

Series: Parenting 911  
Title: How to Mess Up Your Kids?  
Texts: Selected Passages  
Key Word: Principles  
Proposition: Everyone can avoid messing up children by practicing these biblical principles.

We are beginning today a new series entitled, “Parenting 911.” Whether our children are raised, or we’re coaching children, we realize that children do not come with an owner’s manual.

Parenting is a life-long learning process. I confess that I am not an expert with a degree in child psychology. Nor, have I written a thesis in human development. I am coming as a parent learning along the way. That is why I benefit from participating in our “Parenting with God” class. Maybe you see the rewards too.

I have some thoughts this morning around messing up your kids. Sometimes times it just happens. My parents positively shaped my parenting style. Such authors as James Dobson, Donald Joy, Gary Chapman, David Seamands and others have also mentored me. I try to learn from all whom God brings into my life. In addition, I sense an urgency to learn because the more our kids are messed up, the more our world becomes messed up.

Let me assure you that if you are not a parent, these parenting principles will add significance to any human relationship. So I trust the Holy Spirit to reveal His truth for your life situation.

**First, if you really want to mess up your kids, act like they are not watching.** Act like it doesn’t matter what you do in front of them because you don’t think they will notice. Although, we know that kids are watching us 24/7.

We are a role model. Children look to us to see what love and character looks like. They observe how relationships work and don't work. They witness the effects of a persistent work ethic. They learn more from what they observe than what they are taught.

Paul provides great advice in his first letter to the Corinthians. Even though he was not a parent, God gave him a significant insight forged in parenting churches. Listen to this incredible advice, ***“Follow my example as I follow the example of Christ.”*** (1 Corinthians 11:1 NIV) Our kids may not always listen to our words, but typically they will follow our footsteps. Our example teaches important life lessons to kids.

I am hopefully nervous when I think about the fact that we reproduce who we are. So what do your kids see in you? What character qualities, habits, and attitudes do they witness? What are the unresolved issues in your life? Because whatever they are, you will pass them onto your kids. So, it's time to resolve them. If we don't, our kids will pick them up. Those behavioral patterns are passed down from one generation to another.

The Lord God spoke to Moses saying: *“I the Lord your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments.”* Like father like son. With generational obedience comes generational blessing. Repetitive sin leads to generational judgment.

Carrie and Scott sat in their living room talking about some of the painful baggage they had brought from their families. They prayed that night, “God, no more. This generational baggage is going to stop in this family. Our kids two or three generations from now are not going to be dealing with these issues. By Your grace we are going to deal with these unresolved issues, and no more.”

Friends, I want to ask, will you courageously change a stronghold on your family. Maybe there has been a problem that has undercut your family for generations, by the grace of God it can stop with your generation. Divorce, addiction, adultery, abuse, anger can all be generational. What is your generational curse? Do you want to set a new example? So what are your unresolved issues? What do you need to take care of for the sake of your marriage, for your kid’s sake, or for your sake?

Wherever you are in your life, God may be saying that its time to say no more to a generational stronghold and set a new example. It may begin with counseling, a conversation with a staff person, joining our Parenting with God class, or connecting with a life group. It means intentional prayer. It may mean that you commit yourself to every service in this series. Whatever those unresolved issues are God wants to heal you and yours. Remember a soiled example messes up kids.

**Second, if you really want to mess up your kid, solve all their problems.** Don’t let them learn that their choices have consequences. Be their savior. Teach your kid you will always be there to run interference for them or to deliver them from

the consequences of their behavior. The life long lesson this teaches is this: I can do whatever I want and not suffer the consequences.

As a parent it is very tempting to rush in and try to save our kids from the consequences of their behavior. Now why do we do this? I'll tell you why. We hate to see our kids in pain, don't we? So we immediately help them and thus ease our pain. Friends, this really doesn't help them. In fact it is not love.

Real love suffers long with personal discomfort. It endures another's discomfort until the lesson is learned. Real love allows another to see that bad choices equal bad consequences. Usually, someone is not going to immediately rescue us from our bad choices. God gave us the freedom to choose and the freedom to live with our consequences.

The Bible says, "*Misfortune pursues the sinner, but prosperity is the reward of the righteous.*" (Proverbs 13:21) In other words, "*Trouble chases sinners, while blessings chase the righteous!*" (NLT) Teaching our kids this truth will warn them that they are free to do whatever they want and free to live with the consequences.

Consistently rescuing your child will also say to them, "*You are totally inadequate.*" You're saying, "*You can't solve your problems without ME! I'm your Big Daddy; I'm your Big Mommy. I have to intervene. You've messed things up. Now I have to resolve it for you because I don't believe you have the capacity to live with it or resolve it yourself.*"

Many times we want our heavenly Father to rush in and make things better, but as the Perfect Parent, He knows that it is better for us to learn from the consequences of our choices.

This difficult and risky parenting technique is absolutely necessary. If kids fail to understand this they will live life expecting it to owe them. A counselor once said: “If you want your kids to grow up and to go to prison give them whatever they want. When they can’t have instant gratification they will steal what they want. People who have been constantly rescued fail to own their problems. They look at the world and see that everybody else has a problem. Everybody needs to change. The boss needs to change. The teacher needs to change. They never get it. They never say, ‘No, I need to change.’” So as parents if we really want to mess up our kids we ought to just solve all their problems.

**Lastly, if you really want to mess up your kid, never say you’re sorry.** You can say to yourself, “If I say I am sorry then I’ll break the lines of authority. If I say I am sorry that will show weakness. If I say I’m sorry that will give them the right to think they are in charge.” Never saying sorry will mess up your kids.

One night, I was tired after a hard week. My two kids were home and they were bugging me. They were loud, they were giggly, they were talking and they were breathing. And I wanted them to stop. I was testy. I was ornery. In their words, I was mean. In the middle of it all the Holy Spirit spoke to me and said that I was wrong. It didn’t take me long. I gathered the kids around and said, “Kids, I’m sorry. I shouldn’t

be that way. Can you forgive me?” We can pretend we’re strong and never say we’re sorry. Or we can show our kids that failure is being human. We can show our kids how to deal with failure with humility and grace.

Saying “I am sorry,” allows God to heal the fractured relationship. The Bible says, “*Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed.*” (James 5:16) Confession demonstrates how to receive kindness and compassion from others and to model Christ forgiveness. Paul wrote, “*Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving one another as in Christ God forgave you.*”

(Ephesians 4:32)

Without parenting’s hard work we will mess up our kids. If we always do what we’ve always done then we’ll always get what we’ve always gotten. Or we can decide to get some new information and new grace to make some significant life changes. With God’s help we can do more than simply avoid messing up our kids. We can, with God’s grace, help them grow and mature. We can with God’s grace give them a glimpse of their heavenly Father in us. Let us pray. **(1485)**