

Mike Storms' Parenting 101

A PRACTICAL HANDS-ON GUIDE TO
RAISING REMARKABLE KIDS



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Parenting 101 – with GOD’S WORD – *Mike Storms*

Chapter 1

Understanding How Your Kids Are Shaped

“Direct your children onto the right path, and when they are older, they will not leave it.”

—Proverbs 22:6 NLT

Excellent, happy, healthy children — that’s the dream of every parent. Unleashing our children’s full potential and motivating them to choose the right path is our deepest desire. We want to see them grow into confident, kind, and loving people — people who serve God and change the world for good. The question is, “How do we do it?” How do we raise our children to be happy, successful, and responsible? What must we do to ensure that they don’t grow up weak-willed, whiny, and self-centered?

Thankfully, there is an answer. There are specific things we can do to train our children to be a blessing to us and to others.

As a martial arts instructor for 27 years, I have had the privilege of working with over 6,000 kids and their parents. I am also raising four children of my own, and I don’t hesitate to admit that I am not a perfect parent or teacher. Like you, I’ve made my share of mistakes. But through my experience and the study of great parenting wisdom, I have discovered three major influencers that shape the lives of all children—things that mold them in either a positive or a negative way. These influencers are the *media*, their *friends*, and *parental example*.

By understanding how these influencers work and harnessing their power for good, we can raise our kids to become champions of truth that are actively engaged in shaping society.

There are three main influencers that shape the lives of all children. They are the *media* they consume, the *friends* they hang out with, and the *parental example* lived before them.

Manage Their Media Menu

The first major influence we must recognize is the media. Without question, today's entertainment has taken center stage in the lives of many people. The number one thing to remember about the media is: ***input equals output***. What enters your children's eyes and ears comes out in their behavior, character and attitudes. The Bible says in Proverbs 4:23 (NIV), "Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life". Your eyes and ears are the doors to your heart. So every movie and TV show your children watch, every video game they play, every Internet site they surf, every song they hear, and every magazine and book they read is going to affect

them in either a positive or negative way. There is no neutral.

When I was a kid growing up, the TV set was often called the “idiot box” because, as the story goes, when a person watched too much TV, they turned into an idiot. It’s estimated that children today watch an average of twenty-eight to thirty-two hours of television a week.¹ Add in surfing the Internet and playing video games, and the hours children spend engaged in electronic media climbs to nearly fifty-five hours a week.² This is more time than they spend in school, in extracurricular activities, in church and in some cases, it is even more hours than they sleep in a week! Media will be the biggest influence on your children, simply because it gets the most attention from your children.

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So, what values are your children learning through the media? By showcasing beautiful people in

beautiful surroundings, living exciting, dramatic lives the media can create a discontent with our looks, our clothes, our car, our house, and even our spouse. Children learn from the media, that if you want to be happy and important, you must be good-looking, rich and popular. If you want to know why your kids want new toys, new clothes, and a new hair style, or why they think that they are too fat or too skinny, or not good-looking enough, take a look at what they are watching and listening to. You can be sure that the messages being presented by the mainstream media almost always contradict the message of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount³ and the apostle Paul's statement to the church at Philippi about being content in all circumstances.⁴

The media also affects our children's behavior. While counseling concerned parents whose children were exhibiting poor behavior, I have often been able to trace back the child's inappropriate actions to the antics of a character on a TV show the child was watching regularly, or to a video game they were playing. Even many of the characters on so-called "family friendly" programs leave a lot to be desired. In most of the sitcoms, the father is portrayed as a moron and the mom is in charge of everything. The scripts

are written in such a way that the children seem to know it all, have little or no respect for their parents, and the plot often revolves around the children deceiving their parents to try to stay out of trouble. We can’t expect our kids to act appropriately and respectfully if they are watching “cool” kids on TV and in movies act inappropriately and disrespectfully. Like a mirror, they will reflect the images they see modeled before them.

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What can make matters worse is the content of television commercials. I have been astonished to see racy lingerie commercials aired during shows that are geared toward families. Also, R rated movies and lewd TV shows are promoted during primetime hours when children are most likely to be watching. In our home, we initially trained our kids to turn their heads or cover their faces when something inappropriate came on. We even taught them to start singing loudly with their hands over their ears until we could change

the channel. Eventually, we came to the point where we chose to stop watching some channels altogether, whose shows and commercials had become outrageously out of line.

