



RAISING MATURE SONS (in the faith)

Whether God gives you familial sons, biological and/or adopted, every Christian man is called to help raise the next generation of “sons in the faith.”

RAISE MEN, NOT BOYS (Titus 2:1-2, 6-8).

The Bible calls older and younger men to the same high expectation of godly *character*, but our culture does not. Instead, our culture says to young men: “Take your time growing up. Have all the fun you want. There’s no need to get serious about life.” This mindset, coupled with pampered parenting, is leading to widespread immaturity.

Social scientists have noticed that more young adults are putting off the responsibilities of adulthood. *Adulthood* is the term that best describes this postponement of adulthood. This phase is characterized by identity exploration, instability, focus on self, feeling in limbo, and a sense of limitless possibilities.

Others have called this the “Peter Pan Syndrome” because these kids just don’t want to grow up. The percentage of American children, or “kidults,” in their mid-twenties living with their parents has nearly doubled since 1970. Some never leave.

One survey reports that only 16% of mothers and 19% of fathers say their children (ages eighteen to twenty-five) have reached adulthood. Even more alarming is that their kids don’t dispute it: only 16% consider themselves to be adults. Articles dealing with the complicated relationships between adults and their grown dependent children have appeared in many publications including *Money*, *The New York Times*, and *The Wall Street Journal*.

This trend is not unique to America. *Time* magazine points out that other nations are facing similar challenges. The British call them “kippers”—Kids In Parents’ Pockets Eroding Retirement Savings. The Australians call them “boomerang kids”—you throw them out, but they keep coming back. Nor has the church escaped this phenomenon.”¹

What will remedy the growing problem of postponing adulthood among young men? A return to the model of discipleship laid out for us in Scripture.

- Older men should be mature examples of Christian manhood ...
- So that they’re equipped to disciple and train the younger men to become the same.

¹ Jim Newheiser and Elyse Fitzpatrick, *You Never Stop Being a Parent*.

God uses the example and encouragement of older men.

Remember, when discipling sons in the faith, *being* comes before effectual *doing*.

- **Be biblical (2:1).** The word *sound* means healthy. Thinking biblically and teaching sound doctrine is foundational to discipleship ministry.
- **Be clear-headed (2:2).** *Sober-minded* originally meant abstaining from strong drink; it referred to soberness in contrast to drunkenness. However, the word came to be used to refer to a man's mental judgment, self-control in one's appetites and desires. It implies mental alertness and sobriety of life. It speaks of one who possesses wise caution, one who is the master of himself. This is the man who desires to master every area of his life, keeping it under self-control.
- **Be serious-minded (2:2).** *Dignified* means with reverence. The older men of the church should be worthy of respect; they are not frivolous or silly. Of course, this does not mean we should be negative or ultra-critical, for that would be the opposite of maturity. Nor does it mean to have no sense of humor. But it describes men who are serious about living for God in a frivolous world.
- **Be sensible in judgment (2:2).** It's translated *self-controlled*, but the word refers to mature judgment and proper restraint. It is self-mastery in thought and judgment. Older men should be reasonable—mature, balanced men are not unreasonable.
- **Be spiritually healthy (2:2).** Three qualities are obvious: faith, love, steadfastness. These are genuine Christian virtues.
 - Faith = sound doctrine is consistent with true Christianity.
 - Love = true Christian love is a fruit of the gospel and the work of the Spirit.
 - Steadfastness = true believers persevere through painful trials.
- **Be an encourager of self-control (2:6).** *Self-controlled* is an “appropriate word—since youth is the time of brimming zeal, restless energy, and burning drives.”²
 - In purity: “So flee youthful passions and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart” (2 Tim. 2:22). Be respectful toward younger women, treating them “as sisters, in all purity” (1 Tim. 5:2).
 - In submission to God-given authority:
 - Parents (Eph. 6:1-3; Col. 3:20).
 - Church leaders (1 Peter 5:5-6).
 - Employers (Eph. 6:5-8; Col. 3:22-24).
 - Civil and government authorities (Rom. 13:1-7; 1 Peter 2:13-17).
- **Be a model of good works (2:7).** Older and younger men are called by God to abound in good works, to show the fruit of genuine saving faith (Eph. 2:10).

² William MacDonald, *Believer's Bible Commentary*, 2140.

