

Ten Commandments of Parenting

Scripture: Ephesians 5:24-25, Proverbs 28:13, Matthew 6:14-15, Colossians 3:13

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One of the most common questions I get from Christian parents is about parenting. They want specific and practical advice for rearing their children in the very best way. Couples usually understand their general parental responsibility, but will often speak of the need for help in specifically framing their biblical commitments to optimally shepherd and train their children.

Whether you are considering your parental responsibilities with a new child, or even reaffirming these biblical principles with your older children (It's never too late!), or even as grandparents toward your grandchildren, the following "ten commandments" from God's Word are sure to benefit you, your family, and your church.

1. Pursue Righteousness in Your Marriage

Husbands, you need to show your children how a husband loves his wife, even as Christ loved the church (Ephesians 5:25). Do they see you giving yourself up for her? Are they observing how you tenderly and patiently lead her, teach her, and protect her? Your example in the treatment of your wife will teach volumes about Christ's love for His beloved bride, the church.

Wives, to your children you need to model biblical submission as you subject yourself to your husband in everything (Ephesians 5:24). Do your children see how you work out your submission to Christ in respectful submission to your husband? Your marriage is a living, breathing example of the church's willing submission to her Head, the Lord Jesus Christ.

2. Confess Your Sins to One Another

You need to confess, when appropriate, your sins to your family (Proverbs 28:13), and seek their forgiveness when necessary (Matthew 6:14-15; Colossians 3:13). As you are quick to confess, you are demonstrating true humility and an ultimate desire to be pleasing to God in all your ways (2 Corinthians 5:9).

3. Pursue Sexual Purity

Be very careful to protect your home from the sexual immorality of the world we live in. That means you need to abstain from sexual immorality yourself (1 Thessalonians 4:3-8), and otherwise promote

sexual purity in your home (Proverbs 5-7). The pursuit of sexual purity should govern your entertainment choices, season your speech, and guide you when you're in public or private, especially when you think no one else is looking or listening. Your own sexual purity will protect you and your children from the heartbreak known well among a depraved generation (Proverbs 5:7-14).

4. Manage Your Resources Wisely

Take great pains to manage the Lord's money and resources with which you are entrusted, and do so with the utmost integrity (1 Timothy 6:5-10). Continually think of ways to be a better steward of all your time, talent, and treasure (Proverbs 31:10-31), always looking to God for His provision for all your basic life needs (Matthew 6:31-34; 1 Timothy 5:8).

5. Evangelize Your Children and Others

Because of your great love for your children, endeavor to be a consistent witness to them of your own faith, as well as speaking often to them about the nature of their relationship to the Lord. Live in such a way around your kids that you are fulfilling the spirit of Paul's command to Timothy: "Do the work of an evangelist" (2 Timothy 4:5). In addition, as you have opportunity, proclaim the gospel to others with whom you come in contact, thus hopefully instilling in your children the same desire to share this eternal message (1 Corinthians 15:1-4).

6. Teach Your Children the Word of God

Regularly teach your children God's Word, both by your life (desiring to be models of Christ-likeness to them; 1 John 2:6) and by your proactive and consistent commitment to family worship. Especially as fathers (as well as single mothers too), you have the responsibility to impart the truth of Scripture to your children for their great good (Deuteronomy 6:4-9).

7. Discipline Your Children

When your children need correction (which, when they are young, may seem to be "ever and always"), discipline them with what the Bible calls the "rod of reproof." Those parents who truly love their children will desire to do this in a caring, consistent, yet firm manner, attempting to avoid harshness and anger. Scripture says that when you do so, children will cease their foolishness and become wise (Proverbs 13:24; 19:18; 22:15; 23:13-14).

8. Watch Your Words Carefully

Words are very powerful tools for good or evil! They can either build up or tear down. Speak to your spouse, your children, and others with godly wisdom so that you may edify and encourage (Proverbs 4:24; 6:12; 10:32; 19:1). Your children are watching you intently, and what you say (including *how*

you say it), will have deep and lasting effects on them. Train your children not to speak unrighteously (Ephesians 4:29-31).

9. Show Your Children Your Own Love for God and Man

Love your God with all your heart, mind, soul, and strength, and love your neighbor as yourself (Matthew 22:37-40). The greatest gift you can give your kids is to show them your all-consuming love for Jesus Christ! What should flow from this passion is also your love for your neighbors, which certainly includes your immediate family. Extending beyond this circle of influence is your desire to live a pure and undefiled spiritual life, which is demonstrated by visiting orphans and widows in their distress, and keeping yourself unstained by the world (James 1:27). Pray that your example of love will have great impact on your children.

10. Ask God for Grace and Strength in Your Child-Rearing

The Bible commands you to rear your children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord (Ephesians 6:4). Thus, child-rearing is not an option. Thus, the remaining question should be: *How well are you doing as a parent?* To whatever degree you perceive you are succeeding or failing in the task, and regardless of what will be the initial outcome and ultimate destiny of your children, ask God for much grace and strength to be a parent who glorifies Him.

If you'll follow these "ten commandments" of parenting, the Lord will sanctify you and bless you. Furthermore, your life and doctrine can be useful to the Holy Spirit in demonstrating the saving power of the gospel to your children. The rest we must leave in the hands of a sovereign God.

May God continually remind all of us of our solemn parental task to leave a legacy of godly faithfulness to the succeeding generations.

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