational Intimacy:** shared interests in pastimes, mutual participation in sports or any general recreational or leisure activity.

Parrott and Parrott say intimacy is the emotional side of love and without intimacy love is only hormonal illusion. Long term, committed relationships are ones where couples desire to really *know* each other. Intimacy has a *soul mate* or a *best friend* quality about it. It can only be true that part of the problem with today's depressing marriage statistics has to do with too little Godly love and a lack of intimacy. Much of the fulfillment in marriage hinges on love and intimacy. Be intentional to love like God loves us; desire closeness, sharing, communication, honesty and support and make a willful determination to act out these behaviors. God's best to you!

Intentionality is the key!



Intimacy is the emotional side of love.

On The Lighter Side . . . *...a little wisdom.*

****Adam and Eve had an ideal marriage. He didn't have to hear about all the men she could have married... and she didn't have to hear about how well his Mother cooked.****

Unknown

****Try praising your wife, even if it does frighten her at first.**** **Billy Sunday**

****My wife uses fabric softener. I never knew what that stuff was for. Then I noticed women coming up to me, sniffing, then saying under their breath, "Married!" and walking away. Fabric Softeners are how our wives mark their territory. We can take off the ring, but it's hard to get that April fresh scent out of your clothes.**** **Andy Rooney**

****If love is blind, why is lingerie so popular?***

Unknown



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At Stonebriar Counseling Associates, our therapists are licensed professional counselors, interns, and psychologists engaged in providing quality mental health care, counseling and educational services to clients in the Frisco, Plano and Flower Mound areas. Our team offers Biblical hope and solutions. We are committed to being a resource for individuals, family, and our entire community. We offer confidential counseling that is both professionally competent and distinctively Christian. Our therapists counsel with adults, couples, families, children and teenagers. We encourage clients to discover and use their own God-given strengths and resources to help them through difficult times.

Professional Counseling

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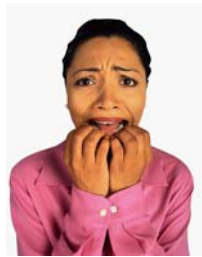
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nagging feeling of dread uses a lot of emotional energy towards worrying about future negative events that are both unpredictable and uncontrollable. Please note that both short-term fear and long-term anxiety are complex, multi-layered responses to danger-whether immediate or anticipated, real or imagined. Understandably, fear can mobilize us to action or paralyze us and become more susceptible to the danger at hand. That is why it is critical to understand our fears. Dealing with fear and anxiety can be very difficult. As a result, using the help of God can be very effective in managing our fears. With this in mind, here are some suggestions on how a person can use the help of God in his or her own struggles.

The first step a person should do is to start talking and praying to God. A person can go to church or to a quiet place during the day to tell God that they are having a problem. They should tell God how they feel and ask God for some of his help. A person could also review the Bible and read some articles on trusting in God and then apply these concepts in their life. Each and every day, a person should make it a habit to talk to God asking for His help. In managing our fears, one needs to be aware of how God is working in their life. Most of the time God works in mysterious ways and the answers He provides might not be that obvious. A person must be aware of God being in their life even when they are dealing with their fears and anxieties. A person must also be sensitive to the answers God gives them. Some people think that the answers that God provides must be religious in nature. That is not always the case. God may provide the answer in a way that might not be religious in nature. These answers could involve basic psychology and cognitive techniques that deal with how to manage fear and anxiety. The point to remember is that although a person may use these psychology methods, it's important that God becomes the center of everything in our life and in our daily struggles.

When Fear Holds Sway By Bob Good, M.A., ThM, LPC

Fear has been with us from the beginning, not as an infrequent visitor but as a constant companion. Fear is the first human emotion referred to after Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden (“I heard You in the garden, and *“I was afraid”* Gen. 3:10). The source of their fear stemmed from disobedience that brought about danger, disconnection, and desperation. There are many people who struggle with debilitating fears. Anxiety disorders such as general anxiety disorder to panic attacks are the #1 mental health problems in the United States, affecting as many as 1 in 10 people and costing tens of billions of dollars in treatment and lost productivity. Not all fears are so severe. We all experience fear in one form or another throughout life. Indeed, it wears many faces from being worried about what others

think of us to reading, watching, or hearing something that triggers a fearful response. So, in a world filled with danger and uncertainty, one thing is clear-we cannot escape fear.

So how do we respond when we feel afraid? Healthcare professionals use terms like fear, anxiety, panic attack, and phobia to describe the spectrum of our fears. For our purposes, we will use *fear* and *anxiety* interchangeably but with the following distinctions: *fear* is an immediate and intense internal alarm system that alerts us to the presence of danger and rivets our focus on one primary goal: protection-to either flee or fight against the perceived danger. *Anxiety* is the pervasive feeling of apprehension that lingers long after the danger has subsided. This