

Protecting the Most Precious

Protection, it is a primary requirement for things of value. The fact is, there are thieves in this world we live in; sometimes they are people, sometimes they come through impersonal avenues such as activities which occupy our time and energies.

God has given us precious children to raise and protect to become the future leaders and citizens of the world. How can the influential adults in their lives, parents, guardians, and teachers, provide the most effective protection against very real threats and dangers to our children's safety and well being? I'd like to share with you a few powerful instructions from the book, *The Highly Healthy Child* by Dr. Walt Larimore, M.D.

1. The most effective protection is to teach our children how to protect themselves. This means raising them with the skills and values they need in order to choose to do what is right. This begins with the parent-child relationship.
2. In order to give them the discernment skills and values, we must **build strong relationships** with them. Child psychologists confirm that protection and loving supervision are necessary in order for children to become highly healthy.
 - Children want to feel loved and to be listened to when they share their concerns. They will only develop the inclination to talk openly to their parents and teachers if they make the significant time investments. Quality time only occurs during quantity time.
 - At least once a day, show how much you love your child through hugs, words, gestures, notes, and occasional small gifts. (teachers will primarily use words, written comments, or possibly rewards)
 - Go out of your way to find them doing things right and then recognize and applaud their accomplishments.
 - Really listen to your children – turn off the TV, radio, put down what you're doing, look into their eyes and listen.
 - Encourage your children to be involved in activities outside the home but try to limit activity to one sport or hobby at a time. Remember also that time spent in a healthy home is healthier than time spent almost anywhere else.
 - As children grow in age and wisdom, respect their need for privacy and growing independence. But never relinquish the responsibility to stay involved with them and to supervise them.
 - Find mature mentors who share experiences, give advice, and hold you accountable when faced with difficult problems in protecting your children.

To this list, I would add the necessity of clear leadership which involves high, authentic moral values enforced and encouraged through intentional instruction as well as discipline with consistency, patience, and perseverance. Moreover, it is absolutely essential that this leadership is centered on the Gospel in all its fullness – the grace of forgiveness, the grace of transformation, and the grace of empowerment. We all need the

power of the Gospel to face the worst in us and still have the hope of the glory of God in sight through faith in who God is and what He has done through Jesus Christ.

Within the context and environment of such love, strict discipline, when necessary, can be implemented effectively with very positive results. For only when children are loved to the point of creating true belief in them that they are precious and deeply cared for, that the truth and reality of existence is in a Holy God, will they behave and perform in ways which reflect a goodness that all of us desire to see.