



Building Life Long Values

Teaching Generosity to Your Children



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When you become a parent, a nearly instant perspective change takes place inside your heart. Your attention shifts towards wondering how your children will do, how they will carry on values, and what you can do for them.

As parents, we desire our children to grow into successful, independent members of society, but we also carry a deeper desire for them: that they would live with integrity and rich character. It is a big dream, but it is not always an easy journey. At The Signatry, we've walked with families through various seasons of life, so from that experience, we've created this guide to give you practical steps on teaching generosity and passing on values at the various stages of life with your children.

Young Children

One of the traits that most parents recognize a need for early on is generosity. From playground interactions to conversations at the dinner table, parents strive to teach their children to be grateful, with the hope that gratitude will lend itself towards generosity. Gratitude is an important value to instill even at an early age, and you can build upon these lessons for years.

There are a few simple things parents can do to instill generosity into young children:

1. **Encourage empathy.** Ask questions such as "Could you imagine if this toy was your only toy?" or "How would it feel to go to bed without dinner each night?" Small conversations like this can open your child's heart to a world outside themselves.
2. **Practice giving.** Invite your child to help you select or wrap a gift, or to write their name on a card to a loved one. The more they are invited into the practice of giving, the more they will learn that giving is fun.
3. **Broaden perspectives.** Look for ways to help your child see that they always have something they can give. Whether it be friendship, compassion or love – everyone has an opportunity to be generous.

Teenagers

A key marker for any teenager is the desire to find an identity. Most teenagers go through phases of different friends and trends, as they try to figure out who they are and who they want to be.

An important role for parents during this time is not only to grant them freedom to explore who they are but also to place markers along the way reminding them of who they can be. Guide your children to see the stories around them and how God is moving. When we teach our children to live God-centered, they find how who they are makes sense in a broken world and how they can be vessels of God's truth and light.

With a few intentional steps, you can encourage this identity growth towards a heart of empathy, compassion, and generosity.

1. **Invite them into your finances.** By modeling wise financial planning such as a save/spend/give system, you can teach your teen to manage their money in a similar way. The goal is not perfection;



know that you are building a foundation for them to hold as they grow. When you see them making wise decisions, such as giving, praise them with thoughtful encouragement. Talk to them about your own decisions you are making, and invite their opinions.

2. **Take them outside their normal routine.** Take mission trips together, or try serving at a local shelter on a weekend. Hands-on experiences like these can leave a lasting impact on your child in how they view the world and their part in it.
3. **Discover their passion.** Start conversations such as, "If you could change anything in the world, what would it be?" or "What problems do you see in our community?" Their answers will offer insight into what burdens their heart. Be open to their ideas and help them find ways to serve or become involved.

Young Adults

You may have heard the saying, "Once a parent, always a parent," and it tends to ring true. A recent survey from CreditCards.com echoes this parental dynamic, finding that 75% of parents financially support their adult children in some way.

As parents, we naturally desire that our adult children be the best they can be and live the best life possible. But how do we continue to model generosity without enabling them to be dependent? In an article from Forbes.com, contributor Nancy Anderson encourages parents to give to their adult children, but to "give extras, not the basics."

Here are some practical ways you can still model generosity with your adult children while teaching them to be independent adults:

1. **Give the extras.** Instead of helping your children with everyday expenses, encourage them to provide for themselves. Give in the ways their hearts may need most; compassion during difficult seasons, a little financial boost to open their own donor advised fund to give from, time spent supporting their projects and passions. Cheer on the good values you see taking root in their lives.
2. **Plan experiences together.** Whether it be a family vacation, a mission trip or just a fun night out, plan activities together. Decide what you can afford and give that experience generously to your family. It builds family bonds and models the heart of the generous parent that you hope your adult child will strive to be.
3. **Share your heart.** Whatever organizations or charitable events you believe in, share them with your adult child. Invite them into that part of your life and allow them to see first-hand the difference that one person can make. Build a plan to give together as a family.

Across the Generations

All these generosity practices are not just for the present. These lay the foundation for instilling values to be passed from one generation to the next. Families were meant to endure, and generosity is a critical piece in a family's success. Why? Because generosity is a vehicle through which values are lived out. Generosity is an intentional choice to gather together, communicate, and then stand behind causes.

Choose today how you will build your family's foundation and ensure a legacy to support generations to come.



About Us

The Signatry is a Christian foundation who partners with families, advisors, and ministries across the world to make an eternal difference through generosity. We equip families with practical wisdom to think through the legacy they want to leave and to find the generosity tools to support this vision. Established in 2000 and having facilitated over \$2 billion to ministries across the world, we are passionate advocates for the transformation experiencing the generosity of God brings.

Have more questions?

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