

Teaching the Way of Love

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How do You Fill a Home with Goodness and Virtue?

A group of young parents discussed their concern that children today seemed to be more interested in themselves than in the common good. They shared multiple examples that illustrated their point: the uptick in bullying, increased school violence, soaring depression, and isolation. Their worry led them to ask me, “what can we do to reverse this trend?”

“Teach your children how to seek the good, choose the good, and share the good with others – beginning in your own home,” I said. After a few moments of silence, the young parents asked the inevitable question. “But how do we do that? Isn’t the world’s influence on our children too strong for us to counter?”

Are you concerned about your kids like these parents? Are you worried that the world is jading your children? Do you want to know how you can guide your children towards the good that God has intended for them? Let me offer a few ideas for creating a home where goodness is taught, chosen, and practiced.



Your first step towards a home filled with virtue is to remember that God has given you the authority to form your family in goodness, even if the world outside your door doesn’t do that. What you say and how you act profoundly influences your children. Even if they don’t appear to listen to you, they are. They will follow your lead in the long run because you matter greatly to them. God created a bond of love between you that is very hard to break. Be confident in this truth.

Use that bond of love that God provides you as a foundation to turn your home into a school of deeper humanity. Lean into your power and ability to create an environment that reflects God’s goodness, beauty, and peace. Model a lifestyle that reflects Christ-like virtues and do so with joy.

Will this be easy? Not really. But it is totally doable if you remember that a virtue is a firm habit to do what is right and good. As the parent, you are the primary educator for your children. As lead teacher, you oversee the tone for daily living. When you are charitable, forgiving, and patient, you set a virtuous expectation that your children can see and learn from. While it is not a given that they will watch and immediately comply, they will likely catch on over time. Of course, this means that you must be consistent in your demonstration of virtue – especially when they act contrary to your lead.

This brings up another important point about bringing goodness into your home through virtue; it takes time and practice. Like all of us, your children need to practice the virtues because they suffer from a fallen nature. It takes time to learn how to choose the good. They need to practice what they have learned

before they can do it without thinking. In fact, most of us need to practice over and over and over again before we get it right. What does this mean for you as the parent? You must be patient and persistent.

Here is one more important reality about creating a school of virtue; it requires a shift in your priorities. Teaching your family about virtuous living must rise above your personal desires. Because it is not a one-and-done kind of project, it requires regular attention and maintenance. Think of it like a coach working with athletes who want to improve their game. First, they learn. Then they practice. Then they pay attention and maintain their level of play. If the coach or the athlete stops paying attention, what was gained is often lost, and the process must start over again. So it is with virtues and their development. You must regularly check to see how they are being lived and course-correct as needed.

After reading this article, there are a few practical ways to begin setting up your school of virtue. The first and most important one is establishing a time every day when your family can gather as one. Logically, this would be over a meal where people can share what they are thinking and doing. But it could also be time shared just before everyone settles in for the night. Be bold and do what it takes to find the right time for your family to be together every day.

Another key way to develop goodness in your home is to give each person chores that contribute to the care of the home. Yes, this does mean figuring out who gets to clean bathrooms, haul trash and do the laundry. Acts of mutual service require great virtue and offer lots of practice time.

Finally, assess how prayer-friendly your home environment is. Goodness comes from God, and God connects with you in prayer. Romans 12:2 tells us this. *Do not conform yourselves to this age but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and pleasing and perfect.* To ensure that goodness comes into your home, do your best to provide the peace and quiet needed to pray by quieting the sounds of media. Find ways to build a margin into every day so that you can stop and pray for and with each other. Carve out time to pray together and call upon God to enter your family life and activities.



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