

Mother's Day ***"Courageous Parenting"***

Intro: Parenting is by far one of the most rewarding and yet challenging experiences in this life. It can give us some of life's sweetest memories or at times, drive us to the end of ourselves. We have been entrusted with this overwhelming responsibility to raise / care for / train this little drooling, noisy, stinky thing into a responsible godly adult. Our kids didn't come with a detailed instruction manual either when they sent us home for the hospital. We all had to figure it out as we went. AND...this process of parenting takes a tremendous amount of courage.

- Today I want to share with you what courageous parenting looks like.

1. Develop Character not Simply Innocence

- This has to do with the internal qualities we need to live in this broken world. Do my kids have a tried and true moral compass they will trust and follow? How do we develop this in our children? How do we develop a strong, righteous character in them?
- Stop valuing the preservation of innocence as your primary role as a parent.
 - I know many of you are going to be shocked at what I am about to say but please don't tune me out. I am going to give you a very different message than what you've heard.
 - I see so many parents who obsess over preserving the innocence of their kids and so they isolate them from this broken / fallen / evil world as much as possible.
 - There is this belief that if we can protect our kids from all this evil in the world they will naturally have character as adults. This is a lie! They will not have character, they will just still have innocence.
 - Your kids have to be able to function well in this evil world. Unless you help them develop godly character, they don't stand a chance. All the protection and innocence in the world cannot prepare them for the darkness of this life.
 - Of course when our kids are young we preserve innocence. BUT, as they get older, this focus can actually get in the way of character development.
 - If you value innocence over character your kids will end up with character atrophy. What is this? No strength of character! No character muscles!
- Value the development of character as your primary role as a parent
 - Character is only developed when it is tried / tested / confronted / and given choices between right and wrong. Innocence untested can NEVER result in character.
 - If you want your kids to develop character when mom and dad are not around, do you ever give them opportunity to develop it? HOW? When you're not around!
 - If you are the typical helicopter parent your child will never develop character. You are in the way of and delaying the character development process.

- This type of parenting is completely based on fear. It is fear based parenting model instead of character based. Be honest with yourself; How much of your parenting is based on fear?
- I hear fear statements from parents all the time. I don't want my kids to struggle like I did. I don't want my kids to make my mistakes. I don't want my kids to throw away their future. I don't want my kids to fail. ALL statements are based in fear. Fear is influencing your parenting.
- Character must be tested. Isn't this what James says.

Rom. 5:3-4 "We can rejoice, too, when we run into problems and trials, for we know that they help us develop endurance. ⁴ And endurance develops strength of character, and character strengthens our confident hope of salvation." (NLT)

- Don't you want your kids to have strength of character as adults? Then it must be developed through testing! AND it must be tested in the broken world they are going to live in.
- Courageous parents develop character?

2. Value Training not Simply Protecting

- This has to do with the skill sets they need to function in this broken world. If our focus is merely on protecting them, they will not have the necessary skill sets to function in this life. Our job as parents is to give them the godly training they will need to effectively follow Jesus in this broken world.
- If your focus is primarily protecting them, they have no skills sets and we have failed them as parents

Eph. 6:4 "Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord." (NIV)

Prov. 22:6 "Train up a child in the way he should go, even when he is old he will not depart from it." (NASB)

- Let's understand what training is. Training is not simply knowledge. Training is active. Training is practice. Training is the development of skills to use in real life.
- Just taking your kids to church / reading them bible stories / attending Christian schools / memorizing bible verses is NOT training. It may be part of the training, but it's not the whole thing.
- Training happens on the job. Training happens in the life. If all you're trying to do is protect them, you are not training them for what's coming.
 - Have you trained your kids to handle sexual temptation?
 - Have you trained your daughters how to handle boys / men who come on to them?
 - Have you trained your kids how to resist viewing porn when everyone they know does?
 - Have you trained them how to be responsible with social media or did you just forbid them to engage in it?
 - Have you trained your boys what to do with all that sexual energy they feel?

- Have you trained them how to engage an ungodly culture with love and grace instead of judgement and criticism?
- Have you trained them how to work alongside unbelievers?
- Have you trained them how not to love money and possessions?
- Have you trained them how to function every day in the enormous amount of brokenness and sin without losing hope themselves?
- Have you trained them how to be in this world and highly engaged in it yet not allowing its values to become part of them?
- Have you trained them to hear the voice of Jesus in the midst of all the other voices they are going to hear?
- Do you see why we need to value training over protecting? How can we send our children into this world unprepared? One of the most unloving things we can do to our kids is to send them out into this evil world unprepared and untrained to deal with what they are going to encounter.
- Will you value training your children as a higher value than merely protecting them?

3. Increase Wisdom Over Simply Knowledge

- This has to do with the wisdom they will need to function in the broken world. Wisdom is the correct application of knowledge in each unique situation. A person can be filled with knowledge / facts / data / information and yet not be filled with life wisdom. As parents, we need to value wisdom over the accumulation of knowledge.
- This is the example we see in Jesus

Luke 2:52 “Jesus grew in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and all the people.” (NLT)

Prov. 2:1-3 “My child, listen to what I say, and treasure my commands. Tune your ears to wisdom, and concentrate on understanding. Cry out for insight, and ask for understanding.” (NLT) The entire book of Proverbs is about gaining wisdom.

- Who doesn't want to have our kids demonstrate wisdom in this life? Wisdom cannot be learned without giving them the opportunities to take what they know and try to apply it in real life situations.
- Knowledge alone does not produce wisdom. If this were true, the wisest people in the world would be kids graduating from college. We laugh because we all know knowledge does NOT = wisdom.
- How do we help our kids acquire and grow in wisdom?
 - Teach and model God's truth for them (explain both) You can't just send your kids to a Christian school or home school and think your job is done. This must be backed up with a consistent model from your life or otherwise you discredit everything they are hearing. They learn wisdom by watching wisdom in action.
 - Give them appropriate opportunities. As they get older, we give them age appropriate opportunities to live out what we've taught and modeled. They must be given opportunities without us around; especially as they get older (teen years)
 - Do you let them go to dances?

- Do you allow them on social media?
 - Do you allow them to be around unbelievers without you around?
 - Do you allow them to get a job?
 - Do you allow them to have their own opinions / ideas / even if different than yours and let them test those theories? (Sure you know what will happen, but they don't.)
- Allow them to make manageable mistakes. You must allow your kids to feel the sting and pain of failure. WHY? How else will they know what to avoid? They must have experiential knowledge if it is going to translate into wisdom. Failure is one of our best teachers. Don't try to remove this from your kids! Parents say; "I just don't want my kids to fail." I understand, but it's how we all learn. This is how values become theirs.
- Manageable mistakes are failures that sting yet does not alter their future – mistakes where consequences are not life-long.
- Have wisdom growing conversations. As your kids get older your conversations with them has to change. They move from what is right and wrong conversations to; "what are you learning conversations." Wisdom is acquired through experiences and time. These conversations you have now help your kids connect the dots / see God's purposes / His involvement in their lives. Wisdom conversations. These are not black and white conversations.
- Daughter being invited to attend a gay wedding. What great conversations we had.
 - Daughter was cutting hair for the local strippers in town.
 - Daughter being trained as a massage therapist and coming home talking about how they took their clothes off / practiced draping on each other / Again...great conversations.

This is the courage we need as parents. I simply want to ask you to pray about them, consider them and ask God if there needs to be some adjustments in your parenting.

If you raise your kids with these qualities, your kids will someday come back to you and thank you for it.

Child dedication