Smart Money Smart Kids
Raising the Next Generation to Win with Money
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“Train up a child . . .”
PROVERBS 22:6
PRAISE FOR SMART MONEY SMART KIDS

When it comes to great parenting, Ramsey and Cruze have hit the nail on the head with *Smart Money Smart Kids*. Every good parent should teach his child how to manage money and live responsibly, but until now, there was no manual. This is a top priority read for every parent.

— MEG MEEKER, M.D., author of the national bestseller, *Strong Fathers Strong Daughters*

This valuable guide, from two different perspectives—that of the parent and that of the child—is a great resource for families. It’s chock-full of easy, practical, and smart ideas on how to raise productive, happy, and money-savvy kids. We’ll definitely take it to heart!

— BRAD PAISLEY AND KIMBERLY WILLIAMS-PAISLEY
Grammy Award-winning artist / actress, director, and producer

One of the bedrock foundations of the Robertson family is passing on values to your children and teaching them how to expand a great legacy. There is not a better family than the Ramseys to teach the importance of passing on the value of handling money and the wisdom of building the right financial legacy. Dave and Rachel show how powerful a family can be when they work together, teach responsibility, and share with others what works and what doesn’t. This book is Miss Kay approved!

— MISS KAY ROBERTSON, matriarch of the Robertson family from A&E’s *Duck Dynasty*
Thank you, Dave and Rachel, for this rock-solid game plan to teach our kids the value of working, spending, saving, and giving as they grow into adults with financial confidence and integrity.

— ELISABETH HASSELBECK, co-host of Fox & Friends and best-selling author

Finally someone’s written the perfect book to help me prepare my children for a strong financial future. In their book, Smart Money Smart Kids, Dave Ramey and his daughter Rachel Cruze masterfully equip parents to train their children. As a father to six kids, I strongly urge every parent to read this book, apply these principles, and change their family’s legacy.


Contained in the pages of this book is the information you and I have been waiting for all our lives. In Smart Money Smart Kids, the father-daughter team of Dave Ramsey and Rachel Cruze moves miles beyond financial theory or interesting ideas. Instead, they provide proof of principles about money that, when harnessed, produce the power to change our families for generations to come. Drop everything. Read this one now.


I can’t imagine a more practical book on a more needed topic. Nor can I imagine a better team to write it. Thanks, Dave and Rachel. We will put your work to good use!

— MAX LUCADO, best-selling author of You’ll Get Through This
Practical, relevant, and encouraging. My only wish is that I had this twenty years ago when we were raising our three sons!

— STASI AND JOHN ELDREDGE, New York Times best-selling authors of Captivating and Wild at Heart

For years, our friend Dave Ramsey has taught us, inspired us, and at times threatened us to get our financial house in order. As if that wasn’t enough, now he wants to brainwash our kids as well! And I’m so glad he does. In Smart Money Smart Kids, Dave and his extraordinary daughter Rachel Cruze team up to help us begin creating healthy financial family traditions. You’re going to laugh, cry, and then come up with a plan to raise money-smart kids—a plan that will allow the generation coming along behind you to be ahead of you in one of the most critical arenas of life.

— ANDY STANLEY, senior pastor, North Point Ministries

Dave Ramsey has created a financial system and tools that, if followed, will SAVE our economy. His daughter Rachel has been tutored in that gospel since birth. This book should be required reading for every parent that doesn’t want to spend their retirement asking their 20-something-year-old child when they are going to move out and get a job!

— SHAY CARL, YouTube personality and co-founder of Maker Studios

Dave Ramsey has more practical insight into money management than anybody on the planet.

— PASTOR RICK WARREN, founding pastor, Saddleback Church, P.E.A.C.E. Plan
It’s no surprise that Dave Ramsey and his daughter, Rachel, have put together a powerful book with practical ideas. With seven children in the Miller home, we’re implementing Smart Money Smart Kids tactics and strategies and getting outstanding results!

— JOHN G. MILLER, author of QBQ! The Question Behind the Question, Outstanding!, and Parenting the QBQ Way

We have had the pleasure of knowing Dave Ramsey and his daughter Rachel Cruze since we moved to Nashville. You should know that after hearing Dave on the radio all these years that they actually live their lives the way he inspires us to live ours. Now Rachel joins her dad in the family business and writes this book that will help our children better understand money and how to build their lives with a richer understanding of financial responsibility. They talk the talk and walk the walk. Let’s share this book with our kids and inspire them to run for Congress.

— TRACIE AND SCOTT HAMILTON

If you want to impart skills to your children in spending, saving, and giving, look no further than Smart Money Smart Kids! Dave and Rachel brilliantly present their plan with stories and hard-earned wisdom that will keep you flipping the pages for more. This book is a must-read for every parent wanting to extend grace while instilling the unchanging axioms of money management.

— EMERSON EGGERICHHS, PH.D.,
author of Love and Respect in the Family
Smart Money  
Smart Kids  

Raising the Next Generation to Win with Money  

Dave Ramsey  
Rachel Cruze
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**Introduction**

**Dave:** The first group I ever spoke to about how to handle money was a Rotary Club with forty-three people in the audience. I used an overhead projector, and I actually had hair. That was a long time ago, many air miles ago, and several million people in audiences ago. When I finished my big presentation that I had practiced for hours in front of the mirror, I walked to a table in the back of the room to sell copies of my little self-published book, *Financial Peace*, for twelve dollars each.

