

The Parenting Parachute

In 1972 a stewardess named Vesna Vulovic was flying over Czechoslovakia. Her plane exploded and she fell, without a parachute, over 33,000 feet into a snowy forest. Amazingly, she survived.

In World War II Sergeant Nick Alkemade's plane was disabled by gunfire. It burst into flames and his parachute melted. He decided to jump out without a parachute rather than go down with the plane. He fell over 18,000 feet and only suffered a sprained ankle.

This is great news for the rest of us. If you ever want to get out of an airplane for any reason, just jump out. Because it *is* possible to survive. In fact, I came across a couple of other stories similar to these. Just think of all the money that has been wasted over the years buying parachutes! Who needs them?

Unfortunately this is the logic that we often use with our families. For example, we look at families who are not using good parenting tools and yet have kids who seem to turn out pretty well. Then we look at families who use good parenting methods and whose kids don't turn out so well. Because of these observations we think that parenting doesn't make much difference.

Why would I say that many people don't think parenting makes a difference? Because I see parents *acting* as if their parenting doesn't matter. Our *actions* follow our *beliefs*. When parents do not correct their children, when they let them run in the absence of any authority, when they prioritize their own interests over their children, it appears that they don't think parenting really matters.

But that is simply not true. It is just like looking at Vesna, the stewardess, and saying that parachutes don't make a difference. That's not right! Obviously, your best chance of survival when falling out of an airplane is to use a parachute. Likewise, following godly principles gives you your best opportunity to have a good family.

Following God's principles is not just a matter of personal preference. It's not like you can just do whatever you want as a parent or spouse and get the outcome you desire with your family. That is just wishful thinking (or maybe it's not thinking at all)! Following God's principles in parenting and marriage (and life for that matter) is your best opportunity for a great outcome.

What does it mean to follow God's principles in your parenting? That's probably the wrong question to ask. We need to follow God's principles in our *lives*, and our kids will benefit from the resulting change in *all* we do.

I remember a motherhood seminar my wife gave a few years ago. The women seemed to enjoy it and she covered a lot of great parenting material. A few weeks later she learned that one of the moms that had been at her seminar was smoking pot at a party. I guess Kathleen had forgotten to mention that smoking pot could have a negative influence on your kids. (Ha. Ha.) In other words, she covered lots of parenting details, but some people were still missing the bigger picture. They were not putting God first in *every* area of their lives. When we yield our lives fully to God we will eventually see the fruit of that in our parenting, and in every area of life. We need to quit focusing on the successes and failures of others and entrust our lives to Him. God's ways will work!