

MANAGING LIFE SERIES: RAISING KIDS, GOD'S WAY PRT 1

Every culture has values and norms, and they tend to shape what goes around, they shape how business is conducted, they shape how visitors are treated and such like things. One of those aspects that are highly influenced by culture is how children are raised in a community.

When it comes to raising kids in the African context, part of the narrative is that kids are to be seen and not heard. This is so entrenched to such a degree that parents fail to relate to adult children as adults because they still think kids are to be seen and not heard. In other words, kids have nothing to say concerning what goes on around them.

This morning, I want to kickstart another aspect under the **MANAGING LIFE SERIES**, that has to do with parenting and my topic is **RAISING KIDS, GOD'S WAY**. God has something to say regarding the upbringing of children because He is a Father Himself.

- Parenting has become complicated over the years – in the past, it was a whole village involved in raising a kid but now, you cannot trust the village to even greet your kid.
- Back then, children mostly relied on their parents' input and wisdom, whereas today, the parents have to compete with TikTok – our kids have the entire world influencing them.
- The big question is, how do you raise kids in such a fast-paced world, a world where the kids now have information on their fingertips.
- The big idea when it comes to parenting is this:

1. Children are a blessing from God.

Psalm 127:3-5 Behold, children are a heritage from the LORD, the fruit of the womb a reward. Like arrows in the hand of a warrior are the children of one's youth. Blessed is the man who fills his quiver with them! He shall not be put to shame when he speaks with his enemies in the gate.

- Children are a blessing which originates from God. They are to be treasured like you would treasure a blessing from God.
- Knowing that a child is a blessing from God changes the way you relate to your children.
- Instead of seeing children as a nuisance, you will start treating them with care.

Jeremiah 1:5 Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations.

- This is a loaded scripture regarding children. No child is a mistake, every child was an idea of God for a purpose and mission.

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- This was God talking to Jeremiah the prophet to reassure him of his identity. It then places a great deal of responsibility on how we should raise our kids.
- When God allows you to bear children, He is calling you to partner with Him to bring about a destiny He has for that child. In other words, raising a child should not be looked down upon, but to be considered as the greatest ministry one can ever embark on.
- Are you going to answer the call to bring about the thoughts that God had when He formed your child in the womb.

Psalms 139:13-16 NIV For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place, when I was woven together in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.

- Many parents struggle to accept the realities of raising a child who is challenged in one way or another, but this scripture tells us that your child's frame was not hidden from God whilst it was in the womb.
- You only got to know the state of your child after the doctors did some tests, but God saw her unformed body way before the doctors had a hint of what was going on there.
- The beauty of this life is that God has ordained the days of every child and were recorded before each one unfolded.
- One day, a blind man was brought to the attention of Jesus and an important conversation happened, that will help us to deal with difficult situations with our little ones.

John 9:1 And passing by, He saw a man who was blind from birth. 2 And His disciples asked Him, saying, Master, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind? 3 Jesus answered, Neither has this man nor his parents sinned, but that the works of God might be revealed in him.

- There you go, there is a purpose for every child, and it is for us parents to allow that purpose to play out. We must not put our fears, insecurities on them and in so doing limit them from living out their purpose.
- For the blind man, the purpose was for God to be glorified by his healing one day – it was not about the presence of sin that resulted in his condition.
- Jesus also has a deep love for children, and He wants us to have the same love for them. Jesus did not see children as a nuisance but rather as needing His undivided attention.

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Luke 18:15 And they also brought infants to Him, that He might touch them. But when the disciples saw, they rebuked them. 16 But Jesus called them and said, Allow the little children to come to Me, and forbid them not. For of such is the kingdom of God.

- Having this type of view of children will change the way you parent. Allow me to share with you several principles on raising kids God's way.
 - One principle that stands at the top of the pile is knowing how to communicate with children.
- ### **1. Effective communication in raising children.**
- How often have we barked out instructions like *"Jump off the couch"* - *"Pick that up."* - *"Stop being mean to your brother."* - *"I told you to listen."* with no positive response from the kids.
 - The problem might not be with the kid but with the adult who may not have expressed their expectations clearly enough — or you may have fallen into a pattern of inconsistent ways of communication.
 - It is vitally important that as parents, we master the art of clarifying expectations when communicating with children. Children thrive when parents have clear expectations for behaviour and enforce those standards consistently.
 - Effective communication is defined as *verbal speech or other methods of relaying information in clear and simple terms.*

How do we go about effective communication with our littles ones?

1.1 Establish values that shape behaviour.

- **Values are** *Important and lasting beliefs or ideals shared by the members of a culture about what is good or bad and desirable or undesirable.*
- Values have a major influence on a person's behavior and attitude and serve as broad guidelines in all situations.
- Defined values come handy when it comes to ensure that you are heard when issuing instructions.
- This means that as children grow, they are taught the values.
- For a Christian family, your values would be anchored in the word of God.

Deuteronomy 6:4-9.

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Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one! 5 You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. 6 And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. 7 You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, 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 frontlets between your eyes. 9 You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

Write down your values

- Some families may choose to write out and frame a mission statement
- Writing down things provides clarity; it creates opportunity for performance - having your family values clearly defined up front makes it easier to enforce rules and stick to consequences.
- In the absence of clear guiding principles, it becomes chaotic in the house.
- With every occurrence, find a way of bringing up the practice of a value – how a value applies to the situation. Use opportunities to reinforce the values.
- Be the model by living out the values – be vulnerable enough to concede when you have violated one of the espoused values.
- You are the closest thing to God that the kids will ever experience. To fathers, if your children cannot see something of God in you, they will battle to see something of a father in God.