After I covered the basics of money (which is what I still do), everyone at the seminar agreed that common sense is not really all that common. I’m sure as that first person—a middle-aged woman—walked up to the book table, she saw a young speaker relieved that his big speech was finished. I will never forget her comment. Holding my little book, she looked at me and said, “Dave, that was great information. Why don’t parents teach their
SMART MONEY SMART KIDS

children about money? Why don’t we teach basic money skills like this in schools? Our kids need to know this information.”

She was right. This mom knew she had never been taught how money works, and she felt inept. She knew she could learn and work toward a better understanding of money, but she also had a sense of sadness knowing that she had not taught her children about money. Nor had anyone else.

For the last several decades as I have done media, spoken to millions in audiences, and traveled America, that scene and those questions have been repeated thousands of times—“Why don’t we teach our children common-sense money principles?”

Virtually all of us teach our children about things in which we feel competent. I have a friend whose dad is an excellent mechanic. That guy spent hours talking cars, laying under them or leaning over them. The dad and son built engines, played with gears, and did brake repairs every weekend and most evenings. And when they weren’t working on something mechanical together, they were talking about it. Is it any wonder that my friend is a serious gearhead? He loves anything with a motor, and he is great at it. It is a family tradition.

I have another friend whose father was a two-term governor of our state and was the youngest governor in our state’s history. So my buddy was a little boy living in the Governor’s Mansion. That family spent most of their energy, time, and dinner conversations on politics or public service. He literally cut his teeth on politics. Just by being present, he was taught by osmosis. Is it any wonder that he loves politics, became a U.S. congressman, ran for mayor, and served in multiple high-ranking public service offices? He loves anything having to do with public service. It is a family tradition.

I have another friend whose mother is a well-known author.
... You finish the story. I have another friend whose father was always starting businesses, making them successful, then selling them. ... You finish the story. I have another friend whose father loves aircraft, piloting, and aircraft history. ... You finish the story.

We all have a family tradition. Sometimes it is a sad legacy, one that you work not to repeat. Children are sponges—they are going to absorb whatever is around them, so we need to be intentional about what surrounds them. The good news is you can choose your family tradition for the next generation. It is a choice.

People with wealth—who also have a healthy understanding of wealth—don’t obsess about money or worship money. They are, however, intentional about how it is handled, and they make sure their children know how to handle money. It is a family tradition.

When my wife, Sharon, and I went broke, lost everything, and filed for bankruptcy, we were two twenty-eight-year-olds with a toddler and a brand-new baby. I did stupid things with money, which wrecked that portion of my life. When I discovered common-sense, biblically based financial principles and applied them, our lives started turning around and we began to win with money. As we got to where we could breathe, the first thought we had was to make sure financial stupidity never happened to the Ramsey family again. The second thought was to safeguard the next generation. We declared not only that we would never be in that situation again, but also that we would permanently sear proper money principles into our children’s beings so they would never be in the same situation. We declared that we would change our family tree.

So Sharon and I, that scared and scarred young couple, made the declaration that where money was concerned, we would start a new family tradition—a tradition of money knowledge, money character traits, and wealth. The good news is, it worked. Our lives
and family tree have been changed because we have raised three money-smart kids.

This book is about you starting a new family tradition with money. Rachel and I are going to teach you practical, tactical, spiritual, and strategic principles that will change your family tree. You will either intentionally teach your children how to handle money or they will live in your basement until they are forty. You will either model how to handle money or they will struggle like the rest of our culture, where common sense isn’t common.

I will never tell you that the Ramseys have it all together or that we’ve done the things in this book perfectly every time. There were times I was an awful money dad. There were times Sharon folded under the pressure of a whining kid in a store aisle. We are not perfect, nor were we perfect when raising our money-smart kids. But we did model good money principles, and we tried hard to intentionally create teachable moments about money for our children.

You may be late to the party with older kids. You may be excellent with money or not. You may be just starting your family. Wherever you are, you can teach from today forward and begin a new family tradition with money. You don’t have to be perfect, nor do you have to be paralyzed by the mistakes of the past. You simply have to start. You can start today and grow money-smart kids.

While we have never perfectly executed the money-smart principles we teach in this book, we have succeeded in raising money-smart kids. Of all the successes, accolades, and fame I have been blessed with, what I am most proud of are my children. Sharon and I have three competent, confident, poised, and wonderful adult children. They are winning at their spiritual walks, their marriages, and their careers, and all of them handle money well.

Our daughter Rachel has become a world-class communicator
teaching these principles to audiences of every age and size all across this country. Her favorite thing to do is guide and teach families how to start new money traditions like we did. Of course I am her proud dad, but as you read her words, you will quickly say to yourself, *I want to raise kids like her.* And you can.

The bottom line is this: If the Ramseys can go from stupidity on steroids, to bankruptcy, to a new family legacy and a new family money tradition, you can too. Hold on. This is going to be a wild and exciting ride.
Rachel: “And we’re back. Joining us now is Rachel Ramsey . . . er, I mean Rachel Cruze, the daughter of financial expert Dave Ramsey. Sorry about that, Rachel.”

So goes the opening line of pretty much every television segment I’ve been on for the past several years—at least since I got married. I guess that’s the danger in growing up Ramsey. My dad has developed such a huge reputation as “that money guy” for more than twenty years that a lot of the crowds I speak to or TV hosts I visit with just can’t shake the association. And you know what? I’m totally fine with that. I’m proud of my family and the way I was brought up, but I always need to clarify something with those who only see the “Ramsey” instead of the “Rachel”: My story is not like my parents’ story.
I’ve never gone broke. I’ve never lost everything and declared bankruptcy. I’ve never felt the shame and pain of having bill collectors call at all hours of the day and night. I’ve never bought food and freaked out in the checkout line because I wasn’t sure I’d have enough money afterward to pay the power bill. But my parents went through all of that and more.

I was six months old when Mom and Dad filed bankruptcy. Dad had been doing real estate deals for a few years at that point, and he had gotten pretty good at it. By the time he was twenty-six, he had a portfolio worth about $4 million. He and Mom had lived the high life for a while, and my older sister, Denise, was born at the peak of their success. Then, as a result of a lot of bad business decisions, just as Mom and Dad were trying to figure out how to be parents for the first time, everything fell apart.

Dad’s whole business at the time was built on debt. He owed millions of dollars on his investments, and one day, the banks called his loans out of the blue. Problem was, he didn’t have a few million bucks in the bank to pay the notes. He got sued. A lot. He describes it as “a bazillion times.”

I was born in April 1988. Mom and Dad declared bankruptcy that September. Dad describes it like this: “After years of fighting it, with a toddler, a new baby, and a marriage hanging on by a thread, we hit bottom.”

They hit hard.

But hey, I was only six months old. I had no concept of money. I didn’t know how it felt to be broke or what it meant to be wealthy. I had never been on the fancy vacations or owned the expensive clothes and jewelry. Some might say I was born right at the worst time: the crash. I see it differently. I think I was born at the perfect time: the fresh start. I didn’t have to see them lose everything; I
got to see them *rebuild* everything and learn the lessons that have since helped countless other families get out of debt. That’s the really exciting part!

Back in those days, Dad was doing a lot more than simply trying to figure out how to keep the lights on and food on the table. He was trying to figure out how money really works. And as a new Christian, he was trying to learn what the Bible says about money. Along the way, he started laying out some principles about how to handle money that eventually grew into a small Sunday School class, then a book, and then a full thirteen-week class that millions of families have now attended. He started hosting a daily talk radio show, which now has millions of listeners every week, and he wrote a handful of other books that walk families along the road to financial peace. Dad’s definitely been busy!

It cracks me up when I hear people talk about “Dave Ramsey” like he is Bono or Mother Teresa. To me, he’s just my dad. And all these books and tools and principles that people have used to take control of their money? All of that started in our living room.

You see, mine was the very first family to go through “the Dave Ramsey plan”—and trust me, it wasn’t always easy. There’s been a lot of fun that’s come from being a Ramsey, but my older sister, Denise, my brother, Daniel, and I had to work—and work hard—for the blessings we’ve received. Being Dave Ramsey’s daughter didn’t guarantee that I’d never struggle with money; knowing and applying Dave Ramsey’s principles did. This stuff works for me just like it will work for you.

I’ve been living and breathing these principles my whole life. Before I could walk, Mom and Dad were already fighting their way out of bankruptcy and starting to implement the principles that would eventually help other families get out of debt and win
with money. Now, with a lifetime of training, I’m a professional speaker, and I travel the country teaching people the principles that my dad taught me.

My husband, Winston, and I are like any other family on the Dave Ramsey plan—we work, give, save, and spend in a way that’s already setting up a legacy for our own future kids and grandkids. We do a monthly budget, we plan for big expenses, and we never even consider debt a useful tool. From the very beginning, my parents gave me a legacy of debt-free living, and that’s one of the best gifts any parent could ever give their kids.

*It Happens Every Day*

Every day, people call into *The Dave Ramsey Show* to scream at the top of their lungs, “WE’RE DEBT FREE!” These are families who have been working hard, sometimes for several years, to get out of debt and change their family tree forever. These are moms and dads who have been working two or three or five jobs to break the chains of debt. They’ve fought and climbed their way out from under a pile of car loans, credit card bills, and student loans, and they are excited. There’s something in their voices when they tell their story; you know they will never again put their family back into debt.

Often, these families drive to our office to do their debt-free call from our lobby. We have this awesome café in our lobby called Martha’s Place that always smells like cinnamon rolls and fresh-baked cookies. Think of it like walking into your grandmother’s kitchen on Christmas morning, like you’re stepping into a cloud of homemade joy. Trust me; it’s amazing.

Martha’s Place sits opposite of Dad’s radio studio, so visitors and debt-free callers can come in and watch Dad do the show through
I was that little girl.

a glass wall separating the studio from the lobby. Sometimes I’ll see a family walk in, and I’ll know immediately why they’re here. I can tell they’re a mix of exhausted and excited and usually a little nervous. It’s easy to see that they’ve been in a car for several hours to get here. The dad stretches out his back while a shy little four-year-old girl wraps her arms around his leg. The mom walks in holding a sleeping baby. And then there’s a hyper seven-year-old boy who hits the lobby like a horse coming out of the gates at the Kentucky Derby!

Martha greets them and helps round up the kids. She sets them up with the headset and microphone and stands them in the right spot where they can see Dave inside the studio. And then, it’s time. After years of working overtime and extra jobs, after overcoming a lifetime of bad money decisions, after driving a stake in the ground and changing the course of their family legacy, it’s time to tell their story on the radio.

As the mom and dad share the microphone, both jumping in to tell parts of the story, you can see the little boy and girl getting excited. They know they have a job to do—they’ve been practicing it in the car for the whole five-hour drive. They’re waiting for the cue from their parents. Then you hear Dave say those magic words, “Okay guys, count it down.”

And this mom and dad, who have moved mountains to change the direction of their family, bend down so the little boy and girl can reach the microphone. You’ll hear the dad say, “Are you ready, guys? Just like we practiced. Three . . . two . . . one . . .” And then, together with mom and dad, you’ll hear these precious little chipmunk voices yell as loud as they can, “WE’RE DEBT FREE!”

