

Your Child's MOST Influential Teacher

by BarBara J. Mandley

Ask your children who their most influential teacher is, and you're likely to be surprised by the answer. Most influential people in our lives are not the ones who taught us the most in terms of book smarts but rather those whose lasting impression was made by either an emotional connection or a deep personal revelation.

In fact, most parents would come close to cardiac arrest if their child walked up and said,

*“You're the most influential teacher I've
ever had in my life!”*

As parents, with some retrospect on how we have been raised, we know what we should be for our families. We just don't expect that we will be. And even though we don't necessarily expect our kids to come to us and say it, we do hope deep down inside that some day afar off in the future, they can at least believe it.

We are our children's most influential teachers, and it is important for us to realize that fact as early on in the parenting process as possible. Why should we waste precious time with mindless routine when we can be **investing emotionally & spiritually** into our children?

Parenting is filled with various opportunities to incorporate discovery, adventure and learning into caring for our children, and the moments that connect us with our legacy as parents, are the ones we invest with **wisdom**.



The famous King Solomon of Israel (c.970BC) is world renowned throughout proceeding generations as “The Teacher.” Recorded in secular and religious annals as possessing wisdom of Biblical proportions, his writing consolidated his life work into a few precious nuggets of wisdom and godly advice that parents can relate with and take to heart. In the first chapter of the Biblical Proverbs, he says,

“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge.” In chapter two, King Solomon tells us where to find wisdom and how to get it: *“For the LORD gives wisdom, and from His mouth come knowledge and understanding.”*

Solomon's grandfatherly advice to us is that gathering information is good, but filtering it through the lens of Godly Wisdom is the key for parents who have a desire to invest valuable knowledge in their children, which has lasting, even eternal effects.

Each parent's connection to God is vital to their child's development. While helping their kids learn to value wisdom, smart parents take advantage of the curiosity God placed within their children.



Curiosity & discovery also involve the love of reading.

It is sensible early in children's lives to begin nurturing the desire to be a wise, life-long learner. "*Lap-time*" is a term child development researchers use to describe the bond parents and their children form which enhances learning at the same time. Children need one-on-one time daily with their parents. An overwhelming fact for most parents with younger children is that each child needs *approximately 1,000 hours* of connection time before starting school. However, if parents take 10-15 minutes each day to sit with their little ones, reading children's books, talking, and helping them absorb new information, the bonding goal is met. Incorporating lap-time into your child's day is a great way to encourage them to be curious and to instill values of both learning and wisdom.

Your child's imagination will begin to flourish when they start seeing in their minds what they have read. Some children need encouragement to think of their mind like a TV screen where the happenings in a book are viewed. Being able to read is a top priority, whether you are doing it from a book, a computer screen, or a museum plaque.

Learning is about much more than just showing up at school and doing what you are told. Successful people have learned that there is a great deal of fun and tremendous value in growing and learning. Children learn best when education is fun, which proves adults never really grow up because they learn best when it is fun too!

"*Informal education*" is a term used to describe learning that does not happen in a classroom setting. Going places and discussing all you have seen together is informal education at its best. "*Teachable moments*" are the best when parents realize their children are curious and want to know more about a topic — any topic. Those moments of interest are exceptionally good opportunities that parents have to describe their knowledge, thoughts and ideas about how something works. The parents' input is crucial, but it is also essential that they take the time to have discussions which allow them to hear what their children are thinking. Conversations that help parents really connect involve not only finding out what their kids love but why they love it, what they have learned, and how their thoughts are influenced.

People thrive where they feel they can safely ask questions. However, everyone also knows an intensely curious child can drive parents to distraction. It is good to remember that at the heart of a child's endless questions may live the man or woman who God knows will search out ways to change the world. World changers ask a lot of questions and think outside the box. Keeping your children's world safe for asking questions means striving not to become impatient. A busy schedule and impatience deeply affect the level of safety children feel when they want to know something. If parents are too busy to be their children's main source of information, kids will often shut them out of that part of their life and go to someone else. Just being encouraged to discover and learn helps children become life-long learners. Parents have a choice: they can promote curiosity and questions which lead to research and study, or stifle them.

Absorbing information is not only done by reading. As you schedule vacations, TV programs, or important social engagements, be deliberate about investing yourself in your children. It is really worth the energy and effort it takes to put learning activities into your family's life. Remember, your children will define what a family is by what all of you do together.

In the long run, investing time, love and wisdom will help knowledge stick and develop mature discernment in your child that will guide them through life long after you're gone. They will be able to associate the heart-warming memories of time spent together with the life-changing revelation of carrying on a legacy with their own children and grandchildren. Some day they will know in their hearts, ***you are your child's most influential teacher.***

Barbara recently completed writing her book, "Parenting with a Wise Heart." Soft cover distribution available through Aloha Publishing and digital distribution through Amazon and Barnes & Noble.