

WNR Column 11-20-08

### Kids Need Good Fruit

“...the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self control.” Galatians 5:22-23

There is an age-old debate in the study of child development – that of “nature versus nurture.” Ultimately, the question of whether children are inherently good or whether they are born “savages” who must be tamed, has been addressed with a single conclusion; that children need a combination of warmth and structure in their environment. It is important for our children that they have a peaceful environment in which to grow, that they experience love, joy, gentleness, and goodness in their relationships with adults. It is equally important that they learn the patience, kindness, faithfulness, and self-control necessary for mature, healthy relationships.

### Love

Unconditional love is the foundation of a child’s sense of self worth and a key component of healthy relationships.

### Joy

Being celebrated, believing that one can bring joy into the world, and learning the ability to find joy in the midst of heartache helps children be resilient to adversity.

### Peace

Development is hindered by chaos. Children need a peaceful environment in which to thrive and grow. Children learn what they live – better to learn peace than violence and aggression.

### Patience

Taking time to think before acting helps adults make better decisions, and helps children learn to delay gratification and tolerate frustration – two key aspects of emotional maturity.

### Kindness

People are social creatures. We need each other to live and grow in the world. The opportunity to learn kindness, helps children get their needs met and meet the needs of others.

### Goodness

Being good – it’s not how we act - it’s who we are. Created in God’s image, we are all good. Given free will, we sometimes choose bad behavior. Fostering in our children a true sense of their own goodness helps them see the goodness in others.

### Faithfulness

One of the earliest tasks of development, learning to trust in others, depends on the faithfulness of adults. Faithfulness continues to be an important quality of right relationships throughout our life span.

### Gentleness

Children are born fragile – handle with care. If we display gentleness in our relationships with children, they are not only more likely to emerge safe and healthy, but are less likely to learn violence and aggression.

### Self-Control

Self-control is a sign of maturity and key for success in the world and in relationships. As adults exhibit and teach self-control, children learn that true control lies within themselves, and has little to do with controlling others.

The task of creating an appropriate balance between the warmth and structure our children need can seem a daunting task. The good news for us is that which Paul first proclaimed to the Galatians. When we center ourselves in Christ and open ourselves to the Holy Spirit, the fruits of our labor will be just what our children need...”love, peace, joy, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness, and self-control.”