



5 Phases of Parenting

Phase 1 - Nurturing

Ages: Birth to about 1 year

The first phase of parenting is “nurturing” and happens from birth to around 1 year. This phase is important to the development of the infant. Your child has an inherent need for nurturing.

At this stage, the infant is the center of their universe (and ours), and is helpless unless we intercede. Crying is the only means of communication they have, and they use it. We need to nurture them to meet all of their needs in this phase. The need for love and belonging is of utmost importance.

Proverbs 22:6

Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it.

Phase 2 - Discipline

Ages: 12-18 months to 5 years

The second phase can be the most challenging, and most rewarding at the same time. This is the age that the children need discipline to break out of the “center of the universe” phase. We need to teach them discipline by using their speech to communicate what they need. This phase would be the equivalent of an athlete getting in shape for a game. It is very hard work. It takes discipline and determination. In this phase, there will be a lot of disagreements as well as challenges to the parent’s authority. The parents need to stay consistent and keep the boundaries tight. They should be given very few freedoms because they will show very little self-control or responsibility. Discipline should be the main focus of the training at this point – not to be their friend. That will come later.

Proverbs 23:13a

Do not withhold discipline from a child...

Phase 3 - Training

Ages: 5 – 11 years (or so)

This phase would be compared to an athlete that is now in shape, but is training for a sport. There is a lot of Biblical principles to learn and become part of everyday life. Their moral warehouse needs to be filled with those principles. Their moral warehouse would be like a computer’s hard drive that puts files on the memory system that tells the children how to act morally and responsibly for life situations. When those situations come up, they have principles placed in their warehouse to remember and act upon. We need to do this training prior to going into the game of life. It is instilling those principles that the LORD would want us to pass along to our children. Parents need to gradually give freedom when responsibility is demonstrated. Parents should start building a relationship during this phase.

Deuteronomy 6:6-9

These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children...

Phase 4 - Coaching

Ages: 12-17 years

At this point, your child is making his/her own decisions and becoming more independent. These are the years that they will question what they have learned from their parents. This questioning is crucial so they can make the principles their own. Until this point, the principles instilled were owned by their parents. Now, they will make them their own. The adolescent is in the game of life, but we are still the coach. We can stop the game at half time, or even call a time out if needed for instruction and help. We stand on the sidelines and watch. If and when they make mistakes, this is the best time to make them because they still have parents to pick them up, brush them off and help them to succeed. Freedom at this stage should be fairly normal, as well as responsibility on the child’s part. It can also be taken away if needed. Relationship will be a key part of this phase.

Ephesians 6:4

Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.

Phase 5 - Friendship

Ages: 17 and beyond

Friendship is the final phase. It is the point in which we change from the power of authority to the power of influence on our children. This is the relational goal of our parenting. When our children grow up, they should be among our best friends. There will still be some difficulties, but this is the time where we become an advisor to them. Relationships built during the training and coaching phase begins to pay off.

John 15:15

I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you