

Day 6

On your mark, continued

On to the children, once again!

Setting goals for our kids is a tricky business. I once heard it said that it really wasn't correct to set goals that included other people, because a goal by definition has to be something that you are solely responsible for. That's why we can't have it be our goal to have a great relationship with our mother-in-law because she might not be willing to speak to us--the correct "goal" would be to be as kind to our mother-in-law as possible, or to treat her as she wanted to be treated--which might just mean not speaking to her because she'd asked us not to!

In other words, your goal shouldn't be "that my oldest son would go to Harvard." Your oldest son may not WANT to go to Harvard (or be a star football player, or win chess tournaments, etc), or maybe the admissions officer will have a cranky day on the day of your interview appointment! And maybe, just maybe, God wanted him at SMU, because He's also arranging for his mate to attend school there.

Lots to think about . . .

Many if not most kids graduate from high school without any idea of what they should do with their lives. And if they grew up in a Christian home, that's really a shame! The Word says we are to "train up a child in the way he should go," and we've heard that defined as "in keeping with their own individual bent." I truly believe that as parents and shepherds of these little ones, we've got a responsibility to KNOW what it is that God has planned for them at least in general terms--otherwise, how could we be expected to train them appropriately? Maybe we aren't encouraged enough to seek God's face and get the answers. That's a lot of pressure for a parent. But I really feel that the responsibility lies first with us, and we build a foundation in the child's life where we encourage them toward the direction we believe God has for them, and also train them to hear God's voice for themselves. We can watch and see the things God has placed in them begin to blossom as they mature, and steer in those directions. Does he love to paint or draw? Is she a soccer whiz? If as they age, their understanding of what God is saying is different from our own, we of course have to listen and encourage them in what they're pursuing. But that primary, first responsibility to train is ours.

Training up our children is usually thought of as meaning disciplining them in one way or another. But there's another meaning to the phrase that I think is incredibly important. Midwives in the Middle East used to "train" infants to suck by putting something sweet in their mouths. Our job, then, is *to stimulate in our children a desire to do what is right*, or to go the right way. Wow! So many parents are great examples to their kids, and wonder why they don't seem to follow in their footsteps. Or they do lots of teaching, but the kids seem to reject the lessons. In both cases, the missing factor may be that they failed to create a desire in their child. It's little wonder so many depart from the faith when they look at the parents lives and see that it doesn't look like it's "working for them."

Of course we know that our kids are responsible for following God's directions and have the choice of whether they'll do so or not on a day by day basis--just as we do. And like us, they're going to fail sometimes, and sometimes for long periods of time! Let's do all we can to put them on the right path and encourage them to hear His voice for themselves.

Spend some time with God today asking Him to define or clarify what you already know regarding His plans for each of your children. And then set some goals that define those things you are responsible for in your children's lives. What are your goals for your kids at these time intervals? What resources do you need to gather in order to meet those goals? Are there any changes that need to be made to further them on their way? Take some time to ask your kids to do this same exercise, and discuss with them what they hear God saying, themselves! Again, you can write more on the back of these sheets if you need more room! (I'm personally partial to *six*, but realize not everyone would want to print papers they don't need!)

Child #1

15 years from now

10 years from now

5 years from now

This time, next year

Child #2

15 years from now

10 years from now

5 years from now

This time, next year

Child #3

15 years from now

10 years from now

5 years from now

This time, next year

Child #4

15 years from now

10 years from now

5 years from now

This time, next year

Child

#5

15 years from now

10 years from now

5 years from now

This time, next year
