

THE LOVE KIDS REALLY NEED

Every parent longs to leave a positive legacy through his or her children, but what does it take? I've noticed four common elements. They are gifts for the next generation:

The gift of your presence

Sometimes just being there is what matters most to your kids.

One day my daughter came home crushed after not making the color guard in eighth grade. To make matters worse, all of her friends had made it. Sobbing, Amy went and sat on the floor of her closet.

One by one, each member of our family crawled into the closet to sit on the floor with her in silence and cry with her. None of us tried to talk her out of her grief. We didn't minimize her pain. We didn't try to get her to "look at the bright side." We didn't urge her to try harder next time. We just sat there and hurt with her. Jesus said, "Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep." That is the essence of empathy. It is the gift of presence.

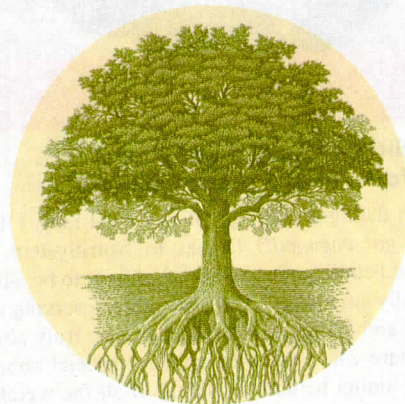
The gift of your acceptance

Everyone craves acceptance. It seems we never get enough, no matter how grown-up we become. When you give your children the opportunity to be themselves and to become what God, not you, wants them to be, you give

Making children feel profoundly accepted and valued is a parent's most important role

them a great legacy. The welcoming environment of acceptance is the atmosphere in which children bloom. Jesus said, "Whoever welcomes a little child . . . welcomes me."

Even though they're your children, acceptance is never automatic. One of the most important times is when a child does something that embarrasses you publicly. At that moment you have a choice: Will I care more about how others see me or about the feelings of my child? We've all seen embarrassed parents in stores use angry, derogatory words with kids who didn't realize what they were doing.



The gift of your guidance

God could have made children completely self-sufficient when they left their mothers' womb, but He didn't. Children desperately need adults for guidance. The Bible says, "Teach children how they should live, and they will remember it all their life."

Children also need to learn from your mistakes. They can learn from experience, but they can also avoid a lot of unnecessary pain by learning from your experience. When you see others go down a path you personally know is a dead end, speak up! It's the loving thing to do.

The gift of your correction

Offer correction when your children make mistakes. Of course, this can cause conflicts in a marriage. My wife, Kay, and I have often disagreed about discipline, but we've learned to step aside privately and work out our disagreement and decide which one of us is best prepared emotionally to handle the situation. Then we present a united front to the kids.

Just as brick homes are built one brick at a time, the lives of our children are built with the bricks of presence, acceptance, guidance and correction. Every time you give a child one of these gifts, you are building his or her life.

You can learn more about living The Purpose Driven Life by going to www.purposedrivenlife.com or by e-mailing Rick Warren at askrickanything@purposedrivenlife.com.