

For the Love of the Family Ministries

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How To Lose Your Child Before He Is Five Years Old

Dr. Terry L. Coomer, Pastor

Ministry of Elwood Bible Baptist Church

P.O. Box 535

504 North 12th Street

Elwood, Indiana 46036

765-552-1973

TLCOOMER@juno.com

www.fortheloveofthefamily.com

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HOW TO LOSE YOUR CHILD BEFORE HE IS FIVE YEARS OLD

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The following is edited and adapted from a message preached by the late J. B. Buffington (1923-2009) at Calvary Baptist Church, Lakeland, Florida, in the early 1970s.

Rearing a family ought to be a thing of joy. You ought to sit down at home and laugh about all the little things that happen. You ought to be happy.

I can talk about teenagers because I have had four of them. My youngest daughter is 23 years old, so I know a little bit about teenagers.

I've heard people say, "Everything went along alright until my children became teenagers and then something happened." But I beg your pardon, that's not the case. Most of it happened before five years old. That's why I exhort mothers, "Don't let anybody be a baby sitter of your children except you and other godly people." Those first five years, attitudes, security, goals, and many other things are already developed, and they will come into full blossom in teenage years. A child is like a computer. What you put in comes out. You can put something into a computer and pray that something else will come out, but it won't happen.

I urge you not to waste time, to start early.

Following are some of the ways that parents can lose their teenagers before they are five years old.

1. Use worldly counsel instead of God's Word about rearing children.

"Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly," (Psalm 1:1). The world can't tell you how to raise your boy or girl. I don't care how well they are trained; God knows human nature better than anybody else. He made the children, and you need to stick by the Word of God. It works! Following worldly counsel is the way to lose them.

Hosea 4:6 says, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge..." Hosea 8:12 says, "I have written to

him the great things of my law, but they were counted as a strange thing.”

Why do teenagers smoke marijuana? They do it to escape reality, to enter a fantasy world. Now ladies, that soap box opera on the television in the afternoon is not reality, and if you expect to rear your children and to be the kind of wife that you ought to be, you better turn off those programs and forget those things. That is not reality. That is escapism; that’s dreaming. That is much a flight from reality as a kid on marijuana.

2. Consider children a burden, a blight, a curse, a robber of your time and pleasure.

A child knows how you feel toward him and reacts toward you in the same manner. Even a baby knows whether you love him or not.

If you think your children are a blight and a burden and that they are in your way, the best thing you can do for them is to give them away because you will have many heartaches when they get to be teenagers. You program into their hearts that they are in your way, that they take your time, that they are just trouble, that they aren’t valuable, and when they get to be teenagers, all of that resentment comes pouring out.

We need to consider our children “an heritage from the Lord” and “his reward” (Psalm 127:3), because they will live and act like what we have told them they are by our attitude toward them. If I have told them that they are the joy of my life, that is the way they will live.

3. Make your possessions more important than your children; don’t make the home a place of fun.

You tell them, “Get out of the house; get off my carpet!” and then you wonder when they are teenagers that they don’t want to come home. Now, I don’t believe that the children should break things and I believe they should learn how to clean up their messes, but there is something more important than the home and the furniture and the carpet and the piano, and that is the people who live there. I like to live at home. That is where I can kick off my shoes in the living room. That’s where I can relax and enjoy myself; and Mom and Dad, you need to make sure that your children feel that way. There have been very few nights that my children have asked to stay away from home. If the home is a place of joy, they will bring their friends there. Before a child is five years old, he knows if the home is a place of happiness and a place where he can enjoy himself.

Now, I don’t believe in a dirty house. There is a difference between a dirty house and a house that is comfortable and a bit “messed up.” A house that is dirty hasn’t been cleaned, but a house that is messed up is lived in.

When your children become teenagers, what will they think about the place called home? Laughter? Joy? Home ought to be the place where you can bring your friends and have fun. The most important thing for parents to do is assure their children that they are more important than anything in that home. Sure, you teach them how to take care of things, but they must understand that they are the really important things to you.

4. Compare one child unfavorable with another.

“Why can’t you be like sister?” “Why can’t you be like that boy down the street?” I’ve got news for you, that’s the last thing they will be. If that other kid is an A student, your child will say to himself, “I’m not

going to be like him; I'm going to be a failure." If you don't know that, you better wise up. You never compare children. The only Person we are to compare ourselves with is Jesus Christ. He is the comparison.

5. Make a federal case out of them being children.

Paul said, "When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child" (1 Cor. 13:11). Children are children, and there are things they do just because they are children. Don't make a federal case out of it. Don't try to make an adult out of a child. Children like to play. It's not natural for them to sit still long. Some of you Sunday School teachers think that a little kid is going to put his feet on the floor, fold his hands, and focus his eyes on you while you teach him for 30 minutes. You better wise up. The child's attention span is short.

