

Parent *pages*

RESOURCES FOR CHRISTIAN PARENTS IN THE 21ST CENTURY



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BY KIM MARXHAUSEN

Do the Job Right

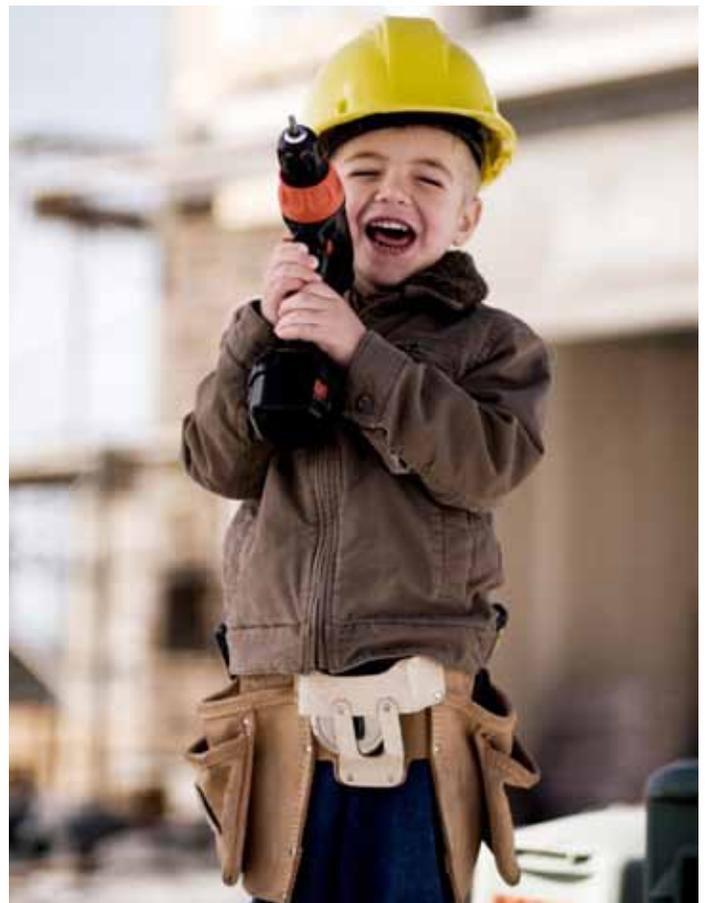
Take a look at your children playing in the backyard. Right now, play is their job, but in a few years, those children playing tag and digging in the sand will be filling out job applications. What qualities will their employers look for? If we were to make a list, it would be easy to assume signs of successful learning, skills specific to the job and familiarity with technology. While these things are important, research says that employers are looking for more basic skills—the kinds of skills parents teach their children long before they are old enough to earn a paycheck.

Employers know they will have to do a certain amount of training when hiring a new worker. This training can be expensive, so employers are reluctant to hire workers for whom training will be a waste of time. The first thing they look for is what we would term character. Character is difficult to teach on the job site. Three character traits are especially important to work and school: pride, respect and commitment.

Pride

“The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it” (Gen. 2:15).

Work has been part of God’s plan for us from the beginning of creation. Even before the fall, God expected Adam to work and keep the beautiful garden made for him. One pitfall we should avoid is thinking that work is anything less than a blessing. We want to teach our children to take pride in their work and not to whine or complain about it. Rather than criticize a poorly completed task, ask your child to evaluate what was done and how it can be improved. Teach your children the benefit of doing more than the minimum, and make sure they understand that a job isn’t finished until they put away the tools and clean the work area. These are ways to take pride in a job well-done.



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Respect

“From the fruit of his mouth a man is satisfied with good, and the work of a man’s hand comes back to him” (Prov. 12:14).

When we approach work with a positive attitude and with respect, the work of our hand will speak well of us. Employees need to respect the work they are given and

respect for the one in authority over them. They need to understand that there is a time and place for disagreement and that they should express their opinions respectfully. Showing respect for coworkers and customers is essential. A big part of this is an understanding that a job, whether it is folding laundry at home or flipping burgers at work, is about the task and not about the worker. Employees must set aside their immediate needs or wants in order to give the work priority.

Commitment

“Commit your work to the LORD, and your plans will be established” (Prov. 16:3).

Even good workers are useless if they are unreliable or cannot persevere at a task. Children need to learn that a task needs to be finished even if the initial interest has waned. Some jobs can take a long time before the sense of satisfaction settles in. Workers also need to be dependable; they need to take the initiative to check schedules and to come in on time when assigned. As children get older, holding them accountable for assigned weekly chores can help to instill this kind of character.

“Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it” (Prov. 22:6).

What to do now

Model and require respect: Be respectful when you talk about your own job and hold your children accountable for being respectful to family, friends and teachers. Help your children learn to obey those in authority and, when appropriate, to disagree respectfully. Siblings and friends will argue, but you can expect them to apologize and to see each other’s side of the story. It is important to learn that at work “it’s not about me.” This is the important skill of empathy.

Resist the temptation to give in

It is often easier just to take out the trash than to put up with the whining and moaning that can follow a request for help. Don’t give in to this! Help your children to learn to respect



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you and to respect the work they have been given. Especially be on the lookout for eye-rolling. This is a sign of contempt and indicates that respect has been lost. Stop and explain the situation to your children; listen to what is bothering them; enlist their help in coming up with a new plan for how the work gets done; but, under no circumstances should you give in and do it yourself or allow your children to be disrespectful without consequences.

Give them the bigger picture

Children live in the here and now and need parents to show them long-term benefits. Help them to see how their work helps the family and to know that you depend on them to finish the task. Help them to see how their careful work benefits them and gives them a sense of pride.

Finally, pray and trust

Know that God has a plan for your children, and He knows how He will make that plan happen to their benefit.

For further study

Parenting resources from Concordia Publishing House:
www.cph.org/searchnew.aspx?SearchTerm=parenting

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