

CHAPTER NINE DRAWING NEAR TO YOUR CHILD BY HELPING YOUR CHILD TO BE A SUCCESS

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Scripture Memory Verse— Prv 19:20

*“Listen to counsel and accept discipline,
that you may be wise the rest of your days.”*

Chapter Nine Drawing Near To Your Child By Helping Your Child To Be A Success— Bible Study

Listen to counsel and accept discipline, That you may be wise the rest of your days.

Prv 19:20

... Wisdom has the advantage of giving success.

Ecc 10:10

INTRODUCTION

The days when parents could busy themselves with their own lives, delegating the training and the preparation for the success of their children to the church, the school, the coach, the scoutmaster, the music coach, or whoever else... are gone.

We live in a hyper-paced, competitive society. As a general rule, those children who do not have parents committed to their success are bowled over, and left behind. There is the exception of the extremely gifted child but for the rest, what separates the wheat from the chaff is parental involvement.

There is indeed a war going on. It is spiritual at its roots, but very real and practical as it impacts your child. The spoils of the war are the hearts and minds of your children. The battle lines are clearly drawn: they are the self-worth, perspective, character and the values of your child.

Children learn early the fiercely competitive nature of the outside world and yearn for a helper, protector, and guide. By working towards your child's success you not only bless the child, but you create a bond of trust and relationship. As the child grows, he realizes you are committed not to holding on but rather to letting go— that he may be a success.

Our definition of success: “to live fruitfully and fulfilled before God and man, independent of parents in obedience to God's will, yet maintaining a loving relationship with parents.”

This assumes three things on the part of the parent:

1. The relationship with the child is a priority with the parent.
2. The parent desires the child's success and recognizes the need to serve the child and God as opposed to trying to make the child after the parent's own image.
3. The parent realizes this process will make the child strong, leading ultimately to his independence from his parents.

This chapter will deal with these issues, always keeping in mind that it is both the child's and the parent's success that is the goal. *Neither you nor I can guarantee that your child will actually use the wisdom and life skills you impart to him.* You can only guarantee that you, as a parent, fulfill your responsibilities. You can guarantee that your child will have the tools necessary for success, but you cannot guarantee that your child will employ these tools. It is my hope that your child “turns out all right.” If you “turn out all right,” his chances are greatly improved, but not guaranteed. If God will not make your child choose correctly, then neither can you.

The parent, in helping his child to be a success, is not trying to live his life through the child, but rather to help the child develop his gifts, talents and call from God.

What follows is:

- 1) A brief Bible study to aid you in understanding the subject matter of this chapter.
- 2) A manuscript is provided for you and your spouse to discuss as you consider this chapter.
- 3) Practical projects for discussion and application are provided to aid you in implementing those areas of the seminar that meet your needs as a parent.

Bible Study

THE WAR

It is a war and the spoils of war are the heart and mind of your child. The battle lines of your child's self-worth, perspective, character, and values are clearly drawn. In the study below, read the passages and then write out your observations on what the desire of God is, and what the world will seek to do.

Self Image:

What does God desire that your child understand about his creation? (*Ps 139:13–14*)

What does the world seek to do to your child? (*Ex 3:11; 4:10–14*)

Perspective:

What does God desire your child to understand about his creation? (*Eph 2:10*)

What does the world seek to do to your child? (*1 Kgs 19:1–4*)

Character:

What does God desire your child to understand concerning his character? (*Mt 18:4*)

What does the world seek to do to your child? (*1 Kgs 12:7–11, 15–16*)

Values:

What does God desire you child to understand concerning values? (*Mk 10:13–16*)

What does the world seek to do to your child in this area? (*2 Tm 4:10; Mk 4:19*)

Satan has one goal for your child. How do the following verses reveal it?

Jn 8:44

Jn 10:10

1 Pt 5:8

What is the primary tool Satan uses to achieve this goal?

On the part of parents? (*Prv 19:18; 23:13 & 14; Heb 12:8*)

On the part of the child? (*Prv 5:7, 12–14; 15:10*)

On the part of the world? (*Mk 4:19*)

On the part of society? (*1 Cor 15:33*)

Parental Involvement:

Christian parents, however, have at their disposal tools more powerful than either Satan or his world system.

What is the ultimate assurance of our victory as well as that of our children? (*1 Jn 4:4*)

What tools does Jesus Christ equip us with to gain this victory?

<i>Passage</i>	<i>Tool</i>
<i>1 Jn 5:4</i>	
<i>Heb 4:12/ Eph 6:17</i>	
<i>Lk 11:9</i>	
<i>Mt 18:20/ Heb 10:24–25</i>	
<i>Mt 28:18/ Js 4:7</i>	
<i>Prv 22:15; 23: 13–14</i>	
<i>Prv 19:18</i>	
<i>Prv 6:20–21</i>	

Chapter Nine

Reshuffling the Deck: Drawing Near To Your Child by Helping Your Child to Be a Success—Lecture

I. THE BATTLE LINES

There is a war raging and the spoils of war are the heart and mind of your child. The battle lines are clearly drawn, those being self-worth, perspective, character, and values.

A. THE DECK IS STACKED

Make no mistake about it, the world has stacked the deck. Satan neither plays fair, nor plays to lose. The Word of God says in 1 Pt 5:8, *“Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls about like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.”* Anyone who has watched a nature show on TV knows that the lion seeks out the young to devour. He does not creep up on the full-grown water buffalo or the adult male zebra, rather he spooks the herd and, in the confusion, brings down one of the young and eats them. In the same way, Satan, that wicked spiritual beast, will seek to spook the parents, distract them from their responsibilities and, in the confusion, bring down the young and devour them.

It is not Satan’s objective to keep your child off the mission field. It is not his objective to keep him off the youth leadership committee. It is not his objective to disrupt his morning quiet time. It is not his objective to reduce him to a nominal Christian. It is not his objective to keep your child off the honor roll or even make him a high school dropout, Satan’s objective is to spook the herd and in the confusion bring down your child by the neck, kill him and devour him right before your eyes.

The innate abilities for success by the world’s standards are predetermined before birth and neither you nor your child can alter them.

The world’s definition of success for your child is in stark contrast to that of God. The world demands of your child, attractiveness, social sophistication, innate intellectual capacity (e.g., that which requires no work), athletic ability, and music or artistic ability.

The ultimate goals in these areas are artificially set by the entertainment and advertising media and, as a result, can never be attained. The cruelty of these goals is that they are almost completely dependent upon natural gifts at birth or forces beyond your child’s control. The world does not want your child to reach these goals; it wants your child to expend his life and sell his soul in the pursuit of these goals. The world will never give satisfaction or gratification, only new demands and unreachable and unattainable standards. What the world wants, what the world is willing to spend billions of dollars and marshal its greatest and most creative minds toward, is to convince your child of his inadequacies and his need to spend thousands and thousands of dollars over his lifetime making up for these inadequacies.

While constantly presenting the failures of Christendom before your child, the world hides from view the ultimate results of its own path. The world lies and cheats and deceives your child and is proud of its success in this area. It has no shame, no regrets

and does not pause to consider its course. It is unrelenting and without fatigue. It does not sleep and it does not blink. The world will not change, reason, nor alter its course. There is nothing you can do about this. It simply is.

One of my fantasy wishes for my children is that I could fast-forward them to their 20th high school reunion, that they might see the true fruits of sin and righteousness. All of the nerdy kids, the kids who obeyed their teachers and parents, were good students, hard workers and on the outside of the “in crowd” are now accountants, doctors, lawyers and engineers who have good families and fulfilled lives. The “in crowd” smoked, drank and partied hard. They gave themselves to sports and to popularity. They were sexually experienced and on the cutting edge of the social scene. Twenty years later, they are dead of AIDS; they are recovering alcoholics; they are on their second or third marriage; and they are fighting to stay up in their careers, if they have one.

The fruits of our actions grind incredibly slowly, but incredibly fine. It is hard for the modern youth to think about the results of not doing his homework, much less to plan twenty years down the line. I talk often to my children about the fruits of this. The nerds are the successful ones and the cool ones crash and burn. I give them names and stories they can relate to from my high school days and cast a vision before them that they might catch a glimpse of the future and not grow weary in well-doing. *“Therefore my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord.”* 1 Cor15:58. Just as the Lord assures us that our work will not be in vain if we just hang in there, so our children need this constant reminder and encouragement.

B. YOUR CAN RESHUFFLE THE DECK THROUGH PERSONAL INVOLVEMENT.

It is true that there is nothing we can do about Satan and about the world. The fallen spiritual environment just is. We may be successful in altering the micro-environment of the home, but the world system and satanic kingdom grinds on to its inevitable destruction. Thus, our proactive stance must be in changing ourselves, in obedience to God, not in wishing what is was not. We are not to whine about if only the world was a better place, or our finances were better, or our boss were more understanding, or the schools were better, or society were on our side, if, if, if. We need to stop waiting for the world to change and get to work in the area of our own personal responsibilities.

Too many Christian parents are incapacitated by fear. The Word of God says in Isaiah 8:12–13, *“You are not to say, ‘It is a conspiracy!’ Concerning all that people call a conspiracy, you are not to fear what they fear or be in dread of it. It is the Lord of hosts whom you should regard as Holy. And He shall be your fear and He shall be your dread.”*

Christian parents have nothing to fear from the fallen world system. **Christian parents have at their disposal weapons more powerful than the world’s.** The Word of God states clearly in 1 Jn 4:4, *“You are from God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world.”* Christian parents do not need to retreat; they do not need to circle the wagons against the world. They have tools at their disposal that are infinitely more powerful than anything the world has to raise against their children. What they do need to do is get involved.

The reality is that few children ever begin to scratch the surface of the vast reserves of beauty, gifts and talents presented to them at birth by their God. Fewer still have parents who are deeply involved in their lives so as to facilitate the mining of these gifts and talents. You, as an involved Christian parent, can reshuffle the deck. No matter how the world chooses to evaluate your child, he, as created by God, can be a success in the eyes of God, if God's plan is followed. (And let me assure you, on the last day, when we all stand naked before the Judgment Seat of Christ, when the gateway to Hell is open and the portals to Heaven are loosed, when the angels move about separating the wheat from the tares, no one will care about SAT scores, who was voted most popular or who was recruited to what school on what sports scholarship.) All that will matter is the Lamb's Book of Life and the plan of God according to His Holy Word. And what is God's plan for our children? It is simple, concise, direct, and to the point— parental involvement.

Parental Involvement is the key to your child's success— success in terms of self-image, success in terms of his relationship to God and to man, success in terms of his ability to recognize and reject the worldly counterfeits of success.

Our working definition of success in this chapter will be: "To live a fruitful and fulfilled life before God and man, independent of parents and in obedience to God's revealed will."

Notice the phrase, "independent of parents." Have you reconciled yourself to this? Are you preparing your child for this? Are you preparing *yourself* for this?

In the college ministry, I have seen Dennis in many forms, fathers who wanted to control their children rather than prepare them for success and then rejoice in their independence. It is important to begin with this mindset from birth. It is important that we, as parents, keep before us that the ultimate success of all that we do is that our children can live fruitful and fulfilled lives, in God's will and apart from us, i.e. they grow up and leave home.

Dennis was an executive of a large Christian organization. His daughter was involved marginally in our ministry. I got a call from Dennis one morning. He was concerned that his daughter's reports to him about her Christian involvement were not truthful. What he wanted from me were weekly reports on his daughter's activities. He wanted them to be very detailed and he wanted me, if asked by his daughter, to say that I was not doing this. I declined, not only on the moral ground of lying, but because his daughter was an adult in my ministry and I could not ethically reveal her actions to another without serious cause and her consent. Dennis flew into a rage. His control of his daughter was slipping away. He was not prepared for this and could not face it.

Some months later, I was at our national conference grounds and Dennis approached me after lunch. He was very agitated. He had with him a legal pad filled with about a five-page outline. This was his plan for his daughter's life and she was not following it. I was to cooperate with it and when I refused, Dennis again flew into a rage.

II. RESHUFFLING THE DECK—PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN THEIR CHILDREN'S SUCCESS (PRESCHOOL)

A. SUCCESS TO A PRESCHOOLER:

Ultimate success to a preschooler is the love, affection, and approval of Mom and Dad. The forms of this are simple: praise, physical contact, personal attention, and stability of the home.

A preschooler views himself as a success if he is loved by his parents, if he is in a home with resident parents involved in his life, and if he is in a home where the parents love each other. Everything else is just fluff. Remove any one of these and the child's

most formative years are characterized by the subtle conviction and belief that he has somehow failed, and this conviction will cast a shadow over his life for years to come.

Having said this, there are additional actions you can take to lay the groundwork for future success, both in your child's perception of himself and in the world's perception of your child. You can build upon this initial success and, in so doing, prepare your child for the future, which will hold for him a series of successes, one built upon the other.

1. The value of books coupled with the intentional limitation/access to the TV:

I am often asked why I put the value of books in the preschool section. Why not move it to the age where children can read? The importance of precedence cannot be overstated in the home. At an early age, even before they can crawl, we give our children little books to play with. We read to them constantly and books take a central place in the activity of the home. In the college ministry, I saw all too many students hampered in their ability to walk with God because of poor reading ability. John 17:17 says, "Sanctify them in truth, Thy Word is truth." It is imperative for their spiritual

I was in Africa presenting a series of messages. I had been invited to the home of one of the staff. He had just gotten a TV. It was the first he had ever owned. There was only one station available and it was tuned to that channel. The reception was poor, the programming of low quality, the commercials incessant, the quality of picture substandard and the speaker on the set rendered it almost intelligible. Yet, the family sat, fixated. We were to have a great time sharing in the Lord and instead the time was, for the most part, wasted, as the new TV occupied the main part of the room and constantly drew the entire family to it. The saddest thing about it was that this man was totally unaware of the drastic and sudden change that had taken place in the interpersonal dynamics of his family.

well-being that your children become avid and skilled readers. You begin reading to them, then they read to you, and then they read, read, read. You turn your home into a Christian library and reap the results. Our children were not genetically gifted and talented, but they all read at a college level by the sixth grade, which meant their spiritual sophistication in terms of reading the Word of God and Christian books was so much ahead of their peers that they were able to easily defend themselves intellectually and spiritually in the public school system

The TV should not occupy a central spot in the Christian home. For me there is nothing more frustrating than to visit someone in the home and have the TV on. They sit there mesmerized. You try to talk and they try to look at you, but you are always losing eye contact as they gaze back at the TV. The TV has an intoxicating effect on the family, drowning interaction and stifling intellectual development.

In our house, the TV is never in the living room. It belongs in the secondary living area. We kept it on a table in the corner, with a tablecloth over it where it served as an end table with a vase of flowers on top. Later, when we could afford it, we bought a bookcase with cabinets where it could be stored completely out of view.

