

Advice on Marriage and Parenting

Bob Jennings

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Tim Conway

You know after having been a father to five children... just one more left at home... looking back, what would you tell all these young parents that just... they are newlyweds, they don't have children yet or they're thinking about marriage... they're just trying to figure out the right woman or the right man, they're not even thinking this far yet, or they've got these little ones running around... I mean if you had... as a pastor and a father... if you had some words to share with especially with young men that right now they just have these little ones, what would be some of the strongest encouragements or strongest points of exhortation that you would give such men?

Bob Jennings

Well, you know it's hard to sum these things up, but regarding marriage, it is normal and it is beautiful, but it is life changing and like Paul says in 1 Corinthians 7, "when you're single", why, "your concern is to serve the Lord", you're more able to "serve the Lord without distraction". And, you know, you've heard that phrase "there's no sacred and secular with God, it's all holy". Well, there's some truth in that, of course, but there's also, there's something that's not true in it. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 7 "if you're married, why, then your concern is for the things of the world, how to please your wife or husband". And so it is a life changing thing when you marry. And so the person just wants to let God engineer it, to say "Lord, your will be done. You engineer it. You work it". And then when the trials come you have some confidence, "Lord this was your idea, not mine."

But, for myself, I'm so very thankful for the wife that He gave me, so thankful for the marriage. When the Lord brought Terri into my life, it was like a thousand questions were answered and I found my other half. So then, I wasn't married until I was 31 and Terri was 27. I remember we were coming back from the honeymoon and we were talking about children and Terri said "Well, you know, children are just going to work for our sanctification, so we might as well get started". And indeed, it is quite a sanctifying influence. there are just questions that must be faced, answers that must be attained, when we have children, that press upon us.

I remember when we walked out of the hospital with our firstborn, Jared, and the nurse... probably...

she shouted out , maybe prophetically, you know, I don't know that she was a Christian, but she said "Enjoy him" and I never forgot it. It was good advice. Very good advice. We ought to enjoy our children. Really enjoy them. Because so quickly, it's going to be over. They'll be gone.

I took Jared... I took all the children with me wherever I went as much as I could. I'm so glad I did. Jared enjoyed work. He enjoyed working with me. I think that's one thing that parents sometimes fail on. They don't teach the children to enjoy work. And they don't allow their children to feel useful. Of course, it's easy, as a parent, to do the job yourself. It's easier to do it yourself than try to train or trust a child to do it, but eventually it pays off and everybody wants to feel useful. It's just the way we're made. We ought to really help our children to feel useful. It's a great source of fulfillment. You're communicating to them that they are important.

And another big thing for parenting, is to be an example. I mean it's just number one. You've got to be an example. And words got to be there too. But, our example, our life, our choices, speak so much louder than our words. And when they see you consistently thinking in terms of God, thinking in terms of the fear of God, the love of God, the claims of Christ it's when you sit down, when you rise up, when you're at the table, it's just all about Christ! When they see that, they realize that this is important. But when they see rather, a parent choosing to go to the ballgame rather than going to the midweek prayer meeting. Then that speaks volumes to them. When push comes to shove and you've got a cross roads decision, and you choose the ballgame, they realize, "well, you know, this is what's really important here". And that's the message they get. So I think parents can really do damage to their testimony by their poor choices, inferior choices.