



Serve God Out of Design, Not Duty

By Rick Warren

Most people these days are moving so fast that they don't have time to listen to their heart any more.

The Bible says that God wants you to listen to your heart. He wants you to look at what you're made to do, and then you'll know what He wants you to do. But you've got to slow down.

The singing group, Alabama, used to sing this song: *"I'm in a hurry to get things done. I rush and rush until life's no fun. All I really got to do is live and die, but I'm in a hurry and don't know why. Can't be late. I leave in plenty of time, shaking hands with the clock. I can't stop. I'm on a roll, and I'm ready to rock. I hear a voice that says I'm running behind. I better pick up my pace. It's a race, and there ain't no room for someone in second place."*

That describes most people today in America. They're speeding with no direction. But God wants you to slow down and listen to your heart. Romans 12:3 says, **"Be honest in your estimate of yourselves"** (NLT).

What I suggest you do is get alone with God and ask these questions: "What do I love to do? What do I dream of doing? What fascinates me? What can I talk about, think about, and study all day and not get bored? Where have I been most effective in my life?"

I once baptized an 80-year-old woman after a service at Saddleback Church. She wanted to be a small group host. That's pretty cool — an 80-year-old small group host! She said, "I just wish I learned years ago that we serve God out of our design, not out of duty."

I wish everybody could learn that truth. That's what SHAPE — your **S**piritual gifts, **h**earth, **a**bilities, **p**ersonality, and **e**xperiences — is all about. We serve God out of our design and the way he shaped us.

We serve God not out of duty but because we love him. Because when you do what he wired you to do, it brings glory to him.

That's the way to live. Don't serve God out of force or guilt. Serve him out of delight and gratitude. Make a careful exploration of who you are and the work you've been given — in other words, what God put you on Earth to do.



This article is by David Popenoe of The Marriage Project at Rutgers University, leaders in ground-breaking research on marriage with a great track record nationally. It contains valuable information that everyone can benefit from. This is Part 1 of 2.

Ten Important Research Findings On Marriage - Part 1

By David Popenoe, Ph.D., The National Marriage Project, Rutgers University

1. Marrying as a teenager is the highest known risk factor for divorce.

People who marry in their teens are two to three times more likely to divorce than people who marry in their twenties or later.

2. People are most likely to find a future marriage partner through an introduction by family, friends, or acquaintances.

Despite the romantic notion that people meet and fall in love through chance or fate, evidence suggests that social networks are important in bringing together individuals of similar interests and backgrounds. According to a large-scale national survey, almost 60% of married people were introduced by family, friends, co-workers or other acquaintances.

3. People who are similar in their values, backgrounds and life goals are more likely to have a successful marriage.

Opposites may attract but they may not live together harmoniously as married couples. People who share common backgrounds and similar social networks are better suited as marriage partners than people who are very different in their backgrounds and networks.

4. Women have a significantly better chance of marrying if they do not become single parents before marrying.

Having a child out of wedlock reduces the chances of ever marrying. Despite the growing numbers of potential marriage partners with children, one study noted, "having children is still one of the least desirable characteristics a potential marriage partner can possess." The only characteristic ranked lower is the inability to hold a steady job.

5. Women and men who are college-educated are more likely to marry, and less likely to divorce, than people with lower levels of education.

Predictions of lifelong singlehood for college-educated women have proven false. Although the first generation of college-educated women (those who earned baccalaureate degrees in the 1920s) married less frequently than their less well-educated peers, the reverse is true today. College-educated women's chances of marrying are better than less well-educated women. However, the growing gender gap in college education may make it more difficult for college women to find similarly well-educated men in the future. This is already a problem for African-American female college graduates, who greatly outnumber African-American male college graduates.

Parenting Tip

Ten Worst Discipline Mistakes Parents Make... and What To Do Instead

by James Windell

(This week will be mistakes 6 to 10, last week was 1 to 5.)

Most good parents realize that there is always much more for them to learn about being good parents.

In a perfect world, parents would all have boundless energy, patience, tolerance, understanding and flexibility. But no one is perfect. So it also helps to have a wide variety of practical skills.

Here is a list of common mistakes parents make when disciplining their children and some alternatives for what to do instead:

6. Shaming And Belittling

Parents often don't realize they make remarks that cause their children to feel smaller, inadequate, less intelligent or more insecure.

Examples: "Why are you acting like such a baby?" "That's the dumbest thing you ever said." "If you can't behave, I'm leaving forever."

Better: Monitor your language and be aware how often you say positive, versus negative, things. Make sure you are dealing adequately with your own feelings

so they don't spill over onto your kids.

7. Setting Traps

Parents who tend to be punitive and authoritarian often try to catch their children in a lie to prove a point.

Example: You find a note in your child's room that refers to a friend's smoking. A trap-setter says, "Do you or your friends smoke? No? What about this note?" As a result, you have a defensive child who learns to lie, conceal and mistrust parents.

Better: Straightforward, trusting inquiry. "I found this note in your room that concerns me. Can we talk about it?" Not everything children write is true.

8. Imposing Excessive Guilt

Parents who were raised in dysfunctional families often make the mistake of implying their children are responsible for the circumstances of the parent's life.

Examples: "Why do you always upset your father?... I devoted my life to you, and now... If you loved me, you'd do this." The child comes to feel responsible for the problems of the world.

Better: Examine your own codependent relationships with your parents, spouse and others, with a therapist, support group or counselor.

9. Physical Punishment

The purpose of discipline (from the word disciple, a student or follower) is to teach the child to have self-discipline. This is never accomplished by physical force.

Trap: Parents who hit or physically punish their children instill hostility and resentment rather than respect.

Outcome: Usually the behavior is not prevented from recurring, and great damage is done to the parent-child relationship.

Physical punishment tends to repeat in families. If you frequently lose control or routinely hit children as a method of discipline, examine your own childhood. Parents who regularly strike their children in frustration or anger usually lack alternative skills, and often have unrealistic expectations of their children at different ages.

Recommended: Get developmental information on normal child or teen behaviors, and improve parenting skills through many books, magazines, videotapes, support groups, workshops and other widely available resources.

10. Coercion

This is the use of physical force to get the child to do what you want.

Example: Pushing or dragging a frightened child into the doctor's office. The parent is asserting a need for control rather than responding to the child's feelings.

Result: The child resists.

Better: Help the child express his feelings: "Is there something scary in the doctor's office?" Give the child a choice: "Do you want me to hold your hand, or do you want to go in by yourself?" This gives the child a sense of control over the situation, but leaves no question that the child is going into the office.

Reprinted from **Bottom Line/Personal**, Vol. 13, No. 22, Nov. 30, 1992, Pp 1-2. James Windell is a psychotherapist specializing in family problems, and a clinical psychologist for the Oakland County, Michigan, juvenile court's psychological clinic. He is the author of **Discipline: A Sourcebook of 50 Failsafe Techniques for Parents**.

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