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Character Counts

Tags: Bible character family

Character does count. Our Founding Fathers certainly thought so. It's been said, "Character is doing what's right when nobody's looking." This is what we must instill in our children. Scripture is loaded with positive and negative examples of character. Character is basically the attributes of God. Our goal is to be like Jesus, and therefore we want to teach our children what character qualities mean so they can adopt them into their lives. *Character Sketches*, as I mentioned in the last chapter, has been a mainstay in our home, as have *A Child's Book Of Character Building, Vol.1 and 2*. This book gives simple definitions that kids can understand. For example: "Attentiveness = listening with ears, eyes and heart", and then applies it to daily situations as well as giving a Bible character who exemplified the quality.

Consider personalizing the character qualities for your children to make it easier for them to apply. It's so effective to personalize scripture and character qualities to bring about real changes in our lives. Remember that a negative character trait in our lives is just a positive character quality misused. God will often take our biggest weaknesses and make them our biggest strengths. So don't despair when you see character deficiencies in yourself or your children. God's at work. Get busy teaching your kids what character is and God will use that to do the changing. Gear scriptures to be learned to specific character needs you see in your child. For instance, if unkindness is a problem, use your concordance and find references to kindness, and assign those verses to your child to learn; or make them into 3x5 cards for your little ones.

We never put our children into AWANA, although our church does have that program. The reason is that we knew our kids would do well. We started early teaching them scripture. But scripture is for the purpose of changing our behavior, and we geared memory work to character needs in order to see scripture change lives. I felt it would instead promote a spirit of competition and pride in my kids if they'd been in AWANA. I didn't want to create a stumbling block for them in focusing on winning a prize. AWANA is great for kids who aren't getting scripture at home. Sunday schools were created to be an outreach and that's fine, but it wasn't the best choice for our children. God holds parents responsible to train and guide and steer their children in His paths. We have rewarded our children for learning scripture, such as a new tropical fish for learning ten verses, or a book they want, etc. But it's a goal that's achievable for them, not competing even with brothers or sisters in achieving it.

If I could emphasize one thing in the training of your children, perhaps the best thing we've done, it would be Bible tapes. When our oldest kids were young, Rick began making sets of Bible tapes. He would read through Proverbs, then Psalms, Matthew, etc., stopping occasionally to explain difficult words and giving stories to illustrate different concepts. He's a good storyteller. We would then play tapes at naptime and bedtime. We found that our children memorized massive portions of scripture without even trying, especially ones who didn't fall asleep right away. At one point, eight-year-old Josh could finish any verse in Matthew that you began. Recently when Rick was reading the Proverb of the day for family devotions (there are thirty-one proverbs – read the first chapter on the first day of the month, etc.), Tucker, then nine, would finish every verse Rick started to read. Rick asked him how he knew them all and he said he was listening to Dad reading the Book of Proverbs at naptime. Scripture is something you take with you to heaven and through eternity. It never returns void. It seems to just pop into your head when you need it.. As our kids grow beyond "nap" stage, Mom still needs a quiet time each day, and so do they. We allow them to play quietly in their rooms and listen to Bible tapes. We also use them for long trips in the car. You can even let them use their own walkmans for times where they have long waits in the doctor's office, etc.

Joshua 1:8 promises that we will be successful in everything we do if we meditate on God's Word. That's what I want for my children. An added benefit is that our children have had very little problem with nightmares. They go to sleep listening to God's Word, and it acts as a purifier and fills their minds with truth as they drift off to sleep. So crank up those CD players and let God's Word make your little ones into mighty soldiers for the King!

Author: Marilyn Boyer

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