As standards of decency have worsened, we've made a decision to nix broadcast TV completely and just buy or rent our own DVDs. By creating a library of wholesome entertainment, you can eliminate the influence of crazy commercials and take control regarding what your kids are watching.

So How Much Media Are Your Kids Consuming?

The most important thing you can do is to control the quality and quantity of media your children consume. You are the policeman -- you are the one with the authority over what comes into your house. You are responsible for what your children watch and hear.

This is important: Don't let them watch television or movies unless you are watching with them to monitor the content. Listen to their music with them and preview their video games. Read their

books before they do. If the images they are seeing and the words they are hearing and reading are not the kind you want to see reproduced in their behavior, change the input. Cut out the negative and replace it with positive alternatives. You can check out some healthy media menu options in the back of my - *Parenting 101 Workbook*.

As for *quantity*, begin to limit your children’s TV intake to a handful of hours a week. This rule can also be applied to playing video games, spending time on the Internet, and listening to music. For my family, I set a boundary early on, not allowing the children to play video games until they were in second or third grade. When they did play, they were given only an hour per person on Saturdays. No video games or TV were allowed during the school week. As the children got older, I increased the time for playing video games up to two hours, but they still could not play during the school week. When they became upperclassmen in high school, they were allowed to watch television for about an hour a day as long as their grades were excellent. Create a media schedule that works for your family based on the age, maturity and responsibility level of each of your children.

Another thing I highly recommend is having only *one* TV and computer and placing them in the living room or family room—not in your children’s bedroom. This helps eliminate distractions in the children’s studying and sleeping areas, decreases their risk of seeing inappropriate images without you knowing about it, and creates opportunities for everyone to come together and watch a good, family-friendly movie. It also prevents electronic entertainment from becoming the main focus of your family’s time. I also strongly suggest having Internet and TV filters to protect your children from accidental exposure to inappropriate material.

Begin monitoring the *quality* and *quantity* of media that is coming into your home. If the images your children are seeing and the words they are hearing and reading are not the kind you want to see reproduced in their behavior, change the input.

Filter the Friends Your Kids Hang Out With

Another major influence that shapes the lives of your children is their *friends*. I always tell my students, “Show me your friends and I’ll show you

your future.” Your kids will rise or fall to the expectations of their peers. If they hang out with poorly behaved children, who often get into trouble and have no real direction in life, they will begin to exhibit the same behavior. On the other hand, if they hang out with peers who are walking on the right road, they will be motivated to live the right way.

The Bible has a number of things to say about the company we keep. First Corinthians 15:33 (NIV) says, “Do not be misled: ‘Bad company corrupts good character,’” and how true it is. Think about it - if you spend a lot of time around people who are sick, you are going to catch what they have. This is why God says, “Don't become partners with those who reject God. How can you make a partnership out of right and wrong? That's not partnership; that's war. Is light best friends with dark? Does Christ go strolling with the Devil? Do trust and mistrust hold hands?”⁵ You probably already know that the answer is “Absolutely not!”

Show me your friends and I'll show you your future. If your kids hang out with ungodly children, they will begin to exhibit the same behavior. On the other hand, if they hang out with positive peers, they will be motivated to live the right way.

I have four children; three of them are young adults and one is in elementary school. My concern about who they become friends with has remained strong throughout their lives. For years I have had certain standards that my children's friends must meet. Some of the questions I ask my kids about a potential friend are, "What kind of grades do they make? Do they play sports or have an activity they are passionate about? What kind of movies and music do they watch and listen to? What kind of books and magazines do they read? Where do they go to church?" As my kids got older, I included some other questions like, "Do they have a job? What do they want to do with their life? Do they drink or smoke or do drugs? How is their relationship with God?" If they weren't the kind of kids that I wanted my kids to be like, I would not let them associate with them. Period.

Now, if you are thinking, *Mike, you’re too controlling...you’re too particular. I can’t do that with my kids.* I would urge you to rethink your position. Just as you need to screen the media your kids consume, you must also filter the friends they spend time with.

