



Heads Up Parenting

*Learning to Parent
Without Fear*

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TRINITY
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Kids in the Image of God

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Most of us tend to be **Reactive Parents**

We spend our lives **responding** to our children and the problems that come up.

“What do we do about Junior’s back talk?”

“She won’t do her homework!”

I believe that God calls us instead to **Proactive Parenting**.

He has made us in His Image, so parenting is not just putting out family brush-fires, it is a construction project designed to develop God's image in our children, and to help give them the "software" to be prepared to be whole adults who can function, love, forgive, and worship as God created us to do.

Parenting is about more than just raising obedient kids. **“Heads Up Parenting”** discusses seven capacities that our kids need in order to live well in adult reality.

This weekend we want to ask, what are the qualities that we are trying to develop in our children to both help them function well in life as adults, and to mirror the Character of Christ? How can we use that list of abilities to help give us a blueprint for parenting, not reactively, but proactively? Let's build a model for parenting that will help you make confident decisions about how to help your child grow...as well as how we as parents can recover from our inevitable mistakes with poise and grace when we mess up!!!

With an Infant

BONDING and NURTURE

Hold them and love them. Parent-infant, "eye to eye" holding and connecting.

And

When they are **distressed**, how can we help them become **undistressed**?

With a Toddler

We need to **MIRROR** and **EMBRACE** all their **new abilities**

And

SET LIMITS on them **without being angry.**

In other words...

Love their independence and their freedom.

Limit their independence and their freedom.

With a School Age Child

EMPOWERING them in all their OUTSIDE THE FAMILY adventures.

"You need to handle this, man...and I know that you can!"

And

EMPATHY with how hard and unfair life can be.

"Everybody strikes out sometimes, get back in there, big guy."

With Adolescents

LIMITS that mirror adult life without being controlling and shame-based.

And

INTERACTIONS WITH THEM that treat them LIKE A PERSON...not a child. Stepping out of our **ROLE** as just a parent and talking **WITH** them. No evaluation, just interaction.

-The Ability to Understand Responsibility & Consequences

Learning about wisdom and choosing.

Usually what we want is **“a tool to make them do what I want.”**

In other words, CONTROL

Let's propose a different purpose for Discipline:

Discipline is basically about **teaching the CAUSE-EFFECT relationship of CHOICES and CONSEQUENCES in Reality.**

What is REALITY like?

In reality I don't **have** to drive the speed limit.

But if I don't.....the highway patrol might 'dock my allowance'.

I don't **have** to pay taxes.

But if I don't.....I might have to 'go to time out" (for 5 to 10...)

In other words, you can have anything you want in life...You just have to pay for it!

So in a discipline scenario....

1. Smell out the power struggle. (When your child challenges your authority AND you attempt to prove it)
2. Instead...back up...stop trying to control them (you can't control ANYBODY).
3. And give them a CHOICE (IF....THEN)
4. Let them choose
5. FOLLOW THROUGH!! (Otherwise, you are lying to your child!)

Now DISCIPLINE is no longer attempting to CONTROL our children into behaving.

It is representing the kinds of choices God presents us with in REALITY, and helping them LEARN this. This is teaching them to choose WISELY and develops an INTERNAL PARENT that teaches them to make wise choices, both now and in adult life.

-Ability to Submit

Helping your child get off the throne in their lives

Basically, we are all born **wanting things to go our way.**

At "Enmity with the Law"

And part of our job as parents is to help our kids **Grow up**

But we also must help them learn to **Grow Down** (into the humble place of submission)

However, we need to help them **LEARN** to submit rather than just **EXPECTING** them to do it.

We foster submission primarily by recognizing that we can never represent our **Authority** over our children, without understanding the **Authority we are under as well.**

In other words, we relate to our children **AS an authority** in their lives.

But

We also recognize that **we too are UNDER authority.**

And we understand WITH THEM that it is a hard position sometimes.

"I'm over you and you have to do the stuff I say."