There should be a monitor policy or some type of restrictive device so that channel access can be controlled in the Christian home . We will not own a TV that does not have a channel-blocking system. Since most cable companies regularly change their format, Eleanor and I monitor the channels regularly, blocking from access those that are unsuitable for the children. If it is unsuitable for a Christian child, then it is unsuitable for a Christian child of God. This has to be done on a regular basis, as distributors know that parents do this and regularly switch programs from one channel to another. Personally, I finally got tired of this cat-and-mouse game and disconnected the cable.

The Christian home should have definite hours set by the parents where TV watching is permitted. In our home, there is no TV after dinner on a school night, Sunday through Thursday. On weekends, there is no TV after breakfast except for special occasions. Children should be playing creatively on weekends, not sitting in front of the TV.

In our home, we check the TV programming guide first and if we find an acceptable TV program, we watch it and then turn the TV off. We do not sit idling in front of the TV, moving from channel to channel. The kids know that if I hear the TV switching from channel to channel I will just have them turn it off and find something to do with their time.

In many of my children's friends' homes, dinner is spent in front of the TV. I can think of few more foolish things for parents to do than to allow this. No, let me take that back. Another unwise decision is often made by mothers who place their unsuspecting and unwitting children in front of the TV to mesmerize them so they can get work done around the house. Rather than discipline and train these children to creatively amuse themselves in an edifying and self-controlled manner, they promote a lack of self-control, while allowing these minds, which are at this point in life social, moral, spiritual and intellectual sponges, to soak up the world view and value system of the most decadent portion of our culture. Now that qualifies as truly foolish.

Saturday night for many families is TV night, especially for the children. In our home, Saturday night is family night. It is spent together, playing games or going on an outing. This is so much fun for the children and is so stimulating for them that they have come to regard the TV as a cultural and intellectual bore.

Since there is no TV in the evening in our home, the family is at peace after dinner. Homework is completed; lunches are made for the next day by the children; they lay out their school clothes and then spend the rest of the evening reading, playing musical instruments, playing games with each other or talking and relating to each other. A typical evening at the Mahon home will find us all in the living room together. Instead of staring google-eyed at a glowing box, heads protruding and mouth propped open, like goldfish out of water, our children are enjoying a family evening together.

I will be in my chair reading my Bible, or at the coffee table helping with homework. One child will be on the couch reading a Christian book; another will be playing the piano; the other two will be playing a game together; El will be cutting coupons or doing her cross stitch. Conversation will be animated, punctuated by laughter. The warmth of the family fills the air as things wind down for the evening. No thought is given to allowing the sin and degradation of the fallen world system, controlled by Satan and his demons and represented by men and women enslaved by their lusts and destined for hell, to enter our home voluntarily through the TV. They must find other homes to fixate.

2. Playing with the child:

Who are the happiest preschoolers on the block? The ones whose fathers play with them. Who are proudest mothers on the block, the ones who all the other mothers envy? The ones whose husbands play with their children. Which father is used as a club with which to batter the unsuspecting husband during an argument on the family? The father down the street who plays with his children. "Why can't you be more like Tom? You never spend any time playing with the children!"

Although only one of our children, Sam, enjoyed sports and pursued it as a personal interest and hobby, all of our children excelled in sports as school kids. This is very important. Nothing will torpedo a self-image faster than to be the last chosen in sports as the team groans in disbelief at their misfortune of having your child on board. The reason they did so well is that from the earliest years, we played with them. They grew up running, throwing, catching, kicking, jumping, climbing and having fun with Mom and Dad. Nothing develops motor skills faster than play.

When we played active games as a family, we never played against each other, only with each other. Games of football or basketball were pretend and always ended in laughing confusion. There is no glory in the big kids sticking it to the little ones, or the parents beating the children. The object is not to beat the child. Don't worry. He will take plenty of beating in the world. The object is not to coach the child. Don't worry, there will be lots of people who will make your child an object... another project. The objective is to love your child, to play, to make your child a success through play and to build a relationship that will stand the test of the turbulent teen years.

No one likes to lose all the time, so I always made sure my children won when they played against me. My fellow ministers have challenged me on this, on the basis of honesty and sportsmanship. My answer is that grace is not necessarily dishonest, though it is unfair. Grace is receiving something that is not earned. For instance, beating Dad at basketball can be an act of grace. As for sportsmanship, what sport is there in beating someone for the fiftieth time?

Although only one of our children, Becca, enjoys writing to the point of wanting to pursue a career in it, all of our children have done extremely well in writing. They have won school competitions, written for the school newspaper and excelled in the social sciences. The reason for this creativity is that from the earliest years we played with our children. Saturday night is family night and out come the games. Nothing develops creative skills like playing with your children— dress up games, make believe, building forts, playing board games, problem-solving, laughing, talking and having fun.

When we play games, we are careful to play games where you do not have to do something bad to your family member to win. It needs to be a game where you excel, not where you destroy. This way we can all congratulate you on your skill, not on your ability to grind those closest to you to a pulp. The American board game Risk is out of the question. This is a game where you win by making others lose. I am not saying this is a bad game, just not the type we play on family night. Another example is Monopoly. Here is a game where throughout the entire evening you hope bad things happen to your family members, and you hope that you prosper at their expense. If we ever do play Monopoly as a family, once we all get property and a few houses we quit, before we have to destroy someone. I wanted my children to grow up to be best friends and promoters of one another and used play to reinforce this. And you know what? They are.

3. Dates with your child:

By going out on weekly dates with your child, beginning with infancy and extending through the teen years, you enhance their self-image as they realize how special they are to Dad. Mom is always there, but Dad is not, and he is taking this time just to spend with just me. Their verbal skills will increase beyond their years as will their social sophistication. Relationally, they will be above the norm and their sphere of experience

will be greatly increased. However, most importantly, they will be the envy of all their friends as they share casually what they did on their date with Dad this week.

One of the early words our children learned to recognize was “date.” Whether it was a trip to the park to swing, or to the corner store to share an ice cream, even at the toddling, highchair stage they looked forward to and enjoyed these dates. Many fathers say, “For the first two years it is all maintenance.” This could not be further from the truth and usually is said to mask their own inadequacies in intimacy and family involvement.

4. Disciplining your child:

Nothing opens more doors earlier than being a well-behaved, well-mannered, obedient child. If you want your child to be a success, discipline and train them to be a success. It opens doors as well as causes others to treat your child as exceptional, as a success. Moreover, as the old axiom goes, success breeds success. In life, success doesn’t just happen, it is planned for, trained for and disciplined for. It is the same with your children. It doesn’t just happen. Roll up your sleeves, wade in there, and make it happen from the very beginning.

III. SUCCESS DURING THE SCHOOL YEARS (UP TO ADOLESCENCE):

A. THE CHANGING RULES

Here, the rules change and it is not enough to have a family where you are a success, but the child now has a world outside his home where success is very important as well. True, success in the home environment is crucial to success outside the home, but at this stage in life, it is not enough. The child will feel a need to succeed before others as well. Parental involvement is the key in this area, just as before. The child need not be left to whims of the capricious world system as to whether he views himself as a success or not during his school years. An involved parent can assure the difference between success and failure here as in other areas.

During the school years, the world rewards attractiveness, experience, social life, and sports, while it disdains these last three: school, work, and family. .It is an ironic and cheap trick of the world that during the school years the world places the value of the items on this list in one order, and the day after high school graduation the order is completely reversed and remains in this new order for the rest of his life. Those very things the world asks your child to sacrifice all else for during the school years, become relatively useless to the child, and those things the world laughed at and played down are now demanded up front by the world for success and happiness. The world is a cruel, cruel joker and this switcheroo is one of the cruelest

I often made this comment to my son Sam. “Nothing that happens on the baseball field tonight will help you get a better job or save your marriage. Once you graduate, that is all that will matter to you. So just go out there and have fun.” I remember when a parent asked me about a particular game the team had lost and I shared this with him. He looked at me as if I had lost my mind.

“Thanks, Dad” The comment caught me by surprise. I had busted Sam loose from his weekend stupor and drug him out of the house to run errands with me. He was not mad about this, as he had nothing to do anyway and knew that I would accommodate his wishes along the way. So, as we walked along the parking lot toward the store, I was surprised to hear him unexpectedly say, “Thanks, Dad.”

As I queried, he pointed to a young man collecting shopping carts in the hot July sun. “See that guy over there? He was the hottest thing in school last year. Varsity baseball, girls, parties, he had it all. Now he is collecting shopping carts in Wal-Mart for a living. Thanks for making me plan for the future, Dad, and thanks for telling all those stories about the cool guys who hit the wall at graduation. They were all true. Thanks, Dad.”

I put my arm around my best bud and we went on into the store. It was going to be a good day.

jokes of all. Your child’s only hope is the involved parent.

The first four gain for your child the title “popular.” A phrase your child will bring home the first day of school and that will shape the fears and hopes of your child for the next twelve years. Then, at graduation, the title disappears for the rest of their life.

For the rest of his life, to be happy and successful, he will need the last three while the other four, the emphasis and heart beat of the school years, become frivolous and inconsequential...

As a result, this next section will be devoted to parental involvement in reshuffling the deck— making sure that when your child finishes school he is prepared, despite the academic social system, to lead a productive and fulfilled life, in the will of God and on his own.

IV. FIVE AREAS OF SUCCESS THROUGH PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT:

A. WORK

Work is not a dirty word. God says, “Do you see a man skilled in his work? He will stand before kings; he will not stand before obscure men.” (Prv 22:9) The ability to work successfully is a lost and dying art among children.

1. Why Parents Fail

Why is hard work so underrated and undervalued by the Christian community in the world today? One of the reasons is the misunderstanding of the biblical teachings concerning work. There are a lot of false doctrines floating around pertaining to work. School is in session and Satan is working overtime to disseminate misinformation concerning this important wisdom and life skill. Five most prevalent and key misconceptions or false doctrines are as follows:

Misconception #1: Work is a result of the fall, of sin in the world. If it were not for Adam, we would not have to work. **Nothing could be further from the truth.** In Gn 2:8, 15, 18– 20, we find Adam being put to work by God in the Garden of Eden before the fall. In fact, the concept of the Garden of Eden as some sort of jungle paradise where fruit fell off the tress and man spent his time in naked leisure and self-indulgence is completely wrong. The word “garden” in the Hebrew speaks of a walled orchard or farm. God put Adam to work on His estate, tending it, farming it and in scientific

Cliff was a hard worker. He had worked on the farm growing up. For as long as he could remember, he had worked. In fact, he almost didn't know what to do if he was not working. He had a nice home, a good career, a fine education and he owed it all to one thing — hard, hard work. However, he wanted something better for his children and as a result was raising a house full of lazy, selfish kids who felt the world owed them a living. They spent their time honing their leisure and artistic skills. They had tutors to help with school, sports camps, art lessons, music lessons, computers, horses, and leisure toys. You name it. In fact, they had all life could offer but the most important thing— an appreciation for and the ability to engage in hard, constructive work to better themselves. Cliff failed to realize that what his father gave him was not a curse, it was a gift and that because of not appreciating this, what he was giving his kids, was not a gift but a curse.

pursuit of the animal kingdom and fauna that inhabited it. It was hard work. In the New Testament, we find Jesus testifying that not only does God the Son work, but God the Father works also. In John 5:17 Jesus Christ states, “My Father is always at His work to this very day, and I, too am working.” Not only that, but in Ephesians 2:10, we are told that when we are saved, one of the benefits of grace is that God gives us work to do

which He prepared for us in ages past. Hard work is by no means a result of the fall, but rather a blessing of salvation. The fall resulted not in work, but rather unfruitful and unfulfilling work. Remember, our goal for our children is that they be both fruitful and fulfilled in their life and in their work.

Misconception #2: God does not want us to experience difficulties in life. “God wants us to be happy, doesn’t He?” Ask this question to 100 Christians and as a rule you will get 100 affirmative answers. If life is hard, if we are experiencing turmoil or deprivation, if our work is hard and challenging, if things are difficult, then we must be out of God’s will. Yet God Himself says in Heb 12:11, “*All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.*” There are times when it is God’s will for us to be “sorrowful;” there are times when it is God’s will for things to be hard. We cannot excuse ourselves from difficult, hard and taxing things in life or in work, with the copout that it must not be God’s will.

Misconception #3: Work is punishment. Many people labor under the delusion that hard work is punishment. They believe that those who are truly sanctified, truly set apart for God, truly blessed by God, will be freed from hard work. In fact, the Word of God clearly teaches in passages such as Ecclesiastes 2:24 & 5:18, that hard work is not punishment from God but rather a reward of God.

- *Ecclesiastes 2:24 There is nothing better for a man than to eat and drink and tell himself that his labor is good. This also I have seen, that it is from the hand of God.*
- *Ecclesiastes 5:18 Here is what I have seen to be good and fitting: to eat, to drink and enjoy oneself in all one's labor in which he toils under the sun during the few years of his life which God has given him; for this is his reward.*

Misconception #4: Work should be fun: In my college ministry years, I spent many a discipleship session trying to help Christian students about to enter the job market to understand that the reason there are two different words in the English language, one for “fun” and one for “work,” is that they are not the same. Ecclesiastes 2:10 teaches us that work may be fulfilling and that is a blessing from God, but work is work and fun is fun and God wants us to work and work hard. Ecclesiastes 3 teaches us that there is a time for planting and harvesting, for weeping and mourning and that these are different from the times of laughing, rejoicing and dancing. There is indeed a time for fun, but work is work and it is wrong to expect it to be fun and it is wrong to cop out of hard work because it is not fun. It is especially wrong to spiritualize our aversion to hard, honest work.

Misconception #5: Work is a necessary evil that you work to deliver yourself from. God says, “*The desire of the sluggard puts him to death, for his hands refuse to work.*” (Prv 21:25). In God’s eyes, the sluggard is looking for ways not to work and this way leads to death. Our desire should be for hard work. It is modeled by God and by His Son; it is His call to us as believers; and it is His special gift to us. It is not something to be avoided; it is not something from which we look for release; it is our life and our duty. We are to be laborers, hard workers.

A second reason hard work is lost to many of today’s children is that it must be taught. Parents for one reason or another simply fail to instill this virtue, this wisdom and life skill, this important perspective into the life of their child. A number of excuses emerge but all with the same result: the child grows up not knowing the value of hard work.

The Protective Parent: “I don’t want my children to have to go through what I did,” or “I don’t want my children to go through life without the things that I went without.” No matter the case, the parent needs to understand that he is protecting the child from something that God would have the child trained in.

