

BEAUTIFUL SAVIOR LUTHERAN SCHOOL PRESENTS: PEARLS OF LOVE AND LOGIC

Special Thoughts on Raising Kids

Chores

Chores are an important part of a child's life. They provide the foundation upon which responsibility and high self-esteem are built. Chores need not, indeed, should not be a cause of parent/child friction.

Guideline 1: When children are small, enjoy doing things together

When children are small they like to "copy" and "model" their parents. When they are small they say, "Let me do it." " (Oh, wouldn't it be a joy if they said that at 10!) Little ones like to stir around in the dishwasher as the parent does the dishes. They like to dress up just like their parents. They like to push around their Fisher-Price lawnmower as if really cutting the grass. So, during the toddler years, it is the wise parent who communicates the following messages:

- "Hey, do I ever like getting my job done around the house. It's fun for me!"
- "Wow, do I ever enjoy doing things with you!"
- "Don't we have fun together!"

Guideline 2: Base chores on the maturity of your child

I say "maturity" because maturity level may not always reflect the child's actual age. Generally, however, through kindergarten, the child is no real help with most tasks. During the preschool and kindergarten years, the correct attitude about chores is built mainly by parents modeling and "working" with the child. Preschool and kindergarten children may be expected to clean up messes they make, help clean up their rooms, and make their beds (even if only in a sloppy sort of way).

By third grade and throughout the rest of the elementary school years, most children can take care of the dishes and clean a few of the family rooms once a week. Other jobs they can handle include cleaning the garage, cleaning the car—inside and out, taking out the trash, and cleaning ovens and dirty windows.

Guideline 3: The secret of happiness with your child around chores is to use consequences without anger

Children do not need to be rewarded for finishing a job. However, compliments and happiness are important. All of us like to hear more excitement about things done right than things done wrong! All of us need positive comments and interactions with others. If parents convey more emotion about jobs done poorly than jobs done well, you can bet jobs will continue to be done poorly.

I do not recommend tying allowance to chores. This is not the way the real world works. Parents don't get paid for fixing dinner or going shopping. It's expected as part of their contribution to the family unit.

The rub comes in applying appropriate consequences, without anger, when jobs have been done poorly or have not been completed. Let's look at this example:

A new parent, trying to be a good parent, once asked a mother why she was able to do a better job of raising eight children than most people did with one. The mother thought for a while and finally said, "Well, I really don't know. All I can say is, if the eggs aren't gathered, nobody has breakfast."

That's it! How simple. It's just like the real world. First do your job, then you can eat! This young parent used the idea. As her children grew into adulthood, she always let them know that she would like the job done by the time they ate their next meal. They could take their time. No rush. But she found the job was always done by dinnertime.

***Chores are the foundation of
responsibility and self-esteem***