

Giving your best to raise great kids

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We only have them with us for a few short years and then they are gone. No, I am not referring to denim jeans or skateboard shoes; I am talking about our children. And one of the most interesting things of all is that they are always the perfect fit.

Things that are valuable to us tend to get special attention. Unlike the Starbucks cup that gets thrown away immediately after use, some devices for drinking are given better care. My wife and I have matching coffee mugs with Minnie and Mickey on them, respectively. I don't throw away the cup after finishing my morning coffee. It gets washed clean and put away. There is a memory and a fondness that is connected to our matching mugs.

You can usually tell if someone cares for their automobile's engine with regular oil changes and maintenance without even lifting the hood. If the outside is so dirty and uncared for that the "Wash Me" message that someone wrote last fall now has a Mars in 3-D effect, and there are yucky, 3-week-old Taco Bell wrappers lining the dashboard, chances are there isn't anything good happening under the hood either.

Some people really put in the effort to take care of their homes, cars and boats, and it really shows. Others simply don't, and it is equally obvious. I wish I could tell you that I was one of those guys who has the sparkling wax on my truck glimmering in the sun as I cruise through the Ojai Valley, but, the truth is, I am probably more likely to warrant a potential back window message writer than win any automobile beauty pageants. But when it comes to my kids, I am giving it all I got.

It is so rough these days to wrestle through the myriads of messages that young people have to be attacked with every day. The constant barrage of illicit inappropriateness and destructive innuendo is beginning to take its toll in society. Movies and music videos are just the beginning. From within and without the home, there is seemingly nowhere safe. And unless the parents and influential adults are creating a safe harbor environment, a place where sanity and wisdom can bring an amalgam producing hope for the future, for so many teens, it seems quite bleak.

We all want to save the schools (at least the good ones), but I have to tell you the truth, listening to kids talk these days might give some a serious reason to question how much is worth saving in any part of the raising of America's youth. For those who are looking for increased funding as the sole rallying point to enhancing the lives of future generations for our community, I believe they are missing the mark. I was talking to a former junior high teacher yesterday who is convinced that parent involvement, more than money, is what is really needed. But that requires time, effort and accountability. What is the driving force behind the success of the home school movement that is sweeping across our valley and our nation? One hundred percent parent involvement! And regardless of the educational approach or school one attends, it is the student with the participating parent that ultimately wins hands down.

The Bible says, "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it." There is a lot in that little verse. To train someone requires proactive and interactive involvement, creativity, preparation, follow-through, and a lot of time. Specifically, the verse says to "Train

up." The problem even among Christians is the failure to train "up" a child. This implies a lifting of one from their current place to a newer, higher place. Not only are we to train them up, and therefore, not hold them back from their total God-given potential, we are to send them in the proper way that they should go. There is a sense of an absolute direction to head them in their lives and our job is to know what that is. It seems that many are "letting" their children grow up (as if that is a noble thing, to "let them") without training them. More specifically, as a pastor I see that many times, people do not know the way their children should go, so it is quite difficult to lead them in this. One of the best things that a parent can do is seek wisdom. That way they can see more clearly to lead another down the path.

The irony is that we don't apply this "hands-off" approach to any other important area of life. Imagine if the DMV decided that each new driver would have to find their own way to navigate the tumultuous roads of California. Consider the consequences if Boeing and the FAA decided that each airplane manufacturer could carve their own aeronautical methods. What if the FDA decided to approach medication regulation as loosely as many handle life training? Would you have any confidence in driving, flying or taking meds again? Wouldn't society suffer? In each of these, intelligence and planning is mingled with standards and accountability.

We have math and grammar standards that require passing scores to graduate from high school. But morals and ethics are the taboo that very few teach. The problem is that when you take the concept of truth out of the equation, and faith in God is replaced by faith in the future discoveries of scientists, and the new religion is that man is at the center of the universe of random particle happenstance, bad things happen. The Bible says that God will not be mocked, whatever a man sows, that he shall also reap. If we have sown seeds of lostness, isolation and purposelessness, we shouldn't be surprised to reap the harvest of violence, destruction and self-guided bigotry. But we can change and there is hope; Jesus shows us how. Let's learn and do it God's way, life would be so much better for all of us.

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Dan Nelson is a frequent contributor to the Ojai Valley News and currently serves the Ojai Valley Ministerial Association and community as editor of the Religion Column. Permission is freely granted to reprint the article in its entirety. Dan Nelson is pastor of Calvary Chapel Christian Church of the Ojai Valley.



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Sunday Worship:

9:00 & 10:45am
Calvary Chapel Ojai Valley
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Mid-Week Study:

7:00pm Thursday
Calvary Chapel Ojai Valley
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