




# Developing Faith & Character in our Children: 10 Things Parents Can Do

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1. The family is the first school of virtue.
  2. Loving is natural; parenting is not.



*A wise person said:*

- “Our children don’t need to see a perfect role model, only someone who is trying.”



# Parenting Does Not Create the Child

Parents can put their children on the right path, but the final forming of a person's character lies in their own hands.

—*Anne Frank*




# 10 Principles



# Principle 1

Know what good character is and make character development a high priority.

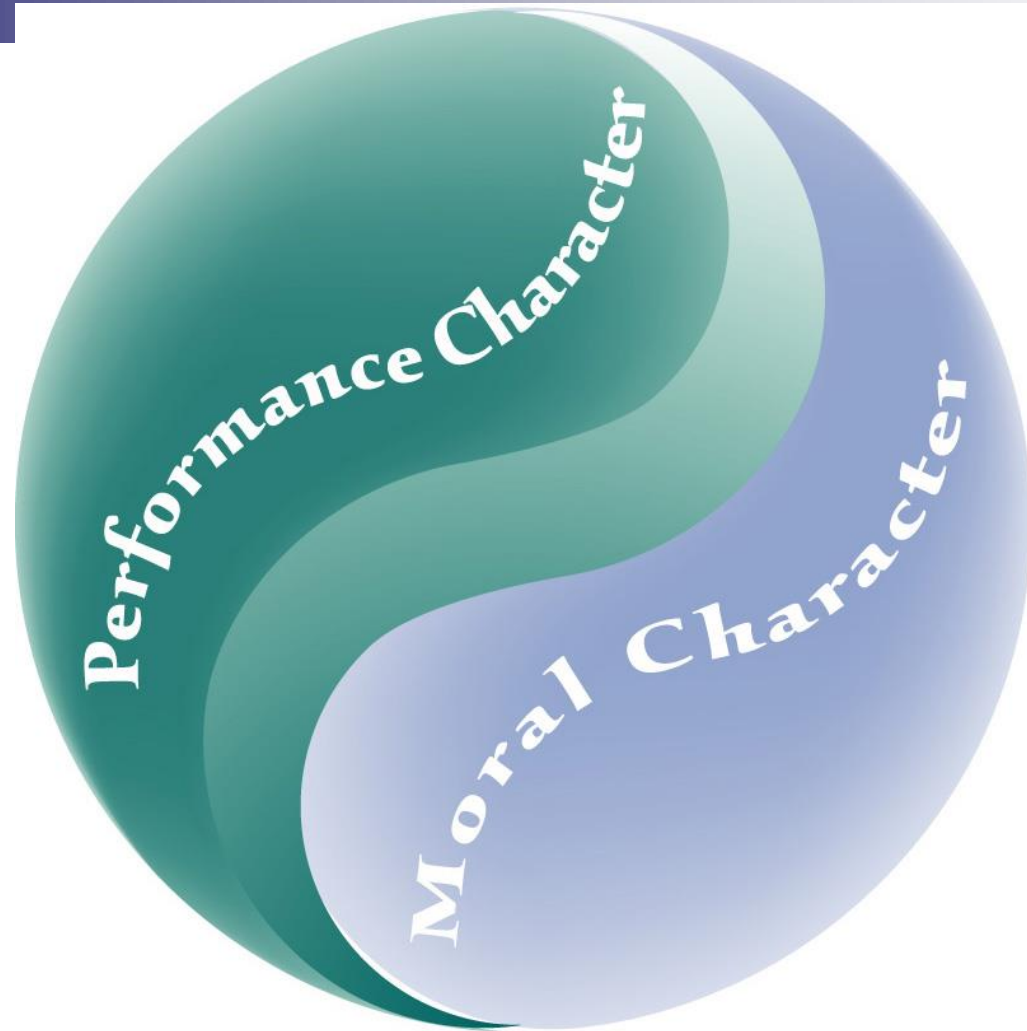


*What is the content of  
good character?*


10 Essential Virtues



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1. Wisdom (Good Judgment)
  2. Justice (Golden Rule)
  3. Fortitude (Inner Toughness)
  4. Self-control
  5. Love (Sacrifice for Others)
  6. Positive attitude
  7. Hard work
  8. Integrity (Honesty w/Yourself)
  9. Gratitude
  10. Humility (Desire to Be Better)




*performance character* (needed for best work);  
*moral character* (needed for best relationships)




A father of 7 asked his  
kids:

"What goal are you  
working on this month?"



Make character  
development a high priority  
and take the long view:

We are "raising adults."