I think of one of my girls pushing crayons up her nose. I think of another of my girls taking her shoes off at Highland Park Baptist Church and throwing them over her shoulder. I stood up to preach one night and had the various texts marked with paper clips and one of the kids had pulled all of the paper clips out. Another time I stood up to preach and instead of pulling a handkerchief out of my pocket I pulled a pair of little panties out. I caught my boy trying to put the dog in the dryer. He was wet. The kids took a pound of bacon out in the yard and fried it in the sand, playing house. Kids do things just because they are children. They aren't doing it in rebellion, but just because they are children. There is a vast difference between a child being a child and a child being a rebel. Now, you deal with rebellion, but don't make a federal case out of a child being a child.

6. Threaten constantly and discipline ineffectively.

Keep on threatening to whip them, but don't do it. And when you do whip them, just tap them enough to make them angry. I watch parents do that. If you are going to spank them, do it right and you do it until they are happy. When you discipline, you discipline until they are submissive. And if they are still in rebellion, you didn't do it right. Either your attitude was wrong, or you didn't keep it going until the plate got warm. If you're not going to do it right, don't do it. If you do it right, you won't have to do it so often.

7. Belittle them.

"You dumb thing; you can't do anything right; why don't you get out of the way and let me do that." So they grow up with an inferiority complex the size of a mountain because you belittled them. There are many kids that learned to be a failure before they were five years old.

8. When they do wrong, talk about how they are killing you and ruining your reputation.

When a parent does this, the child understands that he is not important, that the parent cares more for himself, for his own image, than for the child. His concern is only selfish. When a child discerns this, he will definitely ruin the parent's reputation!

9. Husbands and wives quarrel in front of the children.

When husbands and wives fight in front of the children, they learn that marriage is a duel rather than a duet. And when they get married, they will fight.

10. When you discipline a child, argue about it.

If the husband starts to whip a child, the mother says, "Do you really think you should do that?" The child quickly learns to manipulate the situation. He or she will risk getting into trouble just to see mom and dad have a fight. When you discipline, the parents must be in harmony and must show the child that they are in harmony. The mom must say, "If daddy said it, that's right." The dad must say, "If mommy said it, that's right." They must support one another and work out any differences in private.

11. Brag on their talents but not their character, and constantly show them off in public.

The wise thing to do is to brag on character, not talents.

12. Turn on the television or radio or stereo and let worldly music play constantly.

Worldly music produces a worldly environment and creates worldly attitudes. On the other hand, you can program temperament and stability and peace and quietness in your home if you get good sacred Christian music. You can play Bible stories in a room where a little baby is sleeping, and you are programming Bible stories into his little mind. Kids don't have to learn things formally; you just put it there and they are like a blotter. They absorb it. Put soothing, Christ-honoring, soul-stirring Christian music on and just let it play in your home, and you are programming something of security and tranquility and peace into the children's hearts. (A list of "Suggested Sacred Music Recordings" can be found at the Way of Life web site.)

13. Teach them to be afraid.

When lightening comes, when storms come, even if you are scared, don't show it. When a kid falls down, he looks up at his parent to see if he should cry. If he falls down, don't make a big issue of it, or he will expect that all through life. Every time he has a little trouble he will expect someone to make a big issue of it and fuss over him, and that is not real life. When he falls down, just treat it lightly and encourage him to get up on his own and move on. I know a mother that when her child fell down, she would run and get an aspirin for him! There are many fears that people have that their parents taught them.

My friends, we must face our fears. One of my girls was scared to death of dogs. One day she came into the house screaming, and I thought a tiger was after her, but it was just a little dog. You can't talk fear out, so I got a dog. I didn't necessarily want a dog; I got a dog in order to help a little girl face her fears. One of my boys learned to swim but was afraid to swim across the deep side of the pool. One day I said, "You are going to swim across there before we go home." He swam across and got rid of his fear. Had I ignored that, his fear would have grown. Fear dwelt upon can paralyze. Don't run from your fears; face them. Don't instill fear in the heart of your boy or girl. When they look up at you, they need to see confidence and assurance (but not pride). Many parents have taught their child that they can't go to sleep without a light on. If they are afraid of the dark, go in there with them in the dark and show them that there is nothing to be afraid of.

14. Don't take time to listen to them and talk with them.

If you are too busy to talk to them when they are little, when they get older they will go to someone else for counsel. By the time they are five years old, they already have an idea about you, whether you take the time to listen to them or you are too busy. Take time to listen to them when their little conversation

doesn't mean anything, so that when the conversation is serious they will talk with you and listen to you.

