

The Single Most Dangerous Influence in Your Child's Life

Second only to indwelling sin, we parents are the most potentially destructive influence in the lives of our children.

I. Who we were affects our children.

- Four of the books in the Pentateuch discuss the concept of “the iniquity of the fathers.” Exodus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy all use the same phrase: “*visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, to the third and the fourth generation.*”
- Have you ever thought of the unique nature of sin — how it affects the spiritual and the physical? What is personality and why do our children's so often mirror ours? Why is one person tempted to one kind of sin more than someone else? Just as all men inherited their sin nature from Adam, so — more specifically — we inherited our sin nature from our fathers. And we, on the flip side, literally pass our sins down to our kids. Unfortunately, righteousness isn't genetic the way sin is.
- What this doesn't mean is that our kids will be held responsible for the sins we've committed. *But* our children will likely struggle with the same temptations, sinful habits, and self-worshipping addictions into which we've given because they've inherited it from us just like they got our physical characteristics.
- Knowing what sins we struggled with can help us see what our children may fall into and be able to prepare them better.
- We can use this point to encourage our children and young members of the Body of Christ to be ever vigilant lest they develop sin patterns that they may pass to their kids.
- It's important to recognize that our children were conceived in sin, and that sin was ours.

II. Who we are now affects our children.

- Our kids were created by God to learn. The ability for a child to process, memorize, interpret, and utilize information is staggering! And they spend the bulk of their formative years observing us!
- In addition to that, they have a natural love and affection that causes them to imitate us over the other individuals in their lives.
- Whether it's our poor diets, negative responses to hardship, cutting words, pride, our vanity, our excuses, or our hypocrisy . . . our children will likely learn it.
- Even if we do our best to teach our kids to be humble, our arrogant lifestyle will quickly and more efficiently educate them in pride. “Do what I say and not what I do” has never worked.
- If you don't want to be a dangerous influence on your children, you must grow in the grace and knowledge of your Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.
- Obviously, the affect we have on our children should not be our sole goal for our own spiritual growth, but I think it would behoove us to allow the reality to impact us: our children will find it easier to emulate our sinful behavior than they will our sanctified choices.

III. Who we *will be* affects our children.

- If we don't get a handle on our loose tongue or wanton video-gaming, if we don't submit to God's will for our eating, if we keep returning to our selfishness as a dog returns to its vomit, our children will likely continue excelling in our school of depravity.
- And, though our kids will be held responsible for their choices, we will be to blame for illustrating for them all the ways to deny God and worship self.
- At this point, could we go any lower? This is a pretty horrific picture because we parents need to stop lying to ourselves. We need to stop excusing our sin as we punish our children for the same things. We need to take responsibility for the fact that our daughter inherited her cutting tongue from me. We need to man up and acknowledge that our sons are so arrogant on the court because they spent too much time with us.
- But . . . it was during [episode 35](#) that our guest, Tim Challies noted that even with all the negative influences in their lives, so many kids turn out so well. He said, "God's grace is so amazing that there's great hope for us [in parenting]. God has amazing ways of working beyond our abilities — beyond what we actually think we know."
- God is gracious to our children, and one of the significant ways he shows that grace is through us. In the same way that parents are the most potentially destructive influence the lives of their children, they're also the most potentially *beneficial* influence in the lives of their children.
- To be honest, that's why God gave them to you in the first place. Whether your kids are step, adopted, biological, or fostered, God has given them to you in this time of their lives because you are the one He wants to use to help them glorify Him.
- You have been given your children because — with God's Truth, love, and power — you are the ones he intends to teach your children to live in the reality of God. You are the ones He's talking to when he says, "*You shall teach [My words] diligently to your children, 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. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.*"
- It's true that your kids will likely sin like you, but it's also true that your children are blessed to be born into your homes. You've been called to be the Ambassadorial First-Follower to point them God. Who you are now for God and who you will be for God can influence your children more powerfully than your sinful choices can.
- Why is that? Because Satan might be able to use your sinful choices to tempt your kids to the same, but God the Holy Spirit can actually fill your children and give them the grace and strength to follow your Christ-honoring example!
- Isn't being a parent a glorious blessing?!
- Be diligent, mom and dad. Your influence is paramount. Make sure you're a good influence and not a bad one.