Research finds that adults who were overindulged as children have difficulty coping with life's disappointments.

They have a distorted sense of entitlement that gets in the way of success in the workplace and in relationships.

# Create a Character-Centered Family Culture

## “Our Way”

1. We don't complain or make excuses.
2. We don't lie, cheat, steal, or hurt others.
3. We learn from our mistakes.
4. We work to keep our minds, bodies, and souls healthy, strong, and pure.
5. We commit to growing in our faith and trusting in God's goodness and His plan for our unique potential.
6. We live with an attitude of gratitude and joy.



## *The father says . . .*

- We have this hanging in the kitchen and review it at the beginning of the week.
- We also refer to it when something comes up during the week.
- It's like the foundation of a home. It's what we build on.



## Principle 2

Foster the faith.




# Religion's impact on character

Teens who regularly practice their religious faith are:

- More involved in service activities
- Less likely to steal, be violent, or use drugs and alcohol
- Less likely to have sex.

-[www.childtrends.org](http://www.childtrends.org)




“Figure out what you believe—and why. Our kids want and need detailed, well-reasoned answers about God.”

—*Dr. Meg Meeker*




# The 3 Goals of Life

1. ***salvation***—our own and others’
2. ***service***—using our God-given talents to build God’s kingdom on earth
3. ***sanctity***—growing in holiness.

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- Because of personal sin, **leading a life of virtue is a struggle.** But God's grace is available to help us.
  - The life journey of a Christian is one of being gradually changed into "another Christ."

**Jesus:** *"Be thou made perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect"* (Mt 5:48).

**Dietrich von Hildebrand, *Transformation in Christ***



Why do many young people fall  
away from their faith when they  
leave home?

# 3 Reasons for Falling Away

1. Sin
2. Lack of a relationship with God
3. Absence of the habit of personal prayer.


— *Hugh Thwaites*



# The Secret of a Christian Life

“The secret of the fruitful lives of good Christians lies in their prayer—in that they pray well and pray often.”

—Francis Fernandez, *In Conversation with God*




“Prayer is the food and breath of the soul, because it puts us in close contact with God and leads us to know and love him more.”

—Francis Fernandez, *In Conversation with God*



# Prayer Tips

1. Pray when you wake up: “Thank you for the gift of this day.”
2. Give God at least 5 minutes at the beginning of the day.
3. Talk to God as if he’s right there.
4. Begin with thanks, then prayers of petition.
5. Use spiritual reading (read, meditate, read . . . )
6. Be silent; listen with your heart.
7. Understand how God answers prayers.



“I always begin my prayer in silence. God speaks to us in the silence of our hearts.”



*A high school boy:*

“I never used to pray. Now I believe that, basically, you need God.

“When you pray, your problem might not get fixed when you want, or in the way you want—but you get help.”



*A young mother of four says:*

“Dad always closes his letters with, ‘Work hard and pray a lot.’ This never sounds phony because it’s what he does.

“He has worked hard all his life, and he prays throughout the day.”



# 5 Kinds of Parent Prayer

1. We can pray in the presence of our kids.
2. We can pray with our children.
3. We can pray over our children.
4. We can pray for our children—including their vocations.
5. We can pray for God's help in our parenting.


# Why Go to Services?

1. The Commandment – Heb. 10:25.
2. Christ is there in our midst
3. The Decision of those in fellowship.
4. What we do at Services?
5. The consequences if we don't go.
6. The benefits if we do.



## 6 Ingredients of the Spiritual Life

1. Mental and vocal prayer.
2. The Services
3. The Lord's Supper and life
4. Spiritual reading and meditation
5. Self-denial
6. Good works




“The most urgent need of our time is to make people aware of God.

“We will achieve justice and peace only to the extent that we reawaken the world to a full awareness of God.”

—*Anselm Moynihan*





“There is no practice more vital for our spiritual growth than practicing the presence of God.

“By keeping ourselves in God’s presence, we will draw from him the spiritual light of wisdom, the soul’s warmth of charity, and the energy of zeal in doing good.”

—*Anselm Moynihan*



# Practicing the Presence

“Through moments of meditation and vocal prayer, we can turn our whole day into continuous praise of God.

“Just as people in love are always thinking about each other, we will be aware of God’s presence. Even our smallest actions will be filled with spiritual effectiveness.”

—*Josemaria Escriva*



## Principle 3:

Build a happy  
marriage—based on  
love, respect, and  
commitment.




