



international family magazine

Planet Earth's Every-Family. We are the Stories We Share.

February 2007

Family Man



Breakthrough Parenting (Part two) By Michael Wayland

Parenting is never easy. There is not one instruction book that will make you a perfect parent. There is however some wisdom that can be passed on to help you succeed. We call these points of wisdom, breakthroughs. They help you breakthrough the routine of parenting and excel at the important task of raising your children. Dr. John Maxwell identifies 10 strategic breakthroughs you can use to improve your family life and parenting skills. Last month we explored the first five. This month, we explore the remaining breakthroughs in part 2 of this article.

Maxwell says that the day a child is born, "they start a long trip and their intended destination is the realization of their God given potential." The problem is that they immediately encounter obstacles that get in their way and take them in the wrong direction or they just stop developing their potential. It is your job as a parent to help them breakthrough these obstacles so they can be all they can potentially be.

Making a Plan

The sixth breakthrough is to assess your child and develop a growth plan. Maxwell suggests considering what are your child's interests and their gifts, balanced with identifying their greatest weaknesses and their greatest need. As you think about this, determine where to focus the growth. First and foremost, develop their strengths, and then shore up their weaknesses. Sometimes as parents, we want to fix the problems first, but that is actually backwards. No one ever won an Olympic gold medal by spending their time focused on their weakness in spelling and grammar. Great leaders and achievers throughout history have developed their strengths to their maximum potential so that they can make extraordinary contributions.

Bethany in Connecticut said, "I actually wrote down on paper, my daughter's growth plan". She has an enormous talent with music and she was very reluctant to interact with new people and new situations." Bethany's plan included taking her daughter to a music class at the YMCA, joining the children's choir at Church, and going to theater events at the local playhouse. "I wanted to put her in new environments with new people, yet do that in a way that she was playing to her strengths to shore up her confidence".

Links to previous IF articles by
Michael Wayland.

January 2007
Breakthrough Parenting

December 2006
A Holiday From Divorce

November 2006
The Modern Family's Search
for God.

October 2006
Parental Alienation Syndrome.

September 2006
Speaking the Five Languages
of Love.

July 2006
Covenant Marriage.

June 2006
The Gentle Divorce.

Influence

The seventh breakthrough is to do everything possible to influence the influencers in your child's life. Parents are the primary influencers for a young child. As the child grows up and away, the parent's lose influence and the world becomes the primary influencer. As your children enter their teen years their peers take on strong significance and the parents begin to lose influence. Peers very often come from the kids your child goes to school with and most parents don't have a lot of control over where their child goes to school. You are assigned a school by the public school district. But what if the influences there disturb you? Many districts offer public charter or magnet schools. Other families choose private or Christian schools. Whether your child goes to private or public schools, your presence and decision-making makes a difference.

Janice and Jason in Cleveland have a son who is smart, polite, artistically talented and enjoys his classes. In junior high school, those positive characteristics led to tougher students picking on him, belittling him, and as a result, he began to gravitate to a group of students that while bad influences, at least did not pick on him. Janice and Jason decided to move their son to the school district's public arts academy magnet school. There the bullying disappeared as their son found that his new peers and their families shared a similar values as he did, education, arts, and respect.

Some parents will choose to make their home a magnet for kids, a place where the children and their friends want to hang out. While there, the parents not only observe, but also coach and influence the behaviors and values of all the kids. "I remember one time when my son's friend was talking about his older brother's run in with the law. We all talked about how the kids could support the brother but more importantly we talked about how they could learn from the brother's mistakes and avoid that kind of behavior" said Janice. "What he did was initially perceived as cool, but the kids learned that it really wasn't"

Memory Lane

The eighth breakthrough is to take trips down memory lane with your child. You can do this regardless of their age. Talking about the fun times, trips, and even the difficult learning experiences, builds a bridge between you and your child and also causes bonding between the child and the family. "I'm always saying to my son 'hey, that reminds me of when we'..." says John Anthony in Park Slope NY.

Mark in Columbus Ohio took a video camera to Disneyland on the family vacation, and then when he got home, edited it and made a DVD for his youngsters. "They have watched it over and over again for the past two years. They watch it as often as a real Disney movie, I think, because they see themselves and they see their mom and dad. They love it!"

Spiritual Growth

The ninth breakthrough is not to wait for someone else to grow your child spiritually - you need to do it yourself. You can't wait for school to do it or a church to do it. As a parent, you create the spiritual foundation for your child.

In the fifth book of the Torah, Deuteronomy in the Bible, God said "These commandments that I give to you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them upon your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down, and when you get up. Tie them as a symbol on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the door frames of your houses and on your gates." Your child's spiritual foundation shapes the way they will act, behave, and believe; and you control the initial development of that.

Ask yourself as a parent, where do I wear my spirituality? In my heart and on my sleeve or too hidden and private for anyone to see?

Trust that it will be O.K.

Maxwell's final principle is to trust God first, last, and always. The reality is that no matter what we do for our children, they will make their own decisions and make their own way. We can't guarantee a positive outcome. We can teach, model, instruct and encourage, but in the end your child will make his or her own decisions.

For more information on breakthrough parenting, see the book Breakthrough Parenting by Dr. John C. Maxwell, Focus on the Family Publishing, 1996 Colorado Springs CO 80995. ISBN 1-56179-469-4.

**home | lucky grandma ann | my family in gambia | IF, Orpah and charity | check out savethechildren.org
chuck inglefield | education exchange | family man | travel journal | global pen pals
stories I tell my children | world of talent | mission statement | IF in the press
archive files | global directory | advertise with us**

**Copyright © 2007 International Family magazine. All rights reserved.
Reproduction in whole or part without permission is prohibited.**