

10 things my parents did right

By the age of two I had mastered the art of willfulness. I used to stand at the top of the stairs and defy the patient instructions of my mother to "go to bed." Instead, I would wait until she had walked away and then release an indignant cry of rebellion: "Eghnt!" This headstrong nature had the ability to reduce my mother to tears and prayer.

Today, I am still a passionate and persistent person. I now try, however, to use those gifts to honor God rather than to advance myself. I thank my parents for this development. Their first act of grace was allowing me to live past my toddler years. The following is a sampling of other ways in which they trained this child in the way she should go:

1. Allowed me to tuck my T-shirt into my spandex pants

I may have looked ridiculous, but my mother and father loved me despite the quirky ways in which I chose to express myself. I grew up knowing that my heart mattered more than my clothes.

2. Drove an old woman to church

Her name was Helen and I hated her perfume as much as the extra ten minutes it took to pick her up. Yet this was just one way my parents taught me what it looks like to love and serve others, even at the inconvenience of self.

3. Left notes in my lunch box

They also never missed an opportunity to attend a soccer game, sew me an Easter dress, or pray for me as I drove back to college. Love came in the form of words, hugs, and tiny acts.

4. Kissed in the kitchen

Ok, I admit I still avert my eyes whenever it happens, but it is comforting to see my parents physically show their love for one another. Because of this security, I never doubted their love for me.

5. Mowed the lawn with Peter

Peter was a mentally challenged man who had a love of things with engines. Some Saturdays, my dad would lay aside his afternoon to cut the grass with him. As I watched, I saw that the value of people does not lie in their perceived usefulness, but because each bears the image of God.

6. Visited every historic site on the Eastern seaboard

When both your parents are teachers, school doesn't end in June and education becomes a lifelong pursuit. From our nation's capital to fish hatcheries, my parents saw everything as an opportunity to learn and grow . . . even on family vacations.

7. Told me stories

My sister and I grew up hearing the stories of our parents' struggles, imperfections, and desire to seek God. They never hid their mistakes. Instead, they continually testified to the changing power of God's grace in their lives.

8. Ate dinner together

Almost every night our family gathered to eat and talk. My sister and I have become incredibly proficient communicators. Furthermore, we grew up knowing our thoughts, feelings, and beliefs mattered.

9. Praised me for who I was

My parents have always been able to see value and worth in my life. Even in college as I struggled to pick a major and find direction, they always supported and praised me for the strengths I had.

10. Have a vision of who I could become

While my parents have always affirmed who I am, they were never willing to let me stay that way. It has been their desire and prayer that I would continue to become more like Christ and take hold of all he has for me.

—Katie Kuplin '08 is a senior human development and family science major. Her sister, Becky Kuplin '07, graduated from Messiah with a family consumer science education degree. They are the thankful daughters of Tom and Ann Kuplin, of Ogdensburg, New Jersey.

