

What Lies Ahead?

August 20, 2009

Good Morning! Thank you for taking time to visit school today. Let me begin our discussion this morning by congratulating you on your success. You should congratulate yourselves, too. This is the last year of high school for your kid or one of your kids. He or she is very close to the next beginning point in their lives, and so are you. What will this next beginning point mean for you as parents? What should your role be? How can you most effectively help them continue to build their lives, in college? What can you do to “make their next step count?”

While you may not realize it yet, the next beginning point is already behind you as a parent. At some point in the not too distant past, you moved from being a parent to your new role as advisor. This is seldom easy and if you’ve experienced some stress and angst in your relationship with your children lately, perhaps it is because it has been a difficult transition into this new role for you. Not to fear, you still have time to make the change. This morning, I’d like to offer several perspectives that might help. Perhaps, hearing me talk about them will help anchor them for you in your hearts and minds forever. They are ideas which I believe are basic to being a parent.

I call them “parent perspectives.”

Perspective #1: Let’s all make sure we have our priorities straight. There is nothing more important in life than our children.

- They come first in all things. They are your most important responsibility.
- It’s hard to believe, but this perspective isn’t always obvious and it isn’t common everywhere in our world. Too many children have been, and continue, to be neglected and thrown away.
- However, once you get this priority straight, this perspective can help bring focus so that you can look ahead with confidence and achieve success. As a parent you’ll get there. Just keep your eye on the ball.
- Another way to look at it is, if your children are doing well, then everything in your life feels good. Even the disappointments. On the other hand, if your children aren’t doing well, then successes don’t seem as great as they might.
- Does this make sense? It really does work this way. There is a kind of magic that takes place when you put the kids first.

Perspective #2: Hey, do you want to have a blast? Become a parent! There is nothing more exciting in life than our children.

- Not only from a “now what,” “watch out,” and “what’s next” point of view, but they are a window into the future. By the way, their future looks great too. They will make

theirs just as exciting as we made ours. That has always been the way of things and still is!

- Someday, when you look back, you will count those moments you've spent with and watching your children as the greatest and the most exciting.
- Along the way, their accomplishments will thrill you. Be sure not to do anything that will diminish the ownership that your children have in their their successes, but as you stand back and watch, it will be hard not to claim some credit under your breath. That's Ok.

Perspective #3: Here's a thought about legacy. The only part of us that will remain after we're gone are our children.

- How many times have we parents heard the rebellious proclamation from our children that they don't like our rules or methods, and they can hardly wait to grow up and lead their own lives. Ok, admit it. How many times have you quietly wished for the same thing under your breath?
- "When they grow up, they're going to do things differently," isn't that what they say? Isn't that what we said? They will use better methods to raise their children. Did we say the same thing?
- Not so! The apple doesn't fall far from the tree. They will do things just exactly like we did them. Just as we do things like our parents did. Unless, they decide not too, just like we did with some things.
- There is a powerful hidden force always at work. Nothing is more powerful than modeling! Parents, watch your actions carefully. Always be mindful that your children will "hear" your actions many times more loudly than your words.
- However, isn't it great to know that we parents get the last word? They will be just like us and they can't help it. Of course, that's a responsibility we must take seriously. Right? Think of it as, "leaving a legacy."

Perspective #4: Always listen.

- As parents we think we have all the answers (sometimes we have a few), but we need to listen before expressing them.
- Answers should be expressed as "another thought" or "just an idea".
- If our children think we are good listeners, they will always call. Then when they call, don't talk. Just listen.

Parenting is challenging, isn't it? There is some real fear and the terrible feeling of not having control. A scary journey it can be!

As parents how will we know if we've been successful? While I may be pretty good at asking questions, as you've noticed, I don't have all the answers. There are no instructions manuals.

Each family develops its' own play book. Just know that you're not alone. Many have come before you and many will follow. Most are successful.

However, I would like to share a thought that is meaningful to me. I found it in Robert Fulghum's book, "Everything I know, I Learned in Kindergarten."

He wrote:

"You will never really know what kind of parent you were or if you did it right or wrong. Never. And you will worry about this and them as long as you live. But when your children have children and you watch them do what they do, you will have part of an answer.

Good luck and God speed!