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Families On The Edge
“Investing In NOT Enabling Our Children”
(Part 2)

Intro: Remember bringing your first child home from the hospital? Remember feeling so inadequate. Remember wishing that your baby came with an instruction manual? Well, I found one! (Slides) Now that we have those issues cleared up, let's move on to more complex ones.

- Often our families are on the edge because of the relationship that exists between parents and their children. Many parents mean well / have good intentions, but all too often the tension in the family escalates because parents enable their children instead of investing in them. Enabling is allowing wrong behavior to exist / Investing in them is making intentional deposits that will not just pay off today, but in the years to come.
- If we do not invest in the lives of our kids, we enable them. God has called parents to the job of investing. But, what does that look like. I want to take the word INVEST and give you another acronym today to help us understand and accomplish this task.

I. I – Intercede Daily

I Sam. 12:23 “As for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the Lord by failing to pray for you...” (NIV) We need to look at our responsibility to pray for our kids as being this serious. It would be a sinful thing if we didn't do this!

A. Pray daily for your children

1. Have you developed the habit / the discipline of praying every day for your kids? When should this start? Before they're even born and it ends when you die! It never ends! For life!
2. What if I've never done this? OR, it's been very infrequent? It's never too late to start something God wants you to do! Just decide to develop this spiritual habit and establish a time every day to do it. (Morning / Evening / your commute /
3. This is something that is not just for the mothers. Praying daily for your family is the job of the fathers too. Men, this is a spiritual responsibility you must embrace.
4. Why should we take this so seriously? Because the word of God tells us that your prayers for your children matter. They make a difference in their lives. Your prayers move God on behalf of your children!

B. Pray strategically for your children

1. I know that every parent would physically fight in order to protect their children. (Losing Jessica in Toys R Us)
BUT, will you spiritually fight for their protection? Will you spiritually be a shield and a defense for them? How? By praying strategically. Fighting spiritually!
2. You might be thinking, How? “What things do I pray about?” Great question! Let’s get strategic and intentional in our praying for our children. What does this look like?
3. It means we get past the “Lord bless my children” prayers and we get much more specific. We pray for: spiritual development / relationally – friendships / not to be attracted to the world / protection from Satan / future spouse / embrace God’s plan / keep them from sin / academically / pray they would hear God / God chase after my children like you chased after me! Will you intercede for your kids?

II. N – Never Give Up

I Cor. 15:58 “Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord.” (NASB)

II Tim. 2:3 “Endure hardship with us like a good soldier of Christ Jesus.” (NIV)

- Being a parent is a work from the Lord. We have been entrusted with a tremendous job. This job is NOT easy. There is some toil...there is some hardship! How do you just hang in there over the long-term? Parenting is a marathon not a sprint. There are moments when you certainly feel like giving up. What do you do?
 - A. Keep reminding yourself it is worth it
 1. I love I Cor. 15. It says, “knowing your toil is not in vain in the Lord”. I think there are times as a parent we have to be reminded of this. We have to keep reminding ourselves that the work / effort / the toil / the struggle is all worth it. Don’t give up!
 2. It’s hard work being consistent / creating a healthy environment / not to mention the diapers / sleepless nights / endless soccer seasons / homework / friendships / breakups / heartaches / driving / dating / conflict and the testing of their independence
 3. This job that we have been entrusted with is worth it. It’s not in vain. I like to think about it as planting seeds into the life of our children that will produce a harvest later in their life.
 4. This is the biblical principal of sowing and reaping. What you plant today will produce a harvest tomorrow. Doing the right thing today as a parent doesn’t look like it produced anything, but God says it will later! Don’t give up!
 - B. Endure the hardship of parenting with close friendships
 1. The II Tim. Passage tells us to endure hardship like a good soldier. Paul is imagining a Roman soldier as he writes this. Yes, they were individually tough, the strength of a Roman soldier came from his connection with his fellow soldiers. Roman soldiers never did anything alone! (they endured together) Good lesson for us as parents!
 2. Parenting alone without the encouragement of other parents who are in the same

battle can get lonely and discouraging. You begin to think you are the only parent on the planet who feels like this / who has these issues / who is so frustrated you're ready to sell them off. (Lisa grocery shopping and woman's comment)

3. Parenting is a marathon that is accomplished best together. In our parenting class, these are the comments we hear. "It's so good to know other people have the same issues...feel the same thing..."
4. Where are you connecting with other parents for the encouragement you need?

III. V – Vow Before God

Ps. 76:11 "Make vows to the Lord your God, and fulfill them..." (NLT)

Deut. 23:21 "When you make a vow to the Lord your God, be prompt in doing whatever you promised Him." (NLT) A vow is simply a promise we make before God. What should I vow and why should I make a vow to God when it comes to parenting? Let's answer the WHAT question first.

A. We promise God to raise our children in a manner that pleases Him

1. This means we are willing to discover what that means. We are willing to be taught / instructed / willing to learn / We just don't automatically know all this as soon as our children are born. This is learned over the course of our lives.
2. We promise God that we will do our best as parents to raise our children His way according to His principals explained in His word. We believe that God's word is the best manual on parenting effectively.
3. We promise to teach our children biblical values / character / about God and a relationship with Him / to invest in our children like His words tells us to.

B. We make a promise to demonstrate the seriousness of our commitment

1. I liken this to wedding vows. Why do we share wedding vows at a wedding ceremony? To demonstrate the seriousness of the commitment / the permanency / the intentions of our hearts /
2. This is why we make vows as parents before God. We are demonstrating the seriousness of this commitment / the permanency / and publicly sharing the intentions of our hearts.
3. Just like in a marriage, feelings go up and down. Sometimes, you have to remind yourself of the vows you made. It works! Those vows mattered. (For better or for worse!)
4. It works this way as a parent. There are days we need to remember the vows we made as well. It helps us stay committed to the right things regardless of how we may feel at the moment.

