

## Uncommon Common Sense

Recently I asked two old-timers (men who remember seeing the first airplane or automobile that came to town, men that go to sleep before they finish telling the story) about how they would raise children. Their answers were accurate. These old men, grumbling their views, are largely ignored. If they were thirty years younger, had a degree in child psychology from a “Christian” university and could speak with social grace, their statements would be received as profound. Packaged differently, their message would be highly acclaimed among today’s parents.

When we stand before a crowd of eager parents and share the simple principles of parenting, we never cease to be amazed at their deep appreciation for simple truths. Concepts, that in former generations were common knowledge, are lost to today’s parents. The mid-to-late twentieth century breakdown in discipline and family is not due to an inferior strain of children—nor to a corrupt society. Children are the product of their parents. Or to put it another way: Today’s children are a product of yesterday’s children. Parents are children who grew up to have children. There is usually less than ten years between the child’s last spanking and the first time he spans his own child. Do years alone make one wise and bring maturity? Does the selfish, angry twelve-year-old mutate into a capable child trainer in the ten years before inheriting the job? The question we need to ask is, “What kind of parent is my child going to make?”

Why do some young people make good parents and others make lousy parents? The bottom line is that parenting skills are passed down from generation to generation. It is not necessarily a conscious effort. Most parenting techniques are never premeditated. When Deb and I began our family, we just took parenting for granted—as do most. We were both blessed to have had good parents of the old school. When we casually related to our children as our parents had related to us, we were usually doing the right thing. When we had a problem arise with one of our children, we usually found the answer in our own past experiences as children. By the time most parents have had enough experience to appreciate the issues and make adjustments, their children are already parents. Parents can mature and repent of their mistakes, but meanwhile their children are passing the same mistakes on to the grandchildren. Western culture is in the midst of a cycle of degenerating family structure. Parents with young children must reverse this destructive trend while their children are still young enough to be programmed.

The way farmers used to get new chickens was to allow the hen to sit on her eggs until they hatched. The proud mother would lead the little chicks around the barnyard, teaching them what it meant to be a chicken. But unknowingly she was teaching them how to be good mothers when they grew up. When they grow up and are capable, they too will find a nice place to lay a dozen eggs and incubate them into chicks. Then, just like their mom, they will proudly carry on the farm tradition.

But there is a new way. Every spring, we go to the Co-op and buy a new batch of chicks. They have been hatched in an incubator and are only a few days old. When you look down in their box you notice that they are all grouped according to age and size, and usually grouped according to sex. They grow up with their peers. They remind me of children in a schoolyard or grouped in a daycare center. They learn to compete and survive in this prefabricated social order. It is not like the old barnyard, where the chicks followed the mother hen around looking for something to eat. The new way is much more efficient. Where efficiency is the goal, it is definitely progress. It is a fast new world, you know.

The only problem with this new way is that the young chicks, who grow up among their peers without a mother’s care, have lost the natural instinct to be mothers. It is rare that one of these modern egg layers will devote the time and energy to sit on their eggs and care for young chicks. They are too busy with their own fulfillment to care for the brood of young chicks.

I think there are thousands of young couples struggling to raise their brood, but somewhere in the former generations the knowledge of the simple “how to” was lost. For many of you raised in a classroom and nursed on TV, being a parent does not come naturally. You must imagine what parents should be like.

There seems to be a great awakening of families longing to raise a godly generation. It is a glorious sight traveling from place to place meeting hundreds of parents willing to hear and obey God's direction in raising a family. If you can just understand how you got where you are, you can better plot your journey back. You do not have ten years to recover what has been lost. Your children must be raised on right example. You alone are in a position to reverse this trend. The responsibility, with God's help, is yours alone. Today is the first day of the remainder of your child's life. Make it count.