I cry almost every time. I just want to walk up to that little girl, put her face in my hands, look her in the eyes, and say, “Do
you have any idea what your parents just did for you? They have changed your entire life.”

You see, *I was that little girl.* After my parents’ bankruptcy, they could have gone right back into the old habits that got them into trouble in the first place. But they didn’t. They changed. They changed their own lives, and in the process, they changed the kind of life I could have. They taught me the keys I need to win with money for life.

**Growing Up Ramsey**

By the time I came along, Mom and Dad’s days of spending money hand over fist were gone for good. Shopping with Mom always meant at least five minutes in the checkout line sorting coupons. More than one of the stores we frequented nicknamed her “Coupon Lady.” I don’t think I’ve ever seen her pay full price for anything. She has a keen radar for clearance racks. She can whip out a coupon for just about anything. You think Dave Ramsey knows how to work a pair of scissors to cut up credit cards? You should see Sharon Ramsey go to town on the Sunday newspaper ads! Dad probably learned his famous scissor techniques from her!

I never realized that we lived differently than other families. It didn’t occur to me that other moms walked into a store, pulled an expensive dress off the rack, and paid full price for it. That probably would have felt weird to me because I certainly never saw my mom do that! And wasn’t every family’s favorite vacation destination a public campground? No? Huh. Just us, I guess.

The tight financial situation sometimes bugged me on Sunday afternoons. The Ramsey family went to church every Sunday. I sat in the pew in my sister’s hand-me-down dresses, tights, and patent leather shoes, and when it was time for the offering, I dropped in
my dollar bill that I had taken out of my “Give” envelope (I’ll talk about this later). Giving was always a priority for our family. No matter how tight things got, Mom and Dad always modeled faithful, consistent giving, and they made sure we kids participated too. That was huge for us.

Anyway, after church all of our friends would pile into their cars and head to local restaurants. Denise and I would begin begging to go out to eat before we even reached the car. And every week, Dad said something like, “We’re going to the best restaurant in town! The best! Nobody is going to eat better than we are today!”

Early on, Denise and I would fall for it. The more he built it up, the more excited we got. We’d jump up and down and start asking, “Where are we going? Where are we going?”

With a lot of drama, Dad would exclaim, “We’re going to Sharon’s Kitchen!” Translation: Once again, the Ramseys were eating Sunday lunch at home. Good thing our mom’s a great cook!

I laugh about those times, but the truth is, they shaped me into who I am today. I know it wasn’t easy for Mom and Dad to stay focused for so long. I’m sure they would have loved to have eaten out every week with their friends from church too. But they had to tell themselves what they often told us: “It’s not in the budget.” And so we pulled up our chairs at Sharon’s Kitchen and somehow made it the best restaurant in town. Even after all these years, it’s still one of my favorites.

**Joining the Revolution**

By the time I entered kindergarten, our financial situation started to stabilize. We weren’t totally out of the woods yet, but the worst of the crisis was behind us. Dad had learned a lot about how to handle money, and around that time, he started putting it together
in a class that would become *Financial Peace University* (FPU). At first, he offered it one night a week at a local Holiday Inn. The community’s interest in FPU started slowly, but it soon began to pick up steam. When the Monday night class filled up, he started a new class on another night. And then another. Before long, Dad was teaching FPU classes five nights a week. Now, more than twenty years later, millions of families have changed their lives by going through the class!

Clearly, common-sense financial education struck a nerve, first in our community and then around the country. What my dad was teaching grew into something more than a class, seminar, book, or radio show. It became a revolution.

Now I’m part of that revolution. I’m on a crusade to help families avoid huge financial disasters altogether. I help parents put their kids on solid financial ground from day one. I talk to teenagers and college students and show them how to be money-smart and live debt free before they ever have the chance to go into debt. That’s what my parents did for me, and that’s what I want to share with young families and students.

I like to say that my dad is the emergency surgeon, and I’m the preventative medicine. Nobody gets people out of a financial crisis like Dave Ramsey, but we’d both prefer it if people never got into that kind of mess in the first place. That’s become my crusade.

In the following chapters, I’ll walk you through what it means to raise money-smart kids. I’ll explain how I learned the importance of a strong work ethic, and we’ll explore specific ways you can pass that on to your children. I’ll teach you what my parents taught me about spending, saving, and giving. We’ll talk about debt, why it’s so devastating for young people, and how to teach your kids to avoid it—especially when it’s time to head to college.
or buy a car. We’ll tackle some tougher topics like entitlement, enabling, and contentment so that you can help your kids define what “enough” means for them. We’ll talk about relationships and how money often gets in the way, sometimes actually destroying families and friendships. And finally, we’ll talk about how to raise children who have the emotional, spiritual, and moral backbones to receive the financial legacy you might leave them one day.

I am so proud of my parents and how hard they worked to turn our family around all those years ago. They faced and overcame things I can’t imagine, but in the process, they put me in a position to win in a way they probably couldn’t have imagined themselves. I have never owed a dime to anyone. I will never owe a dime to anyone. I have been raised in genuine, lasting financial peace. That’s not because I’m “Dave Ramsey’s daughter.” It’s because my parents took the time and made the extra effort to teach me how to handle money. Because of them, I have complete confidence in my ability to manage my finances, no matter how much or how little I have. That is the best feeling in the world, and it’s an incredible gift you can give your kids too!

Right now, you may be fighting some of the same battles my parents fought all those years ago. Or maybe you’ve already won those struggles and you want to help your kids avoid them completely. Either way, you’re in the right place. No matter where you are financially right now, whether you’re struggling or winning with money, I can give you a perspective you desperately need: the perspective of your children. After all, all those years ago, I was that little girl.
CHAPTER TWO

Work
It’s NOT a Four-Letter Word

Rachel: When I was in fifth grade, I spent an afternoon at a friend’s house and saw the weirdest thing. I watched my friend’s mom clean her room, take our dishes to the sink after we ate, put her laundry away, feed the dog, and take out the trash, never once stopping to ask us to help. Right then, I knew my family was different.

