

The Housewives of...
Deuteronomy 6:4-9

This series of shows based on The Housewives of...is way over the top. From Orange County to Atlanta, to New Jersey, and now the newly announced Beverly Hills, is so far out of bounds it was hard to find a clip I could show in church. I suspect that the need for ratings really draws out the worst behavior in the people involved, but I am pretty sure these people were already on the way to what is truly a disgusting look at overindulgence and really bad parenting.

The idea behind the show is to take people who have a distorted value system about life in general and to then put them together as friends and watch everything come unglued. It is really inappropriate in just about every way I can think of. The clip for today was about the mildest thing I could find to show.

I thought this would be a great way to give the rest of us perspective on this Mother's Day, to realize just how lucky most of us have been. I do realize that every person here didn't have a perfect relationship with your mother, or in some cases, did not even have a biological mother around. But almost all of us had someone who related to us as a mother and who helped form the people we have become. To all the mothers that are here today, and to those who have passed from this place into God's arms, we give thanks: for your love, for your guidance, for your patience, and for helping us become the people we are.

With all of the positives feelings about a day like today, and with the blaringly bad example of the video I showed to set this all up, I would like to spend a little time today taking about the qualities of Christian parenthood.

Our scripture reading today talks about living a life reflective of and consistent with what we say we believe. Too often our children see a real disconnect between what we say we stand for and what they see in us. The television series referenced for today is about confused kids with adults telling them to act in one way, while as adults, acting in a completely different way. It is this inconsistency that undermines good intentions every time.

Now I could attempt here to give you a whole list of things that should make you a good Christian parent, but on this side of raising

two, now adult children, I know that as hard as Barb and I tried, we made our share of mistakes like everyone else. Like those of you who have raised young people trying to assert themselves into adulthood, you know the joy and the struggle of trying to raise responsible adults.

So instead of offering up a list of do's and don'ts that may or may not work for you, let me try to identify some of the pot holes many of us discovered in this wonderful journey of being a parent.

1. You can't be a parent and your kid's best friend at the same time.

One of the huge mistakes many parents make is trying to be their kid's best friend and to appear cool to their children's friends. You can do this, and many do it well, but then when it comes time to draw the lines and play disciplinarian, you have no credibility. If you have to make a choice between being a parent or a friend, be the parent, they have plenty of friends, and whether they admit it not, they need a parent as well.

2. You can't expect your child to fulfill all the dreams you failed to achieve.

If you always wanted to be the head cheerleader, or high school star athlete and didn't quite get there, that's okay. Let it go. A huge problem many parents get into is trying to make their kids be something they weren't. Your life is your life and their life is their life. Give your kids a chance to be special in the way they were created to be special. Don't wear them out trying to make them be something they aren't meant to be or don't want to be.

3. Money doesn't replace good parenting.

During a time when most households require two incomes, it is hard to have either the time or the energy to be a good and attentive parent. Some can pull it off...many cannot.

It requires very intentional parenting when you only have so many hours in a week to have direct one-on-one time with your kids. When you have all day, a lot of parenting just happens. When you only have an hour or two, use it wisely.

Many parents fall into feeling guilty for the lack of quality time they have with their kids and too often use money, gift giving, and over indulgence to try to buy the guilt away. This doesn't accomplish

anything of value and often confuses our children that somehow having and not having stuff has to do with how much they are loved.

Spend time, not money!

4. Try not to over schedule your kids because everyone else is making that mistake.

Too often we find ourselves competing with all the other parents when we over schedule the lives of our kids. When I was growing up I went to church camp and maybe one other. The rest of the summer was for play, and as I grew up, work. When I talk to young people today they are hard pressed to find a week during the summer that isn't committed. Sure, we want our kids to have all the opportunities in the world, but sometimes we error in not realizing that simply allowing them time to be kids has its own value. Some of my greatest summertime memories were just hanging out with the neighborhood kids. A good old fashioned water balloon fight can be a great way to spend a warm summer afternoon! And Mom and Dad can join in as well!

5. Teach your children to respect people who are differently gifted than they are.

Whether physically or mentally challenged, of a differing ethnic background, of a different sex, children often learn to judge and condemn people who are different. Loving your neighbor as yourself is a great place to help children understand that all people, no matter how different, are also God's children.

We live in a world quick to compartmentalize and judge groups of people. When our society was more or less homogenous a few differences were tolerable. Now the society is so blended, for many, maintaining the walls the separate have become a daily event. Loving our neighbors was easy when they were like us. Loving our neighbors when they are differently gifted doesn't seem to be as easy.

6. Faith is not a practice that is only communicated through discussion. Faith is a practice best communicated when that being taught is consistent with the actions being displayed.

Children and youth are very quick to realize the discrepancies in us when we talk a good game but don't live it. It is easy to say you believe in something, but obvious that you don't when your actions run counter to your words. Don't say something is important to you

and then live as if it is not. As parents, your children should see your faith as something that frees us to live a better life, not something that restricts us from having fun.

On *The Housewives*...shows we see glaring examples of people who occasionally parent, operate by guilt, overindulge their kids, and inconsistently try to hold their children to a set of standards that they do not practice themselves. It always ends in a bad way.

Being a good parenting model is something you choose to do everyday. We all make mistakes, and even our best intentions get sidelined. But having the opportunity to mold lives and to shape hearts is truly a gift granted to us by God.

"Hear, O Israel: The LORD is our God, the LORD alone. You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart. Recite them to your children and talk about them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise. Bind them as a sign on your hand, fix them as an emblem on your forehead, and write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates."

Today I am grateful for the women who cared for me and who modeled, in a very real way, how to live life more compassionately, and more faithfully.