## If you are a single parent . . .

- Find at least one other parent and share parenting experiences.
- Be emotionally supportive of your kids.
- Be firm but not harsh in your discipline.
- Know where your kids are and what they are doing.

## Marriage Ritual: Daily Talk Time

- Plan a regular time for 15 minutes of one-on-one conversation with your spouse.
- Don't use it to discuss conflicts or make difficult decisions.
- Re-connect with each other; share thoughts and feelings about the day.

—Dr. William Doherty, *The Intentional Family*

- 
- Work on communication—  
understanding each other's  
needs and feelings.
  - In a conflict, take turns “being  
understood.”

(Use active listening.)

# Reconciliation Rituals

- Healthy families have rituals that enable them to forgive and make up quickly after an argument.
- “Please forgive me.”
- “A hug for health”
- “Let’s pretend that blow-up didn’t happen—and wipe the slate clean.”



# Work Together as Parents

1. Share the work of parenting.
2. Talk about the kids.
3. Support each other. If you disagree about how to handle a situation with a child, do so privately.





# Principle 4

## Love children

(affirmation, time,  
communication, & sacrifice)



# #1. Attention and Affirmation

- Notice and nurture your children's interests—an authentic way of loving and respecting them.
- A sport, talent, or other interest helps a young person develop their sense of being their own person.



## RACHEL'S STORY

A 15-year-old girl in therapy because of rebellion against her parents' values

- To avoid this kind of rebellion, help kids develop their own interests and their own identity as a person.



# Praise more than you criticize

“My father criticized me constantly. He wanted me to be tough. I guess he thought that by pointing out my faults, I would get better. It made me stop trying.”



# An Affirmation Ritual: *The Christmas Letter*

“Each Christmas my husband and I wrote a letter to each of our 5 kids and put it under the tree.

“We told them what we loved and appreciated about them, the ways we had seen them grow during the past year, the talents and character strengths we saw emerging....”



## #2. Time

- We need psychologically intimate, face-to-face time with our children.
- Attending their sports games and other events does not meet this need.

## *A son remembers . . .*

“When I had a cold, my father would rub my chest with Vicks and cover it with a red flannel cloth.

“On Sunday afternoons, we would walk together to the top of the hill by the dam. We would sit on a rock and look down on the town below us.

“Then I would tell my problems to my father, and he would speak of his to me.”

—Christian Barnard, originator of the heart transplant



# A Saturday Ritual

“I have four kids. Each of them gets one Saturday afternoon a month where it’s just the two of us doing something we both enjoy.”

—a School Superintendent





## # 3. Communication: Back-and-forth Questions

1. How was today on a scale of 1 to 10—where 1 is “terrible” and 10 “terrific”? Why?
2. What happened today that you didn’t expect?
3. What did you accomplish today that you feel good about?
4. What did you learn today?
5. What’s an interesting conversation you had?

# Family Meal: Have a “Topic.”

1. What was the best part of your day?
2. What did you learn today?
3. How did you help someone today?
4. What is something you're grateful for?
5. What's a problem you're having that the rest of the family might be able to help with?

(see [www.thefamilydinnerproject.org](http://www.thefamilydinnerproject.org))



## # 4. Sacrifice

“The most important thing parents can do for their children is to love each other and stay together.”

—a mother



Dr. Judith Wallerstein

*The Unexpected Legacy of Divorce:  
A 25-Year Landmark Study*

*Help for troubled marriages:*

[www.retrouvaille.org](http://www.retrouvaille.org)




# Books on Parenting

1. *Strong Fathers, Strong Daughters*—  
Dr. Meg Meeker
2. *Boys Should Be Boys: 7 Secrets to Raising  
Healthy Sons*—Meg Meeker
3. *Compass: A Handbook of Parent  
Leadership*—James Stenson
4. *Take Back Your Kids*—William Doherty
5. *Raising Good Children*—Thomas Lickona



# Principle 5

Be an  
authoritative  
parent.



Parents must have a  
strong sense of  
*moral authority*  
—their right to be  
respected and obeyed.



# 3 styles of parenting (research of Diana Baumrind):

- Authoritarian
- Permissive
- Authoritative.



## Authoritative parenting combines:


1. Love
2. Confident authority & rule enforcement
3. Reasoning to motivate compliance
4. Listening to child's feelings if expressed respectfully (parents make final decision)
5. Encouragement of age-appropriate self-reliance.




At all developmental levels, the most confident and responsible children have *authoritative* parents.

## *Ways to Say No*

1. No.
2. No, and that's final.
3. No, and don't ask me again.
4. I have thought about it, and the answer is no.
5. I know you know how to nag. It won't work.
6. Nice try, the answer is still no.