IV. E – Expectations Are Realistic

Eph. 6:4 "And now a word to you fathers. Don't make your children angry by the way you treat them. Rather, bring them up with the discipline and instruction approved by the

Lord.” (NLT)

Col. 3:21 “Fathers, do not aggravate your children, or they will become discouraged.” (NLT)

- I’m not entirely sure why both of these passages address the fathers specifically. It may be that as Fathers, we tend to have unrealistic expectation we place on our children simply because we are not as nurturing as our wives. Therefore, God gives us a warning. Just think how often you’ve seen a professional athlete on TV say “Hi dad!” NO, it’s always...”Hi MOM!” WHY? Because most kids don’t have good relationships with dad.
- A. Expectations must be appropriate
1. So what do we mean by appropriate? Appropriate based on age / experience / gender / skill level / personality / their God – given design /
 2. For example: Your expectation may be that your child is going to be a straight A student. What are you going to do when they’re not? What if God didn’t make them this way?
 3. You may be convinced your kid is a star athlete / You may want them to pursue some career path / educational direction /
 4. Lisa would correct me a lot when our kids were younger about age appropriate issues and even gender. She would look at me and say, “Hello, we have girls!”
- Sometimes is expectations about food: Daughter and eating Tuna casserole
5. If we’re not careful, we will communicate to our children they can never measure up...never be good enough...never qualify for praise in our eyes. There is this difficult balance in parenting where we push our kids to succeed without crushing them as individuals in the process. We need God’s wisdom in this process.
- B. Expectations must distinguish between childishness and rebellion
1. There is a difference between age appropriate childishness and the irresponsibility that goes with that age and acts of rebellion. If we expect our children to not act childish our expectations are wrong...even damaging.
 2. For example: It’s meal time and your 5 year old spills his glass all over the table. Your response is to get angry and punish the child in some way. Your children are helping put away dishes and one of them drops one and it shatters over the floor. / Your 7 year old leaves his bike behind the car and you back over it /
 3. Think about your expectations. Are they realistic? Are you punishing childishness or acts of rebellion?

V. S – Suppress Wrong Behavior

Prov. 19:18 “Discipline your children while there is hope. If you don’t, you will ruin their lives.” (NLT)

Prov. 23:13-14 “Don’t fail to correct your children. They won’t die if you spank them. Physical discipline may well save them from death.” (NLT)

- A. Discipline your children when it is most hopeful

1. When is that? When they are young! The longer you wait the less hope there is of the discipline being effective. Many experts agree that the first 5 years are the most critical. If you gain control during these years, it will tend to play out over the course of their lives.
2. How young do you begin to discipline? James Dobson of Focus on the Family recommends that mild discipline can begin around 15-18 month of age. It is amazing to me how early acts of defiance begin to show up.
3. In these early years 2 very important lessons must be imprinted upon our young children's minds. (Obedience and Respect for authority) If we do not reinforce these themes in their lives when they are young, they will struggle with them into adulthood.
4. Discipline is most hopeful when it is done in love. Even though we discipline our children, we continually tell them; "I love you". "I do this because I love you." I love you more than you can possibly understand." After any consequence should come a loving embrace.

B. Discover discipline that works

1. The important issue is to not fail at discipline. I know some people get all hung up with the whole spanking debate. According to God's word, spanking is an appropriate tool in your discipline package as parents.
2. Spanking must be appropriate / not in anger / out of control / leaving welts or bruises When done appropriately it does NOT teach kids that violence is appropriate. Spanking is not violence. It is discipline. Kids know the difference between a spanking and hitting. (Our kids)
3. Spanking though should simply be one of many tools in your arsenal. It should never be your only tool.
4. What do you do when your child doesn't respond to spanking? You find something that works! Some children just don't respond to appropriate physical discipline. This is why you develop other tools...other methods.
5. The bottom line with discipline is that you discover what works and you do this consistently. It is not the severity of the punishment that deters wrong behavior. It is the inevitability of it! As a parent you MUST consistently win!

VI. T – Teach Truth Consistently

Deut. 6:6-9 "You must commit yourselves wholeheartedly to these commands I am giving you today. Repeat them again and again to your children. Talk about them when you are at home and when you are away on a journey, when you are lying down and when you are getting up again. Tie them on your hands as a reminder, and wear them on your forehead. Write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates." (NLT)

A. We teach truth by the consistency of our lives

1. From this passage it is clear that our faith and values must be lived out and

communicated to our children in every context of our lives. Truth and values are a lifestyle. Our example to our children teaches them more than any lecture we will ever give them.

2. As your children observe your life, what are you teaching them? As your kids get older this is so important because they evaluate your authenticity. Is it real?

B. A compartmentalized life will cause our kids to reject our values

Judges 2:10 “After that generation died, another generation grew up who did not acknowledge the Lord or remember the mighty things He had done...” (NLT)

1. The reason the next generation didn't know or follow God was because the parents did not do their job! Their faith and values were not lived out consistently in front of their kids.
2. I believe the #1 reason children rebel against how they were raised / values / faith / is because of the inconsistencies they see in their parents. They see values and faith that is compartmentalized. (Explain)
3. The best gift we can give our children is our faith and values consistently lived out in every context of our lives. Our children don't need perfect parents...but they do need consistent ones.

- Is your life teaching truth?
- Will you INVEST in your children? Will you embrace this important role from God?

Today we have some parents who are going to publicly make this commitment as they dedicate themselves and their children to the Lord today. As we sing this song, parents can go get their children.

Child Dedication: