

THE EXTRA POINT

BY JERRY ROBERTS



239 We Need to Talk to Our Kids Differently

It's natural for parents to want their kids to live better lives than they did. I certainly feel that way. The question is what can parents do to help that process along? I'm Jerry Roberts and I've got a few ideas on that, next, on The Extra Point.

Someone told me a story about a kindergarten teacher who was walking around the classroom to check each child's work as they drew pictures based upon a story she has told them. "What are you drawing?" he asked one girl. She said, "I'm drawing God."

The teacher was surprised by that and replied, "But no one knows what God looks like." The little girl replied, "They will in a minute."

What's the problem? The teacher was expecting the girl to draw a puppy, fish, butterfly or something else that was in the story. The girl jumped outside the box and visualized a God who created them. The teacher then suggested that she draw another picture, this time about one of those creatures. Can you see a problem?

Besides any faith-based concerns, the teacher was encouraging the child to conform to what is expected, to what the people who design curriculum say is the norm. I'll tell you right now, I don't want my kid to conform in that manner. I want him to obey laws, to be a good citizen, a caring person, to respect his elders, and that includes teachers — but I also want him to think for himself.

The trouble is, our school systems — and I don't mean just Guam's DOE — were all designed to churn out industrial workers who played by all the rules and didn't go their own way. Obedience and conformity were the keys, not creative thought. Fit in, don't make waves, graduate, get a job, make babies and raise them to do the same. Rinse and repeat.

I'm sorry, the future called me and told me it will demand more of them. What worked 100 years ago doesn't work today and isn't going to cut it tomorrow. Kids need to know that and since it's not going to come from the schools, it has to come from us. One way to get that ball rolling is to talk to them differently than we have before. Here's an example:

Many of us ask the old and tired question, "What did you learn in school today?" Kids generally hate the question and if you've experienced what I have, the answer is often, "Nothing." I stopped asking that question. Instead, I now ask, "What surprised you today?"...or "Did you disagree with anything?"

Other questions might be based on overall achievement, "What did you accomplish this week?...or "Was there anything you could have done better?" I caught a note about what one father regularly asks his daughter..."What was your best failure this week?" We're afraid of failing and we pass that onto our children. Kids shouldn't worry about failure, they should charge forward and challenge themselves.

Love them unconditionally, teach them right from wrong, ground them morally, ethically, and spiritually. Be the example of what we hope they will become. Help them to develop their creative tools and problem solving abilities? Sounds like a lot? It is a lot, but is anything more worth the effort?

That's The Extra Point. Get out there and make something good happen today. For 93.3 and the Ray Gibson Show, I'm Jerry Roberts.

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