

The perfect parent...you can't be one if you don't have one.

Even those who know God as their truly perfect parent may not value him as a model for their own parenting skills and attitudes. The following observations of God's style as a parent could give us all something to aim at as well as increased trust in His ability to understand and help us in our struggles as human parents.

The perfect parent. Even God had to purchase the right to call himself a father. In the old Testament He repeatedly refers to the Hebrew people as His children, but does not call himself a father until He has allowed himself to be crucified. Being a perfect parent means thinking of your children first...seeing them as fellow travelers rather than luggage to be towed along behind. The act of creation or procreation does not make you a parent...the only path to parenthood is personal sacrifice and a commitment to LOVE. Human parents can break every rule in every discipline book in the world as long as they remember that **the one thing that never fails is love** and that love works best when we make sure our children live with it and understand it.

The perfect parent shares scripture. He even tells us human parents how he wants it done. (Deut. 11: 19-21). *“Fix these words of mine in your hearts and minds; tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Teach them to your children ...write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.”* If you can't get your children to hold still while you tie Bible verses to their wrists and heads buy a deck of scripture cards so they can at least have one in their pocket or purse. If you don't have gates and doorposts put at least one verse on the refrigerator. It is the least you can do...the very least. To raise a child without scripture is to raise a godless child...a long long way from perfection.

The perfect parent...always keeps his promises. He never has to ask forgiveness. Human parents do. NOTHING is more important. It teaches our children the one thing they will need most...the ability to start over. Asking forgiveness of our children for something big like divorce or something smaller like a missed sporting event is **not taking the blame for the past. It is clearing the way for the future.** Our failure to do this is leaving us with a nation of children who refuse to allow anyone to help them because they are too full of hurt and unforgiveness. God does not have to ask forgiveness for anything but if his children's lives and souls were at stake **he would.** Will you? My best effort at a universal request for forgiveness is: “Honey love is very very hard. No human being has ever gotten it just right. I do my best to love you. I am still doing my best to love your _____, but I sometimes I get it very wrong. Will you forgive me and help me keep on trying. “ Look in their eyes and if you are not sure they forgave you ask again the next day.

The perfect parent...reaches outside his own family. James 1:27 *“Religion that God...our Father...accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after the fatherless.”* God even says you can recognize members of his family by their hospitality. Having your children's friends into your home twice a month is a sure way to influence them before the influence your children...the only real solution to peer pressure. It is definitely something God would do...ask his children's friends to get to know him better.

The perfect parent... spends TIME with His children. Being with His children is so important to God that he even named himself Immanuel (God with us). You don't have to change your name to be a good parent but you do have to change your priorities. **Most children will quickly forget what you do and say but they will remember always how you made them feel...important OR unimportant.** The real key to quality time is whether you are emotionally present or not. As a self test ask yourself how long it has been since you looked your child in the eyes and passed a silent loving message.

The perfect parent teaches His children to pray. Like mathematics there are only four secrets. The first three are practice, practice, practice. The fourth one is that no prayer is over until you have the right answer (God's answer). Praying for your children is important but not nearly so important as praying with them and sticking with it until they hear from God. If we have not taught our children that God answers prayer what have we taught them?

The perfect parent... does more than tell his children what not to do. He helps them find things to do: "*created in Christ Jesus for good works*" Ephesians 2:10. Sharing household chores can be a child's first step in learning to enjoy work... the one thing (statistically) that guarantees he/she will never spend time in prison. Whistle while you work is another way of saying "Whatsoever you do, do it as unto the Lord."

The perfect parent... remembers his goals for his children. He focuses on what is important. (Jer. 29:11) "I know the plans I have for you, plans with a hope and a future." In all of scripture God makes his most important goals very clear: that my children are drawn to me and enjoy me, that they love one another, that they learn right from wrong, that they have a servants heart, and that they become leaders and teachers not followers. Parents who fail to keep a similar list of what is most important will be drug through Life by one small emergency after another. Having goals is important. Having them written down is something God would do.

None of us can ever hope to be a perfect parent. Our one hope is to spend as much time as possible with the one who is and share in his wisdom. Day by day we will get better...or we won't. It is pretty much a daily decision. God bless you and keep you and make his face to shine upon you and give your peace.

Note about the Author: Charles White has been a freelance Christian Writer and Facilitator of The Christian Child Care Coalition for nearly 30 years. He currently serves the group as editor of their two websites: www.homeword.ws and www.teachustoprayer.com.