

3 Practices for Purposeful Parenting

[DiscipleLand Staff](#) October 7, 2016 [Discipleship](#), [Discipline](#), [Encouragement](#), [Family](#), [Parenting](#) [No Comments](#)

How do we truly guide our children to become disciples of Jesus? Greg Baird provides timely insights that highlight three proven methods of intentional parenting. These truths apply readily to caregivers in ministry as well.

As fulfilling as it can be, anyone who's been a parent for longer than about a week knows that parenting is hard! There's no manual, and everyone seems to have different opinions on what works and what doesn't.

Most parents want to "parent on purpose." In other words, be intentional about raising kids properly. We want our kids to grow into mature, responsible, godly adults. But it can be frustrating. It can be challenging. And it can be confusing.

Part of the frustration lies in the fact that children are different. Family dynamics are different. Circumstances are different. And every parenting moment is different.

But there are some over-arching practices that I believe work with every child and every family. Here are 3 that I've practiced (imperfectly) and believe are typically applied by purposeful parents:

1. Discipline for the purpose of discipleship, not punishment.

Have you noticed that kids misbehave? They're kids!

What do purposeful parents do when children misbehave? Do they rant and rave? Do they spank them or give them a time out or put them on restriction with no discussion?

No, purposeful parents have a reason for the "discipline."

Ephesians 4:6 says, "Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord."

Ranting and raving, or punishing children and leaving it at that will, in fact, provoke our children. But the "discipline and instruction of the Lord" has a purpose, and that purpose is discipleship, or helping them to become more like Christ.

The Greek word for "discipline" in this verse can be defined as "*instruction that trains* someone to reach full development or maturity."

The purposeful parent uses the correction of misbehavior to teach, to instruct, to disciple...not to punish.

2. Emphasize being over doing.

When your son or daughter is on the soccer field, is it more important that they show skill and succeed in playing soccer, or that they show character in how they conduct themselves?

When your child is struggling with that big homework assignment, do you “help” them (i.e. —do it for them) so they get a better grade, or do you let them struggle and learn and grow from the process, even if the grade isn’t as good in the end?

When you are driving down the road and someone obviously “wrongs” you in the way they drive, does your child see you “being” a godly person of character, or do they see you “doing” what you feel is in your rights by responding in anger?

Honestly, I’ve been on the wrong side of each of these scenarios, forgetting that my response is an act of parenting in each case. How I act and what my expectations are of my child is teaching them that either being or doing is most important.

The purposeful parent emphasizes being over doing.

3. Focus on progress over perfection.

One of my favorite verses is about Jesus as a youth. Luke 2:52 says that “Jesus grew in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and all the people.”

Jesus grew mentally, physically, spiritually and socially.

And the key word in this verse is “grew”. In other words, he developed over time in each of these areas.

Now, while Jesus was, in fact, perfect even as a youngster, our children are not. You probably noticed that, but sometimes we don’t act like it.

Instead, many parents will expect their children to act like little adults. They expect perfection.

But instead of seeking perfection, we need to seek progress. When we discipline them (for discipleship), we want to see them grow and mature. But they might show the same wrong behavior again (imperfection). Instead of responding with the unreasonable attitude of “I already told you once not to do that!” we need to continue to correct (or instruct, as Ephesians 6:4 says).

Over time, we want to see progress in their behavior, in their maturity, and in their character. But it’s a process, not an instant occurrence as many parents seem to treat it.

The purposeful parent focuses on progress over perfection.

Discipline for discipleship. Being over doing. Progress over perfection.

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