



Passing on Morals

Adapted from “X-Factor” series by Scott Erickson.

If we as a nation are going to return to God we must implement His Word into our daily lives. Morals and values in America are under attack. Consider this expert from an article on the family conditions for modeling values for children. In the article, sociology professor David Popenoe wrote the following:

What kind of family is likely to be most successful at instilling character and moral values in its children? Here are its key characteristics: An enduring, two-biological-parent family that engages regularly in activities together, has many of its own routines, traditions and stories, and provides a great deal of contact between adults and children. The children have frequent interaction with relatives, with neighbors in a supportive neighborhood, and with their parents' world of work, coupled with no pervasive worry that their parents will break up. The family develops a vibrant family subculture that provides a rich legacy of meaning for children throughout their lives.

One should add that, in today's family-averse popular culture, strong, self-contained families are more important than ever. Childrearing families must do everything they can to insulate their children from many aspects of the outside world. The more time children can spend in family activities, and the less time spent with peers and the media, the better. Family sub-cultures need to incorporate something of an us-against-them philosophy, an issue around which it is no doubt useful for many families to band together.

Most of the family characteristics noted above are self-evident. The issue of biological parenting is controversial and requires some clarification. All organisms have evolved through natural selection primarily to survive, reproduce and parent so as successfully to pass on their genes into the next generation. Human beings have a set of cognitive, emotional and behavioral predispositions that are encoded in their genes. It is almost certainly the case, therefore, that family behaviors--including courtship, mating, parenting, and relations with kin--are more than just arbitrary social constructs. Each of our relatives shares some of our genes, and it therefore makes evolutionary sense to nurture those genetic kin. This is why we tend to favor our relatives, and why parents tend to put so much effort into raising their biological offspring. Indeed, the parental relationship

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is unique in human affairs because the reciprocity of social benefits is not a major consideration.

This is not to say that stepparents are inherently unloving--many, of course, are intensely loving, as are adoptive families. But it is to say that parental feelings and parental love are inherently more difficult to develop among persons unrelated to a given child. Stepfamilies are one of the fastest growing family forms in America. An estimated one third of all children today may be expected to become stepchildren before they reach age 18.¹

I do not mean to cast aspersions on all stepfamilies; many stepfamilies are necessary and inevitable. But the child outcomes of stepfamilies have been found to be markedly worse than the child outcomes of biological families, and the rapid growth of stepfamilies should certainly not be viewed as favorable from a child's, or from society's, perspective.

Time spent with children--quantity time--is arguably the central ingredient of the good family. There is surely a strong correlation between the amount of time parents spend with their children, and the adult character of those children. The idea of "quality time" is largely a myth, the convenient rationalization of pre-occupied parents. In good childrearing, time shortcuts are few and far between.

¹ David Popenoe, "We Are What We See: The Family Conditions for Modeling Values for Children," *Parenthood in America*, 1998, <http://parenthood.library.wisc.edu/Popenoe/Popenoe-Modeling.html> (accessed July 21, 2017).

COURAGE

C1: Write out one page describing your relationship with your father growing up and when you left home.

- If you are married and/or have children, how does this influence you today as a husband and father? If unmarried and/or no children, how could this influence those relationships in the future?

C2: According to several recent polls, most Americans agree that we still need to return to the teaching of values and norms particularly in regard to the raising of our children. Read and answer the following.

Exodus 20:12 (ESV) Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land that the Lord your God is giving you.

- From this verse, what are two things you can glean.

C3: Write out one page describing your relationship with your mother growing up and when you left home.

- If you are married and/or have children, how does this influence you today as a husband and father? If unmarried and/or no children, how could this influence those relationships in the future?

STRENGTH

S1: God has something to say in His Word to families. God was there when you were conceived. As a father, you have a responsibility to guard, guide and govern you're your children. Read and answer the following.

Psalm 139:14–16 (ESV)

- From these verses, what are three things you can glean about you?

- How do you feel about the fact that you had no choice in who your parents would be? Why?

S2: Just because you brought a baby into the world doesn't mean you are a father. Your child will become emotionally what fathers have engraved on them. If you are a father, take a few moments and circle what imprint you are leaving on your children. If you are not a father, consider the imprint you leave on children around you at church or extended family and friends.

Fearful	OR	Confident
Unhappy	OR	Gentle
Insecure	OR	Joy-Filled
Self-Centered	OR	Character

- Now, ask your children (or those you influence) to circle what they think.

- Where there is disagreement in the above impressions you think you are leaving compared to how the children feel, what steps can you take to move your answers on the right side of the column?

S3: University of Chicago did a survey of all graduate students “When did you receive the clearest teachings of impressions regarding morality & religion?” The number one answer: Mealtime with parents.² Read and answer the following.

Proverbs 22:6 (ESV)

2 Timothy 1:5–7 (ESV)

- Did you receive moral and religious training from your parents growing up? Describe a typical training session in your house growing up.
- If you are a father, where does your child receive moral and religious training?
- For 60 days, set aside five meal times every week to spend training your child(ren). Write out the plan and include a final report giving thought to the impact this has had on your child(ren).

² Source unknown.

ENDURANCE

E1: Fathers have a responsibility to teach their children to obey. Read and answer the following.

Ephesians 6:1–3 (ESV)

Colossians 3:20 (ESV)

- What does the word “honor” mean to you?
- Why do you think God gave this command? List at least three reasons.
- If you are a father, set up a breakfast or lunch date for each of your children. Ask them what they think “honor” means. Do not respond or react just listen. Now ask the Holy Spirit to show you how you can teach Biblical honor to you kids.

E2: Children are to honor their parents. Read and answer the following.

Proverbs 20:20 (ESV)

Proverbs 23:22 (ESV)

Ephesians 6:1–3 (ESV)

1 Timothy 5:4 (ESV)

1 Timothy 5:8 (ESV)

- Is there ever a time a child can stop honoring their parents?

- From the verses, write out the three ways in each stage of life a child is to honor their parents.

- As a child, I honor by _____

- As a young adult, I honor by _____

- As an adult, I honor by _____

- On a scale of 1-4 with 1 being very well and 4 being not well at all, how well do you honor your parents today? Write out an improvement plan.

E3: Promises are provided for those who honor and obey their parents. Read and answer the following.

Exodus 20:12 (ESV)

Ephesians 6:23 (ESV)

- From these scriptures, name at least two things God promises to the obedient child?

- Do you feel as if there is a time kids cannot/should not honor their parents? When? Why?