

To Be a Parent

Being a parent is not for the faint of heart. The price we pay for being parents is high—but the rewards are even higher, if we commit to doing it well.

“A foolish son is a grief to his father, and bitterness to her who bore him” (Prov. 17:25).

“Children's children are the crown of old men, and the glory of children is their father” (Prov. 17:6).



Several years ago, the CEO of the company I worked for took questions from employees in an all-hands meeting. Someone asked him a rather odd question: “What keeps you awake at night?” Without hesitation he responded, “My teenage son.” The exchange drew nervous laughs from the audience, because everyone could instantly relate to his frustration as a parent.

Raising children is hard! When we choose to have children, we are giving up twenty years (or more) of our life to serve as a taxi driver, counselor, drill sergeant, cook, maid, cheerleader, tutor, coach, teacher, nurse, zookeeper, and psychiatrist. Whether we like it or not, we will often be forced to serve as a prosecuting attorney, judge, jury, and jailor (or executioner) all at once.

At the same time, we will have to be our child's number one advocate, an activist who fights to protect our kid from the evil influences of the world that would seek to destroy him or her. A

thousand tough decisions will be thrust upon us, requiring the wisdom of Solomon to sort out. Sometimes we'll get it right, sometimes we won't.

That's not all. When we become a parent, we are accepting a life of sleepless nights, broken hearts, tears, disappointments, and exasperation. We are giving up date nights to become 24/7 babysitters. There's nothing glamorous about raising kids.

Oh, one more thing: For all our trouble, we will be judged by our offspring as incompetent boobs, and they will never pass up an opportunity to remind us of it.

Growing numbers of young adults in our society are looking at these challenges and deciding it's not worth it to have kids. Why bother with all that grief, when I can do whatever I want to do without the hassles of having children around to get in my way of having a good time?

There are two reasons why having kids is worth all the headaches. First, having children in our lives fulfills our most basic purpose in life. Humans were put here by God to replenish the earth, and when we sacrifice a significant portion of our life to that task, we are doing what we were designed to do. There is something intensely satisfying about that.

Second, for all the hassles involved, there is also a deep sense of personal joy in raising children. We may not achieve greatness in business or politics, but if we do a decent job of guiding happy, well-adjusted kids into adulthood, we will have accomplished something truly great with our life. When our time comes to depart this earth, we can do so with the knowledge that a little piece of ourselves lives on in our kids.

These positives, of course, are predicated on the assumption that we take parenting seriously. We should seek the counsel of older parents, read books, and share our frustrations with other parents. We have one chance to do it right, so we should pour everything we have into that endeavor.

One final thought. If we manage to survive parenthood and are blessed to see our children have children of their own, we will experience the joy of spending time with our grandchildren, an adventure that involves all the joys of parenting with few of the headaches. When that day arrives, we'll know it was worth it!

— David King