The Busy Parent: “It is easier to just do it myself.” Now I won’t for a minute attempt to argue the truth of this statement. It is, indeed, easier to do it yourself. In fact, my wife Eleanor has concluded that for most parents who are not disciplining and training their children, philosophy is just a smoke screen. The real reason is that it is just too much trouble to bother with. In most cases, it is easier to do it yourself, both in the time it takes to get the job done, in the amount of supervision it requires and in the quality of the job. The thing to remember is that the objective is not the job, but the training the child receives, the relationship this develops between you, and the job itself.

The Perfectionist Parent: “If I want it done right, I have to do it myself.” It drives this parent crazy to see the mistakes the child is making. The bed looks like it was made by a five year old, the dishes look like they were set by a five year old, and the porch looks like it was done by a five year old. The patience is not there and the lack of perfection just drives you crazy. Eventually you have to step in to do it yourself. It does not matter that your child is being cheated out of valuable training, it does not matter that you are constantly reinforcing to your child that he cannot do anything right, it does not matter that you are damaging your relationship with your child, all that matters now is that the job is done right.

The Affluent Parent: “We pay people to do that.” In this child’s home the laundry and pressing is done at the cleaners, the yard is done by maintenance men, and the house is kept clean by a woman who comes in to do it. What the parent does not realize is that, just as in the busy parent, efficiency does not dictate training, so in the affluent parent, economics should not dictate training. The child should grow up learning the value of work.

In our home, we have had on occasion a lady who comes in and cleans twice a month. There are certain things that are off limits to her: the children’s room, the children’s play room, the children’s bathroom, the laundry, the dishes, the trash and any sweeping or cleaning outside. These are the children’s duties. They all have daily, weekly and monthly duties and whether or not we can pay someone to do these duties is not the issue. The issue is their training in this area of work.

The Lazy Parent: “Life is more than work.” Unfortunately, here is where we get to the heart of the matter in most cases. A parent who, as a child, never learned the value of hard work is loathe to teach their children this virtue. They are in rebellion against it and it convicts them of their own sin. This parent makes a virtue out of this vice, just as they attempt to make a virtue out of the vice of not disciplining their children.

2. The Successful Worker

What then is a successful worker? The Bible gives us a good indication. The following are five biblical traits of a successful worker...

A Successful Worker is a Teachable Worker: The Word of God says, *“Poverty and shame will come to him who neglects discipline, but he who regards reproof will be honored.”* For your child to become a worker who is prosperous and honored he must grow up with an appreciation for discipline.

Mindy looked up at her mother after receiving her spanking for not concentrating as she set the table. “Mommy” she said, “I am lucky I have a Mommy who loves me and will spank me. Otherwise, I wouldn’t know how to do anything, like my friends.”

My son Sam is on the baseball team. One of the reasons the coach has him on is not because of his innate athletic ability, but rather because, “Of all the young men I have worked with, yours is the easiest to coach.”
Liz’s science teacher told me, “The thing that makes your child different is that she wants to learn, she wants to do it right, and she wants to know when she is doing it wrong.”

This of course presupposes, you are committed to disciplining your child, you are committed to training your child, and you are committed to doing it with him.

A Successful Worker is a Trustworthy Worker: The Word of God says, *“He who tills his land will have plenty of food, but he who follows empty pursuits will have poverty in plenty. A faithful man will abound with blessings, but he who makes haste to be rich will not go unpunished.”* (Prv 25:19; 28:19, 20)

The biggest problem any supervisor has on the job is being able to trust the workers to work in his absence. The biggest problem a teacher has is to trust the children to behave if she steps out of the room. The biggest problem you have as a parent is that you find yourself saying, “If I just turn my back for a minute...” or “If I just let them out of my sight for a minute...”

God gives us the model of the trustworthy worker in Proverbs 6:6– 8; *“Go to the ant, O sluggard, observe her ways and be wise, which having no chief, officer or ruler, prepares her food in the summer, and gathers her provision in the harvest.”* If your child, by the age of two, had learned, “no,” “obey,” “come,” “open/give” and “hush,” then you would not be saying this. To discipline your child as a trustworthy worker—to give him tasks to do and then be able to leave him unsupervised and know the task will be done correctly, is a great gift to your wife, to your family, to your school, to your child’s future employer, but most of all to your child, both in his relationship God and with man.

A Successful Worker is a Hard Worker: God says, *“All hard work brings a profit, but mere talk leads only to poverty. One who is slack in his work is brother to one who destroys. She sets about her work vigorously, her arms are strong for her tasks.”* (Prv 14:23; 18:9; 31:17)

God gives us a great example of a hard worker in King Hezekiah. The Word of God says of him, *“... every work which he began in the service of the house of God in the law and in the commandment, seeking his God, he did it with all his heart and prospered,”* (2 Chr 31:20–21). Your children need to learn to work hard. They need to be given hard tasks in hard situations and learn to do them without complaining. They need to learn the satisfaction of tackling a hard job, of completing it with a high standard, and knowing it is a job well done. They need the confidence that they can finish something hard, that while others may shy away, they know their strengths and this job does not intimidate them. You can give this gift to your child by disciplining and training him to work hard.

A Successful Worker is an Uncomplaining Worker: Everywhere I go, I hear people whining about their work. There is nothing more irritating than to be in a restaurant, an office, a church or a home and hear the individual whining as he goes about his work. I hear these complaints often from young parents in my seminars. “Parenting is so hard. The job is so hard. The house, the kids, the yard, the ministry, it is all hard. People don’t appreciate me. I am unfulfilled and misused. The kids are out of control; the job is out of control; the people in the church won’t support me; the church doesn’t appreciate me; whine, whine, whine, whine.”

God says, “*Here is what I have seen to be good and fitting: to eat, to drink and enjoy oneself in all one’s labor in which he toils under the sun during the few years of his life which God has given him; for this is his reward,*” (Eccl 5:18). Look around, see your home, see your kids, see your job, see your spouse, see your church— this is your work, this is your reward from God. As Ann Landers so quaintly puts it, “Quitrebellyachinangetowork.” You give a child a great gift if you require a thankful pleasant attitude when they are working. Do not allow your child to grow into a whiner. It is a privilege to have hands, feet and eyesight, to have muscle coordination and the ability to think though and do a task. It is a privilege to have work to do and to have the freedom to do it. It is a privilege to have a social and family system that requires work. Not all have these privileges, and they are easily lost and taken away. Disciplining and training your child to be an uncomplaining worker is a great gift.

A Successful Worker is a Skilled Worker: There is a skill to work. It is an art— a thing of beauty when done right. It is a great gift to teach your child to be skillful in his work. To learn the details, the nuances, the little things that separate it from just another job, but a thing that witnesses to our salvation and our God. God says, “*Do you see a man skilled in his work? He will stand before kings; he will not stand before obscure men,*” (Prv 22:9). Encourage high standards in your child’s work. Allow him to experiment with the task, to be creative, to devise better ways of doing things. Reward extra effort, reward learning, reward creativity but do not let evasiveness on the part of the child become an excuse not to work hard. Do not tolerate slothful or shoddy work. Through discipline and training, give your child the gift of being a skilled worker.

If you have the time to do it over, then you had the time to do it right the first time.

—Lorne Sanny, Intentional
Director of the Navigators
(ret.)

3. The Training

If you teach your children to work, you will put them on the road to success. A good point to remember when you set out on this process is that working with your child changes this process from slave labor to co-labor. Our children work for their success. True, it frees us up in many ways, but not to be free from work. We are still required by God to work, to be good stewards of His possessions and models to our children. Teaching your child to work, frees you not from work, but rather allows you to raise the standard of what is being done.

A widow in our church hurt her hip. Each Saturday, after finishing our yard work, I would take Sam with me to do her yard work. He was about in the third grade. We would take turns mowing, raking and getting her lawn together. Afterwards, she would give us lemonade and usually have an ice cream bar for Sam. She would sit and talk of days gone by and then see us off. It was good for Sam to learn to work hard and help the weak on those hot, humid, dog days of summer in central Oklahoma.

The children help in the kitchen. They set, clear, do the dishwasher and hand dishes. During this time, though, Eleanor has been cooking the meal. It is not as though she is in the living room eating bon bons and watching TV while Cinderella slaves away.

The children mow the lawn, edge and sweep up each week. It is not as though while they are doing this I am sitting inside watching TV with a beer on my belly while Eleanor sleeps. Eleanor is out in her flower garden; I am working in the garden or trimming trees or doing other yard work. We are teaching the children to work hard, to pull together as a family, not to be slaves of slothful parents.

a. Example of Some Tasks: Pre-school to grade three, the child should:

- Be cleaning and taking care of his room
- Be cleaning and taking care of his play area
- Begin helping set and clear the table
- Be responsible for putting up toys
- Make their sack lunch for school or mother's day out

b. Example of Some Tasks: Fourth to sixth grade, the child should..

- Take care of the pet if he has one
- Be contributing to any yard work that needs to be done
- Vacuuming, dusting and doing bathrooms
- Washing the car
- Cleaning the garage
- Taking out the trash
- Set, clear, wipe table, do dishwasher and hand dishes and put all dishes away.
- Prepare meals when help is needed
- Serving guests refreshments etc. and being host when company arrives

4. TRAPS

Example of some traps parents fall into when teaching their children the value of hard work...

The money trap—

“How much will you pay me?”

Response, “Nothing, I’ll just take it out of your food and lodging bill”

The fairness trap—

“That’s not my job!”

Response, “Your job is to do what I tell you”

The legal trap—

“You didn’t say I had to do that, too...”

Response, “You know when I give you a job you are to do it right, to do it thoroughly and to do it the first time.”

The guilt trap—

“Nobody has to do this stuff!” “I never get to have any fun!”

Response, “Good, that tells me I am doing my job right.”

5. CONCLUSION:

Keep in mind the three goals in working with your child, in this order...

- The relationship
- Teaching the child to appreciate hard work
- The task itself

Most parents order it backwards...

- The task itself
- Teaching the child to appreciate hard work
- The relationship

That is why most of you have such poor memories of working with your parents. Remember, when the job comes first, sooner or later you will push the child aside and do it yourself. Remember *the objective is to draw near to your child* by helping your child to be a success. When your child is faced with difficult decisions in life, he should be able to reflect back and consider how Dad was instrumental in his success in the past, how close that drew them together and how he will stick with Dad since this is a proven path to follow.

B. SCHOOL

Grades and the in-crowd are not the only standard by which success is measured. As the parent launches the child on his academic career, he should remember that in the context of modern life, though grades and social standing may be the key to economic success they are not guarantors of spiritual or personal success from the standpoint of the Word of God. In fact, 1 Cor 8:1 states, “...*Knowledge makes arrogant, but love edifies.*” In fact, in the revelation of Scripture, nothing is ever said of Jesus Christ as having had any formal type of education, nor is this alluded to in the lives of any of the twelve disciples He chose. We may infer it, but it is not spoken of in Scripture.

As a result, we as parents must be sure that we stress the educational aspect of our child’s development to maintain a balance of values and priorities in this pursuit. It is my observation that for most parents, their personal involvement in terms of disciplining and training of their children lies almost exclusively in the realm of educational advancement. In comparison with personal attention given to education, character and spiritual training

are almost dwarfed. Is it any surprise then that so many children choose to emphasize education over their spiritual walk with God during the college years when this value has been modeled and promoted by the parents?

Take away the spiritual superstructure provided by the parents' own walk with God and you will often find very little actual training and involvement in the spiritual and character development of the child by the parent. They merely suppose that in college this superstructure will remain, when exactly the opposite is true. As a result, parents would do well to balance the emphasis of their involvement with their children between the three, educational, spiritual and character development.

Thus, the goal for a good education becomes not the pursuit of wealth and social standing, but the glory of God. The Word of God states, *“And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father. Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men.”* (Col 3:17, 23) This is our motivation for excelling in all areas of life. However, in the pursuit of excellence, we must be tempered with what the Word of God says concerning worldliness, *“Do not love the world, nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father but is from the world.”* This tension, the pursuit of excellence versus separation from the world, is very real and is an important consideration in the training of our children.

Most mistakes in values are made here. Remember: values are caught more than they are taught. To the child, both church and school are merely institutions with competing programs. If the child sees the parent completely preoccupied with school, with the quality of education, with the quality of homework, with the advancement and achievement in tests and extracurricular activities, while at the same time only a marginal interest is shown in Sunday school material and preparation, in Bible reading, in Scripture memory, in advancement and achievement in extra church and ministry activities, then the child will draw the conclusion: “Life is about education, not about spiritual pursuits. Spiritual pursuits are purely secondary; to please my parents and advance successfully in life, I must give myself, not to God and the Word of God, but to knowledge and educational pursuits.” When the child reflects on your priorities, will he think, “When I had a big test, they kept me home from church. When there was a big game, I skipped church to be there. Church must be somewhere below school and sports.”

This is a good time for parents to reevaluate their own priorities and the emphasis of life they are giving to their children. It is important for the parent to ask himself serious questions about his view of his child's success. What if your child does not go to college but is a blue-collar worker? He joins the plumbers union, or she goes to cosmetology school? They marry fine Christian spouses, both are leaders in the church and witnesses to the community? They live in a trailer house on the edge of town, but are happily married and begin to have children right out of high school? They are poor as church mice, but devoted parents and church members? Tell the truth. Would you be happy with these choices? For what reason would these choices disturb you, for spiritual or material reasons?

Contrast this with a different scenario. Your child continues through college and earns an advanced professional degree. Your child marries a similarly well-placed spouse and they advance quickly in their careers. They live in an exclusive area of town, drive only

the best cars and are seen in the right places. They are active in community civic organizations. Their names appear periodically in the papers. They travel internationally and become well known throughout the community. They do not live in open sin, but their Christian lives are decidedly nominal. They attend worship service semi-regularly, see that the children go to Sunday school as often as their busy schedule permits, but that is about it. Due to their dual careers, their marriage is not the greatest. Their family has all the problems associated with this lifestyle, though not ending in divorce. In all honesty, which of these two children would you brag to your friends about? Which would you feel you had been the most successful in raising?

1. Why Parents Fail

Why is it so hard to strike a balance here? Why is it so difficult to not present to our children a double standard? First, we know that once a road is started down in life, as an adult, it is very hard to change. As parents read the above scenario, they think first of the economic hardships the first couple will face, and would wish for their children the spiritual success of the first couple with the economic and educational success of the second. It is when we have to choose between the two that our values become muddled and these values must be clear to our children if they are going to be able to couple both educational and spiritual success.

Many conservative evangelicals chide the health, wealth and prosperity theology of our Pentecostal brethren, yet at the same time emphasize this same doctrine though a different channel in the raising of their children. You may be asking about this time how I can speak of drawing near to your child by helping him to become a success in scholastic endeavors, while at the same time challenging so aggressively the accomplishments that this will bring about. The emphasis of this introduction is to challenge the parent to bring about balance in their own lives and in the lives of their children— the values of excellence in all things, including education, espoused in Col 3:17, 23 with the exhortations to separate from the world in 1 Jn 2:15–16.

