

October 2022

# THE HERALD

Newsletter of the Orrville Grace Brethren Church

## Parenting Toward Maturity

By Taigen Joos

Parenting cannot be delegated.

God is clear in both the Old and New Testaments that parents are responsible to raise their children in such a way that points their attentions and affections towards the one true and living God (Deuteronomy 6:4–9; Ephesians 6:4). This truth cannot be denied, nor can it lawfully be ignored.

This responsibility does not rest primarily on the pastor of your church, nor on any kind of youth leader, Sunday School teacher, or Christian School educator. While others may play a small part, the responsibility of parenting cannot be delegated to any one of them.

Children are blessings from God, for parents to enjoy and to raise for the glory of God (Psalm 127:3–5). While we expect children to have a certain level of immaturity—physically, emotionally, and spiritually—our goal is to bring them along into greater depths of maturity the older they get, and teach them how to continue that growth long after they “fly the coop.”

In other words, Christian parents ought not leave it up to their kids to figure things out on

their own; rather, we must be involved in the lives of our children, urging them to spiritual maturity, even from a young age.

What kinds of things can we do to parent our children towards spiritual maturity? I offer five ways for consideration.

**One, demonstrate to them the beauty and necessity of the gospel.**

When your children observe your life, your habits, your marriage relationship, etc. what will they notice? Will they see a life that is bent towards Christ and the gospel? Will they hear you speak to them of the gospel? Will they observe your marriage as a good picture of the gospel? Will your home environment be such that creates a beautiful greenhouse in which to grow spiritually?

None of us is perfect, but we want our children to see Christ in our lives individually and in our marriage relationship. You as parents are the first and foremost missionaries to your children. Live out the gospel before them; speak to them of it; pray for them to yield to the gospel at a good age of understanding.

**Two, as your children are younger in age, teach them the importance of basic spiritual disciplines.**

Even if your children are not yet converted, they will pick up certain attitudes about God

based on your attitudes—and they will learn from you.

Teach them the importance of devotional Bible reading and prayer. Let them see you read your Bible. Spend time as a family reading the Bible together, singing great hymns of the faith, and praying together.

Teach them the importance of weekly corporate worship. There is a weekly rhythm that God has placed into the life of the church. That rhythm beats every seven days on the Lord's Day. Teach them the value of it through proper preparation for corporate worship and joyful participation in it.

In this corporate worship, teach them the value of congregational singing. How you participate in singing will teach your children the value of singing. How you pray will teach your children the value of prayer. How you treat the Scriptures when it is read and preached will teach your children the value of Scripture. When you as a parent value these things and demonstrate that before your children, they will catch that mentality, too. And they will grow.

### **Three, value time as a family around the dinner table.**

Everyone is busy. As your children grow older, are involved in extra-curricular activities, and get jobs, things do not slow down. However, family time around the dinner table should be valued and practiced, even at an early age. This was a practice we began at marriage, continued even when our children were very young, and enjoy still today as our kids are in college.

If at all possible, we do not text or use our phones around the dinner table. The vast majority of times we eat dinner, we are conversing around a table. Those times have

proven invaluable to the spiritual health of our children and to the bond between each one of us. We have conversations about all kinds of topics. It could be about something from the Sunday morning sermon or Bible study class; it could be something they heard about at work; it could be about politics; it could be about issues they are facing at school; or just fun subjects that lead to much laughter together.

Teach your children at a young age to sit at the dinner table and teach them proper manners for mealtime. Manners and etiquette are applications of loving your neighbor and esteeming others better than yourself. Do not settle for chaotic mealtimes. As parents, you must set the standard for your children, and expect them to follow your leadership and instructions around the table. Teach them to converse with adults in an appropriate way. Recently, I enjoyed a mealtime with some longtime friends, including their daughter and her three elementary age children. We had a wonderful conversation together and they were well-mannered, even when eating something that was not their favorite thing to eat.

Mealtimes, particularly dinner (or supper if you're from the south), is a wonderful opportunity to talk about life issues, to teach your children godly discipline, manners, and etiquette, and will prove to be spiritually beneficial to your children.

### **Four, involve your children in ministry from a young age.**

As a ministry home, we involved our children in helping to clean the church building from when they were about 2 years old, doing things that they could do. And all throughout their lives, we have served

together in a variety of ways. Getting them involved in ministry, and ministering alongside of them as parents, is a helpful way to build character, teach service to others, and to work together to accomplish goals.

