



Considering Children

Compared to getting in shape, getting out of debt or other similar decisions, one of the biggest goals a married couple can set is starting their family.

Babies are wealth

Babies require a great investment from parents—the expense of their care as well as the opportunity costs resulting from lost income can be daunting even for marriages in a strong financial position. Those costs can seem more overwhelming for couples struggling through an economic downturn. Starting a family requires couples to show good economic stewardship, but having a baby need not be out of reach even in tight times. Unlike so many of the depreciating assets people take on, babies are a source of wealth—delivering returns on investment that are beyond measure.

Babies add meaning and goodness

One of the welcome side effects of the recent economic crunch is that people have been forced to look beyond their wallets in order to experience the truly good things in life. After getting the message for so long that babies stand in the way of exotic vacations and a catalog house filled with cool gadgets, many couples are finding that it's those (often disappointing) pursuits that stand in the way of experiencing the joys of children. While the Biblical passages saying that children are a blessing might seem at odds with the headaches our culture insists children bring, new life continues to offer the wonder and goodness that eludes us.

Babies shape our souls

Babies require great care—especially as they emerge into toddlers, kids and then teenagers. The parenting enterprise is not for the faint of heart. It is grueling at many levels. This can be intimidating for many couples who don't feel very mature yet. But it's in committing to the needs of a new life that couples are stretched into greater maturity. Children shape our souls like few other

things in life, conditioning us to be more other-centered and to take a longer view of life. The demands of children that frighten so many would-be parents provide the crucible that is most likely to bring out the person God designed them to be. Babies are a continuous source of hope.

Many couples reading today's headlines are convinced that this world is too crazy to bring children into it. And you can't blame them. Trying to raise a child in our current culture can feel like trying to raise a flower in the crack of a New York City sidewalk. But while fear and anxiety are a natural emotion for would-be parents, the choice to be fruitful is an enduring and courageous encounter with hope.

The timing of babies matters

Even though couples marry later today and need more time to finish their education and kick off their careers, their window of natural fertility remains fixed. Women today are often surprised to find that their fertility begins its decline when they're in their late twenties, accelerates its drop when they're in their mid-thirties and plummets when they're in their forties. A couple's age also affects their ability to keep up with children. While couples that wait later to get started might have more money in their bank account, they're more likely to find themselves exhausted by parenting much quicker than younger parents are. This is also true for grandparents. Children need grandparents who can get down on the floor to play with them ... and still be able to get back up.

Babies can be good for marriage, really

Marriage therapists today often seek to correct the myth that having a baby will make a couple happier. They point out correctly that babies add tremendous new stress to a marriage and aren't a good prescription for turning a bad marriage into a good one. What couples don't hear enough, however, is that letting their love spill over into a

new life can give them a fresh sense of purpose within their marriage. Parenting will require couples to adjust expectations about their sex life, their sleep patterns and their ability to take off on last minute dates, but the parenting mission can mature and sweeten a marriage over the years when a couple commits to do it “as unto the Lord.”

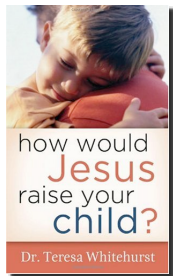
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Unless the LORD builds the house, the builders labor in vain. Unless the LORD watches over the city, the guards stand watch in vain. Children are a heritage from the LORD, offspring a reward from him. Like arrows in the hands of a warrior are children born in one's youth. Blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them. They will not be put to shame when they contend with their opponents in court (Psalm 127:1-5).

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates (Deuteronomy 6:4-9).

And he said: “Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever takes the lowly position of this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me (Matthew 18:3-5).

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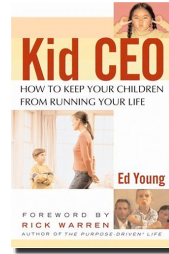
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Dr. Teresa Whitehurst
ISBN: 978-0800787479

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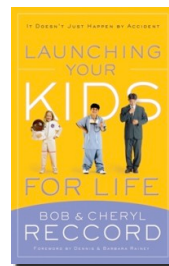
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Bob and Cheryl Reccord
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