2. The Successful Student

For the Christian, success in school is the same as work. In fact, for the Christian student, school *is* his work. As a result, the same virtues that are necessary to be a successful worker are necessary for being a successful student. The parent should, therefore, be emphasizing these virtues as he prepares his child for success in the work world through his educational development. Being teachable, being trustworthy, being a dedicated and uncomplaining worker are also virtues of a good student. If developed during the educational years, they will put the child in a good position for success as he enters his career.

Notice in the list of virtues that I defined as success, I did not include, grade point average, social standing, or personal ministry. These, rather, are variables and the result of how the child was created and gifted by God. It is possible, however, to achieve these results in other ways as well, since both non-Christian as well as Christian young people excel in these areas. Thus, we stress the biblical virtues and their spiritual roots, and leave the results to God and to the child.

3. The Training

How do you draw near to your child by helping him to become a success in school? If your child effectively applies the virtues of work and the wisdom and life skills of his preschool training years, he will be a success in school.

Preschool: The home environment, coupled with training in wisdom and life skills, is of far greater value than any preschool program. It is here, in the home, that the child learns the four skills that will guarantee his success during the early years of school: Hush— to sit quietly; No— to not be disruptive; Obey— to pay attention and follow instructions; Come and Open/Give— to be a cooperative helpful student.

In a classroom full of noisy, squirmy children who boldly challenge authority, your child will be an oasis, a special child, a child in whom the teacher sees hope and reward in her labor. This child—your child— will then be singled out for special attention and his reputation will go before him. Contrastingly, no amount of academic preparation or innate intellectual ability can salvage the reputation of an unruly, ill-mannered, disobedient child.

When El returned to teaching, she had confirmed to her what we always expected. Before school starts each year, there is a draft every bit competitive as any draft held in professional sports. At stake are the “good kids” and the “bad kids.” Virtually every child in the elementary program is ranked to some degree and the competition is high. The good kids are pegged good and are expected to do well, and in the majority of the cases perform to their expectations. The poorly-behaved kids are pegged bad, are expected to behave poorly and in the majority of the cases perform to the expectations of the teachers. By the start of second grade, the damage is done. You do your child a great service by teaching him the wisdom and life skills of the well-mannered and obedient child before school begins.

In the 70’s, Princeton University did a clinical study on the effects of teacher perception and expectations on the performance of children. In a series of elementary schools, the students were identified as either gifted and talented, average, or problem children. The children in each grouping were selected arbitrarily, their actual abilities in no way reflected the confidential information given to the teachers. At the end of the year, in each classroom the children performed almost exactly as perceived by the teacher, both academically and socially, as opposed to their actual abilities.

In a recent article in Readers Digest, a couple wrote on the realistic raising of children. Here they encouraged parents not to tell their children they were smart, pretty or wonderful, if they were truly not. I don’t know where these parents were coming from, but I am glad they did not raise my children. Your child will be bombarded with information on his inadequacies all through life and especially the school years. He does not need to hear that he is sub-par at home. In fact, he needs to hear the exact opposite. The Psalmist says, “*Thou didst form my inward parts; thou didst weave me in my mothers womb. I will give thanks to Thee for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; wonderful are Thy works and my soul know it very well...my frame was not hidden from Thee, when I was made in secret and skillfully wrought...*” (Ps 139:13–16). God made your child; he was made in a fearful, wonderful and skillful manner. Your child is just as God would have him and a wonderful child of God. This needs to be reinforced repeatedly.

Contrastingly, Reader's Digest recently did a poll of all the living Miss America Pageant winners and asked them the following question, “If you could change something about yourself, would you and what would it be?” All the Miss Americas, universally, would have made major changes in both their personalities and their physical

appearances. Here we have some of the most talented, poised, beautiful and vivacious women in the world dissatisfied with themselves. The problem with children today is not that they have an unrealistically positive view of themselves but rather that they do not realize how special or how wonderful God has made them. You give a child a great gift if, during the preschool years, you convince him that he is a wonderful, beautiful, gifted, child of God.

Elementary through Middle School: Teachers are like anyone else: they don't like pouring money down a rat hole. One key to your child's success is that his teacher believes in him, i.e. that he is a good investment. There are certain things that a parent can do that will make a teacher take notice and, consciously or not, change their behavior toward your child. The father especially should make his presence known. Though these activities are important for both parents, when the father engages in them they have an even a greater impact. They are as follows...

- **Meeting the teacher periodically through the year. (In these conferences, I make sure the teacher understands that I am on his/her side and that my child will make the changes necessary to be a success in the classroom and that I will be personally involved in this.)**
- **Attending all school and classroom functions**
- **Serving as an officer in parent/school organization**
- **Signing up to help as a volunteer in the classroom to tutor, sponsor parties, help out etc.. (Teachers are loathe to alienate a parent who is a blessing, and they want the child to do well out of a sense of obligation for the time and effort the parent puts in.)**

Since Eleanor chose not to work outside the home, she was available to help and serve in the classroom. This presence had a very positive impact on our child's education as the teachers greatly appreciated it. Contrastingly, we had friends who were always "policing" and complaining about their child's education. This type of "involvement" has just the opposite result in the educational advancement of the child.

As a parent, I have served as president of the Parent Teacher organization of both the elementary and junior high schools my children have attended. At the high school level, I have served on various boards such as academic excellence committee and school and dress code committee. I have chaperoned parties, dances, field trips and volunteered to tutor newly arrived international students in English. These activities enhance my children's standing in school without embarrassing them, as well as broadening my own ministry sphere of influence.

- **Eating meals with your child during the lunch hour and staying for recess**
Early in my parenting years, I was fortunate to have Mondays off and always enjoyed having a meal with each of my children on a rotating basis. When I first did this with Becca, she wanted me to eat with her each week. My response was, "No, Becca, I don't want to wear this out. We have twelve years to do this. Let's just keep it to once a month or so." However, this is not true. There comes a time when having your father sit with you at lunch is not so cool. So, with the other children, I ate with them every opportunity I got and became quite a celebrity. As they got older, I found that although it is not cool to have Dad sit with you in the lunch room it is very cool

to have Dad check you out of school and take you out to lunch. The teachers really appreciate this special father-child involvement, and it is reflected in their increased admiration and involvement in your child's life.

In later years, my schedule changed to where I had a regular Monday through Friday schedule like most people. As I reflected I found that like most men, I took working lunches. Why not include my children once a week? I began doing so immediately. When I do my weekly schedule, I always include lunch with one of the children. I have found most men take working lunches and are free, if they so desire, to use one of these lunches with their children. It has been a great blessing to me and I would encourage you to make use of the same opportunity.

- **Meeting the principal, disciplinarian and counselors during the school year.**

“Mr. Jones will see you now, Rev. Mahon.” I could see the concern in the principal's secretary's face as she led me in. No one ever makes an appointment with a principal unless there is trouble and she could only wonder what this was all about. Principal Jones rose stiffly and shook my hand. We exchanged pleasantries and then he braced himself for the worst. He was used to these parental visits and had emotionally prepared himself. His demeanor quickly changed as I began, “Principal Jones, I just want you to know what an outstanding job I feel you are doing in running this high school and want you to know if there is ever anything I can do to support you, you can call on me.”

I continued praising him, his staff and the school and then excused myself, knowing what a busy schedule a man of such importance must have. Principal Jones, with a broad smile on his face, walked me out of the office in front of the whole staff. We parted warmly and he mentioned my name to the secretary. When Sam got home from school that day he mentioned that Principal Jones had stopped him in the hall and greeted him by name. The office staff always helped my children along because I went out of my way to make their difficult jobs a little easier.

Each year at the end of school, during the teacher and office work day, I drop off a thank you cake for the staff and have each of our children take flowers to their teachers and the office staff responsible for their records. This thankful, uncomplaining example on El's and my part goes a long way in helping our children develop the virtue of being uncomplaining in work and school.

One of the reasons it is so easy for me to check my kids in and out of school for our lunches is that I drop off a dozen doughnuts several times a semester at the attendance office. I am known as Rev. Mahon, the doughnut man. “It's OK, he's the doughnut man,” is the attendance officer's reply if there is a question about my taking the kids to lunch with me.

Without fail, children will have, from time to time, a difficult teacher. Perhaps the teacher is emotionally immature; perhaps the teacher genuinely does not like your child; and perhaps the teacher really does “have it in for your child.” Whatever the case, it is important for the child to work through this with the help of the parent. Life will be full of difficult relationships with authority and the parent should not always run to the aid of the child, muting important lessons that God has to teach. By the same token, I never let an insensitive teacher spoil my child's love for a discipline, wreck my child's confidence, or keep my child from being in the running for an award. Generally, if a parent is too aggressive the teacher will be very

cooperative and helpful in the Principal/Parent conference, and then turn on the child in every subjective area left to the teacher.

The best way to handle this is two-fold. First, teach the child to work hard, be respectful and not under any circumstance give the teacher cause for his or her actions. Then, on your part, converse regularly with the teacher, letting the teacher know that you are concerned about your child. Let them know that you desire that the child does well and that you want regular phone conferences, at least once a week, until the child's situation improves. Few teachers are vindictive enough to use up this much time for the sake of singling out a child.

In every case, the situation improved within two weeks and the phone conferences were able to stop. This does not mean you harass teachers into favoritism. It just means, that if your child starts to not like school, or discipline, or begins to show problems in an area, then you want the teacher to know that you expect to work together as a team and solve this problem.

Now this should be a rare event in a child's scholastic career. Maybe happening only once or twice over a twelve year period. If you find your child blaming every setback on a teacher's prejudice, then this reflects a character flaw in the child, either in relating to authority or in accepting personal responsibility for their actions.

No matter which case it is, I never discuss this plan of action with the child or criticize the teacher to the child. You only hurt the child's chance of relating successfully to the teacher and appreciating the sovereignty of God by berating and blaming all failures on the part of authority. This is not a wisdom and life skill you want to teach your child.

- **Dressing professionally**

Whenever I go to the school, I always have on a coat and tie. This is no small concession, considering Monday is my day off. I want the teachers and administrators to know that we are a professional family and that we are to be taken seriously. This is a subtle way of communicating this.

My children all have to have their schoolwork and clothes laid out the night before. Teachers notice a child who comes to school well-groomed and ready to go to work. A child who is dressed neatly, who has all of their schoolwork and utensils together, and is ready to begin the day is considered a good student and treated that way.

I never allowed the children to be on the cutting edge of school fashion. They did not have to dress like nerds, but neither did I allow their hairstyles or clothes to reflect the latest trend. There are certain circles of children where fashion is *everything* and to be included you must push the envelope. I was happy to not have my children included in this group and this is one of the ways I protected them from it.

The days when you can assume your child will be adequately educated in school and then can come home and play all day are over. Parental involvement is essential, both because of the growing complexities of modern education and technology and because of the shift in the abilities of students in the declining social atmosphere of the twenty first century. Eleanor and I found ourselves:

Reading to our children: First us to them and then them to us. Every day after school from day one, until we were satisfied with their reading, we did this.

God's Word to us is written and it is very important for their spiritual well-being that they have a very high reading level early in life.

I can remember sitting down before dinner and having my child read to me. Some teachers have a chart and reward a child for reading books. When this was the case, we always made it our goal to read the most. Others do not. If this is the case, I would make my own. Either way, during the early years, the children all read to me for at least 30 minutes before the evening meal.

Math Drills: Find out where your child is in math and work with him every day after school at that level. The computer revolution is a mathematics revolution and to survive your child must have a strong grounding in mathematics. If the teacher is too lazy or overworked to give your child homework, go to the nearest teacher supply store and buy workbooks for your child to use. There are also some excellent educational computer programs for children if you have a computer.

After dinner, I would work on the children with math drills until they had mastered addition, subtraction, multiplication and division. They would work with me until they could do successfully flash cards up to twelve in each discipline. I can remember working long and hard with them on this. We would go through a set, separating out the ones they did not get instantly, work on those, shuffle the set and then do it again. This was for an hour each evening after dinner until they had it down.

Homework: We check all homework, but do not do the work for them. All tests must be brought home and all missed questions corrected and then the test taken back to the teacher and initialed, whether the teachers requires this or not.

Tests: When the children come to the dinner table, they bring their homework and test calendar with them. We can take a look at this and make sure they are studying for tests, doing homework and pacing themselves on their projects. Rather than us continually trying to keep track of things, they must keep their calendar updated and all we have to do is scan it before or after the evening meal.

Rewards: We come up with definite tangible rewards for good grades. They set the goals, we agree on the reward and then they are off and running.

Liz was great on long-term planning, so one big reward to work towards for good grades for the year was fine with her. Becca, on the other hand, lived more in present. The end of the school year was a lifetime away. For her, rewards were broken down into individual grading periods. For Sam, it was even shorter periods. Small rewards for each week he stayed up on his homework and testing calendar. These small rewards for Sam were not enough in and of themselves to motivate, so that had to be coupled with a major disciplinary action for any negligence as well. Adjust the stick and the carrot for each individual child.

Supplemental: There are several things we did to try to make sure our home was conducive to educational growth.

- First, we put the TV in an obscure location and limited access.

- Second, we turned our home into a library, emphasizing Christian biographies and autobiographies, the classics from literature during the great Christian eras of literature and Christian novels.
- Third, we invested in a computer, with an emphasis on educational programs.
- Fourth, we invested in an encyclopedia that read at their level.
- Fifth, we got them all their own library cards and took weekly trips to the library guiding them in their selections and insuring quality reading material in the house at all times
- Finally, we joined a book club that specialized in classic literature. We stayed with this until we had a nice library of the classics in our home. Thus, even though the schools may not emphasize these classics, they were there for our children. Many is the time, when bored and nothing to do, they would go to the shelf and pull down one of the classics. (Remember— no TV after dinner). All of these things were completely open to the children and they often found themselves browsing through them and reading things they otherwise would not.

4. TRAPS:

There are a number of traps that parents can unwittingly fall into in this area:

The money trap—

“How much will you pay?”

Response, “Nothing. Your grades are your payment, but you will be disciplined if you do not work hard at your school work.”

The fairness trap—

“My teacher just doesn’t like me.”

Response, “You do not have to be liked by your teacher to do well. All you have to do is obey, cooperate and get your work done well and on time. I will however go in and talk to your teacher, find out what you are doing to make her not like you and some changes will be made in your behavior towards her.”

The legal trap—

“But she didn’t say we had to do it this way”

Response, “It is your responsibility to know when, where, what and how your work is to be done. If you did not ask the questions then that is your problem, not the teacher’s.”

The guilt trap—

“Nobody has to do this!” or “I never get to have any fun!”

Response, “Great, that tells me I am doing a good job as a parent. It makes me feel good to know that you are getting attention that is above and beyond the norm.”

