

## Family Fusion – Divine Design

***“Train up a child in the way he should go [and in keeping with his individual gift or bent], and when he is old he will not depart from it.” Proverbs 22:6 AMP***

The unspoken pronoun is the word YOU! You...train up a child. The *you* could have broad application. **First** to the **parents**, but then to anyone who has opportunity to touch a child’s life – to be involved in the shaping process – **to put your hands on the clay.**

Teacher, mentor (Illus.- Chris working with *at risk* youth), faith coach, R. rangers, Mpact, youth ministry, children’s ministry, etc.

**First, let me say to the parents that you are the stewards of a child’s early in life opportunities!**

Let me explain: The word “train” is an interesting word. It does mean to discipline, but ***Train* also means to initiate and to narrow.**

The goal is training a child in the “way” they should go. **Way** = a course of life or an action. The way “he/she” should go tells us = **each child is unique so they cannot be trained alike!**

Follow this thought with me for a moment. As a parent, you are most likely the first one to expose your child to the many opportunities and experiences of life; **you are the initiator.** Be it sports, music, reading, play, learning, helping, and spiritual experiences. Then, based on what you observe you act to narrow, restrict, and provide boundaries and opportunities for their choices.

I want to talk about divine design in two areas: Vocationally and Spiritually. Let’s focus first on the most important:

## 1. Their Spiritual Opportunities and Experiences.

A teacher asked her class: *“Why do you children believe in God?”* One little girl replied, *“I guess it just runs in our family.”*

That’s very true. Not that we inherit faith, but faith does have a way of becoming a family heritage that is passed from generation to generation by how we **train** the next generation in God. This is part of the divine design.

**Every child is born with the capacity to know God, but those who touch their lives must develop that.**

The word “train” in the Hebrew has a timeless picture attached to it. It’s the picture of a mother bringing her newborn to her breast and training the child where to find the source of nourishment they need. It is the idea of touching the palate – **It’s giving a child a taste for that which sustains life.**

Now, it’s not too hard to understand how that applies spiritually. Basically, you want your child to learn early in life to get a taste for God, to learn how to enjoy God, to be trained in how to get spiritual nourishment, how to find what they need for life. As a parent, you must initiate and narrow (You limit their choices.)

**The big value? When they learn where to go to get their spiritual needs met, they will also be learning about what does not satisfy!**

Let me suggest parents; that disciplining a child by denying them opportunities for spiritual nourishment and growth is not in their best interest, nor in yours! **Deny the things that stimulate wrong appetites! Does that sound like biblical wisdom?**

You don't train a child not to eat dirt by denying them good nourishment. Rather, you narrow their choices so they can learn how much better one is than the other.

Spiritually, you want to touch their palate with God! What a blessing for your child and for you if they learn early in life to enjoy God! (**How? Music, biblical and truth application story books, family prayer and weaving the Bible into life, church and ministries, serving, nature, rangers, mpact, youth, etc.**)

**Question: What are some ways you can give your child a taste for God and develop their capacity to know God?**

What you want to avoid is teaching them that faith in God is about rules and duty. What you want them to learn is that faith in God is about desire – **my heart was made for Him!** And it's about love and joy and relationship.

Yes, that results in rules or boundaries because just as a wise parent narrows the choices available to their child, so God narrows our choices. He doesn't say "*Try it all and tell me what you like?*" Remember, he narrowed the choices for Adam and Eve, but He also gave them a lot of freedom. It's all yours...except!

**The spiritual choices your child makes are going to shape their lives, and also guide them in the choices they make. So, initiate and narrow the choices and train them by giving them many opportunities to get a taste for God.**

**Secondly: 2. Their Vocational Opportunities and Experiences**

You may be thinking, well right now they are still in diapers. That may be true, but even at that phase of life you can begin to see some of the unique divine design that God has gifted to them.

I like to think of it this way: **Every child has either head, hand or heart gifts...or a combination with one being predominate.**

A wise parent is not only observing this, but is also trying to guide and provide for the discovery and development of a child's gifts.

And listen: **The gifts God has given them may not be what you planned for their life!**

**ILLUS.** – Your son has head gifts but you want him to have hand gifts so he can be a wide receiver for the Steelers! Or, you want her to be an attorney so she can make lots of money, but she has heart gifts and wants to be a nurse. As a parent you want to help your child discover what God has planned for their lives. **What does God want?**

**Remember what I said earlier: Parents are stewards of a child's early in life opportunities.**

**VIDEO:** Casey Fantuzzo

**Head Gifts:** the child is inquisitive, loves to learn, wants to know = knowledge. (Illus. – If you hate to read, you probably are not called to be a teacher!) **Do not hang labels like “nerd” or “egghead” on such a child!**

**Hand Gifts:** the child is always taking things apart, building things, loves to learn practical skills, fixing things (Illus. – Grandson Lucas) Note: If a girl has hand gifts sometimes people label them as a tom-boy. **Don't do that!**

**Heart Gifts:** the child is compassionate and brings home the birds with the broken wing, and befriends the children others pick on, and champions for the less fortunate. They may want to be a nurse or a social worker or work in some other care-

**giving role. Note: If a boy has heart gifts, do not label him as a sissy!**

Here are some ways we tried to provide opportunities for discovery for our children: educational trips – Smithsonian, camping – nature, working on projects, serving others, mission trips, music, learning about vocations: missionary, nurse, business person, etc. We didn't pressure them to fulfill our vision for their lives, but when we saw their areas of interest, we invested in that. We paid for ministry, mission and serving opportunities. We let them try different kinds of sports. When we saw their interest in music, we bought a piano and invested in lessons.

**We didn't let them quit when they got discouraged! Don't cave in to the complaining! You are the parent, so help provide the discipline they need for staying focused!**

### **Some Thoughts for Parents:**

- **Use your parental influence wisely.**
- **Ask God to help you discern your child's gifts, and what they need from you in order to develop those gifts.**
- **Nudge, direct, give them a taste for good things, encourage what you see developing with praise, invest, and don't cave it too quickly and let them choose the easy path just because something has become difficult. You are not doing them any favors by going ahead of them and trying to fill in all the potholes in life's road!.**
- **On the other hand, when it becomes painfully obvious that your child is not designed to be a wide receiver, or a brain surgeon and you discern that they are not pursuing the**

**“way they should go,” release them to go after a new dream for their life.**

- **Avoid extremes like living vicariously through your child and making them fulfill your dreams of what you wish you had done with your life.**
- **Question: Whose dream are you living; your dream or God’s dream for your child?**
- **This is not about earning power; it is about the divine design for your child.**
- **Avoid hanging labels on your child because they are not meeting your expectations.**
- **Practice Romans 12:1- 2 by giving your child the freedom to test and prove what God’s good, pleasing and perfect will for them looks like.**

**VIDEO: Randy Estelle**

**In one way or another, you are putting your hands on the clay of a child’s life. How will you do that? You need God’s help because the divine design is 1) that every child gets to know God, and then 2) that they have someone investing in helping them discover and develop their gifts and calling.**

**You and I will be that someone for our own children, as well as for children whose lives we touch. Touch them for God!**