

Urban Legends: Godly Parents Raise Godly Children
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Lynn Haven UMC

Introduction

Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.
(Proverbs 22:6 KJV)

It is commonly said that this verse can be translated to mean “godly parents raise godly children”. If we just do our best to raise them up in the ways of the Lord, even if there is a separation somewhere in the middle, they will end up back on track before it’s all said and done. But if we key into the specific words used in this verse, we might discover that somehow along the way the true meaning has been twisted and turned a bit. This week we will talk about why this expression is just another spiritual urban legend.

Digging Deeper

THE MYTH: Godly parents raise godly children

It produces needless **GUILT**.

- If you are godly, then you will raise godly children. Talk about parental pressure! But what does it tell folks about our godliness when they mess up? Was there something that could have been done differently? Was it (gasp!) our fault they did this?! Do you internalize shame or place blame on yourself for the mistakes of your children?

It causes foolish **PRIDE**.

- Your child can recite all the books of the Bible in song form without skipping a beat with the voice of an angel while dressed in their Sunday best for the whole church to see! Well, (applause, applause) you **MUST** be doing everything right! Pride can be every bit as damaging as guilt to our tender, parental souls when it comes to the degree in which we attach ourselves to our children’s achievements. Their successes or failures should not be the measuring stick we use to determine our self-worth. Discuss how it can be dangerous to accept too much personal responsibility for the accomplishments of your children.

It creates **JUDGMENTAL** attitudes

- When we look at the mistakes made by other people’s kids we wag our fingers and turn into Judge Judy assuming they must be the product of a bad environment. Well, the truth is even the best parents can raise a wayward child. Or vice versa. Have you ever made a snap judgment about someone’s upbringing and later found out you were way off base? What did that experience teach you about grace?

It brings a false sense of **HOPE**.

- We take a deep spiritual and emotional risk when we cling to the hope that if we properly raise our children in the ways of the Lord, even if they veer completely off track, they will one day find their way back. Without being able to predict the future, we cannot see the choices they will make or what will influence them along the way. What we can do is pray, teach them about God and model grace and love in a lifestyle that glorifies Him. One day we will be held accountable as parents, not how our kids turn out, but how well we prepared them to live a godly life. If you have younger kids do you speak to them about their faith? If your kids are grown, are the topics of God and faith still a part of your conversations?

You can prepare a horse for the day of battle. But the power to win comes from the Lord.
(Proverbs 21:31 NIRV)

THE TRUTH: Godly parents do their BEST and let God do the REST.

Maintain healthy **RELATIONSHIPS**.

- When we display the capacity to engage in healthy, positive relationships we can greatly impact our children's desire to do the same. If you want them to treat others with kindness, do likewise. If you want them to make wise choices in the heat of the moment, be that example of grace under fire. God's great desire for us is to be in relationship with Him and others. Deep, lasting connections are made when our need to give and receive love is greater than our need to be right or "better than". What do you think your current relationships are teaching your children? Do you have any fences to mend that in doing so could provide a valuable example?

MODEL what you hope to get.

- If you want to have peace in your home, be a peacemaker. If you want your children to seek God, give Him first in your life. Will doing these things ensure your kids will never fight or say mean things to each other ever again? Sorry, not even close. But your efforts will foster an environment that is conducive to their existence. What kingdom building behaviors would you say you naturally model with your family? Which ones take a little more effort to consistently demonstrate?

ADAPT to their uniqueness.

- Kids are like snowflakes and fingerprints. No two are exactly alike. As such, parents of more than one child learn early on that what works for one may not work for the others. It definitely takes different strokes for different folks. Are your kids (exasperatingly) just like you or do you sometimes wonder if the stork dropped them on the wrong doorstep?! Does that make it easier or harder to identify and relate to them? Do you try to look at situations from their perspective before doling out punishment or do you default to the "I'm the grown up so I know better" kind of mentality?

PRAY!

- The choices our children make can cause our hearts to soar or crumble and wreck us in so many ways. Since we do not hold the strings that move their feet, the most powerful thing we can do for them is to pray. Do you pray specifically and daily for your children? Do you pray for their current and future selves? Take some time each day to ask God for His favor and blessing to pour into their lives and grow in them a heart to serve Him and surround them with godly influences. There is power in the name of Jesus!

Conclusion

Now that we've examined it more closely, we can see this verse isn't speaking of training children who may stray for a bit, but return to the Lord when they get older. Rather, it is telling us that once trained, they will assumedly stay on track. Godly parents cannot direct the future steps of their children, but they can model the godly people they hope they will become and pray that God will do the rest.