Building Character—

**Who Will Your Child Become?**

Recently I posted my top 10 tips for parenting success. Now, I am elaborating on each item on the list. Parenting Tip # 5 is this:

Building Character and developing a growth rhythm sets the tone.

When you think about it, being given the gift and blessing of parenting is both awesome and terrifying. Who, among parents of newborns, has not been overwhelmed by the daunting task facing them when they look through the newborn nursery at their brand new bundle of joy? So many adventures to come. So many mis-steps to correct. So much wisdom to impart. So much folly to endure. It has been said, oh yeah, I said it in the intro to my book, **Teachable Moments: Building Blocks of Christian Parenting**, that parenting is the toughest job any of us will ever have for which we have no training.

Scripture in the Christian tradition gives us a hint about the relentless job of parenting. In Proverbs 6:22, Solomon says, “Train your child up in the ways of the Lord so that, when they grow old, He will not depart from them.” Essentially, training your child involves intentionally helping him build character. Just who will your child become, as he grows up with your parenting?

As you embed 3 functions into your daily parenting with your children, you will be promoting character development and developing a rhythm to their positive growth.

First, whenever your child shows problems, first respond with active listening. Trying to understand and convey the feelings behind his behavior both shows respect for what he’s going through, and can lead to teachable moments, which build character.

Second, actively and consistently use The Good Kid Chart (Appendix 4 in my book) as a source of behavior management. Target behaviors listed on the GKC are actually measures of helping your child build character. By definition, they are positive measures of how you want your child to behave. For example, “No yelling” is the negative counterpart to a more positive target behavior, “Use Your Inside Voice.” Also, use of the GKC gets your child involved in listing daily and weekly rewards, as well as consequences. Such involvement helps him own the outcomes, inducing character development.

Finally, when you do have to exact consequences for their egregious behavior use Restrictions That Work (Appendix 8). For example, if your child loses use of his cell phone for a month, start with that restriction as your Judgment. Then monitor his compliance and the rhythm of his growth from this restriction. As he does well, use your Compassion to reduce his restriction and then your Grace to give his cell phone back early because he did so well in handling his restriction. With this format, such restriction is better received and likely contributes to his character development.

From cradle to grave, consistently using these 3 functions in how you parent your child will greatly contribute to their positive character development and enhance their growth rhythm through both good times and bad. They may never actually say it, but your reward for your job well done will be a heartfelt, “thanks,” in who they become.