



Family Values

Virtue Realities

Practicing Virtues

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This bulletin insert begins a new series on virtues. It is based on the premise that the most important role that we have as adults is to provide a model and example for children. All adults, but especially parents, are called to teach, nurture and serve as authorities for children. It is both a responsibility and a privilege that God gives us. The apostle Paul describes this function in the following: “. . . *do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.*” (Eph. 6:4)

Certainly a primary component of this role is the teaching of moral values, which are the building blocks of spirituality. One author describes the process in the following: “*The values we acquire over the years, particularly in childhood, continually determine our choices as adults. They become the content of our personal religious code. They help us act responsibly or irresponsibly. They give our lives meaning and purpose. The process of growing up is one of integrating our values. This integration is truly an exercise in spirituality.*” (Linda Kovelin Popov).

One thing to remember is that teaching is different from preaching. As adults we tend to assume that the most effective way to teach children is through lecture and repetition. However, the way we have the most influence on our children is through example. When our behavior matches our message, when we practice what we preach, that is when we have the most profound impact on our children. Whenever there is a disparity between what we say and what we do, it is our behavior that will speak the loudest. For this reason, the focus of this series is on practicing virtues and not on talking virtues.

Series Virtue Realities

Love, joy, peace, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control, patience and forgiveness

We suggest that parents or adults implement the following set of guidelines when practicing the virtues outlined in this series:

- Set up a regular weekly time to review Virtue and discuss examples;
- Focus on the child's learning and find an opportunity to highlight the Virtue each day;
- Love children unconditionally;
- Be realistic about what a child is capable of doing and watch for readiness;
- Applaud effort and improvement;
- Notice and encourage the special gifts and talents of each child;
- Give children lots of opportunities to make choices, while also setting limits;
- Expect children to be responsible;
- Practice what you preach and be a spiritual guide for children; and
- Make God's presence known and engage children in prayer and meditation.

Keep in mind that the above guidelines are the responsibility of all adults, especially in the church family, and not just parents alone.

Recommended resource:

Linda Kavelin Popov, with Dan Popov, and John Kavelin. *The Family Virtues Guide: Simple Ways to Bring Out the Best in Our Children and Ourselves.* A PLUME BOOK.

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