

725 What Do You Want for Your Grandchildren?

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God's Answers to Life's Questions

A friend of mine recently said to me, "You know, Phil, I believe it's much harder for children today than when we were growing up. They're facing so many challenges." He's right, you know. Growing up as a Christian is not easily, and our children need all the help they can get. Today we're asking the question, "What do you want for your grandchildren?" Jackie and I have raised our four daughters, and three are married to wonderful men. We have two grand-daughters and grandson on the way. Having children come along is a sobering experience. It makes you stop and take stock of what is important in life. Jackie and I have tried to teach our children to follow the Lord, and now our children are beginning to spiritually train their children. God's word has some important instruction for parents, and we want to learn all we can from a study of His holy Word.

I believe parents matter and they matter a lot. Sometimes people think parents have no influence on their children. The good news is, as a Kaiser report recently said, kids say their parents have tremendous influence on them. When children and teens face problems or questions, they are more likely to go to Mom or Dad first for advice and help if the parent has previously taken the initiative to talk to and teach their children about difficult issues. Parents, you can make a difference in your children if you will take the time to talk and to listen to them. They need your help through the struggles and temptations of life. Give them your heart and the boundaries they need, and you will see great results from it.

Our children are facing many pressures from business, movies, television, and the internet. Businesses advertise to kids today more than any children in history. Kids spend an estimated \$150 billion a year of their own money. Some parents indulge little Johnny's every whim and fail to set rules and standards. You can see why marketers compete like never before for the attention of these young spenders. So fierce is the competition for their cash that modern marketing techniques have become, in many cases, insidiously evil. Selling to tweens isn't about finding out what they want; it's all about figuring out how to manipulate their minds. The internet also poses a terrible problem for kids. A 2002 Kaiser Family Foundation Report found that 70 percent of youth age 15 to 17 reported accidentally coming across pornography online, and 23 percent of those youth said this happens "very" or "somewhat" often. A more recent study by the London School of Economics reveals the problem is worsening, with a full 90 percent of teens who go online reporting they have stumbled across hard-core pornography. The marketing tricks to create teen porn addicts are endless: E-mail inboxes are spammed by perverted pornographers, unsuspecting youth are frequently tricked onto pornographic sites by simply mistyping a word or using a common phrase, and "innocent" chatter in chat rooms lure kids to unsuitable places and even personal encounters with pedophiles.

Television is also a serious threat to our children. A recent Nielson study reveals that 77 percent of kids say they have a TV in their bedroom. As the Kaiser Family Foundation reported last year, most kids say their parents don't have a clue what they're watching. The number of foul words and bedroom scenes is ever increasing on television. You won't ever find Christian morals upheld on prime-time television. Many programs on television have no ability to blush about shameful things. The average youth now spends six and a half hours watching television or being online each day. It used to be that a parent's worst nightmare was the guy in a van lurking in the shadows at the playground. Today, that guy is often in our kids' bedroom on the computer. Parents who are unaware or too fearful to set boundaries are allowing predators to prey virtually upon their sons and daughters in the privacy of their own homes.

Christian parents, you must take the responsibility to train your children spiritually. If you fail to instruct them to be godly and wise

spiritually, you may find your children to be your greatest heartache. Solomon said in Proverbs 23:15-16, "My son, if your heart is wise, My own heart also will be glad; and my inmost being will rejoice When your lips speak what is right." Parents who raise godly children rejoice greatly. Solomon again said in Proverbs 23:24-25, "The father of the righteous will greatly rejoice, and he who sires a wise son will be glad in him. Let your father and your mother be glad, and let her rejoice who gave birth to you." The old saying found in Prov. 22:6 is still true: "Train up a child in the way he should go, even when he is old he will not depart from it." Children need godly parents to show them the paths of righteousness and wisdom. They need to know where the pitfalls and potholes are, so they can avoid the tragedies of life.

Psalm 127, which was written by Solomon, says: "Unless the LORD builds the house, they labor in vain who build it; unless the LORD guards the city, the watchman keeps awake in vain. It is vain for you to rise up early, to retire late, to eat the bread of painful labors; For He gives to His beloved *even in his sleep*. Behold, children are a gift of the LORD, the fruit of the womb is a reward. Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, so are the children of one's youth. How blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them; they will not be ashamed when they speak with their enemies in the gate." God has to be a part of your children's lives to have any hope at all. More than anything I want my children and grandchildren to know the Lord and to go to heaven when they die. Jackie and I have raised our children, but we know that our grandchildren are still to come along. Here are some of the things I wish for my grandchildren:

First, I want them to experience genuine and abundant love, but with limits and parameters. I hear a lot about unconditional love, and I know that love should be given without "if's," "and's," or "but's." But love without any conditions at all is not the love of the Bible. Completely unconditional love actually harms a child, because children need boundaries and structure. They need to know that love is real and forgiveness is available but they also *need* consequences to their actions. They need to know that loving them does not mean they can do anything they wish to do. Love means caring enough for our children to keep them away from the things that will hurt them physically and spiritually. One of the great tragedies of our day is the permissive parent, the parent who gives his/her child whatever the child desires and never disciplines him/her. If you want a child out of control, be a permissive parent.