A special note here about living with mistakes.

In the ministry, I will always let the leadership make the mistakes they will have to live with, but I will intervene if it is a mistake with which I will have to live. The same is true with your child and school. I will **not** let my child “learn from a mistake” that will affect their long-term educational abilities and thus, my financial and time commitment to their education simply due to their limited experience and insight.

When Becca was in junior high, her particular junior high fed in to two high schools. One was near by and was an exceptional school, specifically geared toward college preparation. The other was quite a distance, was not as good a school educationally, was poorly run and not considered very safe. To qualify for the former, you had to take a language proficiency test in a foreign language of your choice and pass. Becca and her best friend Tina did not like foreign languages so they did not want to take them in the sixth through 8th grade.

Tina’s Dad decided to let Tina learn from her mistake and as a result, she ended up in the other school. This was a mistake that not just Becca would have to learn from but we as parents would suffer the consequences as well, (increased tuition for college, driving across town for school functions, emotional wear and tear due to worry). As a result, we did not give Becca the option when it came to course selection. She signed up for French each year, passed the entrance test and was admitted to the better school. We always review course and class selection closely because we have to live with these mistakes.

5. CONCLUSION:

Keep in mind the goals of being a success in school.

First, draw near to your child through making your child a success. You are laying here the precedent and groundwork that your decisions can be trusted and relied upon, because of your proven history in helping your child to be successful.

Second, develop and nurturing those biblical virtues that will be used by the child to be successful in the workplace.

Third, develop in the child an awareness that success is being pursued for the glory of God and not for material advancement or worldly standing.

Fourth, enable your child to live apart from home, being fruitful and fulfilled, at peace with God and man.

C. SPORTS:

The Word of God says that, “*The glory of young men is their strength...*” (Prv. 20:29) and again, when speaking of the godly woman, the Word of God states, “*She girds herself with strength, and makes her arms strong.*” and again, “*Strength and dignity are her clothing...*” (Prv 31:17 & 25)

In God’s eyes, be it men or women, keeping His temple in good condition, being physically fit and strong, is an important attribute.

Now it is true that this can be overdone. Physical prowess must never replace trust in God. The Word of God also says, “...a warrior is not delivered by his great strength... the eye of the Lord is on those who fear Him...” (Ps 33:16 – 18) And we have in Samson the example of a strong man who came to ruin because he took his mind off God and in Absalom, a man who developed himself into a very handsome man yet came to ruin for the same reason.

Nonetheless, the Bible has many references to sports and physical strengths (1 Cor 9:24– 27), when it refers to man’s relationship with God and the discipline needed to finish the Christian life strong. Any cultural vices you may find in this area should not be over reacted to, as we seek to start our children down the road of life with strong, physically-fit bodies.

Yet, in spite of this and in spite of the fact that athletic ability opens the door to acceptance in almost all circles of life, many parents fail to consider it in their child’s development.

1. Why Parents Fail:

In my observation, one of the main reasons parents fail in this area is that they are simply too busy, tired or preoccupied with their lives to take an active interest in this area.

In the first grade, Sam really wanted to play baseball. Each day after work, we would throw the ball and practice hitting. It was great fun and at the first practice, Sam was way ahead of the other boys. He came back very excited and had already been singled out by the coach for one of the more important positions. After the first practice, he gave me a big hug. He knew that I was committed to his success and that one of the reasons he had done so well was the time I had given him.

Gordon was an executive in a large mission organization and his daughter was involved in our ministry. One of the really fun things that the college students in our ministry enjoyed doing on Saturday mornings after prayer and Bible study was to go out and play some coed sports before eating together. Gordon’s daughter however, stood for the most part on the sidelines during this time. She was encouraged to join in, but she had no confidence. She once confided that her father just would not make the time to teach her the basics of popular sports when she was young, even though she would ask. As a result, she was always behind in school and now just too self-conscious to learn.

My commitment to Sam’s success in baseball over the years continued. I noticed that the coaches' kids got more attention and better assignments, so, even though I had a very limited knowledge of baseball myself, I volunteered each year as an assistant. When Sam grew out of my limited skills and knowledge, I hired a college student to “tutor” him in the basics. Later, I sent Sam to baseball camp. Sam grew up knowing my involvement in baseball

Paul was sharing with me over a cup of coffee during a conference. He was a little agitated. He had been to his son’s first baseball game and it had been a disaster. Now nobody expects their children to be star quality at the first grade level, but his son could not hit the ball off the “T”, ran in the wrong direction, could not throw and embarrassed himself and never wanted to play again. This could have been avoided. Paul confided that even though he knew his son was interested in baseball and had joined a team, he

Jerry was a nerd. He was brilliant, but a nerd. He freely admitted this. In fact, he reveled in it. His interests were sedentary and he had little interest in sports. Jerry also had four sons. Jerry had often mentioned to me how lonely he was during the high school years. While others were active outdoors, he would often find himself playing his violin or alone on the computer. I challenged Jerry about his anti-establishment bias towards organized athletics and how it could contribute to the same lonely experience for his children. Jerry agreed, but he is still too busy enjoying his rebellion against those who left him out to think of the fact that he is sending his sons needlessly down the same road.

was focused on his success in life. This influenced other aspects of our relationship in a positive way. Sam by no means agreed with all the decisions I made concerning his life, but I do not think he ever doubted that my motivation was his success. This covers a multitude of sins.

A second reason parents fail in this area is a personal bias against sports which has its roots in their own failure in this area in the past.

A third reason for parents failing in this area is an impatient, perfectionist attitude which places performance and doing it the “right way” above both your relationship and the success of your child.

Gill was the best amateur baseball player I had ever seen in my years in the college ministry. He could hit, run and field better than anyone I had known. He had a grasp of the game and its strategy that exceeded any coach for whom my son had played. He had an eye for the ball and knowledge of the rules that made him much in demand as a behind the plate umpire. He had a giant baseball card collection and a grasp of the history of the game that rivaled none. I was completely confident that Gill could have played successful college ball and gone on to coach at the high school or college level or beyond. But not only did Gill have no perception of his gifts, he actually viewed himself as mediocre. The root cause I learned was a father who could not be pleased — a father who shouted corrections while Gill was behind the plate, in the field or in the dugout and began every game with criticism, criticized during the game and badgered Gill on the way home. Who knows where Gill might have gone if he had had a father committed to his success?

Pat loved his son but his son dreaded Pat’s appearance on the soccer field. Pat’s son really liked his coach and he dreaded his father’s intrusions in practice, during the game, and after the game. Pat probably would have gone on with soccer, but it was just too embarrassing. It became all too obvious to him that the most important thing to his father was not cheering for him and the team but rather setting things straight. Pat would deny this. He was doing it for his son... for the team, but Pat’s son knew the truth and he lost both interest in the game and a heart for father-son sports.

A fourth reason parents fail is an unwillingness to go with the child’s natural bent.

I met Tony when he was a freshman. He had a real fear of competitive sports and of any type of aggressive coaching in any part of his life. If you get too close and he would recoil quickly and let you know that he did not need help. He shared with me how his father, a baseball nut, had decided that Tony would love the game as well. The only problem was that Tony did not like baseball. What he really wanted to do was play soccer. He hated the limelight of the game and was not good at all at hand/eye coordination. Tony’s Dad insisted and all through his schooling right up to high school. He was signed up to play and failed miserably year after year. His Dad still reminisces about the great times he had going to games and practices, even though Tony never quite caught on. Tony still gets a knot in his stomach as he thinks about this experience and it has affected him in many other areas of life. Too bad Tony’s Dad could not look past his own love for baseball and commit himself to Tony’s success, rather than reliving his own childhood fantasies.

The fifth reason some parents fail in this area is just plain downright stinginess.

Gus's son would have liked to take swimming lessons, "We never paid for lessons, we just taught each other down at the lake." He would have loved to play community baseball, "Organized baseball is a racket, the old back lot and the gang on the block was enough for us." It was the same thing for peewee football, "Just a way for sports stores to push over-priced equipment." The community soccer team, "What do they need to charge so much for, all it is, is a bunch of kids in shorts running up and down on a football field?" But I knew Gus. He was just a tightwad and too self-righteous to admit it. He had the money, and if his son had been willing to make Gus feel guilty enough about it and hear little comments about it all season, he probably would have coughed the fee up. But Gus had long since won this little game and was happy to deceive himself about his motives. His son, however, was not deceived and I could already see a growing rift of resentment in their relationship. Too bad Gus had not been able to overcome his miserly tendencies enough to be able to commit himself to his son's success.

2. The Successful Sportsman:

What is our definition of success in sports? It covers three important areas:

***First:** Care of the Temple of the Holy Spirit, (e.g. our body). God's Word states in 1 Cor 3:16, "Do you not know that you are a temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?" As we help move our children toward success, we also set the precedent of a lifetime of health and refreshment through a positive approach to the nurture and care of the Temple of God.*

***Second:** The development and exercise of the moral virtues associated with organized sports.*

When I was helping coach Sam's first grade ball team I decided that in terms of the season— win, lose or draw, these kids would come out with a sense of the moral virtues that baseball brings. As a result, in the pre-game huddle, I would discuss each virtue, reward with praise a child who could give an example of exhibiting this virtue in the coming game, and in the post-game talk, point out and praise the youngsters who had exhibited this virtue. Before going out on the field, we would all clasp hands and shout the virtues out loud, "Honesty! Sportsmanship! Personal Best!"

Honesty: "You shall not steal, nor deal falsely, nor lie to one another." (Lv 19:11)

We committed ourselves to win without deception, to answer the umpire honestly when questioned, and to not fake a play.

Sportsmanship: "Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind let each of you regard one another as more important than himself; do not merely look out for your own personal interest, but also for the interest of others." (Phil 2:3, 4)

We committed ourselves to selfless team play, to never jeopardize the safety of an opponent to make a play, and to recognize and applaud the athletic skill of another, no matter on which team he played.

Personal Best: "And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks though Him to God the Father." (Col 3:17, 23–24)

We committed ourselves to never quit, to never give up, in every play, in every situation to give our personal best. We would always play against ourselves in every situation. We would improve each practice, each game and each coaching session and reach our pinnacle at the end of the season. We would always leave the field with our head up, knowing no matter the outcome that we had played our absolute best.

Third: Learning to exercise self-control over your body.

The exercise of self-control of the body can lead to the exercise of moral restraint off the ballfield. God's Word states in 1 Cor 9:27, "*But I buffet my body and make it my slave, lest possibly, after I have preached to others, I myself should be disqualified.*"

As Sam learned to discipline his body to excel in sports, to discipline his emotions so that they did not cloud his skill or ruin the joy of sports, he learned at the same time a skill that would be vital in the spiritual disciplines he would later pursue as a disciple.

Fourth: The physical development of the child and the long-term value and appreciation of physical exercise, care and development of the body.

Prv 20:29 "The glory of young men is their strength..."

Prv 31:17 "She girds herself with strength, and makes her arms strong."

3. The Training:

How do you draw near to your child through making your child a success when it comes to sports? If you develop your child physically and athletically in a healthy social setting you will put him on the road to success.

Preschool: To a preschooler sports is play, as all sports should be. Your love, acceptance, praise and presence are all that the child could ask or want. This is the highlight of the day and he does not care what or how you play, just as long as you play. There are things, though, that you can do to help you child as he plays, even at this early stage of life.

- **Do not allow your child to cheat.**

You may allow your child to win, but do not allow your child to cheat. If he throws a certain number on the dice, he moves that number, if he draws a card, he should play that card, if his sister tags him out, then he is out, if he misses the basket, then he missed and it is your turn. You may choose to lay back and allow him to win but do not, at this early age, let him develop the habit of feeling like if things are not going his way he can always cheat and that you as a parent think this is cute and will be happy to look the other way.

- **Do not let the child throw temper tantrums when things do not go his way:**

Perhaps the child is not going to win, either you or one of the other children is winning. At this point, do not let the child throw a temper tantrum, leave the game, or just quit. A child should learn to be happy in the accomplishments of his other family members. Not only that, but a child needs to learn that life is not all winning, that there are times when others win and that graciously losing is an impart part of life.

- **Teach the child to share.**

When playing with the child, all things should not take place on his conditions. He may want a particular block, ball or toy that you or one of his siblings is playing with. Now is the time for the child to learn to share. Do not allow your child to shout at you, to throw things or to leave the room simply because you absent-mindedly picked up a toy he wanted or a toy he decided you cannot play with. Selfishness is both learned and unlearned during play. Teach your child to play and to be thankful for a parent who will play with him.

- **Help you child to place people above things.**

As your child plays with you, his siblings or friends, help him learn the value of people above things or activities— to share, to get along, to go along, to be a friend and to have friends. Some people never learn this skill as their marriage, family, work and church relationships all too sadly reveal.

Elementary to Middle School:

It is at this point that a lack of athletic ability can open a child up to public ridicule and scorn. On the playground at school, in the neighborhood, and during physical education classes the child is judged by his peers. A child who is a detriment or is incompetent will suffer the ostracism of his peers. By contrast, a little ability goes a long way in opening doors and preserving the child's self-esteem and respect. Although the parent cannot change and should not want to change the child's physical attributes, there are certain things the parent can do to help the child to feel good about himself and to gain the approval and acceptance of his peers.

- **Supply the child with the needed tools.**

This does not mean the child must actively play sports he does not enjoy. It just means that you, with the child, through play, develop a certain skill, a proficiency level, so that when he is around other kids they don't wonder, "Where's this kid from? What time machine did he just get off of?" Remember, during the teenage years, outside the mainstream of sports and athletics, exists the drug culture. To deny your child entrance into the mainstream of youth culture is to invite him to join a subculture. Of these, the drug subculture is the largest, most porous and most aggressive.

In our culture, these are the big four of sports:

1. **Baseball:** Help the child learn to throw, catch and hit a baseball. Buy a "t" from a local toy store for the child to hit off. Help him learn the bases and a few of the necessities of the game. There are now super-soft softballs that can be used while acquiring these skills.
2. **Football:** Running, kicking, throwing and catching the football are all skills that a child will use all through high school and college. Develop these early and the child will always feel at home on the playground and park.
3. **Basketball:** Teach the child to dribble, pass, catch and shoot the ball. Set up a goal in the driveway and mark off the free throw line and the three point shot marker. Be willing to sacrifice a few windows as he and his friends play pick-up games.
4. **Swimming:** This is important not only for his safety, but also for his recreational enjoyment. Swimming lessons, how to dive and how to have fun in the

Jeff had never learned to play. His father, a Christian executive of a large Christian organization, had always pushed him to excel in all that he did. Win at any cost; gracious losing is for suckers. That was the motto he grew up with. Jeff joined our ministry and from the beginning had trouble making lasting relationships. Everything was competition. Then, one Saturday afternoon, as we were playing a spirited game of co-ed softball after morning Bible study, it all came to a head.

