

**God's Guidelines for Growing Your Kids**  
**(How to Love Your Children and Let Them Know It)**

**Ephesians 6:1-4**

**Introduction:** 1) On April 26, 1989, the “Queen of Comedy”, Lucille Ball, passed away. Some time before her death she was interviewed on television by talk show host, Merv Griffin, who asked Lucy some very interesting and important questions:

“Lucille, you’ve lived a long time on this earth and you are a wise person. What’s happened to our country? What’s wrong with our children? Why are our families falling apart? What’s missing?”

To those series of questions Lucy quickly responded and said:

“Papa’s missing. Things are falling apart because Papa’s gone. If Papa were here, he could fix it.”

2) Lucy was right. In 1960 only 18% of children in America lived separated from their biological daddy. Today almost 40% live in a home where their daddy is not present. 80% of all African-American children will spend part of their childhood separated from their father (6-19-99). Yes in too many homes Papa is gone.

3) And yet there is another tragedy that stalks our land that comes alongside this one, a tragedy that often afflicts Christian homes as well. There are homes where dad is present physically, but not personally and emotionally. He is not really

there. He is tuned out and checked out, and doesn't have a clue about what is going on in the lives of his children.

4) I think the sorrow and heartbreak experienced by far too many children was expressed well in a letter written to *Seventeen* Magazine. Listen to what this teenager girl said for all the world to hear about her relationship with her daddy:

Have you ever heard of a father who won't talk to his daughter? My father doesn't seem to know I'm alive. In my whole life he has never said he loves me or given me a goodnight kiss unless I asked him to.

I think the reason he ignores me is because I'm so boring. I look at my friends and think, "If I were funny like Jill or a super brain like Sandy or even outrageous and punk like Tasha, he would put down his paper and be fascinated."

I play the recorder, and for the past three years I've been a soloist in the fall concert at school. Mom comes to the concerts, but Dad never does. This year, I'm a senior, so it's his last chance. I'd give anything to look out into the audience and see him there. But who am I kidding? It will never happen. ["The Trouble with Dad" *Seventeen* (10-85) p. 38].

5) I do not wish to overstate the situation but...knowing your mom and dad care and knowing they will be there when you need them can sometimes be the difference between life and death for a child!

I read this story in *Focus on the Family's* monthly magazine several years ago. It had run earlier in *Reader's Digest*, and is one of the most powerful stories I have ever read concerning the difference the love of a daddy made in the life of one of his children.

One day, a father took his two elementary school-age children for a ride in a pontoon boat. They were traveling down the river when suddenly the motor stopped. When the father looked behind him, he noticed something familiar about the red sweater tangled up in the propeller. Then his young son yelled, "Sherry, fell in!"

In horror, the father saw his little girl entwined in the propeller of the boat. She was submerged just beneath the surface of the water, looking straight into the eyes of her daddy and holding her breath.

He jumped into the water and tried to pull the motor up, but the heavy engine wouldn't budge. Time was running out. Desperately, the father filled his own lungs with air and dipped below the surface, blowing air into his daughter's lungs.

After giving her air three times, the father took a knife from his shocked son's hand. He quickly cut the red sweater from the propeller and lifted his daughter into the boat. Although she had survived, her

deep cuts and bruises needed medical attention, so they rushed her to the hospital.

When the crisis was over, the doctors and nurses asked the girl, “How come you didn’t panic?”

“Well, we’ve grown up on the river and my dad always taught us that if you panic, you die. And besides, I knew my daddy would come and get me.”

Do your children know beyond a shadow of a doubt that you would come and get them, no matter what? If he was busted in a drug raid, would you go and get him? If she got caught being a prostitute, would you go get your little girl? If your son was drunk on skid row, would you disown him? *Focus on the Family*, May 1996, p. 1.

- Almost all parents do love their children, but that is not the issue. The issue is do your children feel loved?

