

Series: I Love Sundays	Reference: <i>Proverbs 22:6</i>	Title: Better Sundays Make Better Families	Date: 11.17.2019
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How do we raise our kids? How can we build into them, and train them up? We scratch the surface here with a few ideas. In trying to make better Sundays we find our families gain great benefits.			

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Memory Verses for this Series

Exodus 20:8 - ⁸ *“Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy.*

Mark 2:27 - *Then He said to them,
“Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.”*

Psalms 100:4 - *Enter his gates with thanksgiving & his courts with praise;
give thanks to him & praise his name.*

God wired us for work & rest. We want to adopt His rhythm, becoming balanced, making Sunday a day to rest, refuel & refocus. Today we want to say that good Sundays make better families. Turn to Isaiah 58:13–14, page 509 in the church Bibles, reminding ourselves of what we learned last week. It says...*If you call the Sabbath a delight & the LORD’s holy day honorable, and if you honor it by not going your own way & not doing as you please or speaking idle words, then you will find your joy in the LORD, and I will cause you to ride in triumph on the heights of the land.* Isaiah wrote these words about three thousand years ago & God’s promise of blessing stand firm today.

Raising families in a face paced culture is difficult. Everything seems designed to distract or destroy. But even in this climate, we can use Sundays to build up families. I’m not just speaking to parents, we all have influence in our immediate & extended families - and influence in another’s family. But I will say, the greatest thing which can happen in the heart of a child, is in the heart of a parent.

Open your Bible to Proverbs 22:6, P447 In your church bible. This verse contains one of the most important parental principles you might learn. Composed by Solomon, purported to be the wisest man ever, it says, *“Start children off on the way they should go & even when they are old they will not turn from it.”*

Take me by the shoulders, point me due north & say, “Start walking,” where would I end up? The North Pole (if I could walk on water). Solomon’s saying the first push is the most important. We might not always end up precisely due north from wherever we started, but chances are good, we’ll end going in the general direction.

Peyton & Eli Manning wound up as NFL quarterbacks. Their father, Archie, also played in the NFL. I’d venture their father pushed them towards it. George Clooney’s aunt, Rosemary Clooney, was also an actor. She probably pushed him in that direction. The direction you start your children in determines the destination to which they’re likely to

arrive - and it's never too late to course correct! Let's look at seven practices of successful parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, friends & leaders. The first being the most important of them all...

Put God first (Matthew 6:33 - p661 in your church Bible). We say, *first things first*. God wants to be the first of all firsts in your life - for your sake & for those you influence. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said, *"Seek first his kingdom & his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well."*

The best gift we can give children & grandchildren isn't to love *them* first, but to love *God* first. Your children are far more likely to follow the direction you set, rather than the directions you give. Put God first & your children will more than likely do the same. *The acorn never falls far from the tree.* More than likely, your kids will grow up to look a lot like you, value what you value & to live as you've lived.

Turn to P52 in your church Bible - we want to look at Exodus 20:2-3...The first of the Ten Commandments is, *"I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery, you shall have no other gods before me."* God wants to be first in your life, because whatever you put first influences you most & He wants to influence you most. What does it mean to put God first?

It says in your *I Love Sundays* book, *"Putting God first means spending time with Him, caring for what He cares about, using your money the way He'd use it if it were His. Putting God first means honoring Him on the Sabbath & honoring Him with your words, attitudes & ethics at work. Putting God first means honoring Him with how you treat your body - what you eat & how you exercise. I know, those are tall orders. And there's grace. You won't be perfect. But if you're trying to honor God, your children will see that & imitate it. And when you fail, they'll see that it's okay for them to be imperfect too."*

When flight attendant's give safety instructions, they say, *"Should the oxygen mask appear above your head, put yours on before you try to help others with theirs."* What they're saying is, *"You've got to make sure you're breathing right before you have any hope of helping your children."* Your first practice is to put God first, your spiritual formation, your soul care in Jesus.

Once God's first, your second practice is to, **Let your kids see your relationship with God** (Dt. 6:6-9 - P125 in your church Bible). When Moses was preparing to send the Israelites into the Promised Land, he wanted them to know how to pass on their faith to their descendants. So he decided to spell it out for them carefully. He said, *These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home & when you walk along the road, when you lie down & when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands & bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses & on your gates.*

In Jewish homes, you'll see a little decorative Scripture box on the doorframe. They take this passage so seriously they literally put Scriptures on the doorframes of their houses. This passage of Scripture became one of the most important in Israel's history. They talked about their faith with their children, letting their kids in on their relationship with God. Generation after generation passed down what was important. More than 3,500 years later, the Israelites are still talking about faith with their children.

