

GODLY PARENTING

THREE CALVARY CHAPEL PASTORS OFFER BIBLICAL COUNSEL ON RAISING GODLY KIDS IN AN UNGODLY CULTURE



Pastor Ken Ortize



Pastor Nate Holdridge



Pastor Raul Ries

The following condensed excerpts come from three parenting books by Calvary Chapel pastors: *Raising a Godly Family in an Ungodly World* by Pastor Raul Ries of Calvary Chapel Golden Springs, CA; *Parenting by Grace & Truth* by Pastor Ken Ortize of CC Spokane, WA; and *Dear New Dad* by Pastor Nate Holdridge of Calvary Monterey, CA.

How has our culture influenced our parenting?

Raul: We are witnessing, in our world, what took place in the days of the Book of Judges. *In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes* (Judges 17:6). Many parents have turned their backs on the Lord and are serving their own interests and selfish desires. They do not want to take responsibility for their own children. However, the Bible never instructed the church or government to raise, protect, or train children. God has specifically given parents the responsibility to nurture, guide, teach, train, and discipline their children. The Lord has also given guidelines and insight as to how children are to be raised. Parents may declare that they are Christians, but if they do not submit to the Lordship of Jesus Christ, their homes are filled with confusion and disorder. Only when you make Jesus Christ Lord of your lives and your home, will you be a godly parent, raising godly children.

How can I help my children to stand fast in an ungodly culture?

Nate: *You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world* (1 John 4:4). John references the reality of the battle at hand. Especially as your children grow older, they will come face to face with the pressures and influences around them. To ignore this would be folly. Instead, like John, remind them of who they are in Christ and the great victory that can be theirs through the power of God living in them. Give them grace and help them to process their failures at times, but speak to them of the wonderful power of God who enables us to overcome.

Raul: Proverbs 22:6 says, *Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it*. God gives parents a promise: If you take responsibility for your children and teach them God's Word—how to live a righteous life by loving God and loving others as themselves—that child will not depart from God's ways. Your children do have a will of their own, and you cannot force God down their throats—but if you are diligent to raise your children in God's ways, and are an example in your home, they will remember and return to it later in life. Train your children to flee from things that are sinful or harmful (Proverbs 1:10-15). Do not just give them philosophy—lecturing them. The Word of God guides children to wisdom. Remember, God's Word does not come back void (Isaiah 55:11). The Holy Spirit reminds them of what they have learned and brings conviction.

How can I influence my children for good?

Ken: Children literally learn by your example. So don't excuse your own sin, rationalize it, or ignore it. If you lie, they will lie. If you are hateful, they will become haters. If you are lazy, or dishonest, or any other list of negative behaviors, they will follow your lead. I have found that young children always respond openly to godly influences. They are more than willing to pray, listen to Bible stories,

and sing songs about Jesus. When parents consistently set aside times for these activities, I believe it stimulates spiritual awareness and makes children more sensitive to the Holy Spirit's influence. Children are especially impacted by what they observe in your marriage. Live the kind of marriage relationship outlined within the Bible: saturated with the mutual love and respect God commands. Do your children see the reality of Christ in your life? If not, then now is the time to begin. Acknowledge your failures. Ask for His forgiveness. Ask Him to show you the way.

Raul: Children mimic what they hear and see. Many times, our children take on our mannerisms and bad habits. How can you tell your child not to lie, when you lie? How can you tell your child not to drink, when you drink? As a parent, your actions must back up your words. Not only will your children take on your bad attitudes, actions, and habits, but they will have a poor example of Christianity. Do you realize that when you live contrary to Christ's teachings, you are misrepresenting God before your children? We cannot effectively teach our children in God's ways and live contrary to them.

What about those times when I fail as a parent?

Nate: *If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself* (2 Timothy 2:13). [Parents need] to be encouraged by the grace of God. To be a parent is to continually run up against your own limitations. You will be tested and stretched beyond your current capabilities. Fortunately, we serve and know a God of wonderful grace and mercy. He lovingly and gently restores us and helps us grow to become the parents we long to be. Allow this loving God to have as much access into your life as possible. By the blood of Jesus, you are His child. He will continually prove His faithfulness to you, helping you become stronger than ever before, the parent you've dreamed you could be for your children and family.

Raul: As parents, you are representatives of God. You have a great responsibility to be obedient to the Word of the Lord. While we need to be living examples of Christ, we also struggle daily with our flesh, sin, and the devil. That is why it is so important to walk closely with the Lord and be in His Word on a daily basis. Parents are not perfect. When you do make a mistake, misrepresent God, or are a bad example, confess it to the Lord and to your children. Let them see a right example of confession and repentance. This can help them understand God's grace in their own lives and nurture an atmosphere of respect.

How can I connect with my child?

Ken: We need to be sensitive to the differing personalities and sensitivities in each of our children. Otherwise, we run the very real risk of under-reacting to some kids, and over-reacting to others.