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**Ephesians 6:1-4**

**I.     We love our children by education them                     **6:1-3****

1. It is proper 6:1
2. There is a promise 6:2-3
  - a. A Better life 6:3
  - b. A longer life 6:3

• Illustration: Charlotte's Story

**II.    We love our children by encouraging them                   **6:4****

1. We should avoid making them angry
2. We should be active in giving them advice
  - Kids don't listen to mom and dad. The experts say they are more influenced by peer pressure than parental guidance.
  - *Newsweek*, May 11, 1997: "In a recent national poll, teenagers named their parents as their #1 heroes.
  - When asked what they would most like to have with them if stranded on a deserted island, 29% of Gen-Xers said, "My parents." The other requested items were music (24%), a

computer (21%), books (15%), and television (10%). *Time*,  
June 30, 1997, (p. 22)

## **12 Ways To Love Your Children And Let Them Know It**

### 1) Get down on their level and enter their world.

- I call this “Incarnational Parenting” (Example of Jesus-Phil 2:5-11).
- Illustration of the little boy whose turtle died and dad’s idea of a turtle funeral/party!

### 2) Love Your Mate

- Ephesians 5:25: “Husbands love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.”
- Titus 2:4: “And so train the young women to love their husbands and children.”
  - Great partners make great parents (Love and Security)

### 3) Give them discipline

- Proverbs 13:24: “Whoever spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is diligent to discipline him.”
- Proverbs 29:15: “The rod and reproof give wisdom, but a child left to himself brings shame to his mother.”
  - Where are the boundaries? Can I have my way?

- Illustration: Jon Akin stepping into the bathroom.
- Big playing field not a little box
  - Honor faithfulness, trustworthiness and obedience
- Adjust the way we discipline as they grow older

#### 4) Look at them with your eyes

- Proverbs 20:12: “The hearing ear and the seeing eye, the LORD has made them both.”
  - Lady in Dallas who had “mean eyes.”
- Next to your tongue, one of your most powerful means of communication is your eyes!

#### 5) Touch them

- Ecclesiastes 3:5: [There is] a time to embrace...”
  - Dad’s with their little girls
  - Mom’s and their teenage boys

#### 6) Spend time with them

- Deuteronomy 6:7-9: “You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as

frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.”

- “Focus on the Family” survey/Associated News Service (August 2003). 5 Year olds spend 25-35 minutes a week with dad. They spend 20-25 hours a week with a T.V. or another “technological babysitter”.
- Article “What’s a Dad Worth?” (Readers Digest, June 1995). In a survey of 4 & 5 year olds who were asked, “If you had to choose to give away either your daddy or your T.V. which would you choose to give away? 33% said I would rather give away my T. V.!
- What did one man say to his parents in reflecting upon his childhood years?

You didn’t take care of me you sent me to daycare.

You didn’t feed me you sent me to McDonalds.

You didn’t study with me you bought me a computer

You didn’t talk to me you bought me a stereo.

You didn’t look at me you bought me a T.V.

You didn’t play with me you bought me toys.

Now that I’m grown and you are old



Why should I come and see you?

I don't even know who you are!

Love is a beautiful 4-letter word. Sometimes it is best spelled T.I.M.E!

7) Listen to them

- James 1:19: “Know this my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger;”

8) Bless them rather than curse them

- James 3:10: “From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers, these things ought not to be so.
- Do you ever stop and think what it is like to be a child and to hear some of the things they hear coming out of mom and dad’s mouth fired in their direction?
  - “Put that down. Stop that right now. Shut up. I don’t care what you are doing, come here right now. Listen to me, give me that. Don’t touch that. Go away. Leave me alone. Can’t you see I’m busy? Not like that stupid. Boy, that was really dumb. Can’t you do anything right? You’d lose your head if it wasn’t screwed on. Hurry up, we don’t have all day. What’s the matter with you? Can’t you hear anything? I don’t know what I’m going to do with you!

- Parents never underestimate the power of your words to bless or curse your children.

