

8 Tips to Thrive as a Parent

Intro: Even though we are talking about practical ways to parent your kids, the end goal is not just behavior modification but heart transformation.

1. Having simple, enduring household rules.

- We started with obey, respect, & tell the truth
- We morphed into “be quick to listen & obey, honor others, & be honest.” This helped with heart issues and not just behavioral outcomes.
- We even found songs & sayings to help better describe obedience and honor.
- We made them into coloring pages when they were little, & posted them on our fridge and pantry wall. They are still on the pantry door.

2. Having a simple way of dealing with rules that are broken.

Example:

- **What did you do wrong?** – They need to learn to admit what they did. It is ok to tell them. If you do, then have the child repeat it back to you. We would ask, “Which of the 3 rules did you break?”
- **Why was that wrong?** This is a *value* question. The 3 basic rules: **Obey, show respect, be honest.** You don’t need to ask, “Why did you do it?”
- **What are you going to do differently next time?** You might have to co-create an answer.
- Pray about it and ask for God’s help
 - Focusing not on “why” but “what” they did
 - Allows for forgiveness

I know that this was a game-changer for me. I tend to hold on to grudges and I would be stewing for a long time. This freed me from stewing and freed the boys from sitting under the weight of my stewing silence.

3. Marriage comes first.

4. Realize that teens are still watching how you live your life.

...So, if you feel like it’s too late, know that it’s not. I know of some parents that are dealing with some very difficult situations with their teenage kids. It’s true that it’s heartbreaking to see our kids want to be with their peers more than us

and yes, while they are being influenced by their peers a ton during this season, your voice still matters. How you handle disappointments, mistakes, highs and lows are still being watched. Even if they don't say it, they are absorbing like crazy – so don't give up. Keep finding ways to be involved. Allprodad.com is a great resource for this.

5. Choosing to be Intentional:

- Spiritual growth of our kids is on us.
 - Other parents will likely have a different set of values. Determine what values you want to instill and be willing to stick to your values even when other parents decide not to.
- What's the end game for your kids?
 - The book that rocked me was the book, “The Intentional Father” in which it painted the picture of my son going off to school at some point. Will I have done my part to help him be ready? It brought me back to how I was not equipped at all and how desperately I wanted something better for my boys. So ask, what kind of person do you want your kid to be (notice, I'm not asking, “what job do you want them to do?” – I'm talking about character).
- Finding ways to embed biblical values (Examples: give to others during Christmas, recognize Advent candles, tell the stories using the Jesse Tree)
 - While it's fun to play make believe with things like Santa and the Easter bunny, it's important to help your kids know the difference between fantasy and reality. So many kids graduated from Children's Ministry not caring much about Jesus because they thought he was make-believe, just like Santa.
- Find someone who is ahead of you and ask them for tips.
 - One of the most helpful things we had at our disposal was someone who had just finished raising teens to ask questions to.
 - It was also super helpful to find parents who were like-minded about being intentional and try to have our kids lean into those relationships. This helped us so much with the “well, so-and-so said their parents will let them watch ___”. Once we asked the parent, we found that it was either false, half-true or some extenuating circumstance.
- Reading and reviewing games, movies , materials (see resources below).
- Phone

- Bark or iPhone parental controls
- Keeping the phone out in the living room (having a regular alarm clock)
- Hold off on a smart phone – no parent ever said, “Man, I wish that I would have given them a phone sooner”
 - Use a dumb phone
- ☐ Finances – tithing
 - We went with 10% tithe, 50% savings, 40% spending. They used the “savings” money later on to purchase bigger items like a car or used it toward college.
- ☐ Family time
 - This is something that requires looking at the calendar and finding moments when life gets busy. Having dinner together or continuing to have a “family night” is important, even when the kids don’t want it.

6. Find an approach you can agree on and run with it.

One of the things I find parents struggle with is that they come to the marriage with different parenting styles based off of how they were raised. Some are reacting in terms of “I’m never doing what my parents did” or they are saying, “I want to do it exactly like my parents.” Two issues:

- A. How does your style/approach align with Scripture?
- B. Can you both get on the same page about the approach? I highly recommend you finding an approach that you both can agree on and work that approach together. Assuming you’ve vetted well, it takes the blaming away from each other and places it on the tool you’ve selected. If you find that the approach/tool doesn’t fit your lifestyle, temperament/child’s temperament, it’s ok to change. Just don’t change at the first sign of trouble or you will create a bunch of confusion for your kids if you are constantly changing.

7. Owning things when we do something wrong.

It’s important to model saying, “I’m sorry” when we’ve done something wrong, even to our kids.

8. Discipline now. Kids are looking for boundaries.

It’s never too late to start. If you are lucky enough to hear this and start now, go for it. Someone will discipline your children. It is so much better to deal with conflict and the pain of discipline now instead of having the police do it. I meet

with too many parents who are experiencing the pain of buying into the no-discipline approach – they are now having to undo years of unhealthy patterns before they start building new ones. Your kids will be better humans, enjoy more favor from adults, and be ahead of their peers when it comes to being selected for things.

Resources:

Biblical Parenting.org (great for comprehensive approach to parenting)

Parenting and relationships (quick email snippets to improve everyday)

- Allprodad.com
- Imom.com

Creating a worldview:

- Seeds Family Worship
- MamaBearApologetics.com

Babywise/Toddler wise – (resource for having structure with baby and toddler)

Family Life

Vetting games and movies:

- Focus on the Family “Plugged in”
- Common Sense Media

Gateway Resources

- Parenting Class (April 27-May 25) – Brian and Kelly Clark
- Joining a group with peers
- Meeting with Godly mentors who are a step or two ahead
- Interviewing parents with kids who you want your kids to be like

Bark (great for phone monitoring)