Prolonged exposure to unruly, rebellious kids leads to contamination. You’ve probably heard your grandmother say “Lie down with dogs and you’re going to get fleas.” It is just as true today as it was in grandma’s time. If your children hang around kids who lie, cheat, and steal, guess what they are going to eventually do? If they associate with kids who are self-centered, disrespectful to their parents, and rebel against authority, guess how they are going to start acting? The Bible confirms this, saying, “Make no friendship with an angry man, and with a furious man do not go, *lest you learn his ways* and set a snare for your soul” (Proverbs 22:24,25 NKJV).

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The *ways* you want your children to learn are *godly* ways. Consequently, they need to be spending time with godly kids who are developing godly character. The Bible says, “As iron sharpens iron, so a friend sharpens a friend” (Proverbs 27:17 NLT). Look for kids whose parents are actively involved in their lives, helping them grow and mature in a healthy way. Now, I want to make it clear that not all church-going children are raised equally. That is, there are a number of kids who go to church with their parents, but their lives are really no different than the non-church-going children. The statistics on divorce and premarital sex among Christians proves this. Therefore, do some background checks on your children’s choice of friends. Invite them and their parents over for a meal and watch how they interact with each other. It won’t take long to see the true measure of their character. All you need to do is monitor the words of their mouth. In due time, they will speak out of the abundance of what is in their heart.⁶

I realize you may be thinking, Mike, are you saying my kids can never hang out with kids who need help? No, that is not what I am saying. I believe that we should reach out to kids who are in trouble and try

to give them a hand up. We should offer them the truth through mentoring and counseling. However, we need to limit our kids’ exposure to them, and our children must understand why we are involved. One benefit this type of relationship provides for your children is an example of what wrong choices will produce. It can be a warning to your children to avoid making the same mistakes. And at the same time, it is also a bridge of hope to the troubled child—a lifeline of God’s love that may one day connect them in relationship with the Creator of the universe who can truly transform their life into something awesome. But you must constantly monitor the relationship to ensure that your kids are the influencers and not the influenced.

God has placed you in your children’s lives for a brief amount of time. He has commissioned you to train them up in the way they should go, and that training includes teaching them how to choose good friends—friends who will motivate them to do right and fulfill their God-given destiny. Proverbs 13:20 in *The Message* says, “Become wise by walking with the wise; hang out with fools and watch your life fall to pieces.” It all comes down to helping our children make right choices so that when they are adults they

will have the wisdom and skills to choose wisely for themselves.

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Live the Life You Want Them to Live

The third and most important influence in your children's lives is *you*. The example you live before your children each day impresses a blueprint for living onto their hearts and minds that is not easily altered. The things you say, how you respond to adversity, the way you love and serve the Lord—you are constantly teaching and your children are always learning. As a parent, your actions speak louder than your instruction. So how are you living? God's Word says, "He who heeds instruction and correction is [not only himself] in the way of life [but also] **is a way of life** for others. And he who neglects or refuses reproof [not only himself] goes astray [but also] causes to err and *is a path toward ruin* for others" (Proverbs 10:17

AMP). Wow! Our actions are either *a way of life* for our children or *a path toward ruin*. The choices you make and the actions you take pave a path for your kids to walk on.

As a parent, your actions speak louder than words. The example you live before your children each day impresses a blueprint for living onto their hearts and minds that is not easily altered.

What Kind of Example Are You *Seeding*?

Basically, all of our attitudes and actions are *seeds* we plant in the lives of others, and our children are the greatest recipients of these seeds. The Bible gives us a sobering principle in Galatians 6:7,8. It says, “...What a person plants, he will harvest. The person who plants selfishness, ignoring the needs of others—ignoring God!—harvests a crop of weeds. All he'll have to show for his life is weeds! But the one who plants in response to God, letting God's Spirit do the growth work in him, harvests a crop of real life, eternal life” (The Message). The behavior we see in our children is, to a great degree, the harvest from the

seeds we have been planting in their lives for weeks, months, and years. When counseling families, I am no longer surprised to find that the behavior the parents are most concerned about in their children is behavior that the parents themselves exhibit.

For example, take your attitude toward those in authority over you. When you have had a rough day at work, do you come home and bad-mouth your boss? When you see government leaders make wrong decisions, do you criticize and cut them down in the presence of your family? If a police officer pulls you over for not coming to a full stop at a stop sign, what kind of things do your kids hear you say about him after you get back on the road? If you judge, criticize, and disrespect people in authority in front of your kids, they will do the same thing to the people in authority over them. When their teacher, coach, or even you do something they don't like, they will respond in the same way that was modeled before them. As in every area of your life, your example of rebellion and disrespect **or** submission and honor are seeds being planted in their lives. In time, a harvest will come.

