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# Tower of Strength

“The name of the Lord is a strong tower  
The righteous runs into it and is safe.”  
—Proverbs 18:10

## The Eight P’s of Parenting

I’m no expert parent. My children are not old enough for my efforts to have been truly tested. And it must always be remembered that every human being eventually chooses for himself whether or not to love and obey God (Ezek. 18:4).

Two Harvard professors, James Q. Wilson and Richard Herrnstein, wrote a book called *Crime and Human Nature*, and argued that the main indicators of a habitual felon are developed between ages 1 and 6. Wow! I don’t know if they appreciate the power of the gospel to override one’s background, but I think I see their point, and it is alarming.

There is no greater responsibility that God has given a couple than the raising of what children they are blessed with. We must give it our utmost attention while we have the opportunity.

God, the perfect parent, has given us at least eight things in the Bible that we parents can follow to set our children on the right path.

### 1.) Provide for Them.

If we are going to bring children into this world, we must take seriously the responsibility to provide

them with food, shelter, clothing, and education. Children are an expense we must be prepared to meet through hard work, and a responsibility that will require us to sacrifice our own desires. If we must drive jalopies so that our kids can soar (or simply have some lunch money) it's a worthy sacrifice.

Providing for our children may seem too obvious to mention, but deadbeat dads are an increasing problem. And, there are other fathers who still live at home, but who spend all their earnings on alcohol or hobbies, so that there is nothing left for the family. "If anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith, and is worse than an unbeliever" (1 Tim. 5:8).

## **2.) Pass on the Faith to Them.**

Faith is not passed down genetically, like eye color and height. It is passed down through a diligent and conscientious effort to teach the faith to the younger generation. The Bible says, "Fathers ... bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord (Eph. 6:4).

Influence cannot flow from parent to child unless there is time, connection, and conversation. Speak to the children. Guide them. Take advantage of teachable moments as they arise. Three times in the history of Israel, God told the children of Israel that their kids would ask questions about God (Exo. 13:14, Deut. 6:20, Josh. 4:6). His advice was not to tell them to shut up, not to tell them to ask their mother, not to tell them to ask the preacher to preach on it, not to tell them to run along and turn on the TV, but rather to explain it! A parent's responsibility is to fill his children's hearts with stories of God and His power, of God's care, of God's nature.

## **3.) Prove to Be a Good Example.**

Teaching must be accompanied by a good example. While kids often do not do what we say, they almost always do what we do. Paul said that Timothy's faith came from the modeling of his grandmother and mother (2 Tim. 1:5). Don't be one of those "do as I say not as I do" parents. Show Christianity in action.

#### **4.) Punish Them.**

Did you hear of the parent whose daughter stepped on a rusty nail? The girl whined so much about getting a tetanus shot that mom couldn't bear to take her to the doctor. So she developed lockjaw and died in a few weeks. In a misguided effort to spare her momentary pain, mom caused her greater anguish and death.

Despite the modern fad of saying that spanking is wrong, our Heavenly Father, the perfect parent, tells us that such punishments, and others like it, are helpful and necessary (Prov. 13:24, 19:18, 22:15, 23:13–14, 29:15). It is the loving thing to do. Avoiding confrontation and punishment is actually *unloving* (Heb. 12:7–11, 1 Kings 1:5–6, 1 Sam. 2:29). The application of momentary pain sends a powerful signal, that spares from later encounters with the worse consequences of sin.

#### **5.) Play with Them.**

But, it is easy to overdo discipline. Failing to express our love for our children gives them a perverted view of God, a God who is all discipline, no fellowship. Some do not pay attention to their children unless they require correction. Eventually, this becomes a frustrating cycle, for children prefer negative attention to no attention at all, and will misbehave if that's what it takes to see Dad. "Fathers, do not exasperate your children, so that they may not lose heart" (Col. 3:21).

Good times between you and your child should outnumber the bad. Be sure to devote time to taking your children on outings, playing with them, and doing fun projects together. Find some activity that you can enjoy. Time spent with your children should never be considered time wasted. We must change the way we look at children—not as a nuisance, but as a gift from God Himself (Matt. 19:14).

#### **6.) Protect Them from the Worst Influences.**

Some dangers we allow our children to grapple with, because sometimes experience is the best teacher, even if it means a few failures—riding a bike, swimming in the deep end, handling an

awkward social situation. But there are some dangers we keep as far away from our children as possible, because they cause instant and irreparable damage—things like internet pornography, teen pregnancy, and falling in with the wrong crowd (1 Cor. 15:33). Shepherds do not allow the sheep to frolic near the wolves (Acts 20:31).

### **7.) Prepare Them for the Rest of What They'll Face.**

But, it's impossible to shield children from everything. Isolation is unrealistic. Instead, parents have to prepare children to face a world full of temptation and distraction, to prepare them to deal maturely with everything (Prov. 6:20–23). The adolescent landscape is littered with dangerous pitfalls, secret ones in friends' homes and official ones in classrooms, and we must prepare them to handle them without our constant presence. Once they have a driver's license, and maybe even earlier, they must begin to stand on their own.

### **8.) Pray for Them.**

Since human parents are finite beings, who cannot be everywhere at once, it is vital to request the help of our eternal all-seeing Father. I have always been touched by the prayer of Manoah and his wife, "O Lord, please ... teach us what to do for the boy who is to be born" (Judges 13:8). Ask for God's help! If God could get the baby Moses through the bulrushes, He can get our children through the world.

If we would spend one-tenth of the time working toward our children's spiritual success as we do their academic and financial success, we would surely do well. I would rather have a faithful child than a wealthy child any day. Let's do our part to teach and protect our children, and then let's entrust them to a faithful Creator. Who knows what great things they will accomplish!?

*—John Guzzetta*

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### **Quote of the Week:**

"A great leader takes people where they don't necessarily want to go but ought to be."

*—Rosalynn Carter*