



### **Teach Children to Lead**

By Tracy Gosnell, guest writer

When I left the corporate world to stay home to raise and educate my children, that was not the popular thing to do. In the world's eyes, I had given up a successful business position as an administrative assistant to take on a menial task, one that was difficult. For the first two years, I underwent a transition in which I even questioned our decision and my own identity, but the Lord showed me that the new life He had assigned was more important. One of those early defining moments was the day I heard a statement made by Steve Farrar that I was "raising up leaders for the next generation." This statement brought both comfort (that I was doing more than just raising my children) and a challenge to accomplish more than just raising and instructing my children. Thus began my journey to raise, educate, and train my children to be leaders.

### **Fulfillment of God's Plan**

I had not considered how Bible verses fit into this concept of "raising up leaders for the next generation." This newly found focus of training my children to be leaders added a deeper meaning to my understanding of Proverbs 22:6: "Start children off on the way they should go, and even when they are old they will not turn from it" (NIV). It also raised some questions that needed answers. How do we do our best to ensure that children stay on track to fulfill the plans that the Lord has for each one of them? What does it mean to be a leader? If I were going to train my children to be leaders, what would the task involve? What I discovered over the next few years would help me meet this challenge and guide my course on the journey.

## **Leadership Is Influence**

John Maxwell says in *The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership* that “leadership is influence-nothing more, nothing less” (Maxwell, 1998). To develop leaders, we must first gain influence in their lives and then help them develop their own ability to influence others. This is true for homeschooling parents and professional educators. It also applies to all children no matter what their purpose in life, their vocation, or their societal status. “The world doesn’t need more great leaders, it needs more great people who lead” (Erwin McManus). This does not involve a curriculum, but it happens when parents help children develop in several areas.

**Vision** – We need to teach our children how to dream big and know they can dream big as they follow God. Proverbs 16:3-4 says, “Commit to the LORD whatever you do, and he will establish your plans. The LORD works out everything to its proper end . . .” (NIV).

**Communication** – When we train our children to communicate effectively with others, instruction must include good listening skills. Effective communication happens when the person receives the message and understands the information correctly. Good leaders value feedback, and they use it to develop themselves and their plans.

**People skills** – As we train our children to be leaders, they need exposure to people of all ages and backgrounds. This is an advantage our homeschoolers have as our children spend a large amount of time interacting with us and other homeschoolers of various age groups. We can plan field trips to many different places. Leaders learn to be respectful and comfortable in a variety of settings.

**Character** – Good character involves strong work ethic, humility, integrity, social responsibility, self-discipline, courage, and respect for others. As parents and educators, we must understand the power of modeling these types of behaviors and the lasting effects this modeling will have on the children we influence. Every one of us can tie our own value system and success to individuals in our lives who influenced us by demonstrating character. Finding ways for the children to volunteer is a fantastic way to help them develop good character.

**Confidence** – We need to build our children’s self-confidence. Finding diverse ways for children to learn is a fantastic way to assist them with building self-confidence. To help with this challenge, find out what they are interested in; then create assignments in these areas so they can impress you with the knowledge they obtain. During the assignment, praise them for their efforts great or small. Build on this foundation and challenge them in the future.

**Servanthood** – “Jesus led by serving. There is no more effective leadership model than that model of a servant. There is no more rewarding way to live than to lead by serving others.... This is the heart of authentic leadership. This is the message we must teach to those young people who will be tomorrow’s leaders. People find true meaning and joy in life through following in the footsteps of the Carpenter, through putting ourselves second and others first. A leader is above all a servant” (Colson as quoted in Williams, 2005).

## Teaching Children How to Live

As a homeschooler, please understand that this is a journey. We can shape these young lives through everyday life. Another defining moment in my own life as I have taken this journey to train children to be leaders came when James Dobson shared the idea that we should not **tell** our children how to live but **teach** them how to live. Look for those teachable moments when you can share examples of success and failures in your own life and the lives of others. This will enable children to learn valuable life lessons in a controlled environment.

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