

Develop Your God-Given Potential

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For many people life is a big race to try and see how many things they can accumulate before they cross that great finish line in the skies. Unfortunately, many parents start their children on the same race far too early. Instead of trying to give children everything (which of course is impossible), parents ought to focus on what is really important in life.

Jesus asked his followers, "*What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul?*" In the same way he might ask parents, "What good will it be for your children if you take them to every club, teach them every sport, and give them every toy and don't help them enter into heaven?"

The Bible teaches that while earthly possessions and successes are destined to pass away, eternal values are forever. Jesus said, "*Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven...*" (Matthew 5:19-20).

A second consideration that ought to effect what parents give their children is "How will this effect my child later in life?"

Preschoolers who figure out how to make mom or dad feel guilty until they get whatever they want will likely go through life trying to manipulate others. Manipulative people cannot be happy because they mistakenly believe that happiness depends on possessions or on other persons' actions.

Once a child is old enough to earn his own money, some parents mistakenly believe that he should be free to use it however he wants. The problem is that once a teen sets his heart on accumulating things, he often becomes sidetracked from longer lasting goals. Instead of working and spending, a teen often profits more by studying and saving. According to an article a few years ago in the Wall Street Journal, teens who work 20 or more hours a week during the school year are more likely to become emotionally distressed, to use drugs, to smoke, to drink, and to have early sex.

As teens become old enough to earn significant amounts of money, doors begin to open both for good and for bad. Teens who spend the bulk of their earnings on cars, clothes, food, and gadgets usually go through life wondering why they never have enough.

On the other hand, teens that learn to control their spending and to save for the future develop positive life-long skills. By learning self-discipline, they avoid debt and unwise, impulsive purchases. As a result, they are free to pursue their real goals and to develop their God-given potential.

Sadly, some teens become so enamored by cars, clothes, gadgets and socializing that they become stuck in debt and never learn to manage their finances in a way that allows them to develop their God-given talents to achieve greater goals. We would all do well to remember these words of Jesus: "*The deceitfulness of wealth and the desires for other things come in and choke the word, making it unfruitful*" (Mark 4:18).