I’ve learned so much from my parents over the years, but one of the most fundamental lessons they taught me from a young age was that the Ramseys are hard workers. People may know about Dad’s radio show, our Financial Peace University class, our high school curriculum, our youth Bible study materials, or any of the dozens of other products and services we offer, but if you’re wondering what the Ramsey “family business” is, let me tell you from experience—the family business is work.

As an adult, I look back at my childhood and I’m extremely
thankful for all my parents did for me. But there’s one thing they taught me that I lean on literally every day of my life, and that’s how to work. I learned early on that work creates discipline, and when you have discipline in your life, you are a healthier person.

There is no better feeling than coming home from a job and feeling tired. You know, the *good kind* of tired. The kind of tired that means you actually *did* something with your life today. Instead of allowing the next generation to sit in front of the computer or PlayStation all day, being lazy and lethargic, let your kids experience the feeling of being tired after some good, old-fashioned work. Raking leaves, cleaning the house, or being responsible for feeding the pet creates a sense of accomplishment, the sense that they actually did something that they can feel good about. It makes them feel confident that they can go out and win.

**Dave:** Our culture has made many wonderful advances to ensure the safety and well-being of children. But we may have taken this too far. Many parents today are so centered on what their children want that they have lost perspective on what their children really *need*. Perspective—looking at life over time—demands that you teach children to work. Teaching children to work is not child abuse. We teach them to work not for our benefit, but because it gives them both dignity in a job well done *today* and the tools and character to win *in the future* as adults.

You should view teaching your children to work in the same way you view teaching them to bathe and brush their teeth—as a necessary skill for life. An adult who has no clue how to tackle a job and finish it with vigor is as debilitated as an adult with green teeth and body odor. If your child graduates from high school and his only skill set consists of playing video games, whining, coping
an attitude of entitlement, and eating junk food, you have set him up to fail.

Another huge benefit of teaching a child the wonder of work is that she will tend to lose respect for people who refuse to work. Why is this good? It is good because you want your daughter to marry Mr. Right, not Mr. Lazy. We noticed quickly that our daughters (and our son) didn’t pursue relationships with people who didn’t know how to work. This is great news, because someday you may have grandkids, and you want both of their parents to be productive so your grandkids get to eat.

Rachel: Cleaning our rooms was a standard chore in our house—one that I hated! I am not a super-organized person in general, and this trait was definitely worse when I was younger. Week after week, I was told to clean my room, and I put it off as long as I could . . . at least until I heard footsteps coming up the stairs to examine my work. Mom and Dad didn’t expect our rooms to look like military barracks, but they did expect them to look neat and nice. And even though I didn’t particularly enjoy the process, after spending just a few minutes cleaning and seeing the results, it was rewarding. I immediately saw what my hard work had accomplished, and it felt great.

Work might be a challenge for your children, especially if they aren’t used to it, but what a blessing to give your kids. Of course, I’m talking about age-appropriate work; nevertheless, the value of work is needed and necessary. Proverbs 22:6 says, “Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it” (NKJV). When your kids learn hard work from a young age, the habit will stick with them for life.

Now, my dad is one of those people who never seems to have
much trouble figuring out how to make money. Sure, Mom and Dad had some trouble keeping it for a little while during the bankruptcy years, but bringing home a good income was never really a problem. That’s because my parents have never been confused about where money comes from. It’s something my dad has told me pretty much every day of my life: Money comes from work.

Even when my parents went bankrupt, it wasn’t because Dad didn’t work hard enough. He worked like crazy all the way up the ladder of success and down to their financial crash. Before the bankruptcy, Dad worked to build his fortune; after the bankruptcy, he worked to keep food on the table. The motivation changed, but the work ethic never did. My dad’s the hardest working person I’ve ever seen.

He used to tell me stories about helping out with his parents’ real estate business when he was a little boy. My grandparents worked out of their home, so when the phone rang, there was a good chance that it was a client. That meant when eight-year-old Dave answered the phone, he did it like a full-time, highly trained receptionist. And my mom grew up on a farm, so she was no stranger to hard work either. She could probably out-work all of us all day every day and still get home in time to host an amazing dinner party!

Dave: As Rachel said, my parents were in the real estate business when I was growing up. That was “back in the day” when phones had cords and rotary dials. “Back in the day” when people still read newspapers and bought houses from things called classified ads in newspapers and real estate magazines. “Back in the day” when there were no cell phones, voice mail, email, Twitter, Facebook, or even answering machines. So you had to answer the phone or it
didn’t get answered. When someone called my childhood home, they could be calling about buying a house, so if we didn’t answer the telephone properly or if we handled the call incorrectly, the sale could be lost. Answering the phone well was a big deal.

We were taught early to greet the caller in a friendly and professional tone, especially when our parents were not available. We were taught to use our manners—“yes, sir” or “yes, ma’am” as opposed to “yeah”—and to take the caller’s phone number and information and then repeat it back to them for verification. This respectful manner of handling the phone was a standard part of our lives, and there was no tolerance for mishandling it. We understood early on the concepts of customer service and entrepreneurism. I guess that is why Sharon and I drilled those same kinds of things into our kids—and why I still can’t stand an unanswered phone.