Have a *zero tolerance*  
policy for  
disrespectful speech  
and behavior.

- 
- Require children always to speak respectfully to you—in what they say *and* in their tone of voice.



Set a consequence in advance:

***“What is a fair consequence  
for speaking to me  
disrespectfully?”***



Insist on respect, courtesy, and kindness in all family interactions.

Don't tolerate disrespect or disobedience to you, or rudeness ("Shut up!"), name-calling ("Stupid!"), or other unkindness toward siblings.



# Principle 6

Teach by  
example.






# **Moral Moments**

## **Our Children Remember**



The stands we  
take define  
our values.



# *Do our kids know where we stand on . . .*

1. Respect for life?
2. The plight of the poor?
3. Respect for the environment?
4. War and peace?



# Principle 7

Manage the  
Moral  
Environment

# The importance of supervision:

The most academically motivated and morally responsible teens—the least likely to engage in risky behaviors:

1. Have warm and involved relationships with their parents
2. Have parents who set clear expectations and monitor their children's activities in age-appropriate ways.

*- Building a Better Teenager,*

Child Trends 2002 research report, [www.childtrends.org](http://www.childtrends.org)



# Your Kid's Friends

- We become like the company we keep.
- What is a true friend? A false friend?
- Share stories from your life.

# Media Facts

- The average child sees about 100 commercials a day.
- The average young person consumes nearly 7 hours of electronic media a day.
- Three-quarters of 6<sup>th</sup>-graders have their own TV in their bedrooms.

—*Kids and Media at the New Millennium,*  
[www.kff.org](http://www.kff.org)



# What The Research Shows

1. Kids who watch the most violent TV are the most violent.
2. Kids are also *desensitized* by exposure to violence.
3. Teens who frequently watch sexual content are more likely to become sexually active.



# Set Limits on Use of Media

1. The use of all media in the family is a privilege (not a right) that requires a parent's permission.
2. "We don't allow media that goes against our family values."
3. Have "quiet nights" (TV is off).
4. Make watching TV a special family event, not a private or regular pastime.
5. Set reasonable limits on time spent on Internet, video games, telephone, etc.



# The Moral Low-Down on Movies

- [www.screenit.com](http://www.screenit.com)

- [www.kidsinmind.com](http://www.kidsinmind.com)



## **Explain your rules and expectations:**

“I don’t want you going to R-rated movies with a lot of sex and violence because I care about you.

“I don’t want you putting junk into your mind, just as I don’t want you to put junk into your body.”



*RECOMMENDATION:*

Consider having

NO TV

while you have children  
in the home.

# Supervise Social Media

- “For your own sake, I’ll check your online activity (posts, texts, emails) periodically.

“Please let your friends know I’ll be doing this.”




## Principle 8

*Use direct teaching  
and questioning to  
develop conscience.*



*Judith Martin (columnist):*

"Raising a civilized child takes  
20 years of constant  
teaching and another 10 of  
review."



Practice what you preach,  
but preach what you  
practice.



# Forming conscience in 2-year-olds: Clarity + Concern

- You hurt Amy!
- Pulling hair hurts.
- NEVER pull hair.



# Teach Empathy

“There are two kinds of hurts: *outside* hurts that you can see, and *inside* hurts that you can’t see—like a hurt feeling.”



## *A daughter remembers . . .*

When I was 15, I adopted the ungracious habit of referring to certain classmates as “losers.”

My father took me aside and pointed out that it wasn't right to dismiss anyone like that, as if they weren't persons—as if they didn't have a soul.

That habit ended that day.

# Dad's Two Sets Of Threes

- *On honesty:*
  - Never lie.
  - Never cheat.
  - Never steal.
- *On adversity:*
  - Don't whine.
  - Don't complain.
  - Don't make excuses.

-John Wooden

# Ask-Don't-Tell

*Use questions to get kids thinking:*

1. What's the rule about this?
2. What will happen if you keep arguing?
3. How can you solve this problem?
4. How can you help make this a good day instead of a bad one?
5. Why am I upset with you?



# Why is it wrong to cheat?

1. It violates trust.
2. It's unfair to those who aren't cheating.
3. It's a form of lying.
4. It will lower your self-respect.



# Why not drink?

“You’re laying the foundation for your future during these years. You don’t need drinking when you’re learning to drive. You don’t need drinking when you’re learning to relate to the opposite sex.

“Let’s study the scriptures and have you tell me where drinking alcohol and the consequences fit in with the Christian lifestyle.”