- The season of youth is not a free pass to live out one's foolishness, but the time to establish godly habits which lead to becoming a model of Christlike manhood.
- *Let no one look down on your youthfulness, but rather in speech, conduct, love, faith and purity, show yourself an example of those who believe.* (1 Tim. 4:12)
- **Be doctrinally sound and serious-minded (2:7).** Paul describes faithful teaching in two ways: sound and serious. Christian man is not called to fit into his culture, but to live above it and speak into it. A mature man is not the class clown.
- **Be faithful in speech (2:8).** Godly speech is sensible, biblical, and pure. No one can take exception to a godly man's conduct. This doesn't mean he is perfect, but his speech is faithful, glorifying to God, and edifying to others.
- **Be careful about your testimony (2:8).** The men of the church should model mature character and commitment to God above all other relationships.

KEY TAKEAWAY: Development of humility and godly character is more valuable than good grades or athletic accomplishments. Scripture should be your functional authority.

REPLACE INBORN FOOLISHNESS WITH DIVINE WISDOM (The Book of Proverbs)

Proverbs has a lot to say about wisdom, and it also has a lot to say about foolishness. See if anything on this list surprises you:

- A fool starts fights (Prov. 18:6).
- A fool is easily upset (Prov. 12:16).
- A fool believes everything he reads (Prov. 14:15).
- A fool loves to talk but hates to listen (Prov. 18:2).
- A fool is fiercely independent and stubborn (Prov. 28:26).
- A fool makes light of sin (Prov. 10:23).
- A fool hates his mother (Prov. 15:20).

The second chapter of Proverbs provides an incentive for seeking wisdom with all your heart. Here are four ways wisdom brings blessing.

- Wisdom will lead you to knowing God (Prov. 2:5-8).
- Wisdom will transform you as a person (Prov. 2:9-11).
- Wisdom will deliver you from dangerous people (Prov. 2:12-22).
- Wisdom will keep you safe (Prov. 2:20-21).

Suggestion for one year of Bible reading: encourage your sons to practice the *Proverbs Plan*: read the Proverbs chapter corresponding to the day of the month.

KEY TAKEAWAY: A wise and discerning heart is more valuable than mere knowledge or outward conformity to rules.

REQUIRE WORK BEFORE PLAY AND WORK FOR PAY

The Bible teaches us to work before we eat, to enjoy the fruits of our labor (2 Thess. 3:10; Ps. 128:2). From their earliest years, instill in your sons the importance, goodness, and joy of work.

- Train them to be submissive, cheerful, hard workers (Col. 3:24). Have them work with you at home and serve with you at church (where possible).
- Warn them to avoid becoming a sluggard (Prov. 6:6-11; 10:26; 26:12-16).
- Consider paying them wages instead of giving them an allowance. Connect pay to work, not entitlement (Prov. 12:27; 14:23).
- Teach them financial responsibility (E.g. pay their own cell phone bill, auto insurance, etc.) and to give faithfully from their wages (Prov. 3:9-10, 21:5; 1 Cor. 16:2).
- Prayerfully consider establishing faithful work patterns before and/or during college.

KEY TAKEAWAY: A strong, faithful work ethic is foundational to a blessed life.

RESIST CHILD-CENTERED PARENTING

Be a faithful protector and provider, but avoid fear-driven parenting patterns:

- *Helicopter parenting*: overprotective hovering that breeds insecurity and immaturity in your sons.
- *Bubble-wrap parenting*: habitually rescuing your sons from the natural consequences of their foolish choices gets in God's way and hinders the development of biblical wisdom.
- Be faithful to discipline your sons (Eph. 6:4).
- Study the poor example of Eli, who feared his sons more than he feared and loved God (1 Samuel 2:12-25). Consider the harmful results.

KEY TAKEAWAY: Christ should be the center of your home, not your children.

Parenting and Discipleship Tools

- Coats, Dave and Judi. [Help! My Teen Is Rebellious](#) (excellent description of the five kinds of fools mentioned in Proverbs).
- Scott, Stuart. [Wayward Children](#) (31-day devotional to encourage parents of prodigals).
- Tautges, Paul. [Raising Kids](#) (gospel-shaped parenting for all ages).
- Tautges, Paul and Karen. [Help! My Toddler Rules the House](#) (practical, biblical counsel for the early years).
- Tiffe, Armand. [Cultivating a Good Family Heritage](#) (building a legacy).
- Tripp, Tedd. [Shepherding a Child's Heart](#) (foundation for early years).
- Tripp, Paul. [Age of Opportunity](#) (parenting teens).

For other resource recommendations, see the Resource Pages in the right margin of my blog: www.counselingoneanother.com.