

***BEAUTIFUL SAVIOR
LUTHERAN SCHOOL
PRESENTS:
PEARLS OF LOVE AND LOGIC***
Special Thoughts on Raising Kids

Values: Passing Them On to Our Children

Every day it seems there's another story of the decline in values of our youth in the United States. Drugs are a scourge on the land, available even in remote rural schools. Teenage pregnancy is skyrocketing. In many schools, teachers are more like police officers than instructors. In our society, proper moral values seem to be taking a pretty good licking.

As parents, this has become a disturbing trend. "I want my children to have responsible moral values," we say. "But how do I teach them those values?"

A great wave of change has swept over our society in the past forty years. The "human rights" revolution has spread even to our children. Parents cannot make their children think like they do simply by telling them, "You'll do it or else." Demands and threats may yield short-term results, but they don't mold our children's minds. Such tactics don't persuade children that we're right.

Values are passed on to children in two ways: by what children see, and by what they experience in relating to us. When children see us being honest, they learn about honesty. When we talk to our children with love and respect, they learn to talk that way to others.

We can accelerate our modeling of effectiveness by engaging in "eavesdrop value setting." That means that Mom and Dad talk to each other about their values, but within earshot of the children. If we want our children to learn about honesty, for example, we allow them to overhear us reporting on our genuine acts of honesty. "You know, sweetie," we might say to our spouse. "something interesting happened to me today. At the store I gave the clerk a \$5.00 bill for a can of pop and she gave me \$14.50

in change. So, I gave her back the ten. I could have said nothing and been \$10.00 richer, but I feel so much better being honest - doing what's right."

Children soak up what they hear when we speak to others. It's great when what they soak up is good. Be advised, however, they're sponges for the bad, too.

Our improper words and actions hit them with the same force. If we have nothing but ridicule for our bosses and co-workers, our children learn that ridicule and sarcasm are an acceptable way to talk. If we cheat at board games or when we play sports with our young children, then we shouldn't wring our hands and cry, "Why?" when they get nailed for cheating in school.

The other way we influence our children's values is in the way we treat them. A corollary to the Golden Rule applies here: Children will do to others as their parents do to them. Treating our children with respect teaches them to go and do likewise. Being fair with our children makes them want to be fair to their friends and teachers.

Children have minds of their own. They want to exert their independence and do their own thinking. They shuck off the things that are forced onto them and embrace the things they want to believe. If we want to pass our values onto them, we must present those values in a way that our children can accept: in our actions and words. A child's values come from what he/she sees and hears - and also overhears. Children don't accept what we try to drive into their heads with lecturing.

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