

What Do You Want Your Child to Become?

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Today you need not look far to find products and services to help plan and order your life. Products such as Stephen Covey's Seven Habits books, Franklin day planners, Day-Timers, Day-Runners plus a plethora of other products can help you organize every last second and turn wasted time into productive time. Whatever system you may use, if you use one at all, you must begin with one essential question, what is the end point you want to achieve? This question then becomes the vision to which you organize and live your life.

We see the importance and value of planning for vacations, retirement, and our children's college education. How much more value is there in planning for our children spiritually by asking the question, "What am I teaching my child to be like as an adult?" The popular proverb on parenting affirms this type of future thinking for your children when it says, "Train up a child in the way he should go, even when he is old he will not depart from it." But two questions we must ask ourselves is what is the way a child should go when my child is an adult and what is the way I am teaching my child to go when my child is an adult?

The way a child should be trained and should go as an adult is clearly described in scripture as a life that brings glory and honor to God. The glory and honor comes from us living in faith and obedience to the Great Commandments and the Great Commission. The Great Commandments (Mark 12:30-31) are the vision of our lives. This vision is our life's perfect end point to which we should always be moving toward. The Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20) is the mission of our lives that describes the way we are to exist in this sinful world as we move toward our life's vision (Great Commandments). Both the end point and the way to the endpoint can only be done through Christ's enabling power working in us.

You have heard that if you aim for nothing you will hit it every time. I prefer to think that if you aim for nothing then you'll shoot yourself in the foot every time. We do not desire to aim at nothing with our students. Parents need to ask themselves about what direction their teaching takes their children. A good exercise is to sit down and write out what you want your child to be as an adult. When you do this, you may find it easier to direct the activities of their life and to evaluate your parenting and discipleship of your child.

As you seek to apply your vision for your children, remember that all parts of life serve as tools for teaching, not just the things we say. It is not uncommon to see parents insist on certain grades in school, performance on sports teams, or encouragement to earn money to buy themselves things. Many times these urgings are rooted in an unspoken vision we have for our students. Remember these urgings are teaching your children and guiding them in a specific direction in life. Don't expect your children to grow up to live differently than you have trained them. If we teach them to place school, sports,

work, friends, hobbies, or whatever as a priority over their serving God through the church, then they will grow up to be adults who do the same thing.

In thinking about your vision for your children, ask yourselves first what hidden agendas you may have for your children. Are these agendas more characteristic of the American dream than dying to self and living for Christ in order to fulfill the Great Commission? Examine your heart to find the cause of your dependence upon yourself instead of Christ. Discuss your finding with your spouse and even repent of them to your children. Then prayerfully examine the Great Commandments and the Great Commission and articulate the vision for your children. Once you have articulated a vision, talk with your children about it and spend sometime examining the priorities and activities in their life. Finally, pray with your children about how they may pursue a life that seeks to bring glory and honor to God as God has prescribed. Enjoy the journey!