

## **The Most Important Job**

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When my wife and I were parents of young children, many older adults told us, "Take time for your children now. They'll grow up so quickly."

True words. Good advice. Even though it may seem like the time of diapers, sleepless nights, and runny noses will last forever, once it is over it seems like the baby reached school age overnight.

A child entering kindergarten seems ages away from high school graduation. But most parents of graduating seniors find that the years flew by quicker than they ever dreamed. God planned it that way. Children are to grow up and become responsible adults.

Some parents panic once their children become teen-agers. They complain that their teens are irresponsible, unmanageable and difficult to live with. Although such parents may still be able to influence their children, they have, unfortunately, missed their best opportunity. Teen behavior is largely set long before a child reaches 12 or 13. The most formative years are the first five or six. Parents who raise secure, respectable toddlers are sowing the seeds for responsible, pleasing teen-agers.

Parents whose nests are empty seldom wish that they had spent more time at the office or worked more overtime. But many of them regret they didn't take more walks with their children. Empty nesters seldom regret that they didn't watch more sports on TV. But they sometimes regret they didn't play more ball with their first graders. Parents of grown children seldom regret that they didn't read the newspaper more often, but they are often sorry they didn't read the Bible to their children.

When our three children were all preschoolers, my work occasionally took me away from home for a week or two. Once when I returned home, my wife was in tears. "Why can't I get anything done?" she cried. "All I do is change diapers, cook meals, wash laundry, and wipe runny noses."

Sometime I have answered my wife unthoughtfully, but this time God gave me the right words, "Honey, you are doing something. You are doing the most important job in the world. You are raising our three children."

That little conversation changed us both. My wife never complained again that caring for our children prevented her from getting other things done. Instead, she found new joy in doing life's most important job.

As for me, I learned to be quick to praise her for her decision to stay home and rear our children, instead of entering the work force. When anyone asked what my wife did, I was proud to say, "She's a full-time homemaker."

Mothers of preschoolers have the most important job in the world. Husbands who insist their wives work outside the home ought to realize the significance of their request. When they are nearing the end of their lives, it won't matter a whole lot what kind of a car they drove when they were 30. The brand of shoes they wore and the size of TV they had won't be that important. But what their children and grandchildren are like will mean everything.