Jeff hit the ball and raced for first as the ball was thrown. His instincts took over and he careened as fast as he possibly could into the first baseman, knocking him down, dislodging the ball from his mitt. Jeff jumped up and shouted, "Yes, yes, yes, safe at first!!" The young man, however, did not get up; he was knocked out cold. The game came to a halt and Jeff never grasped the magnitude of what he had done. He talked of rules and of winning. When I met his father, I found out why. "I hear Jeff cold-cocked some guy making it to first." He smiled, "Pretty heads up ball play on his part." Jeff had never learned to play.

water will not necessarily open doors for him, but it will keep them from being closed and save him from embarrassment.

- **Become personally involved.**

The key for the parent is to keep the relationship with the child at the play level while at the same time honoring in the child the desire to excel in a sport if he so chooses. Remember, the coach's kid always gets the breaks and a parent's presence always improves a child's opportunities.

For Sam and his sisters, it was a real boost if I was to volunteer as a coach. Even though I did not know a lot about the game, by assisting the coach I guaranteed them opportunities they would otherwise not have had. I decided not to fight the "coach's kid" rule and instead came on board. Later, as they grew older and coaching became more intense, it was better for me to be on the sideline cheering. I still did little things, even through their high school years. Supplying soft drinks at the games was a big one and the most popular. I would just show up with an ice chest full of soft drinks, all iced down. Never correcting them in front of their friends, and actively cheering on their teammates was another. The boys always had a sense that I was on their side and wanted their success. This shaped their opinion of many of the other areas in life that I desired to have an influence.

- **Be willing to either help or get help for the child.**

If the child desires to improve, take him seriously. Buy a book, ask a friend, hire a tutor, buy some sports equipment, rent a video. It's time with the child; it's wholesome fun, and it is not getting into trouble lounging around the house or goofing off outside.

High School: This is simple: get out of the way. Let your child develop at his own speed and bent and be his cheerleader and equipment manager. Keep your mouth shut. Don't embarrass him in front of his peers. Don't try to be one of the guys, and be responsive to his desire to increase or decrease his involvement.

4. TRAPS:

The Child: Quitting— never finishing.

Each of our children, at one time or another, began on a team which as the season progressed they decided they did not like for one reason or another. Perhaps the kids were not nice to them, or they did not like the coach, the team is having a terrible season, or they were just bored. No matter the case, we made them finish out the season. They did not have to go again next year, but they had to finish what they started. We all know people who can never finish something. Any disappointment or distraction is enough to send them off in a new direction. Do your child a favor and make him a finisher.

The Child: Temper Tantrums.

Whether we were playing in the backyard or they were playing on an organized team, the one thing I would not tolerate was a selfish temper tantrum. Do not just quit playing with your child if he throws a temper tantrum. Discipline him. It is foolish to be angry with someone who is taking time off from his or her busy schedule to be with you. Discipline this foolishness. The child is often so foolish that he will storm away rather

than deal with disappointment. He will allow himself to miss out on precious play time with his parents. Deal with this foolishness and then continue with the playtime together.

The Child: An Inability to Lose.

With our children, we always stressed the relationship first, then the game, then the skill and lastly, winning. Not that winning wasn't important; it was just that the relationship with the child was the most important thing. I think my children learned this best by seeing my excitement when they beat me. I wanted my kids to do well. I wanted them to succeed. And, I wanted them to beat me. They picked up on this in their relationships with one another, with me and with life.

"For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve and to give His life as a ransom for many."

Jesus Christ (Mk 10:45)

"Servanthood is getting excited about making someone else successful."

Bill Gothard

The Child: An Inability to Accept Their Own Limitations.

Sam was not very tall or large when he was young. He did not really fill out as a man until his junior year of high school. I never dissuaded or discouraged him from football or basketball. I did, though, push him in areas in which I knew he could succeed. He had a much better chance of succeeding in basketball as a guard and ball handler than as a center. He had a much better chance as a receiver than as a guard or tackle in football. Baseball is a game where size is incidental. I helped Sam excel here where his late growth spurt did not matter and, in fact, was a plus. I once wrote to Pete Rose, one of the outstanding ball players of the time, who was a short man. I shared with him about Sam. Pete sent Sam a poster of him with a hand written exhortation to excel, then signed it "Hit It Hard! Pete Rose." Sam had this framed and put it on the wall of his room. It is there to this day.

Becca loved softball, but her batting and throwing were far more developed than her catching. Even though she wanted to play first base like her brother, I gently nudged her to third where she excelled at the long throw to first. Later, as her skills increased, she could have gone to first, but she liked the excitement of testing her strength: her throwing arm versus the runner.

Megan loved horses. We let her collect ceramic horses and horse pictures for her scrapbook. On her birthday and the occasional outing, we would rent horses and go horseback riding and we sent her for several summers to a horse camp. However, given our finances and our urban setting, it would have been unfair to let her pursue this as her primary sport. The opportunities were just too far apart and financially unrealistic. Megan tried her hand at several sports and enjoyed them; her first love was always horses but this remained an aside in her outdoor life

The Parent: Pushing The Child

Cliff was a great guy off the soccer field. He was easy going and a good Sunday school teacher. Get him on the soccer field with a bunch of kids, though, and he turned into a terror. He spoiled the game for his daughter and her best friend, my daughter. He pushed and pushed and pushed. Nothing was ever good enough; he used ridicule, fear and intimidation. Cliff could never understand why the kids did not have more fun and why neither his daughter nor mine wanted to play on his team the following year.

The Parent: Criticizing The Child

I liked Glen, but I could not sit with him during a game. He badgered the umpires incessantly and was a scourge to his child. Whether batting, fielding or in the dugout, his calls from the stand could be heard. His son told Sam more than once that he could enjoy the game if his Dad would just shut up. His son, by the way, an honor student and varsity player, had a terrible self-image. I wonder why?

The Parent: Embarrassing The Child

Christine could just die. Her mother had done it again. Right there during practice she had run out on the field to give her daughter a few pointers. Christine's Mom meant well, but she would correct the coach, mingle among the kids on the sidelines. She would try to be one of them, but Christine really wished her Mom would just grow up and butt out.

The Parent: Making Everything a Project

Gordon's eyes glazed over, "Here we go again." All he wanted to do was play a game of horse with his friends on their driveway with the basketball goal his father had set up. He didn't mind if his Dad joined in, but now he was organizing and coaching again. Soon would come the request to repeat back what they had learned and then some drills to get it down. Gordon just wished that his Dad would get a life and give it a rest.

Megan and Liz were not very keen on organized sports. They had played. They could bat, throw, dribble and shoot with the other kids, but it is just was not their thing. However, they loved each other and loved to play with each other. One thing they had a great time together doing was jumping on the trampoline. I came out one late afternoon when they were jumping and laughing and having a good time and announced, "I know what, kids, what about me signing you up for a gymnastics class where you could get coached and then compete on the trampoline?" All activity stopped as they stared at me as if I had lost my mind. Enough said— no gymnastics class and back to fun. (I had the same idea about joining the swim team with the same enthusiastic results.)

The Parent: Not Taking the Child Seriously

As I have mentioned, Megan loved horses but buying one was just out of the question. We did strive to take her interest seriously. She collected ceramic horses and we encouraged her in this. She had a horse scrapbook and we tried to respond with interest each time she wanted to go over it with us. On birthdays, we honored her request to go horseback riding at a local stable. If a horse show was in town, El would try to make it with Megan and if driving, we would many times stop if a horse were near a fence by the road. We always tried to communicate to Megan that we took her interests seriously.

5. Conclusion:

Remember the goal is drawing near to your child by making your child a success. Don't let your child spoil this process, but don't you spoil it either. You are not living your life through your child, but promoting your child's success. Your child should look back on the times together and say, "You know, my Dad was really committed to my success. I never embarrassed myself because of his commitment to me and just as importantly, he never embarrassed me. I ended up with some good skills and some great times together. I can trust my Dad and can rely on him. When needed to, he will come through for me."

D. SOCIAL LIFE:

This is a spiritual law. It cannot be circumvented. Unfortunately, for most children parents are as commonly deceived in this area as their kids. For parents it is necessary to be wise as serpents and gentle as lambs. It is not always the best to naively try to see and believe the best in all children. Few realize either the pressure or the stakes that are involved. Parents must remember this law, in relationships, bad triumphs over good.

"Do not be deceived: 'Bad company corrupts good morals.'"

1 Cor 15:33

1. Why Parents Fail

- **There is no social life in the home**

When there is no social life inside the home, the children will look elsewhere. If you are lucky, this will be found in a good church, among Christian friends, or a Christian home that is open to kids. More often than not, it is found in a youth subculture made up of kids who are looking for a social orientation and sense of belonging outside of parental authority.

- **Failure on the parents part to become personally involved**

The parent naively assumes the children her kids spend time with are good kids since they are all in the same Sunday school class, scout troop, sports team, etc. The parent naively assumes that since she knows the parent, that appropriate chaperoning will take place at parties or that children will be picked up on time and kept under control. With a little involvement, a little checking, a little impetus on your part, a willingness to be inconvenienced so your child can get off on the right foot and with the right kids, a little caution and common sense and both you and your child can be saved from many griefs.

- **Poor modeling by the parents**

What kind of friends do *you* have? Are they spiritually mature? Do they model Christian virtues? Have you presented to your children proper social behavior? Do they see how you treat your wife? Do they go on dates with you? Do they see you active in the community and church?

One of the reasons Becca had such high standards in her dating life was because of the way I treated her mother on dates and the way I treated her on dates. She knew how a lady was supposed to be treated and had come to expect as much. I remember our discussion about boys opening the door...

"You just don't understand Daddy, guys just don't do that nowadays."

Hey, I am a guy and I do it, I always open the door for Mom and your girls. Sam is a guy and he opens y'all's door. We are guys aren't we?"

"Oh Daddy, you and Sam don't count. I am talking about real guys, you know guys who date."

"OK, listen Becca, just promise me this one time you will do what I ask, just try it one time and if it doesn't work out like I say I will be willing to change in this area."

Becca looked at me with arms folded, a little skeptical but willing to consider

"Here's how it works. You get in the car with Jim and he takes you out. When you get to where you are going, Jim will get out of the car and start down the sidewalk. You just sit in the car looking straightforward. In a minute, Jim will turn around, see you are not there and turn bright red. He will run back to the car, open the door and then fumbling and stammering he will say, 'Gee Becca, I don't know what happened. I always open the door for my dates. I am so sorry, fumble, babble etc.' and then from that moment on the word will be out and all the boys will treat you differently."

Becca was unconvinced, but she gave me her word that she would try it...

"Dad you wouldn't believe what happened tonight!"

"Oh... I don't know, give me a try."

"Well we got to the movie, like you said. And, I just, you know, sat there staring at the windshield, like you said. Then Jim, he like, wanders on down the parking lot and he's like talking to me but I am not there. Then he stops, looks around and sees me and comes running back and he's soooo red and he's acting so goofy, he's explaining and fumbling and says, 'I always open the door for girls', just like you said. He treated me differently all night, and the rest of the guys did too. Just like you said. (Big hug and kiss) "Thanks Dad" (Tears off upstairs to call her best friend.)

- **Pressure by the Parents:**

Jackie just wanted to be one of the girls but her mother would have none of it. Cheer leader school, joining the country club and seeing that she only had the best kids at her parties was just part of it. By her sophomore year, Jackie, faced with a feeling that she could never satisfy her mother and the competition from the girls in the popular crowd, exchanged her virtue for security and became sexually active with one of the young men on the football team. Her mother was so proud that her daughter had finally broken into the crowd she had always dreamed of in her youth, not even guessing the price she was having to pay in order to fulfill her mother's dreams.

2. Social Success:

What then is success when it comes to your child's social life? The Word of God lays down three conditions for a successful social life. We can work towards these with our children in assuring that we draw near to them as we work toward their success in this area.

- **Friends Versus Popularity**

The Word of God says, "A man of many friends comes to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother" (Prv 18:24). The young man in the parable of the

prodigal son is said to have, *“squandered his estate with loose living. Now when he had spent everything, a severe famine occurred in that country and he began to be in need. And he went and attached himself to one of the citizens of that country and he sent him into his fields to feed swine.”* (Lk 15:13–15) You have to wonder where the friends were that shared in his loose living. Where were the beneficiaries of his earlier largess? This is an important lesson for your child to learn— the transient and fickle nature of popularity. Your child will be successful socially if he learns to differentiate between the crowd and true friends, between popularity and friendship, between true friendship and opportunism.

- **Supportive Peer Group**

The Word of God says, *“Now flee from youthful lusts, and pursue after righteousness, faith, love and peace, with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart,”* (2 Tm 2:22). Just as the Word of God states in 1 Cor 15:33 that, *“Bad company corrupts good morals,”* so the Word of God exhorts young men to fellowship with those who separate from sin. Just as Daniel, Shadrack, Meschack and Abednigo depended on one another for support and commitment during their exile so your son will need the support of committed friends. Your child will be successful socially if he learns to attach himself to a peer group based on shared life values rather than what society as a whole will think.

“My daughter has Christians friends all over the world, but none to pray with in her own school.” An executive in a large Christian organization forlornly shared this fact with me. His family had never been active in a local church and he had depended on independent Christian camps for his daughter’s discipleship. He was finding out, though, that camps like these are no substitute for a good church youth program that offers a supportive peer group. I have sent my children every year to independent camps; I think they are great. However, I have also sent them to church youth camps and retreats with their local church. They need this and it is very important to them. You never want your child to be in the position of having Christian friends all over the world but not in their own backyard.

“They never learned that ‘Bad company corrupts good morals.’ They spent their lives playing with non-Christians and now they are dating them to their own spiritual ruin.” Paul, a missionary friend of mine who was now a campus minister, was discussing the children of a missionary who belonged to a mission organization that stressed both culturalization and secularization in the reaching of the lost. His children have grown up in a non-church culture outside of the Protestant church. Their parents had great fruit in evangelism, excepting, of course, their own children.

- **The Ability to Have Fun**

The Word of God says, *“Rejoice, young man, during your childhood, and let your heart be pleasant during the days of young manhood. And follow the impulses of your heart and the desires of your eyes. Yet know that God will bring you to judgment for all these things.”* (Eccl 11:9–10) The ability to appreciate those things within the will of God and to enjoy them without yearning for those things that are sinful, to have fun without regret and to appreciate those good things which are from God is a great gift. Your child will be successful socially if he learns to enjoy those

things that God allows and to have fun on that basis without having to taste what the world has to offer.

3. The Training:

How can we as parents draw near to our children by helping them to be a success in their social life? How can we help them to choose the right, to get off on the right foot, to facilitate success in this area? I have found that there are three crucial areas that a parent can help his child in, in terms of success in social life. They are Friends, Appearance and Poise.