Kim & I've sought to be open about our faith with our kids, discussing how faith & biblical principles impact our lives, guide us, and how Christ is central to us. We've sought to be authentic & not hide our struggles, or faults as we walk with Jesus before our kids. We believe they must see their parents' joys & struggles to be able to walk with Jesus themselves. Parents have about 3000 waking hours with kids a year. Church has an average of 40. Mom & Dad will always be the greatest spiritual mentor of a child.

Thirdly, in our culture, we don't discuss how much money we make, or how we spend it. Jesus said, *"Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also"* (Mt 6:21). If you're going to start your children out right, it'll help them see your heart by seeing your budget. So, the third practice in raising healthy children is to show them how to allocate & spend money in a healthy way. The only real way to do that is to **Let your kids see your spending** (Luke 6:40). Jesus said, *"Everyone who is fully trained will be like their teacher."*

At about seventeen or eighteen years old, when your kids are fully trained, chances are they're going to be a lot like you. Teach them your best skills & practices. Their best chance of learning how to give, save, spend & invest is to see how you do those things. And the truth is, we live in an incredibly affluent society.

Sometime go to www.globalrichlist.com and see where your income ranks in relationship to the wealth of the world. According to Global Rich List, if you earn \$32,000 a year, you rank in the 1 percent of the wealthiest people in the world. In one hour you make \$16.67, while an average laborer in Zimbabwe makes \$.53/hour. What you make in one year, it would take him from now until the year 2050 to make (31 yrs)! It takes you 2 minutes to earn enough to buy a coke, he'd have to work 1 hour & 8 minutes for that coke. Your monthly income could pay the salaries of 143 doctors in Pakistan. Which means our children are growing up affluent no matter how we cut it.

Jesus said in *Luke 12:48*, *"From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded."* Your children have been given much, so much will be required of them. One of the most important skills you can pass onto your kids is the wise handling of money. One of the most important pieces of wise money management is generosity. How much you give not only indicates the size of your heart, but it *develops* the size of your heart! (Albert will be telling us more about *Financial Peace* later today)

Go to the very last book of the Old Testament, to Malachi 3:10, P654 in your church Bible, a page before the Gospel of Matthew. Chapter 3 Verse 10 says, *"Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house."* This is so important to

God that it's the only time He gives a command with permission to "*test me in this.*" And if we continue reading that verse, God promises when you faithfully bring the full tithe to your local church, He will throw open the floodgates of heaven & pour out so much blessing you'll not have room enough to store it. The pressure to spend is enormous. So every year or two, walk your kids through your budget & let them see how you figure out your priorities & what you spend on.

And just so you know I am not urging you to something I wouldn't do, 20% of our income goes to Six:Eight, and I support a missionary friend beyond that. In total Kim & I give about 21-23% of our income away to Kingdom work.

Practice number four is tied to this, and may be even more important - **Let your children tithe** (Malachi 3:10). You could follow the simple 10-10-80 Plan - tithe your first 10%, save your second 10%, and live on the other 80%. If you want to teach your children this plan, start them off with an allowance which divides easily by ten. If you give them a \$5 allowance, give them four \$1 bills & 4 quarters so they can put fifty cents in their tithe envelope & fifty in their save envelope. Then urge them to bring that tithe to church on Sunday, and every kids room here has a tithe box for the kids to give.

Due to affluence, generosity's a challenge. Studies show the more money we earn, the smaller percentage we give. But the sooner you start giving, the easier it is to give. Children who learn to give before they spend, rarely have trouble being generous as adults. Teach your children to tithe, and then make it easy for them to do it by setting up a 10-10-80 Plan. Celebrate every time they bring their tithe to church & help them think through what they're saving the other 10 percent for. You'd do well to make this habit. How great do you think they'd feel if they know they've contributed to their own kids rooms, or to help a family in need!

Practice number five is, **Serve at church together.** A few years ago Eric Swanson of Leadership Network published a study about children who grew up in church & walked with Jesus as adults. Their study found these children experienced two things in their family of origin. The first was, *their family served God somewhere together in church.* Children whose parents served at church & found ways for their children to serve with them were much more likely to grow up to love God than children who didn't. Serving together gets them around different people, fosters compassion, builds love for others, develops healthy risk taking, confidence, helps them to understand how to deal with uncomfortable situations, and much more.

Fortunately, there are several ways adults & children can serve together here. Once your child's old enough, they can serve in Sunday school with younger children. If you've got kids of that age, you can sign up to teach Sunday school as a family. Kids can serve alongside parents in many of our kingdom opportunities. They can do slides, or sound for this service. You might greet together. The Nicoletti's play music together. Tanner serves on Worship & in Kids Ministry here alongside Kim & I on Sundays. Kids & parents can help with VBC this summer. And by all means get them out into other things

like YoungLife Work Crew, or becoming a Christian Counselor at a camp, or serving in local community.

Decades ago children grew up with significant chores & responsibilities which often is not the case now. The church is one of the few places where a child can truly contribute & feel valued today. Results are eternal & great for your family's health & identity. Another great avenue church provides for family members to serve together is on cross-cultural mission trips. Which leads to our sixth practice.

