

Parenting is More than a Formula: Part 1

I. Introduction: Parents are looking for a formula which will guarantee that their kids will turn out right.

- A. What formulas have people tried?
 1. Educational formulas: public schools, Christian schools, home schooling.
 2. Parenting formulas.
 3. Church-based formulas: Sunday School, AWANA, VBS, Summer Camps, Youth Groups, Family Integrated Church.
- B. Most of the formulas have some strengths.
- C. Each of the formulas has weaknesses and problems.
- D. Parents who have tried each of these formulas have experienced various results
 1. Proponents of each system can point to many examples of success.
 2. There are also examples of failure in each system – which often leads to the birth of the next system.
 3. Proponents of a given system will often blame all failure on user error – the parents didn't properly follow the directions.
- E. Many parents go from formula to formula looking for *the* answer.

II. Parents need to exercise discernment when examining child training formulas.

- A. We need to recognize the difference between plausibility and proof when considering various parenting formulas. Acts 17:11 Eph. 4:14 I Thess. 5:21
 1. Anecdotal stories do not prove that a formula works.
 2. Sometimes the Scripture quoted doesn't prove what the formula advocates claim.
 3. An advocate of a particular formula may sound very persuasive without actually proving that his formula is true and biblical.
 4. Contrary data may be ignored or explained away.
 5. Some of what is asserted is demonstrably false.
 6. I encourage you to be good Bereans when listening to me or anyone else who tries to tell you how to parent your kid.
- B. Many "Christian" approaches to parenting are legalistic.
 1. Legalism involves going beyond the Scriptures. II Tim. 3:16-17 Pr. 30:6
 2. It is very important to distinguish between what Scripture commands versus one of many possible ways to fulfill our responsibilities to God.
 3. The biblical commands concerning child training are quite basic. We as parents are then called to work out the specifics in our own situation.
 4. Some make their particular methodology "law", while failing to acknowledge that other approaches are equally valid ways to fulfill biblical commands.
 5. Some believers impose their extra-biblical rules and preferences on others.
 6. Sometimes the extra-biblical rules (traditions) become more important than what Scripture actually teaches. Mark 7:8
 7. Some people actually claim divine revelation for their child training methods.
 8. What is not biblically mandated is a family choice.

9. Extra-biblical formulas often fail to take into account legitimate differences between kids and between families.

III. Why do kids turn out the way they do? Three factors:

- A. Parents are responsible to raise their children properly. Eph. 6:4
 1. What the Bible says about parenting is pretty basic and simple. Eph. 6:4 Col. 3:21
 - a. Discipline them. Pr. 13:24 22:15 23:13-14 29:15 Dt. 21:18-21
 - b. Train them. Deut. 6:4ff Prov. 22:6 1:8 4:1 Gen. 18:19 Ex. 12:26ff 13:8,14
 - c. Don't provoke them to anger. Col. 3:21
 2. God blesses faithful parents. Prov. 23:13-14 29:17
 3. If you neglect discipline you will contribute to your child's ruin and your own misery. Pr. 17:21,25 29:15b 19:13
 4. Learn from Eli and David. 1 Sam. 2:12-17,22-25 3:13 4:11 2 Sam. 13 1 Ki. 1:5-6
 5. While parents have an influence on how their children turn out, they do not have control. The Bible does not teach parental determinism!
- B. Children are responsible for the choices they make. Pr. 20:11 Ezek. 18:5-13
 1. Not all rebellion is the fault of the parents.
 2. There are no "good kids". Ps. 51:1 Pr. 22:15
 3. What was the difference between Cain and Abel? Gen. 4:1-9 Mark 7:18ff
 4. God, like Cain, experienced rebellion in His child Israel. Jer. 2:30 5:3 7:28 Isa. 1:2
 5. As our children enter adulthood, they are responsible to make their own life decisions. Prov. 1:21ff 20:11 Ezek. 18
- C. God's sovereign grace is needed to save our kids.
 1. You can't save your kids! Eph. 2:1-3 Rom. 8:6-8
 2. The LORD must give them life and draw them to Himself. John 3:1ff 6:37,44 Eph. 2:4ff
 3. Sinful kids and sinful parents need grace.
 4. The LORD works in mysterious ways.

IV. Concluding summary: Part 1

- A. Does the Bible offer a surefire formula for success in parenting? **Prov. 22:6**
 1. Is Proverbs 22:6 an unconditional promise or a maxim?
 2. Jesus warned that the gospel would divide families. Luke 12:51-53
- B. There is no guarantee of success. We are dependent upon God's grace.
 1. None of us is a good enough parent to merit our child's salvation! Heb. 12:10
 2. Our children are so sinful, they would reject perfect discipline. Ge. 8:21