The Bible gives us an example of a permissive parent in the old priest Eli. 1 Samuel 2:22-25 says: Now Eli was very old; and he heard all that his sons were doing to all Israel, and how they lay with the women who served at the doorway of the tent of meeting. He said to them, "Why do you do such things, the evil things that I hear from all these people? No, my sons; for the report is not good which I hear the LORD'S people circulating. If one man sins against another, God will mediate for him; but if a man sins against the LORD, who can intercede for him?" But they would not listen to the voice of their father, for the LORD desired to put them to death. The sons of Eli were wicked, but God held Eli himself responsible for not disciplining his children. Even though Eli was a priest, God was quite harsh.

1 Samuel 3:11-14 says: The LORD said to Samuel, "Behold, I am about to do a thing in Israel at which both ears of everyone who hears it will tingle. In that day I will carry out against Eli all that I have spoken concerning his house, from beginning to end. For I have told him that I am about to judge his house forever for the iniquity which he knew, because his sons brought a curse on themselves and he did not rebuke them. Therefore I have sworn to the house of Eli that the iniquity of Eli's house shall not be atoned for by sacrifice or

offering forever.” The time came when Eli and his sons perished, and Samuel became the priest. There are limits to what God will endure from His people. Parents who will not discipline their children will find life very difficult.

Second, I want them to grow under Christian influence and values. Isaiah 54:13 says, “All your sons will be taught of the LORD; and the well-being of your sons will be great.” When people know the Lord’s will and obey him, life is so much sweeter. They have well-being. God’s word is a gift to us to help us live our lives in peace and in righteousness. The closer we walk with the Lord, the better our lives will be. Paul taught in Ephesians 6:4, “And, fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.” Any father or mother who takes the time to nurture and admonish his children in the will of the Lord will be a blessing to those children. Knowing Jesus makes life better, more loving, and more godly. More than anything, our society today needs to know the Lord.

Third, I want good guidance from their moms for them on what they wear, and how they look in public. We live in a world with far too much emphasis on fleshly things, and many children are not taught the value of modesty. Sometimes, parents must say "no" to their children about what they wear, regardless of the reaction. Peter said to wives in 1 Pet. 3:1-4, “In the same way, you wives, be submissive to your own husbands so that even if any of them are disobedient to the word, they may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives, as they observe your chaste and respectful behavior. Your adornment must not be *merely* external—braiding the hair, and wearing gold jewelry, or putting on dresses; but *let it be* the hidden person of the heart, with the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is precious in the sight of God.” A chaste and modest wife is a good role model for her daughters. Children imitate their parents more than they know. Parents are you a good model of morality for your children?

Fourth, I want open communication for my granddaughters. I want them to be able to discuss anything with their parents. Parents, if you wish to make an impact on your children, communicate with them and especially listen to them. James said in James 1:19-20, “Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness that God requires.” Anger blocks communication and turns it into a fight. Parents must be able to communicate with their children, if they wish to influence them in the important matters of life. I would much rather that my grandchildren hear the facts of life from their Christian parents than from the world or the internet. One college student many years ago came to her crying one night to her friend, because she thought she was expecting a child. What had she done? She had kissed a boy. Any parent of an 18-year-old girl, who hasn’t told her the facts of life, has genuinely cheated her child.

Solomon said in Proverbs 14:15, “The naive believes everything, but the sensible man considers his steps.” Again Solomon said in Proverbs 14:18, “The naive inherit foolishness, But the sensible are crowned with knowledge.” In Proverbs 27:12 Solomon said, “A prudent man sees evil *and* hides himself, the naive proceed *and* pay the penalty.” Nearly forty percent of the children in America lack any spiritual training today. They have grown up not knowing Jesus Christ, not hearing the morals He taught, and often not knowing what is right and wrong. It’s no wonder many children’s lives are so messed up by the time they get grown. Their parents did not give them the spiritual wisdom they needed to know what could hurt them. They didn’t even know that they needed to say “no,” because they lacked the spiritual training they needed to keep them from a tragic life. More than anything, I want my children and my grandchildren to go to heaven when they die. I know you want that too.

I want my grandchildren to grow up in a world with the love of God and good morals. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 15:33, “Do not be deceived: Bad company ruins good morals.” I know I can’t take them out of the world, but I want them to at least know that there is a good God who loves them and provides a way that is moral and kind. I know that their friends and their mates will make a powerful impact on them. I pray they will choose a spouse wisely. 1 Kings 21:25 says, “Surely there was no one like Ahab who sold himself to do evil in the sight of the LORD, because Jezebel his wife incited him.” I hope my grandchildren will choose a godly Christian for their mates, not someone who will lead them away from God into an immoral lifestyle. The people our children date are the people our children will eventually marry. I want them to choose well.

The best chance our kids have of living godly lives is if we parents set the pattern for them. Good parents who love the Lord and live godly before their children more often than not have godly, productive children who love the Lord. If you forsake the Lord, what chance will your child have to know the Lord? If you ignore God’s will, where will your child learn it? If you never go to church, how will your child learn about Jesus? My friend, you are not just living your life for yourself. Your children will follow you into eternity. Where are you leading them?

Don’t just become a Christian in name only, be fully Christian. Serve the Lord with every fiber of your being. Love Him with all your heart. Trust in Him. If you haven’t yet obeyed the gospel, do so today. Today is the best day to do what is right and to set a new course. You can make a great difference in your life and the lives of your children. Believe in Jesus, repent of your sins, confess the name of Christ before everyone, and be baptized into Christ so that you will have the forgiveness of your sins. When you get your life right, you have the best opportunity to help your children go to heaven. More than anything, don’t you want to go to heaven and lead all of your family with you? Take that first step today!

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