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One of my dear friends and his wife recently had their first child – a beautiful baby boy. Upon receiving the birth announcement, I responded to him with this message: “Now you will be even further transformed by the influence of your son’s expectations of you.” Our kids have an amazing way of humbling us and challenging us to become better people—if we let them. Each of my children has motivated me to become a better man. Their complete trust in and reliance on me, as well as their belief in me as Super Dad inspires me to continuously develop my character. I want to be the wise, loving father that they need. But before I could be an example of excellence, I needed to put first things first and get my life right with God.

The Most Important Example You Can Give

The most important thing we can model for our children is an always deepening, personal relationship with God. By attending and serving in church, having daily private devotions with God, trusting in His Word, and putting Him first in all that we do, God enables us not only to be all that He created us to be, but also to give our children a close-up, living example of the Christian faith. We should make seeking God's help to walk closer with Him our top priority. The apostle Paul said it well when he stated, "Everything else is worthless when compared with the priceless gain of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. I have put aside all else, counting it worth less than nothing, in order that I can have Christ, and become one with him..." (Philippians 3:8,9 TLB).

Without complete and total surrender to Christ, we are powerless to live the example before our kids that they need.⁷ As we give ourselves over to Him daily, He will begin to change the way we talk, the way we think, and the way we act. Bad habits and ungodly desires will begin to melt away and be

replaced with godly ones. It is God who will “strengthen (complete, perfect) and make you what you ought to be and equip you with everything good that you may carry out His will...” (Hebrews 13:21 AMP). Instead of our behavior being a path toward ruin for our kids, it will be a pathway of life!

The example of our own faith can lead our children to the most important decision they can make – to accept Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior and to live for Him. When we are obedient to God’s command to impress upon our children the commandments He has given us⁸ and they see us grow in our relationship with Him and experience the blessing of His promises, they will be drawn by His loving kindness to the throne of grace. We must provide the antidote for the worldly beliefs that are being pushed onto our kids all the time.

Think about it. Many kids spend seven to eight hours a day at public school being influenced by their peers and the warped philosophies of man. Then they come home and feed on a few hours of worldly media. At best, some of these kids go to church once on Sunday and maybe once during the week. Is it any wonder they are struggling with purity and rebellion

when we're only inoculating them with an hour or two of truth each week while they're getting over one hundred hours of everything else shoved down their throats? Clearly, what our kids need is a firsthand, personal relationship with God, and this starts with your example.

The greatest thing you and I can do as parents is to surrender our lives to God and serve Him with all our heart. Without Him, we are powerless to live the godly example before our kids that they need.

With God, You've Got What It Takes!

If you want your kids to get better, *you've* got to get better, and the only way to truly get better is by completely surrendering your life Jesus Christ. Not only will He make you a new creation⁹, but He will also enable you to carry out His parenting principles. Being a parent is the toughest job there is and at times it can seem overwhelming, but with the Creator of the Universe on your side, you've got what it takes! Find rest in 2 Corinthians 12:9 which says, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in

weakness.” He will enable you to stand tall and make the tough and unpopular choices for your children’s sake. I encourage you to make a commitment before God to deepen your relationship with Him. He has promised in His word that He has promised in James 4:8 (NKJV) that He will meet us as we seek more of Him; “Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you”.

If you have never invited Jesus Christ into your heart and are not sure where you stand with God, turn to page 247 for some good news!

TAKE AWAY

- WHAT ARE THE TOP 3 NUGGETS OF WISDOM YOU CAN TAKE AWAY FROM THIS CHAPTER?
- WHAT PRINCIPLES ARE YOU ALREADY DOING?
- WHICH ONES DO YOU NEED TO PRAY AND ASK GOD TO HELP YOU PUT INTO PRACTICE?

PARENTING 101 RECAP: To understand how your kids are shaped, you must understand the three major influences in their lives: the *media* they consume, the

friends they hang out with, and the *example* you live before them. By controlling the quality and quantity of media they receive, helping them pick and partner with virtuous peers, and living the kind of life before them that you know is best, you can begin to positively impact the lives of your children. This is the foundation for raising happy, healthy, godly kids that are world changers.