# Why Wait for Marriage?

“Sex is so special, it deserves a special home. It is most meaningful when it’s part of something bigger. When you are married, your sexual intimacy expresses your total commitment to each other.

“The ultimate intimacy belongs within the ultimate commitment.”






# **“10 Emotional Dangers of Premature Sex”**

[www.cortland.edu/character](http://www.cortland.edu/character)

(Character-Based  
Sex Education Tab)



***The attempted suicide rate for 12- to-  
16-year-old girls who have had  
sexual intercourse is six times  
higher than for peers  
who are virgins.***

**D. Orr, M. Beiter, & G. Ingersoll, “Premature sexual  
activity as an indicator of psychosocial risk,”  
*Pediatrics*, 87, 141-147.**



# What Are the Rewards of Waiting?

1. Waiting will increase your self-respect.
2. It will teach you to respect others.
3. It means a clear conscience (no guilt, no regrets).
4. By waiting, you're developing the kind of character (virtues such as respect, self-control, modesty, and courage) that will attract a person of character.



## ***The Real Love Character Test***

1. Is this person respectful and kind to me?
2. Does this person always expect to get his or her own way?
3. Can I trust this person?
4. Does this person ever pressure me to go against my values?
5. Would I be proud to be married to this person?
6. Would I want this person to be the father/mother of my children?

# What's Wrong with Porn?

1. It violates the dignity of person by treating people as sex objects. It takes something beautiful and makes it dirty.
2. It puts images in your mind that you won't be able to get rid of.
3. It's addictive—it brings short-term pleasure but then starts to run your life. For males, it is also usually accompanied by masturbation.
4. It will lower your self-respect.
5. It causes problems in marriage.
6. It violates passages that require purity of thought and actions.



T. G. Morrow

*Achieving Chastity in a  
Pornographic World*

*Chastity*: bringing sexual desire into  
harmony with right reason.




# Principle 9

# Discipline Wisely

# Have consistent rules


- Help with clean-up after meals.
- Answer the phone politely. (“This is Max Lickona. Who would you like to speak to?”)
- Don’t call me from another room (“**MOM!**”); come to where I am.
- Don’t leave your clothes lying around the house; hang them up.
- Say, “May I please have . . .” not, “I *want* ...”





When kids do something wrong, require them to . . .

1. Say, "I'm sorry."
2. Say why they are sorry.
3. Ask, "What can I do to make up for it?" (restitution)




"What do you think is a fair consequence for what you did?"



# Principle 10

Provide opportunities  
for kids to practice  
their values.



Children develop character by  
what they see, what they  
hear, and what they are  
repeatedly led to do.

—James Stenson

# HARVARD STUDY

John and Beatrice Whiting studied 6 cultures: the U.S. and 5 “developing nations.”

- U.S. kids had the *fewest responsibilities* in family life.
- U.S. kids were the *most self-centered*.




# TEACHING RESPONSIBILITY

- Chores are a way to contribute to the family.
- Don't pay kids for doing them.



# SERVICE BEYOND THE FAMILY



Solve problems  
with love and  
fairness.



# Hold Family Meetings

1. Set/review rules: Respectful talk, no put-downs.
2. Start: “What’s something you appreciate that someone in the family did for you this week?”
3. “How can we all make this a good week—what’s a problem we need to solve?”
4. Go around twice, giving all a chance to: (1) state their view of the problem; (2) make suggestions for solving it fairly. ***(Record & read back what each person said.)***
5. Combine ideas into an agreed-up plan; all sign. Post agreement; ***plan follow-up mtg.***

# Family Meeting to Assess Progress

- Set a weekly time.
  
- How are we doing?
  - Give everyone a turn to speak.
  - First celebrate success: *“I think we did better on . . . .”*
  - Discuss areas for improvement: *“I think we can still do better on . . . .”*



# The Fairness Meeting

1. Achieve mutual understanding.
2. Find a solution everyone thinks is fair.
3. Have a follow-up meeting to discuss how it's working.

# Fairness Agreement

1. If Mom has promised to do something with us, she will tell the person she is busy and will call back later.
2. Will make a list of things to do while mom is on the phone.
3. Mom will try to make her calls shorter.
4. If mom has to be on the phone for a longer time she will tell us, and we will behave.

Mom, Phillip (7) and Ben (5)



WHAT IS THE MISSION OF YOUR  
HOME AND FAMILY?

AND

IF JESUS CAME TO YOUR  
HOME FOR A WEEK'S VISIT,  
WHAT WOULD CHANGE?