

Introduction

Kathleen and I have six kids who, at the time of this writing, range in age from two to twelve. Just like the Brady Bunch, we have three boys and three girls, but unlike the Brady Bunch they are all ours. We are also excited to have another one on the way, which is really going to mess up the Brady Bunch thing. Kathleen is a home-mom, and I am a pastor at Summitview Community Church in Greeley, CO.

We've experienced countless precious moments with our kids—sweet prayers, steps of faith, and honest confessions. The older ones have shared their faith, are excited about God, and are developing their own deepening relationships with God. They are good kids. We are proud of all of them.

We've also caught one of our kids, about a year old at the time, sitting on the kitchen table with a box of cheerios dumped out around him. One of our girls cut her own hair once, which as you can imagine, did not go well. Several of them have written on the walls. Usually this occurs at an age where all they know how to write is their own name, so finding “persons of interest” in our investigations is usually not too difficult. We've caught them lying, stealing, cheating, yelling, hitting, threatening, biting, scheming, and doing most of the other “ings” kids do on occasion. Most of them have sampled a wide variety of deviancy over the years. These are not norms for our kids, but they are normal kids.

One time, I got so flustered at a kid, I became harsh and angry. Okay, so maybe it was more than once...

Let's get one thing straight. We are not perfect parents. If you were to watch our family for a week, you might think we were too strict. Some of you would think we were way too easy on our kids. We are also too affectionate, although I suppose a few would think we could be far more so. We've been accused of being too regimented even though we often parent in the midst of clutter, chaos, and shooting from the hip. Many

will say that we take the Bible too literally, and some will be appalled at how we don't follow it closely enough. I have no doubt that we've broken most of the advice given in this book at one time or another. We have certainly made many mistakes and will continue to do so.

It's not about us, is it? It's about God. This book is about how God's principles have helped us as parents. We don't follow them perfectly, but we've been pleased with how God is shaping our children as we've tried to follow His principles in parenting.

This book is a mixture of our own advice and tips, as well as many timeless principles from God. The degree to which our advice lines up with God's Word is the degree to which this book will capture God's heart on parenting and have the greatest impact on your family.

Our hope is that this book will be a great springboard for you as you personally study out God's Word in these matters. You don't have to agree with Steve and Kathleen Nelson on everything. In fact, you'll undoubtedly *never* find a single set of parents that raise their children *exactly* as you think they should. That's okay. You don't have to agree with us on everything, but you do need to agree with God on everything. Before, during, and after reading this book, we strongly encourage you to develop a habit of studying the Bible. What you learn and apply from the Word will impact you more profoundly than anything you learn from any book on parenting.

Proverbs 3:5-6 Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight.

We hope that God will bless you as you read. This book is made up of lots of small articles. This made it easier for me to write during a free minute of time here and there. Hopefully

that will make it easier for busy parents to read during a free minute of time here and there.

We warmly welcome you into our lives and our thoughts.