“Longer, Daddy Longer”... by John Trent

Recently, a woman grabbed my arm at a conference after I had finished speaking on the enormous need we all have for affirmation.

“Dr. Trent, may I tell you my story?” she asked. “Actually, it’s a story of something my son did with my granddaughter that illustrated what you’ve been talking about—the importance of affirmation.”

“My son has two daughters, one who’s five and one who is in the ‘terrible twos’.” When a grandmother says this child is in the ‘terrible twos’,” believe me, she is!

“For several years, my son has taken the oldest girl out for a ‘date’ time, but he had never taken the two-year-old until recently. On his first ‘date’ with the younger one, he took her out to breakfast at a local fast food restaurant.”

“They had just gotten their pancakes and my son decided it would be a good time to tell this child how much he loved and appreciated her.”

“Jenny,” her son had said, “I want you to know how much I love you, and how special you are to Mom and me. We prayed for you for

years, and now that you're here and growing up to be such a wonderful girl, we couldn't be more proud of you."

Once he had said all this, he stopped talking and reached over for his fork to begin eating...but he never got the fork to his mouth.

His daughter reached out her little hand and laid it on her father's hand. His eyes went to hers, and in a soft, pleading voice she said, "Longer, Daddy...longer."

He put down his fork and proceeded to tell her some more reasons and ways they loved and appreciated her, and then he again reached for his fork. A second time...and a third...and a fourth time he heard the words, "Longer, Daddy...longer."

This father never did get much to eat that morning, but his daughter got the emotional nourishment she needed so much. In fact, a few days later, she spontaneously ran up to her mother and said, "I'm a really special daughter, Mommy. Daddy told me so." *Stories for the Heart*, Questar, Published 1996

- Illustration of the 65 year old man in Mississippi who got saved at 60 and the words he remembers from his dad as a little boy, "Boy you will never grow up to amount to anything."

9) Have fun with them

- Proverbs 15:13: “A glad heart makes a cheerful face, but by sorrow of heart the spirit is crushed.”
- Proverbs 17:22: “A joyful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones.”
- Ecclesiastes 3:4: “[There is] a time to laugh;”
  - Have a fun house/ a grand central station!
  - Make good memories (Illustration: the boys and me watching college football)
- My parental philosophy: 1) Teach your children to love Jesus
  - 2) Have fun with them

10) Let them go and develop their own wings as you nudge them out of the nest.

- Ecclesiastes 3:6: “[There is] a time to seek, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and time to cast away.”
- You get 20 years to pour your life into them so that when you are not around anymore and it is just them and God, they will be okay.

11) Admit when you are wrong and ask for forgiveness

- James 5:16: “Therefore confess your sins to one another...”
- 7 magical words in English:
  - I am sorry. Will you forgive me?

- I was wrong. Will you forgive me?

James Dobson, *Home With A Heart*, Unconditional Love From a Child:

We often learn the most from our children. Some time ago, a friend of mine punished his 3- year old daughter for wasting a roll of gold wrapping paper. Money was tight, and he became infuriated when the child tried to decorate a box to put under the Christmas tree.

Nevertheless, the little girl brought the gift to her father the next morning and said, “This is for you, Daddy,” He was embarrassed by his earlier overreaction, but his anger flared again when he found that the box was empty.

He yelled at her, “Don’t you know that when you give someone a present, there’s supposed to be something inside of it?”

The little girl looked up at him with tears in her eyes and said, “Oh Daddy, it’s not empty. I blew kisses into the box. All for you, Daddy.”

The father was crushed. He put his arms around his little girl, and begged her for forgiveness. My friend told me that he kept that gold box by his bed for years. Whenever he was discouraged, he would take out an imaginary kiss and remember the love of the child who had put it there.

12) Introduce them to a perfect parent

- John 1:12: “But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become the children of God.”
- We all need a perfect parent; a perfect heavenly Father
- Illustration: “The Rest of the Story” with Charlotte
- What God did for Charlotte, He will do for anyone if you will just ask Him!