**RAISING CHILDREN WHO AREN’T LAZY:**

**TEACHING *STEWARDSHIP* OF TIME AND TALENT**

 *Laziness steals from people*. It takes away their time, energy, optimism, confidence, spontaneity, joy, mental focus, and their zest for life. In return, it leaves them with more depression, boredom, discouragement, and addictions. It damages life for everyone around them.

 Children naturally make excuses for their laziness. Most parents don’t want lazy children, but they often believe these excuses, and start doing their kids’ homework or chores for them. Instead, you can teach your children that everyone’s opportunities and abilities are *invisible* *gifts from their creator God*. Just as with visible gifts, the more time and energy your kids put into them, the more they will enjoy them. Adults will enjoy them too: they’ll coach up your children’s abilities, and give them *more* opportunities.

 Children need their parents to model healthy attitudes and lifestyles, *balancing work, rest, and recreation,* celebrating how each is needed to enhance the others. Let them see your work be a vocation that along with the money gives you joy, friendships, challenge, and fulfillment from helping others.

***Preschool Years***

 If toddlers who can speak are indulged for whining, they won’t ever learn what they want, or how to ask for it. This laziness stops when parents say *“Don’t whine. Use your words. Ask me for what you need.”* And if whining continues, parents need to calmly yet firmly close a door between them, and stay disengaged until words are used appropriately. This requires finding the peace and courage not to cave to your anxiety. Preschoolers really want to please you, so tell them how proud and happy you are with every helpful, creative, and self-reliant thing they do.

***Elementary School***

 Here are some verbal comebacks for children’s lazy behavior. For their **boredom**: *“I enjoyed playing with you before, but I need to get back to work. You can figure out what you need to do now.”* For **procrastinating chores**: *“The sooner you get started, the easier and more fun it will be.”* For **fatigue**: *“If you’re so tired, you can go to bed earlier tonight.”* Be consistent in giving them what their behavior says they need, not what their words demand. More mature 10-year-olds can do chores for small allowances.

***Middle School***

 These are the best years to give your kids **a work ethic and an attitude of *stewardship****.* Help them to see their talents, passions, and opportunities as gifts (see the second paragraph above). **Manage your own passions and opinions** to show your children both love and respect (see the last paragraph below). At this age many make professions of faith, and you doing these things helps them see God as a giver of abilities and opportunities who loves *and* challenges them. Teach them that until they learn to use their time and talents to bless themselves *and* others, both now *and* down the road, they will be disappointed in this life *and* the next. Teach them that money earned works the same way: money that’s invested and shared with others will grow, and what’s indulged selfishly will never seem to be enough.

 For young adolescent **boredom,** you could tell them to think of all the ways they could bless others *and* themselves right now*.*  For **exhaustion,** tell them that mental and physical exercise creates energy. **Too busy**: tell them to write down where all their time goes, and explain to you if they think the big chunks are really the most important. **Screen addictions**: tell them that their phone/video games have taken them away from life and other people. You’ll give their screens back when they’ve learned to enjoy real life again.**Resentment for your discipline:** Tell them,*“It’s not me you don’t like, it’s yourself. You’ll like yourself better when you stop wasting your time and talent.”*

***High School***

 Some verbal comebacks for **boredom in late adolescence:** *“What you’re doing won’t be worth much, and it won’t be much fun for you either, until you put your heart, mind, body, and soul into it.”* **Apathy:** *“You say you don’t care, but deep down, we both know you do.”* **Wanting to quit something important:** *“Your family and best friends are proud of you for trying and learning new ways to make the world a better place for us all.”*

 In short, remember that when you respond to laziness by being tense, critical, or guilty, *your children are downloading their negativity into you,* and that only rewards it. Instead, be calm, brief, and pleasant, and then disengage with a smile until they bring themselves out of it. This is the best way to *inspire and reward their enthusiasm for life.*