

Soul Food



Parenting

By Ken Ortiz

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As the youngest of 14 children born to a clergyman in Devonshire, England, 19th century poet-philosopher Samuel Taylor Coleridge had some decided opinions about childrearing, as illustrated by the following story: While a guest in Coleridge’s home, a well-known intellectual informed Coleridge that he did not believe in giving children any religious instruction whatsoever. His theory was that a child’s mind should not be pre-

judiced in any direction. Rather, he reasoned, when the child became mature enough he should be permitted to choose his own religious opinions, without the influence of his parents’ views.

At first Coleridge said nothing. A little later though, he asked his guest if he would like to see the garden. He indicated that he would and followed Coleridge to the back of his home.

Once outside, Coleridge showed him a

patch of ground that was completely overtaken by weeds. The man looked at Coleridge and exclaimed, “Why this is not a garden! There is nothing here but weeds!”

“Well, you see,” answered Coleridge, “I did not wish to infringe upon the liberty of the garden in any way. I was just giving the garden a chance to express itself and to choose its own production.”

Coleridge was simply reflecting what the Bible said long ago: “Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it.” (Proverbs 22:6)

In some ways, raising children is like pouring concrete. While they are young, they are malleable. But once they hit puber-

ty, they begin to quickly harden into the kind of adult they will become. If undesirable influences are introduced and left unaddressed, it will leave a permanent imprint on the child’s personality and character. The longer the trait is allowed to “set”, the more difficult it is change.

Psychologist use a weaponized illustration to explain the complex nature of behavior: “Genetics loads the gun of human behavior, environment (training) pulls the trigger.” In other words, there are some things that are hard-wired from conception and can’t be changed. But they can be molded and shaped, so that when the emotional “trigger” is pulled, the barrel is pointing in a safe, healthy and helpful direction!

This is so important that it should NOT be left to professionals! The Bible repeatedly states that it must be the parents who train their children. (Deut. 4:9; 6:6,7; Pro. 23:13,14; Eph. 6:4). Parenting experts like Dr. Katherine Dowling, say the same thing: “If you buy into the...notion that standardized daycare is the best place to raise children, then you must also accept the premise that... breast milk... can be replaced by formula, and that a 21-year-old childcare trainee will be as excited about a baby’s first steps as the parents would be. Common sense tells us that this is just not the case.”

Don’t doubt your abilities; and don’t abdicate your parenting role. You are the most important and influential person in your child’s life. They want and need your training.

Editor’s Note: You can connect with Calvary Spokane Church on their social media community, The City, at <https://calvaryspokane.onthecity.org>. You can also check out their many resources available including podcasts at www.calvaryspokane.com or call their office at 509-467-2860 for more information

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