Serving the Lord together also helps teach them that life is more than just consuming; it is contributing. We live in a consumer-driven world. We want our children to learn that it is more blessed to give than to receive, to think more highly of others than they do themselves, and to sacrifice things like time, energy, and even finances, for the welfare of someone else.

### **Five, cultivate a relationship with your children that allows for open conversation.**

Teach your children that you can all sit around the living room and just talk about life, without a lot of technological distractions.

Talk to them about real life struggles and about what God says about those things.

Enjoy times in the car with them. My wife, more than I, got to take our kids to their music lessons, rehearsals, and concerts. She called it “windshield time” and had all kinds of rich conversations with them. Ask probing questions about life, what they are thinking about, what they are hearing from other people, and how to respond to people when they hurt you or treat you wrongly.

We have talked with our children many times about the value of handling conflicts in a biblical manner, saying that if they could learn basic skills in this area, they would be far ahead of many Christian adults.

If you want your children to talk with you about difficult subjects when they are 16, 17, or 18 years old (or older), create that open

line of communication with them when they are 6, 7, or 8 (or younger). You want your children to know and believe that they can talk with you about anything—truly anything. You would rather them ask you questions about things like human sexuality, Critical Race Theory, abortion, or politics rather than ask Google, watch something on TikTok, or talk with their peers.

Our children are now 18 years old (we have twins). We have made plenty of mistakes as parents, for sure. But the teen years have been an incredible blessing in so many ways. We have enjoyed them thoroughly. We just finished taking a family vacation and had a wonderful time together enjoying fun activities, much laughter, and good conversation.

Maturity does not take place overnight, and your children are not going to be perfect any more than you will be perfectly mature. But our goal in this should be similar to Paul’s as he wrote in Ephesians 4:13–15, “till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ.”

May God help us as parents to take our parenting seriously, and to pray for God to grow our children to be mature, godly, and faithful servants of Christ, for his glory.

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Originally Posted on: <https://g3min.org/parenting-toward-maturity/>

# FUNNIES

One of the assistant editors on a national magazine wore a new hat to the office one day. While he was in conference with his boss, a writer on staff inspected the hat, then went down to the store it came from and bought an exact duplicate, complete even to the monogrammed initials on the sweatband. There was only one difference—it was three sizes larger than the original. Back at the office he switched the hats. At the end of the day when the editor put on his hat, it fell over his ears. Thoroughly mystified, he took it off and examined it. There were his initials—it must be his hat.

The next day, he was wearing the hat, which now seemed to fit pretty well. As soon as he went out of the room, the writer inspected the hat. He found the sweatband was stuffed with tissue paper; so he took the paper out, stuffed the original hat, and put that on the rack. At the end of the day, when the editor put on his hat, it just sat on the top of his head. Again he looked inside—and immediately went off to Bellevue Hospital for an examination.

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Certain government functionaries contend that Americans are getting stronger. Twenty years ago, they point out, it took two people to carry home forty dollars' worth of groceries. Now a child can do it.

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The four-year-old was absolutely fascinated with his grandfather's false teeth. After staring transfixed while they were removed for brushing and replaced, he asked to have the process repeated. The obliging grandfather did it several times for the youngster. Then asked, "Now, what?"

"Do your nose next!" the youngster replied.

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Many husbands go broke on the money their wives save at sales.

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Mrs. James answered the front door one day to find her dear old friend Mrs. Avery standing outside with a huge mangy, panting dog. Delighted by the unexpected visit, Mrs. James bade her friend inside. The dog bounded ahead of them, knocked over a valuable vase while dashing for the cat, used the lush carpet as a toilet, then jumped onto an antique sofa and proceeded to take a nap.

He was still napping an hour later when Mrs. Avery rose to leave. Mrs. James showed her to the door and waited for her to call the dog. But her friend paid no attention whatsoever to the animal.

"Aren't you going to take your animal with you?" Mrs. James asked, a hint of impatience in her voice.

"Oh, that awful beast is not my pet. I thought he was yours."

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"Where have you been for the last two hours?" demanded the minister's wife.

"I met Mrs. Brown on the street and asked her how she was feeling," sighed the weary pastor.