15. Be a dual personality.

If you are one personality at church and another personality at home, the children know you are a fake and they don't like it. That hypocrisy will ruin them.

16. Criticize the preacher in front of them.

If you do criticize the preacher in front of them, you shouldn't be surprised when the children refuse to obey authority and refuse to take the preacher's exhortations to heart.

17. Mother, teach your little girl rebellion.

We teach by action, and the mother teaches a daughter rebellion by her own stubbornness and disobedience to her husband and to the preacher and to other authorities. She teaches rebellion by not caring how she looks for her husband. Mother, the little girl gets an idea of what a lady is like from you. If the mother is in love with her husband and devoted to him and in submission to him, her daughter will grow up to follow that example and she will follow her husband to the jumping off place, and not shove him off but jump off with him. Many men that God has called to the ministry are having great problems because their wives are not in submission. Their wives are more committed to their mothers than to their husbands. They are not willing to leave their relatives to go to the place of God's calling. One question I ask every young woman that sits in my office for counsel before a wedding, "Do you love this man enough to leave your mother and father?" I ask the same thing of the young men. If you can't answer yes to that, you aren't old enough to get married. Mother, look in the mirror, because the little girl that grows up in your home will probably be just like you in her attitude toward authority and men in general and in her attitude toward her husband in particular. If you are thinking about marrying a girl, you should take a look at her mother and her attitude toward these things.

18. Dad, treat your wife disrespectfully.

Treat the wife with disrespect and a lack of compassion, and you will raise a boy that does the same thing. Before you marry a young man, you had better take a long look at his father and at the attitude of his father toward the wife. If a dad talks about other women all the time, about blonds and brunettes and red heads, the little boy will follow that example. The dad needs to teach his son that he is committed to his wife and that he would die for her, and then when the boy grows up and says at his wedding, "till death do us part," he will mean it. The dad must teach his son how to be treat girls with kindness and how to be a gentleman toward women and how to have a proper respect for the opposite sex. And it must start early.

19. Dad, teach your son to be wimpy.

Do you know that there is difference between how you raise a girl and how you raise a boy? With a girl you treat her with gentleness; with a boy you trip him when he walks past! A boy needs roughness. You want to grow him up to be a man, not a sissy. Get a pair of boxing gloves and swap licks with him. Wrestle with him and let him get the best of you sometimes, but sometimes put a scissor grip on him so he can learn reality. Life is rough, and a man must learn how to deal with it. He must learn that life has pain, that there is give and take, and he must know how to take. Teach him to walk like a man, work like a man, think like a man. The predominate figure in a boy's life needs to be his father. The predominate

figure in a girl's life needs to be her mother. There are boys that have gotten so attached to their mothers that they can't have a successful marriage.

20. Teach your children that you don't trust them.

We know that foolishness is bound in the heart of a child and that children are children and that they have to learn how to be dependable and honest, but we need to have the objective of letting the children know that we trust them. Early in life we need to tell our children that we don't want them to break our trust. "I trust you son; I trust you daughter; don't lie to me. If you lie to me I can't trust you." Teach them from the earliest age, "Tell the truth; tell the truth; tell the truth." My daddy died when I was in high school. When I would get ready to go somewhere, my mother would say, "Son, I trust you." Boy, that kept me out of a lot of things. Now if she had said, "I don't trust you son," I would have acted out her distrust.

Conclusion

In the book of Proverbs, the ideal woman is not a businesswoman; it is a mother and wife at home. The home is not the woman's dungeon; it is her throne. Daddy, in Psalm 128, God talks about the home in this manner:

"Blessed is every one that feareth the LORD; that walketh in his ways. For thou shalt eat the labour of thine hands: happy shalt thou be, and it shall be well with thee. Thy wife shall be as a fruitful vine by the sides of thine house: thy children like olive plants round about thy table. Behold, that thus shall the man be blessed that feareth the LORD" (Psalms 128:1-4).

The thing that God gave to Job after all his travail was his home re-established and letting him see his children to the fourth generation.

I know parents that are just looking forward to when their kids get old enough to get out of the house. You know why that is? Because before the children were five years old they programmed the wrong things into their hearts and modeled the wrong things before them.

Dr. Terry L. Coomer is the Pastor of Elwood Bible Baptist Church, and the Director of For the Love of the Family Ministries. He has also served as the Publisher of the nation's fastest growing daily newspaper. Pastor Coomer holds Family Conferences in the local church. To have a meeting at your church or other needs he may be contacted at (765) 552-1973, tlcoomer@juno.com. There are many helpful articles and material on our web site to help you change your life at www.fortheloveofthefamily.com. We serve the God of answers. If you need help finding those answers you may contact us at tlcoomer@juno.com. To be removed from our mailing list send an e-mail to tlcoomer@juno.com.