DYNAMICS THAT GIVE STRENGTH TO A SINGLE PARENT FAMILY

By Pat A. Bishop

“If the Lord doesn’t build the house, the builders are working for nothing.” Ps. 127:1 (ncv)

Parenting as a single mom(or dad) is one of the most difficult issues you will face. Many different scenarios present themselves - many times the single mom (or dad) is the only parent; often there is a f who simply brings little or no positive influence into the picture. In fact, many times the father can be a negative example for the children. Even when the father is doing his best to assist, the weight of the parenting falls on the single mom. Regardless of the circumstances, the single mom and her children are a family and the single mom bears the responsibility for creating family dynamics that make for a loving, peaceful, and safe environment where children can come to know and follow the Lord and fulfill His purpose for their lives.

She is responsible for creating an environment which nurtures and supports each child in the way he should go.

**“Train up a child in the way he should go and when he is old, he will not depart from it.” Prov. 22:6 (kjv)**

Holding a family together is like running a business: There should be an overall MISSION STATEMENT which determines your purpose. There should be a set of VALUES that define the dynamics for achieving that purpose. Then there should be GUIDELINES, EXPECTATIONS AND CONSEQUENCES which drive the activities of the people within the family. Finally, there should be an effective COMMUNICATIONS channel both internally and externally.

**THE FAMILY MISSION STATEMENT**

What do you want the focus of your family to be? What is the highest and most meaningful thing that you want you and children to become or to accomplish? You should be able to state your mission

in no more than one or two sentences or no more than 50 words. Be concise and memorable- something that is meaningful and that can be easily repeated and emphasized and stored in the hearts and minds of you and your children.

Some examples:

**Look up! Look in! Look out! Look down!**

LOOK UP - “As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.”

LOOK IN - “As a man thinks in his heart, so is he”

LOOK OUT - “In honor preferring one another”

LOOK DOWN - “Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another.”

Or

**“Live for God; Love and support each other; Care about others; Live with integrity, and Value education.”**

If your children are school age, involve them in the process of developing your family mission statement. Then be reminded that “we learn what we see; we learn what we hear; and we learn what we see others do.” So, write your mission statement; post it for all to see. Doing it in words and pictures is helpful for younger children. As your children get older, frame it in a beautiful frame and put it where all who enter your house will see it. It will become a family heirloom both in fact and in the minds and hearts of you and your children. Repeat it often when teaching and admonishing your children.

Above all, LIVE IT. Don’t just say it - DO IT! Children learn far more from what we do than from what we say!

We said this in the previous chapter; but it bears repeating here. “If you don’t have a plan; you plan to fail.”

**FAMILY VALUES**

What exactly are values? How do you define values? Values are those character traits which define the choices and decisions you make in life. Where do we get our values? We learn them. First from our caregiver(s) as toddlers and children. Secondly, we learn them from the people we encounter at school or kindergarten or college. We learn them from our friends, from what we see and read (which speaks loudly to the fact that we need to monitor the influences in our children’s lives). Values can change as we go through life and experience significant emotional events in our lives such as births, deaths, weddings, divorce, health issues and the like.

Values can change; however, the values we hold at any moment in time determine the choices and decisions we make - for good or for bad.

The choices and decisions you and your children make affect your family. The children in your family begin to make choices and decisions at a very young age - never underestimate the importance of instilling core values in the minds and hearts of your children, even as toddlers.

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