

Intentional Parenting

By Rod Arters



Have you ever noticed that most good things that happen—happen intentionally? No one gets married, grows a business, or graduates from college by chance. Close friendships are not formed sporadically. Important relationships and events in our lives occur intentionally.

Throughout the Bible we find an intentional God making intentional invasions into the human experience. From the first verse of Scripture God teaches us something about His intentionality. Genesis 1:1 reads, “In the beginning God created...” God did not wait to see what would come about. He makes it clear that creation was an intentional act of supernatural power, not a random “Big Bang.” In spite of His many examples of being intentional, we still somehow give “chance” the credit. Sadly, the language we use (even in the church) reveals our culture’s influence, our reluctance to be intentional, and our unwillingness to give God the credit He deserves. How often have you said the following?

“When you have a **chance**, would you please...?”

“What are the **odds** of that?”

“Isn’t it a **coincidence** that...”

“You sure are **lucky** to...”

“I heard there was a bad **accident** on the road...”

Words like “chance,” “odds,” “coincidence,” “lucky,” and “accident” should not be in the Christian’s vocabulary. Instead, they ought to be replaced with words like “opportunity,” “providence,” “fortunate,” “blessed,” and “wreck.”



While the world may desire to “practice random acts of kindness” to one another, Christians should be intentional in all things—especially the way in which they parent. Just as a good chef does not throw random ingredients into a pot and expect good soup to come out, we should not (as parents) rear our children randomly and expect godly results. Intentionality in the following obvious—yet overlooked—areas can help our children become the “good soup” we desire to see—and the world desires to taste.

Time. Much has been said about whether children want quality or quantity time with their parents. Although some argue that one is more crucial than the other, they are equally important. Parents who desire a healthy relationship with their child and wish to instill faith must intentionally invest the time to do so. Is there a set time in the week that you invest time with each family member? Do you have a goal of what you would like to see accomplished? The old adage, “If you aim at nothing, you will hit it every time” is true. As Paul reminds the church in Ephesus, you must “make the most of your time, because the days are evil” (Ephesians 5:16). Although just “hanging out” is important, there also must be thoughtful consideration as to how that time is used. Most people *spend* time with their children. God desires that we *invest* it. How much time are you investing in the lives of your wife and children? Is there enough quantity? Is it quality? How can you be more intentional about this in the future? Remember, at the end of one’s life no one ever wishes they spent more time at the office.



Conversations. The Bible repeatedly places much emphasis on the importance of our words and conversations. Ephesians 4:29 reminds us to “let no unwholesome word proceed from our mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification.” Chapter 5:3-4 places “silly talk” and “coarse jesting” in the same banned category as immorality, impurity and greed. Twice Paul warns Timothy as a young pastor to “avoid godless chatter” (I Timothy 6:20, II Timothy 2:16). Instead, we are to “speak to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs (5:19). Even a casual glance at the book of Proverbs provides much insight into God’s thoughts concerning our words and how we use them. Dads, are you intentional in your conversations with your children? Moms, do you seize opportunities to initiate conversations and turn them in a spiritual direction? Since conversations do not automatically gravitate to spiritual matters, they must be directed there. What do you talk about with your family? Will your children remember you as a parent who often talked about the Lord and His Bible? Will your children recall you as the parent who often quoted Scripture and drew spiritual water from a deep well with the Lord? Or will your eulogy consist of endless, temporal football, fishing or golf stories?

We see God’s command for parents to be intentional in Deuteronomy 6:5-9. In verses 5 & 6 (below), Moses urges parents to first possess what



they desire to pass on. He understood the timeless principle, "You cannot give what you do not have."

"5" *You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.*

"6" *These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart.*

In verses 7-9 (below), Moses charges parents (not Sunday school teachers, pastors or youth leaders) with the responsibility of passing the spiritual baton to your children. Though our children's Bible teachers can be used mightily by God, what they offer should be a supplement to what you are already teaching at home.

"7" *You shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up.*

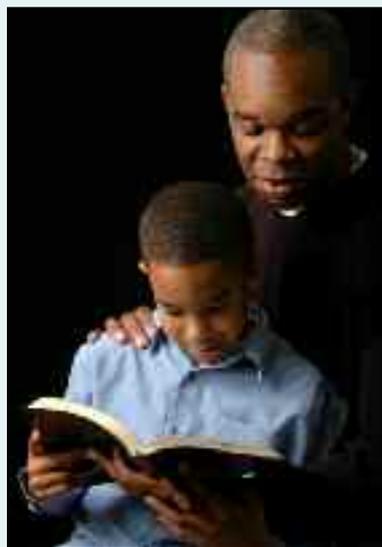
"8" *You shall bind them as a sign on your hand and they shall be as frontals on your forehead.*

"9" *You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.*

Is God's Word on your heart? Do you teach the truths of Scripture diligently to your children? Do you talk of His precepts when you sit in your house, or when you walk by the way, or when you lie down and rise up? Are God's standards reflected in your attire or on the walls of your house? THAT is intentional parenting and that is how the faith is imparted.

All Scripture in this article is from the New American Standard Bible (N.A.S.B). For more information about Rod Arters or to read other articles written by him, please visit www.rodarters.com.

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