MAKE NO ALLOWANCES

Rachel: Work was never an option in the Ramsey house, no matter how young Denise, Daniel, and I were. From the time I was five years old, I was working—on commission. Mom and Dad didn’t believe in giving us an “allowance.” Dad hated that word. It implies that a child is “allowed” a certain amount of money just for living and breathing. Sure, every parent likes to bless his or her child with surprises and gifts, but the allowance system as a general rule doesn’t teach the child how real life works. My parents didn’t want to raise kids who expected life to make “allowances” for them. We see that way too much in today’s world.

There’s a whole generation growing up thinking money is free. They expect their parents to keep paying their bills into
adulthood, or they think the government exists to care for them. That mindset has never been an option for me—not even when I was a little kid!

From age five on, I operated on one general rule about making money: Work, get paid; don’t work, don’t get paid. That’s a basic principle that a lot of parents miss with their little kids. If a child can understand that money comes from work at age four, then she’ll be ready to hit the “real world” running at age twenty-four.

Dave: I do hate the word allowance because I think words are powerful and can convey deeper meanings. When you make allowance for someone, it is because they are not able. Allowances for children sound like welfare to me, as if children are unwilling or unable to achieve, so we have to cover for them. Granted, they are our children and we do cover for them, but Sharon and I wanted to instill drive and dignity in our kids’ characters. These qualities do not develop when we hand everything to our kids, because then we give them the impression that they are the center of the universe. Handing out money and not teaching strong work habits create people who whine, who feel entitled, and who become perpetual victims. Does this sound like any adults you know? We taught our kids that the Bible says, “If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat” (2 Thessalonians 3:10), and we would quote verses like Proverbs 12:11: “He who tills his land will be satisfied with bread, but he who follows frivolity is devoid of understanding” (NKJV).

I once took a radio call from a father of a rebellious fourteen-year-old son. The father said his son refused to do chores and help around the house. So this dad went to his workshop, got a hammer, and placed it on the teen’s plate at the dinner table. When his son came to dinner, the dad said, “No food until your chores are
done, and if you continue to avoid your work, I am going to take that hammer and break your plate.” We all know that the fastest way to a teenage boy’s heart is through his stomach. Not surprisingly, that young man immediately got to work. That may have been a drastic way to get the boy’s attention, but I guarantee he will probably tell this story to his children and grandchildren because it got the point across and hopefully set a new pattern for his life.

Rachel: It is so important for parents to help their kids make the work-money connection from an early age. That means instead of an allowance, you should reframe the whole discussion with your kids. When speaking of money, “allowance” shouldn’t even be in your children’s vocabulary. Use the word “commission,” and explain how money comes from work. As soon as your children understand cause-and-effect relationships, you can start teaching them the relationship between work and money.

The Fear Most Parents Have
Without fail, every time I’m on the road speaking to groups, I have a parent ask me, “How can I raise my kids not to feel entitled? How can I teach them the value of a dollar?” From my experience, the basic principle of working is one of the best ways to combat the attitude of entitlement. Once your kids understand that money comes from work, they won’t be able to spend money on a toy without considering how much work went into actually making that money. Sure, they can and should enjoy a good purchase, but working for it makes every purchase—even a toy or video game—feel like an accomplishment, not an entitlement. Encourage your kids to discover the dignity of working and earning money themselves. The worst thing you can do is
become a human ATM and give your kids a five, ten, or twenty-dollar bill every time they ask.

START THEM YOUNG: AGES THREE TO FIVE

I’ve talked to many parents who tried the commission system with their children as young as three or four years of age, and they’ve been shocked by how their kids have responded. Kids will jump on board with new things—yes, even money-type things—quicker than you may realize. You can create incredible teachable moments when you give your young children an opportunity to do a few things around the house and get paid for doing them.

Jobs for Little Kids

A word of caution: Some parents get so excited when teaching their kids about money that they go a bit . . . well, let’s just say they go a bit overboard. Call me crazy, but telling your four-year-old to do the dishes every night and mow the lawn every weekend probably won’t work out too well.

Remember, you’re not opening up a sweatshop. For young children, I recommend that you limit the number of chores—somewhere around three jobs—and keep them short and simple. You want each job to be enough that it feels like a big accomplishment, but not so much that it seems complicated or impossible to complete. Some great options for chores at this age include:

- Picking up toys
- Putting dirty clothes in the laundry basket
• Making his or her own bed
• Matching socks in the clean laundry
• Setting the dinner table (with supervision)
• Collecting the indoor trash cans from around the house
• Helping carry in light groceries

The job assignments are up to you. Just list a handful of responsibilities your child is capable of doing and put a dollar amount on each one. You might be surprised at how excited your child gets about this. A friend of mine explained this system to his four-year-old daughter for the first time one Saturday morning, and her playroom went from looking like a tornado blew through it to “spick and span” in under thirty minutes. Not a bad return for a dollar!

**Pay Fast and with Excitement!**

When you’re initiating the commission system with kids under age 5, you should pay them as soon as the job is complete. They need that immediate connection between the work they did and the money you’re handing them. Younger kids don’t relate the action and the reward if payment is delayed, especially by several days.

Let’s be honest. When a four-year-old cleans his room, we all know that probably means Mom or Dad put away ten toys and the child put away two or three. That’s okay. The goal at this age is to get the child in a mindset of working. That’s not going to happen overnight. As long as your kids understand what the job is and what it means to see it through to the end, you’re doing just fine.

As soon as your children finish the job, you should inspect
the work. You’ve got to really amp up the enthusiasm here. Get excited! If they cleaned their room, then they need to feel like they are the most incredible room-cleaners on the face of the earth! It may sound silly, but you’re doing two things by expressing your excitement: You’re showing them how proud you are of the work they’ve done, and you’re building up their own pride in their hard work. At that point, handing them their commission for the job doesn’t come across as an expectation; it comes across for what it is: payment for a job well done. That’s the kind of mindset you want to encourage.