But

"I'm someone under authority like you. And boy, it sure does stink sometimes, doesn't it. I get that. But it is ultimately a good thing."

This **empathy** helps heal our inborn **resistance** to **submission.**

-Identity, Mastery, Independence

Teaching your child to be strong

We want our children to be able to **SUBMIT**

But

How are the adults **who are just compliant and obedient** doing in life?

Part of equipping our children for reality in this universe involves helping them find their own **strength** and **ability to handle things**.

Around **age 7 to 9**, children begin coming up with problems that you will find hard to solve **for them**.

The bully at school

Fear of going to sleep or of bad weather

Forgetting everything

This is a sign that it is time to stop '**parenting**', and start "**de-parenting**" i.e. helping them **find their own ability** to solve problems.

Deparenting means:

--we **discern** the problems that **only they can handle** and say,

"That is pretty scary, but you know what? I know you can handle it."

--And **manage** our own anxiety

--And **push** them to deal with it.

Children get their view of themselves and the world through the eyes of their parents.

Sometimes our eyes need to say, "You can do this!"

-Ability to deal with Imperfection

Learning humility and forgiveness

We all have to make sense of how things on this planet are often NOT GOOD.

We see this **in three places**

Others – people in our lives are not perfect and let us down.

The World – things in our world are seldom perfect -

Ourselves – how do I make sense of my own imperfection?

A child’s natural tendency when they confront these ‘yucky’ things is to:

Protest

Demand

Feel guilt/shame

Perfectionism

Anger

How do we help our children ‘make peace’ with imperfection?

A few ideas

1. Be careful about opportunities you have to rescue your children from disappointment.

Our goal is not to **protect** them from suffering but to help them **suffer well**.

2. **Empathy and caring** in the midst of disappointment.

Loving empathy and understanding are the "anesthesia" that softens the blow of pain.

3. (The bad news) The most powerful way our children learn to deal with loss and imperfection is how they SEE US manage it in our own lives.

-Ability to Manage my Emotions

Can I think and not just react?

Children are **concrete thinkers** (and feelers).

When they **feel** something, it usually just comes out in a **reaction**.

If they are angry, they throw a tantrum.

If they are scared, they might wet the bed.

By adulthood, we need to develop the ability to "**Feel**" a feeling, and **stop...reflect** on it...and **DECIDE** what to do. "I would like to yell at my boss, but I don't."

This is called "**Mentalizing**" a feeling.

Two ways we help a child mentalize their feelings:

1) By **talking to them** about what they feel... with words. "You were really angry when I wouldn't get you the M&M's" When we do this, we aren't just spouting psychobabble. We are literally teaching them the lexicon of the emotional world, like we do the alphabet or how to count to ten!! They will need this in order to **understand** their emotional world, not just **react** to it.

2) By **setting limits** on their behavior (see Ability 2). As a child reaps consequences for **acting** on their emotions, they learn to **think** about them and **talk** about them instead. All acting out people need to **experience** the consequences of their impulsive behavior in order to stop.

Feeling without Reacting: This is a hallmark of adulthood!!

-Ability to know and love God.

Introduction to the ULTIMATE reality!

How do we teach them about God

- 1. Content
- 2. Experience

Content –

Overt teaching is necessary and great, but passages like Deuteronomy 6 teach us the ultimate place to teach our kids about God is "when you rise up, when you lay down, when you walk along the way."

Teach God's way as you live life!!

Experience -

The reason we can struggle with what we "know" about God, versus what we "feel" about God, is that somewhere we've experienced an **incongruity** between what we were **taught** about God and how we were **related to**.

The most powerful Godly influence that we can have on our children is showing them what it **feels like** to relate to God by **living with them** with love, limits, mercy, humility, power, forgiveness.

(Let your walk match your talk)

....or (fortunately) by showing them our own need for grace when we fail to live that lovingly and powerfully. Repair and ask forgiveness.

(Let your talk match your walk)

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