Friends: If you want your child to have the right friends, simply be an involved parent. The bad kids think this is corny and will not hang around a child whose parents are there and are aware of the activities. Sin is harder to get away with, the activities are wholesome and they are carried out in the light of day. All these things the bad kids will avoid, even if it means dumping your child. When this happens, your child will finally realize what jerks they were in the first place. There are several things you can do to facilitate this without being a nuisance or an embarrassment to your children.

- **Make your house a magnet**

Open your house to your children's friends; adjust your standards for noise, clutter and abuse to allow for their friends to be in your home. Open up your cupboard and make sure there are plenty of snacks and soft drinks for them whenever they come over. Have some magnets to draw the kids to your home. I knew a man who built a pool for this very reason. Another had a boat (he lived near the water and it was great fun for the kids). These were out of our league financially but I could afford to put up a basketball goal in the driveway, surrender the garage to a ping-pong table and put up a trampoline in the backyard. The kids loved to hang out at our house. I knew here they could not get into trouble with the TV, VCR or Computer. There were no cigarettes, booze or dirty magazines to get in to. They would not be left alone and they would have the moral oversight of Christian parents. This is exactly why the bad kids will not want to hang around with your child and that's fine with me.

- **Be the one who drives and picks up**

When kids are away from home, the times they get into trouble are the blank spaces in the schedule. When I pick my kids up after a movie there are always unattached kids waiting for Mom or Dad to finally show up. They are running, shouting, checking out the opposite sex and generally getting into the mood of things. I make sure I am there early and the kids go right into the car. In the same way, if you are driving, there will not be a last minute change in agenda and destination. You have input on what happens and where. Kids get bored and even Mom's ideas for what to do are better than nothing. The bad kids hate this and will hang out with kids whose parents will allow them to set the agenda and then are unreliable, leaving them with more freedom to get into trouble.

I remember recently talking with a police officer who was pulling duty at the local mall and multiplex theater. I asked him how the evening was going and he said all his problems could be solved if parents of kids would just pick them up as soon as the movie was over.

- **Don't Use Your Child As A Tool**

In Do not allow parents of problem kids to try to use your child to straighten them out. Let them raise their own kids. The stakes are too high and peer pressure is too

strong. Wait until your child is an adult to expect adult behavior. Remember, God says that in relationships, bad overcomes good.

In the same way, do not use your child as a ministry tool to meet non-Christians. While you are saving their parents, their pagan kids are discipling your children in the ways of the world.

- **Get to know the parents**
Get to know the parents *and their home life* before they play over or spend the night. The rule in our home is that they cannot go over to another child's house to play until we have met the parents and seen the home.
- **Don't Facilitate Bad Relationships**
To disentangle a child from a friendship you do not like, don't attack the friend, the child will just come to his defense. Just don't cooperate. It never seems to work out for me to drive, to pick up, or to get together with certain kids. The parents will finally get tired of this and look elsewhere for their child's playmate.
- **Pick Your Battles**
You will have to say "no" to so many things, try to say "yes" to as much as possible. Remember, to a child, if everything is wrong, then nothing is wrong. Save your "no's" for the things that really count.
- **Make the Right Choices**
When they are young, make the right choices for them in the area of friends and take aggressive action on poor choices, even if it costs you a friendship. It is easier to find a new friend than a new child.
- **Be conservative on dating**
Our policy was as follows: Elementary school— no dating, no boy/girl parties, and no socials; sixth and seventh grade— church socials and school socials (limited to award ceremonies); eighth grade— group social activities, but no single or double-dating; ninth and tenth grade— no car dates. Dates in cars must be driven by an adult (this keeps the junior and senior boys and girls from dating your child). Eleventh and twelfth grade— they may have car dates, but no out-of-town dates and a midnight curfew. For my daughters, the young man had to come to the door to get her. She had to wait in her room (making him wait) for a few minutes while he sat down and talked with me (the father). I would then call her, and off they would go. For my son, he had to drop by the house and introduce his date the first time. After that, he did not have to.
- **Appearance:**
Do not allow your child to be the on the cutting edge of fashion. Fashion is one of the entry keys to the rough crowd or bad crowd. These kids are very vain and will not tolerate a member in their group who deviates in the least from their standards.

*Does not even nature itself teach you
that if a man has long hair, it is a
dishonor to him?*

1 Cor 11:14

Young men’s haircut. I never went in for the cutesy pageboy look for Sam. He went to a barber shop with me and got a standard young man’s haircut. We did not go to styling salons where cuties in short skirts oohed and aaahed over Sam, where they have you look at fashion magazines full of male models and then encourage you to change your part and be cutting edge. We went to a barber with a bunch of guys looking at Field and Stream with the sports channel on the TV, and a standard haircut offered. There are certain kids who just won’t hang out with a young man with a decent haircut and that’s fine with me.

“Now in all Israel was no one as handsome as Absalom, so highly praised; from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head there was no defect in him. And when he cut the hair of his head (and it was at the end of every year that he cut it, for it was heavy on him so he cut it), he weighed the hair of his head at 200 shekels by the in weight... Then the king said to the Cushite, ‘Is it well with the young man Absalom?’ and the Cushite answered, ‘Let the enemies of my lord the king, and all who rise up against you for evil, be as that young man!’ and the king was deeply moved and went up to the chamber over the gate and wept. And thus he said as he walked, O my son Absalom, my son, my son, Absalom! Would I had died instead of you, o Absalom, my son, my son!”

2 Sm 14:25, 26; 18:31, 32

Daughters and dress

Do not allow your daughters to wear make up and mature clothes before it is time. Even when they are mature the “Daddy check” on formal dress (or any) was no cleavage, no thighs and nothing below the bra-strap line in back. (Cleavage, Thigh and Strap rule— “CTS”) On the other hand, in the area of hygiene, do not cause your daughter embarrassment. Allow them to shave their legs, buy whatever hygiene and feminine hygiene articles they may need, have their hair neatly cared for and have them dress appropriately for their age.

Like a gold ring in a pig's snout is a beautiful woman who shows no discretion.

Prv 11:22

Fathers, do not balk at spending what is necessary for your daughter’s undergarments. She will have enough grief in life without the pagans at her school teasing her for worn or shoddy undergarments seen while changing in gym class, etc.

Experts report that child molesters and sexual predators look for two kinds of girls: ones who are dressed way ahead of their age, and the baby doll look, ones who are dressed way behind their age group.

Discretion will protect you...

Prv 2:11

Whether concerning the son or the daughter, being a slob is never an option. Appearance and dress is a social statement. **Your child’s hair and makeup are a code which all his peers can read** and it will, in many ways, determine what social spheres are opened and closed for them. To be sure, you want your child’s appearance to close certain social circles.

And behold a woman comes to him, dressed as a harlot...with persuasive words she led him astray...many are the victims she has brought down.

Prv 7:10, 21, 24

Poise: An active church youth group that offers opportunities for personal and spiritual expression will go a long way in this— one that emphasizes ministry involvement rather than entertainment events, so that your child may grow in their poise and confidence before people. With your daughters, music, sports and dance lessons will also be helpful.

When it came to dance, we emphasized ballet, but passed on tap and jazz. Although cute at seven, I could not help but notice the teen age boys who showed up to ogle and whistle at the jazz and tap routines of the older girls.

Boys, too, can benefit from sports, music and scouting, all of which give them the opportunity to develop poise. Encourage both sexes in academic clubs at school where they must speak before groups and do presentations.

4. Traps:

There are a number of traps parents can fall into at this level.

“But he looks so cute...”

Please don't let Mom feed the vanity of your young son by taking him to a feminine hair salon and turning him into a cutie pie. Take him with you to get his hair cut at a barbershop free of temptation and vanity.

Early in my marriage, I discovered hair salons. My wife quite innocently introduced me to them. I would go there. Cute young things would greet me and seat me, lots of fashion magazines to pass the time with, then a nice young girl washes your hair, talking pleasantly and flirtatiously. After that, another young girl cuts your hair, complementing you and suggesting changes to make you more fashionable. Then one day, I found the conversation becoming more personal and realized this cute little thing was putting out feelers for a relationship. I walked out, paid my bill and never looked back. Since then, it has been the corner barbershop, businessmen's haircut, talking politics, fishing and sports with Zeke the barber while my son Sam waits for his turn reading the Field and Stream magazine as he occasionally looks up at the sports channel on TV. The only other people in there are no-nonsense men getting no-nonsense haircuts.

“If I don't get to _____, then I will never be popular.”

Good. If he is running with a crowd whose acceptance and friendship depends on certain social activities being fulfilled, then the sooner he sees them for who they are, the better.

“Everybody is going”

Now wait just a minute here. Let's go down a list of people whose parents who share the same values as yours. Are they all going? If yes, call them and talk it over, maybe you are being too conservative, but chances are they will respond “no” to each one as you click off the list. Soon, “everybody” drifts into its proper perspective.

“Why don't you go out more with _____ and his friends? Y'all used to spend so much time together.”

Be careful about pushing your child into an active social group that you are not familiar with. He may be withdrawing for moral reasons, but feel like he cannot blab to you about their behavior at parties. Feel the child out. If he is happy, let him be happy. If he is shy or unhappy, offer to host the next series of Sunday school parties or outings and make sure there is enough good food on hand to make it a success. (Our kids never want us to do this and then always revel in the attention they get from our doing it).

Keeping Kids Out of Trouble

For a young person to get in trouble it takes four things — Cash, Cars, Time and Anonymity. For the child on the brink of trouble, the crowd he moves in is selfish and

most forms of sin take discretionary spending money, thus money in hand is necessary. Cars equal mobility and anonymity. To be somewhere where parents are not, to be alone and anonymous, takes a car. To get into trouble, a child needs time on their hands. Idleness is indeed the devil's workshop and too much discretionary time plus the money and mobility to fill the boredom by experimentation with sin, plus the anonymity necessary to give the child boldness, is just the environment in which Satan thrives.

Our answer— no wheels until the end of the second year of college. When the child goes to work, he sets up a college fund for the paycheck to go into during the high school years and has the responsibility to budget the remainder for necessities, leaving an adequate social fund, but nothing more. Lastly, we require them to belong to at least two academic clubs and one social club at school, for their college résumé. During the summer, they must get a job. If they are too young to go to work, they can do volunteer work for the church or a Christian service organization. The results are limited cash, limited access to a car, limited discretionary time and very limited opportunity to be anonymous. In other words, our kids did not have the time, money, mobility or anonymity to get into trouble during their high school years.

Becca: Academic club #1— French Club
 Academic club #2— Future Teachers of America
 Social club #1— Christian Student Union
 Social club #2— School Choir

Sam: Academic club #1— Student Peer Mediation
 Academic club #2— History Fair
 Social club #1— Varsity Baseball
 Social club #2— Christian Student Union

Megan Academic club #1— French Club
 Academic club #2— Future Teachers of America
 Academic club #3— History Fair Competition
 Social club #1— Christian Student Union

Liz Academic club #1 — History Fair Competition
 Academic club #2 — French Club
 Social Club #1 — Christian Student Union
 Social Club #2 — Band

5. Conclusion:

Remember, the immediate goal is to draw near to your child by making your child a success. The long-term goal is for your child to successfully leave home and live on their own a fruitful and fulfilled life in the eyes of God and man. Rather than their social life being the one thing you worry about most in terms of how it will affect these goals, turn the tables on Satan. Make their social life your biggest ally. To do so, though, you will have to be on your toes and walk the delicate balance between the naïve parent and the controlling parent. As in all areas, it will take a wise, praying parent to maintain this balance. Go for it.

E. EXPERIENCE

In Lk 4:5–6 an unusual event occurs. Satan actually tries to ensnare Jesus Christ in sin. *“And he led Him up and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. And the devil said to Him, ‘I will give You all this domain and its glory; for it has been handed over to me, and I give it to whomever I wish.’ ”* This was no idle boast. Satan has at his disposal all the experiences that the world has to offer. 1 John 5:19 states, *“We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.”*

The lure of worldly experience is a powerful one for a child, and the lack of experience is a powerful tool for the world to beat a child with. As parents, we want our children to be successful in their fight against the enticements of the world. The Bible clearly states in Mk 4:19, *“and the worries of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things enter in and choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful.”* It is the million and one distractions of the world that can entrap our children. One way you can draw near to your child by making your child a success is to arm your child with things to talk about and share so that he can compete within his peer group. There will be so many things he cannot do, try to give him everything that he can.

When Becca finished the 5th grade, her school, during the last week, had a series of events to honor the outstanding students. One of these events was to see a movie called “Beetle Juice.” Now, this was a movie we could not let Becca see, either for its moral or spiritual content. Unfortunately, the only alternative was for her to spend the day in the library doing study projects. Institutions often use intimidating alternatives to get you to compromise your stand in an area. This meant that Becca would be in the library of the school all day as an aide working with the only other girl who could not go, the daughter of the leader of the local Mormon Church. We took a page from Gus’s book and Eleanor put together a great day with Becca. We lived in Stillwater, Oklahoma, a small college town, so on the appointed day, she checked Becca out of school and then they drove in to Oklahoma City. There, they went shopping in the mall, ate at her favorite restaurant, saw a movie together and on the way home had ice cream at an “in” dessert shop. The next day Becca was the envy of her class. The bus ride was hot and noisy, the lines at the movie long and the theater full of noisy kids. All the kids agreed, “Gee, I wish my Mom had taken me out for the day!”

Gus lived across the street from us and was the Pastor for the United Pentecostal Church. At that time, this denomination was very conservative in its social morals. Gus had two boys who were all boy, yet their convictions did not allow for mixed swimming, the wearing of shorts and several other things which could have put these two young men at a disadvantage. However, Gus, rather than imposing these rules with no relief, made sure his boys were blessed, not cursed, by having conservative parents. It is true the boys could not do mixed bathing, but Gus made the sacrifice of building a swimming pool in his backyard. His boys could have swimming parties in a controlled environment and even the non-Christian families wanted their kids to attend Gus’ kids’ sleepovers.

It is true, Gus’ kids had to wear sweats under their shorts when at PE, but it is also true that Gus paid top dollar for private coaching and training in the sports his boys liked. Nobody laughs at a kid who dresses funny yet bats 500.00 on the varsity team. Nobody laughs at a guy who dresses funny, but is flawless at the free throw line. Teachers don’t mind a kid who dresses funny, but is an honor student, polite, respectful and cooperative. In fact, it became the style on the practice field. It is true that Gus’ boys could not go to the parties or on most trips the school sponsored. It is also true that Gus took his boys to Hawaii and that gave them something to talk about. I learned a lot from Gus in this area. Give your kids the experiential ammo to compete with the world.