**Make It Visual**

Another key for rewarding kids between the ages of three and five is to make their commissions visual. With older children, you’ll use the envelope system for setting money aside for saving, spending, and giving. But when you’re just starting out with really young kids, it’s a good idea to make the money look as big and impressive as possible. That means keeping it all together.

My dad taught me a great method for making fifty dollars look like $1 million to a five-year-old. Use a clear container and pay in dollar bills instead of loose change. As you put the bills in the container, be sure to rustle them up just a little bit. A stack of dollar bills can look pretty thin if it’s lying flat, but if you get the bills wrinkled and a little wadded up, they start to look a lot bigger and more impressive when you see them in a clear container. Kids are visual learners, so it’s great visual reinforcement to watch the money grow.

You want your children to imagine the bills exploding out of that jar. That kind of stuff gets them excited about their money, and they *should* be excited about it—after all, they earned it!
The Main Goal: Spend

When you have a three-, four-, or five-year-old, getting them to do a few chores and paying them is an incredible head start. Most children this age can’t fully grasp money concepts like setting some aside for saving and spending (we will get there soon; don’t worry). So the best way to reward young children is to go shopping with some of the money they have earned. Can you imagine how proud they will feel when they hand the cashier a couple of dollar bills that they earned all by themselves? Something amazing happens in little boys and girls when they get to walk into a store, pick out a toy all by themselves, and pay for it with money they earned.

GROW THEM UP: AGES SIX TO THIRTEEN

As your children grow, the chores, responsibilities, and maybe even the dollar amounts should grow to reflect their ability and maturity. As I got older, I wanted to do more things and buy more stuff, just like any other kid. We knew Mom and Dad would always take care of our necessities such as food and clothing, but Denise, Daniel, and I were under no illusion that our parents were there to fund every little thing we wanted to do. That meant as our wants and needs grew, so did our chores.

Make a List, Check It Twice

We continued to get paid commissions on the work we did around the house as we got older. I remember having a list of five specific chores, and I got paid one dollar for each of those five jobs. This wasn’t back-breaking labor; I’m talking about tasks such as making my bed, taking out the trash, feeding the dog, jobs like that.
We had a chore chart on the fridge to keep track of who did what and how much we earned. Mom wrote our names on the chart and listed each of our five jobs. When we completed each task, we were supposed to put a check mark next to the chore to show that we did it.

Now does that mean I got a dollar every time I put my dirty dishes in the sink? No way! There are always going to be things kids should do around the house just because they’re a member of the family. For us Ramsey kids, most of those unpaid chores revolved around mealtimes. We didn’t get paid for setting the table, taking our dishes to the sink, or drying the dishes. If you were part of the family, cleaning the kitchen was simply expected.

You want your kids to understand that money comes from work, but you don’t want to go so far that they end up thinking they should get paid for *everything* they do around the house. Money can’t be the motivator every time; we all have to do some jobs simply because they’re part of life.

You, as the parent, should figure out a handful of specific chores and a dollar amount for each one. That’s your call. As I said, my parents paid me a dollar for each of my five specific chores. That’s just what worked for them. The types of chores and specific amounts that work for your family are up to you.

**Dave:** Every time Rachel or I present the commission idea to a group of parents, we have at least one parent who disagrees with us. They argue that children should do work around the house just because they are part of the family, and they should not expect to get paid. I agree, but if you don’t involve a money transaction in a few chores, you lose all the teachable moments in the work, spend, save, and give principles. Our children had a few chores that were
paid commission items, and the rest of the work they did because they were part of the family. It is an act of love to help your mom or dad with the dishes, and it is not an optional act of love. These non-paid chores help teach kids how to be good citizens of their church or community, later producing adults who willingly volunteer to help others.

I grew up in a wonderful Leave It to Beaver neighborhood. It was a new suburb in Nashville, and almost all the families were first generation off the farm. Farmers are hard workers, so physical work was a part of our neighborhood, as was pitching in to help with projects other neighbors had going. Of course, no one expected to get paid; we were just helping our neighbors.

Our next-door neighbor was one of the nicest men I have ever known. He was kind and gentle and would help anyone in need. He was also a mechanical genius and enjoyed fixing and building things. He built hotrods from the ground up in his garage. And he could weld and turn a wrench on just about anything. To accomplish his hobbies, he collected stuff in his backyard—I mean a lot of stuff. As an adult, I look back and wonder what conversations took place among the adults, but all I knew was that every so often, all the neighborhood kids and many of the adults would show up to help John clean up his backyard.

We worked for hours moving and piling scrap metal, filling trucks with things to be hauled to the dump, and mowing and trimming the yard. We kids thought it was great fun, and everyone loved John and enjoyed helping him. When the yard was finally clean, all the kids were allowed to jump in the back of John’s pickup truck for a ride down to the Kwik Sak for an ICEE. Our pay for a half-day’s work was an ICEE. Well, not really. The real pay was that forty-five years later, I look back on the lessons those mornings taught me:
hard work, working with others, and, of course, repaying the kindness of a helpful neighbor with a simple cleanup day. You may think this was just a bunch of rednecks who let their kids ride in the back of a pickup, and you might be right. But those neighborhood work days played a huge role in making me the man I am today.

**Adventures in Babysitting**

**Rachel:** By the time I turned twelve, I received weekly commissions for my home chores, but I remember wanting to do more. Some of my friends at that time were babysitting. Now if you can imagine, I don’t do things halfheartedly. If I was going to take on this new venture of watching other people’s kids, I was going to do it right.

