

Who Would Have Thought?

by Carl McMurray

Results of a recent study from Mississippi State University, working with the parents of more than 16,000 kids brings us BIG news indeed. The study on self-control compared the scores of children exhibiting poor or unhappy behavior and how well they respected and worked with peers, to parents' statements on how frequently they attended worship, talked with their children about religion, and argued about religion in the home. Two main conclusions seemed to stand out.

- 1) The kids whose parents attended worship services, especially when both parents did so frequently, and talked with their children about religion, were rated by parents and teachers as having better self-control, social skills, and approaches to learning.
- 2) When parents argued frequently about religion, the children were more likely to have problems. Religion seemed to "hurt" if faith was a source of conflict or tension in the family.

Researchers credited the good influence of religion for three reasons.

- 1) Religious networks provide social support to parents, helping to improve their parenting skills. Also, children who are brought into such networks hear the same message from other adults that they hear in their own home, thus reaffirming the importance of the message.
- 2) The types of values that circulate in religious congregations tend to be self-sacrificing and pro-family. This is important to how parents relate to their children and how the kids develop in response.
- 3) Lastly, religious congregations impart sacred meaning and significance to parenting.

Of course it doesn't take a university study for Christians to see the importance of following God's value system in the home, rather than the world's. Just turn the above three reasons around to see the values that most of the world is teaching today. 1) Abdicate responsibility for parenting to schools, government, and child care officials instead of learning parenting skills oneself. 2) Encourage kids to think that the family revolves around them instead of teaching them service. And, 3) mock family values by encouraging unwed parenting, divorce, materialism, and homosexual agendas.

Ephesians 6:1-4 does not say it all, but it certainly starts the relationship of parenting, children, and spirituality on the right track for everybody involved. The one who built us has provided the manual for proper operation. Who would have thought?