1.2 Anchor expectations in day-to-day life (Children are not perfect)

- Without realising it, we can easily expect our children to be super kids, perfect kids in whom there is no mess.
- In this regard, pick your battles – don't feel embarrassed when they cry, don't lose it when they stumble over themselves or when they wear pants inside out.
- Keep your expectations anchored in reality and anticipate mistakes and even foresee some misbehaviour – your kids are not angels.

1.3 Have a healthy view of what is normal behaviour in every stage of growth.

- We often overestimate their ability to have self-control, to stay focused on a task and to handle social situations well.
- It's normal for a 2-year-old to get upset if he doesn't get something he wants.

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- it's normal for a 3-year-old to lose it if there's a change in his bedtime routine.
- it's normal for a 5-year-old to daydream in the middle of a T-ball game.
- it's normal for a 12-year-old to be moody; it's normal for a teenager to be irresponsible every once in a while.
- Anchoring your expectations in reality does not mean disobedience is ok – what are signs of disobedience:
 - Deliberate violation of a known principle or behaviour

1.4 Expectations must be preceded by relevant training.

- Create room in your heart for the odd surprises when they fail at those things.
- Making mistakes is part of how our kids' brains develop.
- Use these mistakes as launching grounds for further learning.
- Our responses to their mistakes and poor choices must encourage that natural maturing process.
- Train up your children because they don't know better.

Proverbs 22:6 Train up a child in the way he should go, And when he is old he will not depart from it.

- Children ought to be trained because they are born with a nature inclined to sin (Ps. 51:5).
- Children are born without knowledge (Pro. 22:15).
- Children have unlimited potential.
- Children are the carriers of culture (Ps. 78:4-8; 145:4).
- Training children is the one way of building up children's work ethic – do not expect what you have not trained.
- Training up a child is different from child abuse – our training must be age appropriate and must still ensure that they enjoy their childhood.

How to train children?

- Give them age-appropriate chores to accomplish each day.
- Encourage them to take initiative in helping beyond their chore list.

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- It's often faster and easier to just straighten their beds or vacuum their room yourself - Exercise patience
- Use the "Let's do it together" approach – this is the only way to remove the inability excuse.
- Training will include repetition, gentle correction and practice before children can succeed.
- Don't aim for perfection but them doing their best.
- Focus on what they are getting right – affirm them.
- Sometimes training a child will involve correcting the child.

1.5 When and how to correct?

- Sometimes we want to take pain away from our children – your heart sinks when they cry or they are sad; doesn't it?
- The reality is that missing the mark is engrained in their hearts.
- The pattern of correcting is clearly set out by God the father himself.
- God disciplines His children out of love (Pro. 3:11-12; 13:24; Heb. 12:5-6; Rev. 3:19).

Proverbs 3:11 My son, do not despise the Lord's discipline, and do not resent his rebuke, 12 because the Lord disciplines those he loves, as a father the son he delights in.

- God disciplines because He is faithful to us (Ps. 119:75).
- God disciplines as a form of instruction (Ps. 94:12, NIV; Ps. 119:71).
- God disciplines but afterward re-establishes His love to us (Job 5:18; Jer. 31:18-20; Ps. 89:32-33).
- Love + Discipline = Happy Functional Children
- Correction correctly applied builds the child's esteem, the child feels more secure and happier.
- The following principles will help you ensure that your discipline is consistent and fair:

Create capacity that enables correct behaviour.

- Never punish for something a child didn't know was wrong. To do so would be unjust.
- Differentiate between childishness and defiance – never punish a child for being a child.

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- Allow/tolerate childish behaviour – never make a child to feel guilty for spilling milk because of being naturally clumsy.

Exercise appropriate and relevant punishment

- Don't burn the house to kill an ant - A small infraction should be met with a small form of correction.
- A big wrongdoing should be met with more stringent correction.
- Don't pass on punishment to another parent especially if they were not present – this erodes your authority over the child. You have relevant information to decide on the appropriateness of the punishment.

Establish guidelines

- Establish the child's personal responsibility. Have them tell you what they did wrong.
- Don't ask, "Did you do that?" You are giving them the opportunity to lie. Now you have two sins with which to deal.
- Don't ask, "Why did you do that?" You are giving them an opportunity to make up an excuse. Now you will have to judge the excuse.
- Do ask, "What did you do that was wrong?" Now you are giving them an opportunity to confess and at the same time you are reinforcing the original instruction.
- Explain again to the child the reason for discipline.
- Before you correct them, sit in silence for a few seconds for their personal reflection.
- Correct with a rod, a neutral object (Pro. 13:24; 22:15; 29:15; 23:13-14).
- Never use your hand. You use your hands to show love.
 - Never use the "eye for the eye" method (biting, pinching, pulling hair, scratching, slapping, etc.),
- Apply the board of education to the seat of knowledge.
- Correct firmly and do not let his or her crying stop you (Pro. 19:18; 20:30).
- Do not over correct – no more than is necessary.
- Show love afterward without nullifying discipline.

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- Do not degrade the child; encourage him or her in right behavior patterns.
- Pray with your child and help him or her to pray for forgiveness.
- The child needs to understand that they have not just offended or sinned against you, they have sinned against God. They need to ask for forgiveness from all offended parties. This will help build into them a God consciousness that will serve them for the rest of their life.
- If there is a need for restitution, have the child do it.
- They need to follow through on the original instruction, apologize to offended parties, replace what was damaged or give back what was taken.
- Be consistent!