

HELPING YOUR CHILD BE SUCCESSFUL

Posted on April 1, 2022 by Angela Herrington



Today's post is for all the parents out there who want to help their kids reach their full potential. That's an admirable goal, is it not?! But what does that even mean (in real life) and how hard is that to actually do? As a mother of four and a grandmother of six, let me offer some perspective which may help you navigate this complicated path.

I remember being a bit overwhelmed with the number of "opportunities" available to my kids. How many do you allow your child to participate in? How do you pick? What if you miss choosing the thing your kid was actually going to excel at? If these questions sound familiar, let's take a minute to think about what's really important.

We all want our children to be successful in life. But how many of us are guilty of dreaming that our child will turn out to be some kind of prodigy—musically or athletically (or whatever)? Is that really what would define success for us? How many "prodigies" do you know who have some major character flaws that have severely limited their careers or personal lives? I can think of a lot. And would those prodigies say they experience a lot of personal contentment and joy? Hmmmm . . . doubtful. Some might, but if they do, it would be based on something other than that area in which they were a star. It would be based on something we need to develop much more than a special talent. I'm talking about a person's character.

Be mindful how you define success. In the big scheme of things, it is personal character development that will be the most significant thing you can do for your

child. This isn't something that happens naturally, or by accident. It is only done intentionally. I have no regrets about limiting the number of extra activities we allowed our kids to sign up for. For us, money was a natural limitation. But, with four children who were five years apart, time was also a limitation. I believed it was imperative that our children have time to be part of our family, and I refused to allow activities to block that goal. That connection cannot happen when every minute is accounted for. There must be some "down time" to just BE.

During the preschool and elementary school years we used some of that family time to focus on character qualities. For example, we talked about honesty—its definition and its opposite. Then we put a chart on the refrigerator where we could write down examples of honesty that we observed in other people during the week (or when we observed its opposite). We studied examples of people from the Bible who demonstrated honesty (or its opposite). And anytime they felt like they had made a choice to be honest, they told me and we wrote it down on the chart together.

Those four precious children that I spent so much time with are now in their thirties and forties. And you know what makes me proud of them today? It is when they choose to honor God and to help people. It is when they choose to do the right thing and to be a person of integrity, even if it costs them something. And that is how I define success.

What Can You Do Now?

*Focus on one character quality per week. I recommend starting with attentiveness, followed by obedience (you have to be good at listening before you are good at obeying). Define it. Identify its opposite. Get your kids involved in finding examples from the Bible and from observing people around you—**write them down**. Share from your own life. Make it fun—play games that emphasize the character quality. For example, the game "Simon Says" requires listening in order to obey the instructions.*

For more ideas on character building, visit your local Christian bookstore. I used to find some great resources there.