This requires taking the time to get to know each child as an individual, and then consider how we can best direct and respond to their needs. Our job as parents is to guide our children with wisdom toward the profitable ways of life, and away from those things that bring heartache and self-destruction. God's promise, I believe, is that in so doing, we create the framework for our children that allows for eventual repentance and restoration even if they go astray after leaving our homes.

Nate: *For whom the LORD loves He corrects, just as a father the son in whom he delights* (Proverbs 3:12). Give your time and your presence to your children. Spend yourself on them. To be a dad is such a wonderful privilege and honor. Give yourself fully to these little lives. Learn about them. Study them. As you give yourself to them, your delight in them will only grow. They will sense it and know it. They will be safe in your love.

What is an important role of a father?

Ken: There are two things children need, especially from fathers: attention and approval. Yet today many fathers are so busy and distracted, they fail to show the interest in their children's lives that is necessary for their survival. As a result, children become frustrated, depressed, and eventually angry. Ephesians 6:4 specifically states, *Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord* (NIV). Also, fathers must be careful not to discourage children: *Fathers, do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged* (Colossians 3:21, NIV). *Exasperate* means to

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provoke or push toward anger. Sometimes, parents can be too harsh, demanding, or unsympathetic. Or they give the wrong type of attention—too much negative and not enough positive. Then children become convinced that their acceptance is based solely upon their performance. They are not loved for who they are. Regardless of how hard they try, it's not good enough. We can also exasperate and embitter by neglecting our children.

Nate: Understand the power of your words and use your words to build up your children. The apostle Paul wrote to the Thessalonian church: *as you know how we exhorted, and comforted, and charged every one of you, as a father does his own children* (1 Thessalonians 2:11). *Exhort:* A good father calls his children closely to himself and speaks to them—not brutal commands from a distance but exhortations that flow from relationship. Your child should know your lap as a place of safety, love, and encouragement. *Encourage* indicates consolation, comfort—filling a discouraged heart with cheer and courage.

Which is better: quality time or quantity time?

Ken: Parents may be doing all the right things yet fail in the one thing that matters most: giving their children undivided time and attention. Some people say that they don't give children quantity time [but] quality time. But my question is, "How do you produce quality without quantity?" There are no shortcuts—good parenting requires significant investment of time and energy. We need to make time to know each child as an individual, and consider how we can direct and respond to their needs.

Nate: This might be a season where you strip down your priorities to only the most important, which is a good thing. Your motorcycle, golf clubs, and Xbox might have to collect dust for a while. It might be a season where God teaches you radical selflessness, perhaps in a way you've never experienced up to this point. Of course, it will be a season where God uses you to love and nurture a human life, raising her or him up under your care and protection.

How do I discipline children in a godly way?

Raul: Children must have clearly defined boundaries. Set rules for the home—be reasonable and let your children know that these boundaries are set up in love, for their protection and for their care. Some parents go overboard with a maze of do's and don'ts, based on legalism rather than God's grace. As a godly parent, seek the Lord's instruction and guidance in this matter, and do everything

in a spirit of humility, grace, and love. Then your children will see your example and grow to know that Christianity is the Gospel of grace. So many children rebel because their home was based on rules, regulations, and legalism—not on God's wisdom, instruction, grace, and love.

Nate: Remember your Father in heaven. His discipline is consistent, so create a predictable style of discipline versus an arbitrary style where children have no idea what will/not be punished. Don't use empty words, promising discipline but never delivering it. Additionally, create a style of discipline that is age-appropriate. We all want a method that works for every child, but your kids will come out of the womb freakishly different from one another, so remember the goal of discipline and be flexible. Discipline should always be forward looking and future oriented. It must stem from love and relationship, not anger and position, so cultivate a tender relationship with your children.

How should prayer be a part of parenting?

Ken: The most important thing we can do for our children is to pray for them. God answers prayer. He doesn't necessarily do it the way we want or when we want. But He always responds. And the devil knows it! This is why consistency in prayer is so difficult. The devil is terrified of losing a foothold in your family's life. For prayer is where the battles are fought and won. When a mom and dad consistently pray together for their children, not only do they see their prayers answered, but they gain insight into God's will for their children.

Raul: Prayer is the glue that binds families together. Stop yelling and start praying. Fathers, first thing in the morning, lead your family in prayer. Mothers, pray with your children throughout the day. I have seen the difference prayer can make in my own home. Prayer brings peace. It aligns us with God's will and helps us to turn our eyes on Jesus rather than the situation or crisis at hand. Pray as a family for needs, direction, guidance, and strength. Teach your children to turn to God in prayer when a difficult situation arises or they need wisdom. Allow your children to see you when you are broken by God, humbled and on your knees, praying in tears. If you do family devotions, make sure you allow your children to pray. You will see the difference it makes in your home. 🙏

(Parenting Book Reviews on next page)