Send or take them on a cross-cultural missions trip. The second item on Leadership Network's study of what helped kids to grow up to love God was going on a mission trip. Amazing things happen to kids on such trips. They discover how good they have it! Kids who spend time in a third-world country come home & thank their parents for all they have. While they're on the trip, they realize they can make a difference, giving them a new perspective about making life count, no matter where God leads them in their adult career.

The final practice is, **Help your children find godly mentors.** Kim spoke of this last week. Parents are the first line of offense in the spiritual formation of our kids. Work on behalf of your children. Talk to others, urge them to pray for your child. Promote encouragement from others like, *"Hey, my son looks up to you a lot. He has a play coming up, could you encourage & pray for him not to be nervous?"* (this person may offer to come to the play!) Or, *"My daughter loves you so much, she has a math test coming up, could you pray for her, and give her a little encouragement?"* Come consistently to church & community group with your kids so you can get them around others - let them see church in action.

Somewhere between ages eleven & fourteen a gap begins to open in communication & influence, kids don't want to listen to parents. This is where the church can shine - because at the same time, kids begin to look up to older kids or young adults. So, don't forget the older teenagers & college students, they can be great influences on your kids!

During preteen & teen years, kids need a role model they can both look up to & relate to. Church becomes such an important part of a teenager's character formation because it can introduce middle schoolers & high schoolers to young people who have great values & are willing to mentor them. This is part of why Sundays are special, because great things can happen to kids in the critical stage in need of mentoring! Sam Christie has a heart to minister to our High Schoolers, be praying for him in that effort!

Sunday can be the highlight of our week - here are four suggestions to make that happen. Firstly, **Make Sunday family day.** Anchor your Sundays in church; then continue spending quality time together at home & beyond. Make it fun. Take time to breathe together, build time for connection in ways which resonate with your family's personality. Play, connect & seek balance between scheduled events. And reserve the freedom to relax & be spontaneous as well.

Talk meaningfully. Ask each other good questions about what you're seeing & learning in church & life. We now have an app which parents can get which shows what the Toddlers & PreK kids learned on a Sunday with questions to discuss with your kids. Elementary will be available soon. Ask each other how the Holy Spirit's leading you. Show interest in each others activities. Encourage each other, go light on criticism, look for areas to praise. Bond, build identity & have fun together. How do you feel when someone says, "I'm proud of you," or, shows interest in you? You feel great. How often do others ask about your soul & spiritual direction? Establish habitual spiritual talk in your family. Be open about your own walk with your kids. Have a family competition to memorize our theme verses. Reward the person who's done the best - make up a fun song you all have to sing to them while they wear a paper crown or something!

Explore God. Take a hike in nature together to experience God's wonderful creation. Point out the intricacies of life & the vastness of creation - there's something humbling about getting out into nature. Something calming about sitting on rock next to a creek & putting your feet in the water. Great conversations happen in places like that - remember quality time is born of quantity time! Hike the Wissahickon Trail! Swim in Devil's Pool. Climb Livezey's Rock. And if you don't know what those things are, find out! Ride bikes on the Schulykill trails - from Philly out to Exton or Pheonixville & beyond. Ride or walk the Towpath Trail along the Delaware Canal & eat lunch in New Hope. Go to John Heinz Refuge Center, Bartrams Gardens, Ridley Creek State Park, Morris & Tyler Arboretums, Longwood Gardens. Hike Valley Forge, or French Creek. We live in a rich area with plenty to do - I can't list them all, but every one is kids friendly. Let God speak through Creation to your family.

Serve together. Take Leadership Network's suggestion to find something to do around here regularly as a family. It would help our entire church family & really benefit your family for a long, long time. Greet together. Teach together. MJ had her son Asher up singing a few weeks back along with her. Do park cleanup, or face painting, etc.

Let me read you this verse one more time: *Start children off on the way they should go, and even when they are old they will not turn from it (Proverbs 22:6)*. God's mercies are new every morning - so it's never too late to start. If your kids are around, start something with them today. If your kids are grown, give them a call & tell them you love them sometime before the sun goes down tonight.

Sundays are so helpful for families! I'll always remember how my kids benefitted from serving in this church, as we began it years ago. They're better for that. I'd urge you to choose church over sports or any other activity for that matter on Sundays. Make this Sunday worship service the utmost priority - I remember Tanner got on a baseball team one year and the coach obviously couldn't care less about church. We said Tanner would not be at Sunday practices. And the coach basically benched him for the season. Does that matter now? NO! Not at all! Tanner is well-adjusted & I am not even sure he remembers it. Your kids will prioritize what you prioritize - make the Lord first & foremost for them. And Read chapter 5 in *I Love Sundays* this week as homework!