Passionate About Parenting

Pamela Marais 8 May 2018



It is an absolute delight to be sharing with you my heart on raising children in the Lord from a young age. I am passionate about parenting, which has been both a source of incredible joy and incredible pain in my life. God blessed my husband William and I with four wonderful children. If I had had my way, we would have had more children, but 'sadly' William (and obviously the Lord) were not of the same persuasion. However, I cannot complain too much, because the truth is that William's quiver was already full after 2 children, so the fact that we had two "extra" is a huge bonus. I love the comedic saying, 'Women should not have children after 35...35 children are enough'.

Our son went to be with the Lord at the age of twenty, and our three daughters are married and have blessed us with nine grandchildren. Two of our grandchildren are adopted, which is a particular joy for me, because as a young girl I dreamed of working with orphans. I never had the privilege of doing that, but now have the pleasure of grandparenting two delightful adopted grandsons. God is so awesome! Most awesome of all is the fact that all of our children love the Lord Jesus, as do our grandchildren.

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Our son was about four years old when William led him to Christ, when he was overcome with emotion after watching the old Jesus film. The scenes depicting Christ's crucifixion touched his

heart very deeply, and he eagerly received Christ as his Saviour and Lord at that young age. Children are never too young to experience a 'God-encounter'. Because children are spiritual creatures, they will either learn to worship and rely on Jehovah God, or they will learn to bow before lesser gods.

Trust God to touch your child's heart at an early age! 'Parenting is a partnership with God…you are working with the Creator of the universe in shaping human character and determining destiny' (Ruth Vaugn). So what is your (and my) part?

I asked my three daughters what they felt had helped to positively influence them spiritually during their early years in our home. They each felt that it had been essential to observe me enjoying a relationship with Jesus and making Him my highest priority. They loved to hear me praying and worshipping Jesus. They loved to see me reading the Bible. They loved bedtime Bible stories and prayers. They loved going to church. What we model is what will impact our children and what they will mimic. **'Our children are watching us live, and what we are shouts louder than anything we can say'** (Wilfred A Peterson).

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At one stage, William taught the congregation we were leading at the time how to interact with Jehovah's Witnesses. We had these little pamphlets called 'A letter to a Jehovah's witness'. We had some Jehovah's Witnesses living across the road from us when our daughter Abby was about five years old. One afternoon, Abby took one of these letters and crossed the road, knocked on their door and gave it to them. She came running home, went straight to her room and shut the door. I rushed in and she was on her knees praying. I said, 'Are you scared?' She said, 'No, I'm praying they will read it'. Nobody told her to do that. Our children need to see that Christianity is a daily relationship with Jesus and that He is interested in every aspect of our lives, no matter how mundane.

Are you hospitable? Allow your children to be part of your hospitality. Teach them to love people and to welcome them into your home. Teach them to greet people and to be friendly. James Dobson says, 'If it is desirable that children be kind, appreciative and pleasant, those qualities should be taught, not hoped for'. Teach them to sacrifice for the Kingdom (for example, giving up their room when hosting etc.).

The most important lesson for your child to learn in infancy is that they are a person under authority. They have been made by God for God. They have a responsibility to obey God in all things. The most direct application of this is obedience to parents. This is called the circle of

blessing. We don't get them to obey us for our sakes but for their sakes. This is the place of safety, physically and spiritually.

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Prepare your children for eternity. Teach them about heaven. Expose them to the presence of God. This life is imperfect, and you cannot shield them from the pain of living in a fallen world. Your children learn more about your faith during the bad times than they do during the good times.

Each child is unique and has a "heavenly identity"- that is what we want to encourage, pray into, call forth. Ask God for discernment in this. Be accountable in raising them in the community of faith into which you've been knitted.

There are no perfect parents and you will make mistakes. Don't put your trust in your performance! **Always remember that each child has a free will and, ultimately, they must decide what to do with what they have heard concerning Jesus.** Proverbs are not oaths but strong possibilities. If you 'train up a child in the way he should go, there is a strong possibility that when he is old he will not depart from it'.

When people ask me how I managed to bring up four children who love the Lord, I don't answer with a list of 'must do's'. 'It is by God's grace that my children love the Lord', and then I add, 'Oh, and yes, here are some things that will help you along the way'. Real life is messy; our children are not perfect and have caused us pain at times because of bad choices they've made at different times in their lives. But God uses all things for the good of those who love God and are called according to His purposes, both in their lives and ours.

Header image: The Marais family (circa 1989)

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