

Confident Parenting

The Lesson of A.W.E.
Affection, Warmth, and Encouragement

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When my family and I moved to Windsor, people told us this was the banana belt of Canada. *The summers are hot and the winters are mild. You can sell your snowblower. You won't need it here, Pastor Garth.*

Well, let me tell you, that first winter we had 17,000 feet of snow!

Seriously...when it comes to the climate of Essex County, we can't complain. God is the One who sets the thermostat!

When it comes to the climate of your home, however, it's your responsibility as the parent to set the "emotional thermostat." At our house, my wife says, often, "you're the one who establishes the temperature in our house. You're the leader, so smarten up!"

She's right! A healthy home environment must be chosen; it cannot be just a reaction to the "temperature" or mood of your children or your spouse. It's our job as parents to set a positive tone and atmosphere in the home. Don't expect your kids to do this, especially if you have teenagers. With all the stress and busyness of life in many families today, we could all find reasons to whip up a storm and be mad at our kids or spouse most of the time. But there's a more effective way to parent your children and set a healthy climate in your home.

Jim Burns calls it "Parenting with A.W.E."

While there is no such thing as a perfect home, we can always make improvements. Right? How do we do that?

1. Show Lots of AFFECTION

As children get older, they will begin to shy away from the hugs and kisses of their parents, especially in front of their peers. But appropriate, loving gestures of touch, along with words of affection and encouragement, will do wonders for your relationships.

Romans 12:10 NLT tells us to Love *each other with genuine affection, and take delight in honoring each other.*

One of the classic studies in the field of raising healthy kids happened when some Harvard University researchers accidentally came across a child-reading study dating back to 1951. They decided to follow up on the research, which was comprised of interviews with mothers of kindergarten students. The children would now be parents, if not grandparents. As they located the families, the researchers discovered a remarkable fact. The study indicated that the most important indicator of happiness in a family is not a good education or an upscale home, but physical closeness with parents. Their parents had been warm and affectionate, generous with hugs, kisses and playtime.

Jesus certainly understood the importance of meaningful, personal touch. Even with constant demands for his attention, he took time to show affection and love to children. Let's have a look at Mark 10 for a moment...

Mark 10:13-16 NLT

One day some parents brought their children to Jesus so he could touch and bless them. But the disciples scolded the parents for bothering him.

When Jesus saw what was happening, he was angry with his disciples. He said to them, "Let the children come to me. Don't stop them! ..." Then he took the children in his arms and placed his hands on their heads and blessed them.

Jesus was a master at communicating love and personal acceptance. He took them in his arms... He showed them lots of affection! Parents are a physical extension of the love of God, so we need to show our children lots of affection, too...just like Jesus!

What else can you do to parent with AWE?

2. Fill Your Home with WARMTH

There's no such thing as a home without conflict, but by working to reduce stress in your family, you promote a warm environment...

The Bible says, in Romans 12:18 NIV, *If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.* Yes, we experience conflict and disagreements in our home, but we continually seek to live in peace, and create a warm environment so our kids will flourish.

Hebrews 12:14 NIV says, *Make every effort to live in peace with all men...* This applies to our families. We need to make every effort to live in peace and fill our homes with warmth.

Perhaps that means fewer activities, less travel, lighter schedules. Think about your home. Is it a place the kids enjoy? Is it peaceful, or is it a negative, critical war zone? Maybe you need to speak more positive words than negative words.

Proverbs 18:21 NIV says

The tongue has the power of life and death, and those who love it will eat its fruit.

Choose your words at home very carefully. They have the power of life or death, and the choice is yours every single day!

3. Provide tons of ENCOURAGEMENT

Affirmation is a much greater motivator than guilt and shame. Just look at the way that the Apostle Paul began his letters to his family scattered across the world...

Romans 1:8 NLT

Let me say first that I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith in him is being talked about all over the world.

I mean, how encouraging would it be to read those words coming from the Apostle Paul, or your mom, or you dad! Wow!

And what about 1Corinthians 1?

1 Corinthians 1:4-9 NLT

I always thank my God for you and for the gracious gifts he has given you... He will keep you strong to the end... God will do this, for he is faithful to do what he says, and he has invited you into partnership with his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Can you imagine the impact his words had on the church in Corinth? The Christians in that city had messed up ethically and morally, and Paul addresses those issues later in his letter, but for now he focuses on encouragement. He always starts with words of praise!

When your kids mess up, they don't need constant reminders of their failure – they need encouragement.

And then, over in Ephesians 1...

Ephesians 1:15-17 NLT

Ever since I first heard of your strong faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for God's people everywhere, I have not stopped thanking God for you. I pray for you constantly....

See what I mean? Affirmation is a much better motivator than guilt and shame. Words of support and encouragement go a lot further at home and at work than words of humiliation and criticism.

Our homes ought to be the one place our kids feel truly affirmed and safe. When they ask the question, "Who am I?" in a thousand different ways, you need to answer the question in a thousand different ways with the Word of God.

Who am I? My son, my daughter, You belong to God! You are His child!

Confident parents
show lots of affection,
fill their home with warmth, and
provide tons, *tons* of encouragement.

Parenting with A.W.E.: Affection. Warmth. Encouragement.

You can do it. I'm convinced you can, because you can do all things through Christ who gives you strength!

"Who Am I"

Who am I, that the Lord of all the earth
Would care to know my name
Would care to feel my hurt
Who am I, that the Bright and Morning Star
Would choose to light the way
For my ever wandering heart

Not because of who I am
But because of what You've done
Not because of what I've done
But because of who You're

I am a flower quickly fading
Here today and gone tomorrow
A wave tossed in the ocean
A vapor in the wind
Still You hear me when I'm calling
Lord, You catch me when I'm falling
And You've told me who I am
I am Yours, I am Yours

Who Am I, that the eyes that see my sin
Would look on me with love and watch me rise again
Who Am I, that the voice that calmed the sea
Would call out through the rain
And calm the storm in me

I am Yours
Whom shall I fear
Whom shall I fear
'Cause I am Yours
I am Yours

Questions for Discussion

1. Which phrase(s) best describes your home?
 - a. Filled with tension
 - b. All is peaceful
 - c. Everyone is doing his or her own thing
 - d. Lacks affection
 - e. Warm
 - f. Very positive (optimistic)
 - g. Negative (pessimistic)
2. What is your personal contribution to the climate of your home?
3. How proactive are you about bringing A.W.E. to the home?
4. What would need to change in your home to boost a sense of A.W.E.?
5. What practical steps from this sermon could you put into practice this week?