1. Why Parents Fail:

- **A primary reason is that they do not see the importance because they did not need this as a child.**

Tonya was a non-Christian growing up in a non-Christian home. She did not receive Christ until she was already married and had two small children. Both she and her husband had a very difficult time relating to the struggles their pre-teens went through. It never bothered them to “run with the crowd,” and they never seemed to have conflicts with non-Christians. They weren’t saints, sure, but they weren’t druggies either. For moms like Tonya this is a hard principle to fathom. It is, however, essential that parents realize how great the gulf is between Christian and non-Christian friends, how strong the pull is to this experience-related subculture and how crucial it is that parents accept this as fact and arm their children with alternatives.

- **Another reason is that one or both of the parents is just plain stingy.**

I know dads who will lay out \$500.00 for a good shotgun, or two or three hundred for some new tools or equipment for their shop but would not think of sending their daughter to horse camp, buying a trampoline for the back yard or, even worse, putting in a pool or basketball court.

Fernando was not rich, but he did know concrete. He had spent all his life in the business and when his son became a basketball fanatic, he became concerned about the crowd he ran with. Fernando could not afford to send his son to a Christian school with a good basketball program, much less send him to one of the Christian basketball camps offered around the US. One thing he could do is build him a good practice court, which is what he did. He got the zoning permit, laid out the court and then poured a great 3/4-court right there in the backyard. It was the place to be, playing half court ball on regulation size floor with markings and the works. They got it lit for night ball and it went a long way in keeping Fernando Jr. on the straight and narrow.

For Pete, however, things were different. He had his shop, his guns and his dogs. Pete grew up in the country and was never hurting for things to do as a kid. It was hard for Pete to relate to the struggles his kids faced in the city in terms of boredom and the lure of experience. However, that was not the issue, Pete was a tightwad and he just did not part with money for others. Pete knew his kids were at a disadvantage, but he watched them slip through his fingers as he clutched his wallet and would not let go.

- **Lastly, some parents are just not in tune with their children’s needs.**

They view themselves as material care givers and the emotional pain that their children feel causes them genuine concern, but they just never seem to be able to connect or focus in on this. The spiritual aspects of the world system just go right by them and they watch in amazement as forces beyond their comprehension take hold of their family. These parents cannot understand that our relationship with the world is that of competition.

I once saw advertisements for a movie about a child who was adopted as an infant. Years later, as a teenager, her birth Mom and her scuzzy boyfriend tracked her down and made it their goal to lure her away from her proper, middle-class home and join them in their wild counterculture. Of course, the birth Mom was very hip and her boy friend handsome, yet ruthless, and they used every conceivable device of evil deceit to poison the child to her adoptive parents. The adoptive parents were aware of this and realized, as the child did not, that they were in a life and death struggle for their child.

This is how we as Christian parents must view the world. Our child was Satan's at birth and we received that child back through spiritual rebirth. Satan and the world want that child back, and will use every trick, every lie, and every despicable deception they have to woo our child back. As parents we must be both alert and at battle for the heart and mind of our child.

2. Success and Experience:

What is success when it comes to experience?

First: Appreciation of the value of enjoyment that the righteous can have apart from sin.

*Eccl 5:18–19 “Here is what I have seen to be good and fitting: to eat, to drink and **enjoy oneself** in all one's labor in which he toils under the sun during the few years of his life which God has given him; **for this is his reward**. Furthermore, as for every man to whom God has given riches and wealth, He has also empowered him to eat from them and to receive his reward and rejoice in his labor; this is the gift of God.”*

*1 Tm 6:17 “Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be conceited or to fix their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, **who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy.**”*

My children would often complain that we were too strict. Why couldn't they do the things other kids do? What we tried to help them see is that it is a package deal. They get loving parents, peaceful home, brothers and sisters who love each other, and a home that is a haven and a place they love to come home to. However, they get this not by a series of disconnected actions but by a total and holistic lifestyle. I don't go to strip joints on the way home from work. Mom doesn't go out drinking with the girls and the kids live moral lives. We are all in this together. As they matured, they were able to see clearly how much fun we as a family were able to have, as Christians, and how empty the homes and lives of their non-Christian friends really were. One of the reasons we were successful in helping them to see this contrast is that we were aggressive in helping them to experience those good things in life which God rewards us with, while at the same time discussing openly the alternatives their non-Christian friends were choosing.

Second: Maturity and sophistication in experience that both enable the child to discern evil from good and protect the child from the claim of naïtivity.

- *Heb 5:14 But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil.*
- *Mt 10:16 "Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves; therefore be shrewd as serpents, and innocent as doves.*

John Crawford is a retired missionary who has labored sacrificially all his life. God has called him to make many sacrifices and he willingly bore them. He told me one day, “John, the Lord may have called you to be a missionary, but with your kids it is different. Don't make them make the sacrifices without the calling.”

That helped me greatly and was a real blessing for my family. I also noticed that though John was denied many things by his calling, he never turned away a good thing if God offered it. And he especially never turned away a good thing offered to his family. It is important for our children to realize that there is great enjoyment of life apart from sin, and we can supply them with the life experiences that make this discernment possible.

“This is the gift of God.”

- *Lk 4:8 And Jesus answered and said to him, "It is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God and serve Him only.'"*

There is a kind of hatred of sin, a kind of wariness of evil that comes from experience. There is no one as intolerant of drink, than the saved drunkard. There is no one as intolerant of the occult, as the formerly demon-possessed saint. There is no one as intolerant of fleshly sin as the whore monger, the porno addict, the homosexual, who has come to the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. They have tasted the filth, know firsthand its revulsion, have been burned by its fire and it offers no allure to their scalded hearts and souls.

The saying of the world, "How can you know if it is bad, if you do not experience it for yourself?" is as foolish as it sounds. The child, trained to discern between righteous experiences and their rewards, and sinful experiences with their resulting judgments can be just as fanatical in their purity as the repentant sinner can be in his salvation. Jesus did not need to sin in order to turn down Satan's offer for the experiences of the world in exchange for the worship of this fallen angel. In the same way, our children can be trained to recognize and turn down opportunities for sin.

By arming your child with the right righteous experiences, they have the correct framework from which to discern the futility and destructive nature of sinful experiences. By arming your child with the right experiences, they have a response to the aggressive lure of Satan when he suggests that they exchange their purity for his kingdom of exciting experiences.

3. The Training:

How do we ensure the success of our children in this area?

- **Strive to give your child equal but opposite experiences that children in their social and economic strata might reasonably expect.**

When I first started teaching, I made it my goal to be the best teacher in the school as a testimony of my faith. As I got into it, I realized two things: I could not compete with divorced teachers, who were giving their lives to their careers, who had no family, no social life, no spiritual life— only their careers; and, doing the things necessary to be the best might very well eliminate me from maintaining a good testimony. Instead, I decided to make sure I was a good solid educator whose job was a testimony to his faith while at the same time he maintained his priorities with God, family and ministry. I found that this was a powerful witness, especially given the consideration that to compete with the best was neither plausible nor conducive to a good testimony.

As our children matured, I made it my goal that they would have the equal but opposite of what the world had to offer. As I got into it, I realized two things: I could not compete with the world or with worldly people, who have no giving budget, no ministry budget, no conscience as pertains to debt, working hours or the way a standard of living is attained; and, doing the things necessary to afford my children the equal but opposite might very well eliminate me from maintaining a good testimony and relationship with my children. Instead, I decided to make sure that the kids had good solid Christian experiences that were reasonable to be expected in the socio-economic strata within which they lived and moved. This I found was a powerful witness to my kids, especially given the consideration that to compete with the best

was neither plausible nor conducive to my testimony or my relationship with my children.

One of the ways we did this was in choosing the socio-economic strata in which to raise our children, we would choose a strata or neighborhood where we would be near the top, rather than the bottom. I know this is not good marketing sense, in terms of the resale value of the house, but in terms of your children being able to compete with the world, we have found that it makes perfect sense.

- **Take family vacations**

Shared family memories and experiences within a loving family unit where children are obedient and fun to be around are a powerful force. By doing the work early, the parents assure that the family is able to enjoy the simple pleasures in life. Even non-Christians recognize this as a valid alternative to empty materialism. They simply have neither the experience nor the vision to see it as a possibility.

- **Take advantage of church activities**

We have always belonged to a church with an active children's and youth program. A good church will supply your child with many leadership and personal growth experiences. Choir trips, mission trips, ministry projects, sleepovers, conferences, retreats, lock-ins and fun nights. Nothing beats the corporate commitment of the Body of Christ to afford children the wisdom and life experience to make good decisions in this area.

- **Make sacrifices necessary for your children to go to a good church camp**

The first thing kids are asked when they return from their summer and are back at school is, "What did you do over summer vacation?" After their family vacation, the next thing kids talk about is camp. For our kids, even though it was a sacrifice, the spiritual rejuvenation and wisdom in godly fun and experiences gleaned from camp prepared them for the school year ahead.

- **Include your children on business trips**

My father often did this, but for the wrong reason. He wanted me to see how much fun you can have sinning when you are out of town. There are certain types of business trips where father/son or father/daughter time can be maximized. True, they are few and far between, but think it through and take advantage of it when they present themselves. Sometimes the schedule is packed, other times though there is quite a bit of discretionary time where you can take outings and have lots of fun together while simultaneously giving your child an insider's peek at your career— something few children ever get to do.

Do you have relatives and friends who live out of town? Arrange for visits by your child.

I have been blessed with a sister in Colorado and a brother in New Mexico, both fun places to visit if you are a kid and like the outdoors. Think through on your relatives. If you have done your work and your children are polite, well mannered, obedient and agreeable, your relatives will love to have them visit and they will gain a wealth of personal experience and insights into the extended family — something few American children have nowadays.

- **Use your spiritual, business, family and personal network to create opportunities.**

One of the things Sam really loves is baseball. I could afford to travel all day to take in a game, but the overnight stay and expense of a downtown motel were really out of

reach. In addition, I was loathe to drive back all night with my son in the car. As I looked at the cities within a day's drive, it occurred to me that in each one was someone I knew well enough to ask to spend the night. Each year, Sam and I took a baseball safari this way and had some great memories and experiences. Many opportunities for my children have come through networking of friends and families, a little time, a little thought, a little creativity, can open a world of experience for your children.

4. Traps:

Guilt— some parents allow their children, through guilt and manipulation, to experience things in life they should not, either because it is not good for them or it is not good stewardship for the parents. Ingratitude on the part of a child is a discipline issue. Can the guilt and nip ingratitude in the bud.

5. Conclusion:

Remember you are seeking—

First: Appreciation of the value of enjoyment that the righteous can have, apart from sin.

Second: Maturity and sophistication in experience that both enables the child to discern evil from good and protects the child from the claim of naïveté.

This requires you to think through on these things with a clear head and to be in good communication with your spouse as to a plan which you can follow to meet these goals.

IV. CONCLUSION:

Remember, the goal is drawing near to your child by making your child a success. Notice the emphasis here is on relationship. It is not sacrificing your relationship with your child as you drive them to success. It is not sacrificing your relationship with your child as you live your life through them. Rather, your child should look back with fond memories of his time with you and a deep appreciation and growing understanding of your commitment to him and his success as he leaves the home to live a fruitful and fulfilled life on his own.

V. Summary

- I. It is a war and the spoils of war are the heart and mind of your child.
 - A. Make no mistake about it, the world has stacked the deck
 - B. The innate abilities for success, by the world's standards, are predetermined before birth and neither you nor your child can alter them.
 - C. You can however, reshuffle the deck through personal involvement. It is true there is nothing we can do about Satan and about the world. The fallen spiritual environment just is.
- II. Reshuffling The Deck — Parental Involvement In Their Children's Success — Preschool.
 - A. Success to a preschooler:
 - 1. The value of books coupled with the intentional limitation/access to the TV:
 - 2. Playing with the child:
 - 3. Dates with your child:
 - 4. Disciplining your child:
 - B. Success During The School Years Up To Adolescence:
 - 1. Here the rules change, and it is not enough to have a family where you are a success but the child now has a world outside his home where success is very important, as well.
 - 2. There are five areas the parent should be aware of
- III. Five Areas Of Success Through Parental Involvement:
 - A. Work— is not a dirty word:
 - B. School— Grades and the in-crowd are not the only standard by which success is measured
 - C. Sports
 - D. Social Life
 - E. Experience

CHAPTER NINE

What follows are a number of projects that you and your wife can complete. Some are to be done separately and, then, the results compared. Others are to be done together. The goal is to come to an agreement on the discipline needs of your child and then work on them together as a team. Remember, the general rule in decision making in this area is to yield to the more conservative of the couple in arriving at a decision.

Scripture Memory Verses— Eccl 10:10

If the axe is dull and he does not sharpen its edge, then he must exert more strength. Wisdom has the advantage of giving success.

Last Week's Verse— Prv 19:20, “Listen to counsel and accept discipline, that you may be wise the rest of your days.”

QUIET TIMES ALONE WITH GOD

JEREMIAH 15:16

THEME: THE SUCCESS OF YOUR CHILD— SPIRITUAL TOOLS

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: PRV 4:10— 12

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week, and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: 1 JN 5:4

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week, and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: HEB 4:12

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week, and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

QUIET TIMES ALONE WITH GOD

JEREMIAH 15:16

THEME: THE SUCCESS OF YOUR CHILD— SPIRITUAL TOOLS

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: PRV 22:15

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week, and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: PROVERBS 19:18

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week, and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: PRV 6:20–21

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week, and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

A Plan Of Action:

Go back over this chapter and review the areas listed. Then, pick out one or two areas to work on and map out a plan of action.

<u>Topic</u>	<u>Plan of Action</u>
Work	
School	
Sports	
Social Life	
Experience	

Children Under Attack

The chapter listed four areas of your child which are under constant attack. Think through on your child's life experience so far. Rate each one 1-10. 0 = total defeat. 10 = total victory. Having done this, write out how you can minister to your child in his areas of greatest vulnerability.

Self image: _____

Character: _____

Perspective: _____

Values: _____

Areas
Of Greatest Vulnerability

How Can I Minister
To My Child In This Area

The Approval Of Mom And Dad

In the lecture, it was said that to a preschooler's ultimate success is gauged by the love, affection and approval of Mom and Dad. Although especially true for the preschooler, it remains true during all stages through which your child will pass. In the project below, rate yourself on a scale of 0-10, 0=virtually nonexistent and 10=wonder parent. Then, think through each area and write out how you can better minister to your child in this area.

Praising Them: _____

Time with them _____
(Personal attention)

Physical Contact: _____

Time with them _____
(Stabilizing the home)

<u>Area</u>	<u>How Can I Better Minister To My Child In This Area?</u>
Praise	
Physical Contact	
Time with them / Personal Attention	
Time around them/ Stabilizing the home	