

Bible wisdom for parents

The word “Father” appears in the Bible over 1,000 times. It is a key part of who God is and is a clear invitation to earthly parents who need help. May the following thoughts and scriptures help you on the often difficult job of parenting.

1. **You can't parent alone.** God's two relevant promises for parents are: that we can do nothing without him ...but... that we can do all things with him. My own first experience of these two promises is: one morning while fixing breakfast for eight preschoolers a five year old arrived early, marched up to me and said: “Mr. White, you are a fat cow.” I had no idea what was motivating her. I was at



that time very thin and I had many things on my mind so I prayed something like. “God what is going on here.” Almost without a thought I found myself saying “Did someone call you a fat cow.” Someone had and she did not know how to react. I asked if she were a fat cow and she said “no”. And I said “Too bad that other person is confused...and God calmed her heart. *He truly is faithful to help us if we ask. Parenting without God is a hopeless affair. Parenting with him is MUCH less stressful ...because...He is an everpresent help in time of trouble.*

2. **Catch them being good.** It is God's specialty and should be ours. Every parent must correct children breaking rules, making mistakes and or being bad. The great parent is even more vigilant to catch them being good. When it is the hardest to find something good to say to a child is the exact moment the child needs it most. Correcting a child is not punishing him for the bad BUT helping him get it right/correct.
3. **Listen regularly.** Connection with our children starts with listening, putting ourselves in their shoes. It is the foundation of God's relationship with his children. For earthly parents the first step to listening is get them started talking. Start each day with a greeting “How are you this morning?” Then “Are you ready to start your day?” What do you think it will be like. Another way to prime the pump of conversation is take the ball in your own hands...just talk...about something funny or something you would like to do...about something you enjoy or something the child enjoys. Spending time with our children does little good if we aren't talking regularly. Practice makes perfect. Start today.
4. **Post a minimum set of rules:** No assault, no slander, no vandalism. In child language, no hitting, no name calling, no breaking things. Having the rules posted helps us focus on the big things, and helps the child understand what the big things are. Add to the list only those things which are very important. Too many rules can be confusing and difficult for the child to remember.

5. **Offer MERCY.** I learned this one from the worst behaved child in the world. He was a discipline addict and misbehaved to get attention. His record was a little over 30 timeouts in a single day. Then one day by the grace of God I found myself saying “Do you want another time out or would you rather have “Mercy”. He said what is Mercy. I said that is where you promise not to do it again and then you don’t get a timeout. He said “I will have Mercy please.” By the end of the next week this child had nearly mastered self control. Mercy is a great tool to help children develop SELF control. It is offering them the CHOICE of controlling themselves (self control) or having us do it for them.
6. **Ask Forgiveness.** The only parent who does not offend or sin against his children daily is God. The rest of us, in our honest moments, must admit that we are not perfect. God asks us to admit it to Him and those we offend, including our children. If we do not ask their forgiveness, for slights both large and small intentional and unintentional they have only two other choices...blame themselves or blame God. Asking forgiveness is not taking the blame for the past. It is clearing the way for the future. Try something like “Honey, I am not perfect I get angry and tired and say things I shouldn’t but I love you could we forgive each other for another week, I forgive you do you forgive me? It is especially important to ask forgiveness for divorce something like “Honey, I hope you will forgive me for the divorce. I didn’t want it but was not smart or strong enough to keep it from happening “Will you forgive me?.”
7. **Have your children’s friends to your home at least once a month...**influence them before they influence your children. I learned this from two five year olds. I was on a porch just about the children and one of them had a pretty BAD idea. When he shared it the other child said “Oh no, Mr. White would not like that”. The point is that if your children’s friends know where you stand they are much less likely to push their bad ideas. A few activities for friends night, activities that don’t involve electronics are: board games, cooking, outdoor games (Frisbee, catch etc), interactive games like Pictionary and charades, even form your own band. One extra idea is a small bowl of bible verses near the door so you can offer departing children: “one for the road”.
8. **Set up family traditions, something you do once a week...** Take a walk in the park, cook a meal together, star gazing one night a week, visit the elderly or ill, make cookies, for younger children read together. Try eating outdoors. There are as many choices as there are people...but do it on a regular basis...do it once a week. Make it a tradition.
9. **Make a list of goals for each child** and post it on their bedroom wall. The one thing God never turns loose of are his goals for his children. He sees us as his love will make us. God’s goals for his children (a good starting place for any parent) are:
That my children learn to trust and enjoy me. Isaiah 26:4, Daniel 6:23, John 14:1
That my children learn to love one another. John 13:34, 1 John 4:20, John 13:34-35,
That my children learn right from wrong. Leviticus 22:31, Deuteronomy 4:2
That my children find their role as workers serving God. Romans 12:11, Galatians 5:13
That my children are leaders and teachers...not followers. Titus 2:7, Acts 5:42, 1 Peter 3:15,
Post these on your wall and add to them as God leads.

10. **Put this article on the Fridge and Use a daily Bible Verse.** Our first choice for a daily Bible Verse is a bedside flipover calendar. Put one by each child's bed and it will be the first thing they see in the morning and the last thing at night. Total cost is about \$12 a year. Our second choice is a visit to www.bibleparent.com. Share the bulletin inserts with your church or download free pocket scriptures.

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