

## Trusting God With Your Child in a Non-Christian Environment

by Dennis & Barbara Rainey

**Q: One of the things that you talk about is the need to get our kids into a mission field. You recommend launching them into the mission field of a public school or a baseball team where they will rub shoulders with kids who don't share their values. How can I protect and safeguard my child while launching him forward?**

**Barbara:** I think the key is for parents to be involved. Become familiar with the environment, whether it is a playing field or the local arts center where the child takes voice lessons. Meet the people your child will be spending time with: coaches, teachers, and students. Involvement will require a time commitment on your part. You need to be around and know what is going on in these new environments.

Interact with your child as he encounters new value systems. When he begins to recognize that people have different moral standards than those his family holds, explain to him how to respond and how to act around those kids.

**Dennis:** Later, as you raise a child through adolescence, you will have to learn to let go of him. You will have to learn to trust God with him outside the home just like you trust God with him within the home. Once when I was praying with a group of parents and children, I prayed, "Lord, please protect these kids in our absence." One of the children said to me afterwards, "Who do you think protects us in your presence?"

God has given us the responsibility to protect our children, but ultimately it is God who protects all of us regardless of where we are. God protects our kids when we are watching them and when we are not watching them. Raising our children to be missionaries in a hostile environment, we will have to learn to trust God as we watch them march off into new situations. God is at work increasing our faith while also increasing our children's faith.

At the same time, you need to carefully consider what is taking place in that circumstance or situation. Assess the element of risk in the situation by noting whom the child will be spending time with and where he will be. I would not send my child into a situation I judged to be truly dangerous.

**Barbara:** I think generally it is a little easier for fathers to release their kids than it is for mothers. Watching fellow mothers struggle with this issue, I have seen a tendency for moms to want to protect. Our role since giving birth has been to protect, shelter, and nurture our children. As we bring our children into adolescence, our role doesn't change, but our perspective should. We need to learn how to allow them more freedom so that they can develop their own faith.

Finding this new balance between freedom and protection is really tough. Husband and wife should discuss it together and be influenced by each other. Dad may lean towards being too permissive and Mom lean towards being too protective, but together they can find a balance.

**Dennis:** We need to continually cultivate a biblical perspective on parenting. Psalm 127:3-4 says, "Behold, children are a gift of the Lord. The fruit of the womb is a reward. Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, so are the children of one's youth." Arrows were never intended to be left in a quiver. They were designed for battle, to be launched toward a spiritual target and to make a difference in this world.

I believe that in our culture today we are often more concerned about the material success

of our children than we are about their spiritual success. We ought to be praying for a battlefield mentality, a mission mindset. That is our biblical role as parents. We're to be raising spiritual missiles to have an impact in our culture. Part of the reason God designed the Christian family unit was to reach neighborhoods and communities and to effectively bring others into the faith.