As I planned out my new endeavor, I focused on presentation and customer service. When a family was interested in hiring me to watch their kids, I would meet them and walk them through my presentation binder that highlighted my skills, experience, references, and fee schedule. Later, if they scheduled me—and seriously, who *wouldn’t* hire a professional babysitter like that—I had them complete a form I created that included the hours they planned to be away, where and how I could reach them, emergency phone numbers and contact people, and any special needs or instructions I’d need to know. You can just call me Little Dave if you’d like.

It didn’t take much time to put my binder and forms together, but it made a huge difference in my business. Dad always taught me that doing little things like that made me stand out from the crowd, which made me more marketable. Even if I didn’t know what “marketable” meant at age twelve, I could definitely tell that I was getting more babysitting jobs than my friends.
Jobs for Older Kids and Tweens

When your kids are in the six- to thirteen-year-old age range, you need to upgrade their chores. By six, they are ready for a little more responsibility, so you can start to add more jobs and provide less hands-on help as they complete them. We recommend listing their tasks on a chore chart and sticking it on the fridge so they see it every day. Make a big deal when they complete a task and check off the item as done. Some great household jobs for this age range include:

- Making their own beds
- Feeding pets
- Vacuuming and sweeping
- Sorting, folding, and putting away laundry
- Cleaning the dishes
- Watering plants
- Cleaning windows
- Washing the car
- Doing yard work
- Cleaning the bathroom

As they get a little older, you can encourage them to find some ways to make money outside your home. You can help them brainstorm new ideas, such as:

- Babysitting
- Walking dogs
- Doing yard work for others

If your child has an entrepreneurial spirit, encourage that by helping make fliers to advertise his or her new business.
Pay Weekly

At this age, you can start paying commissions weekly instead of immediately. By now, your children should have already learned the crucial work-money connection, so it isn’t as important to have the immediate reward of a payout. Knowing that they have to work throughout the week but they’ll only get paid once a week teaches kids lessons in delayed gratification and patience. Besides, that’s how the real world works, right?

In our house, every Sunday night was “payday,” so we would grab our chore charts off the refrigerator, see whether or not we had completed all of our jobs, and then Dad would pay us for the work. If I only did three of my five chores, then guess what? I got three dollars, not five. Our parents never paid us for work we didn’t do. That’s not how life works, and it’s not how our family functioned either. When we first started doing this, it was textbook. Every Sunday night, Dad would have fifteen one-dollar bills in his hand, ready to pay commissions to three eager kids. But every so often, on a Sunday night we would ask about payday and Dad would say, “I forgot to go to the bank and get the one-dollar bills, so we’ll make it up next week.” This was rare, but it did happen—even to Dave Ramsey. So parents, give yourself some grace. The more consistent you are, obviously, the better it is for your kids, but don’t stress over it if you miss one payday. This small error probably won’t send them to counseling.

Dave: As I look back on parenting the Ramsey kids and teaching the ideas of commission, chore charts, saving, giving, and spending, what amazes me most is that our kids still got it despite how often Sharon and I messed up. We talked about the concepts and enforced the “no work, no pay” principle, but we were far from
exact in all the applications. If one of our kids messed up or broke something, we dished out grace and paid anyway. We just wanted them to get the concepts. My memory of Sunday-night payday is that we probably missed or forgot 25 percent or more of those, and yet our kids remember being taught these concepts thoroughly.

There will be times when you’ll be too tired, on vacation, or simply distracted and forget to do “payday,” but you can always make it up the next week by talking through the chores and carefully funding each child’s three envelopes. So parent to parent, let me tell you the word here is grace—grace for the kids’ reactions to unusual circumstances and grace for yourself for not perfectly executing this plan. You don’t check every homework paper (Please tell me you don’t check every single paper! That’s a little weird.), and yet your kids will graduate and possibly even get good grades. The reason for this is that the child gets the concept of hard work and will do his or her part once you teach and model the principle. The key is to be intentional and to control the teaching and guiding of their character rather than to control the child.

**Envelope System for Kids**

**Rachel:** This is also the perfect time to start teaching your children about what to do with the money they’re making. We’re going to suggest you have your children divide their income across three key areas: spending, saving, and giving.

Give each child three specific envelopes: one named *Spend*, one named *Save*, and one named *Give*. Write those words big and bold across the envelope or let the kids decorate their envelopes however they want. Every dollar they earn in commission needs to be spread across these envelopes. You can also apply this to any birthday or gift money they receive throughout the year.
Here’s how it worked for us on Sunday nights: I would take the five dollars I earned and put one dollar in the Give envelope (because giving always came first in our family), two dollars in the Save envelope, and two dollars in the Spend envelope. That’s the most basic form of budgeting, but it works—even for a six-year-old.

The Spend envelope was fair game. We could use that however we wanted. It was meant to be enjoyed because money can be fun! The Save envelope was basically a long-term Spend envelope. I wasn’t saving for college or a house or anything at that age. My parents encouraged us to set savings goals, like for a certain toy that would take weeks or months to earn enough money to buy. As our savings grew and we hit our goal, we’d proudly take the Save envelope to the store and bring home our major purchase. This teaches your little ones about patience, goal-setting, and delayed gratification—three things a lot of adults still struggle with!

The Give envelope was extremely important in our house, which is why it was the first thing we did with our money. By the time I was six, my parents had stopped giving me their money to drop in the offering plate at church, and I took my own money from my Give envelope. Giving his own money changes a child’s whole understanding of giving. We’ll talk more about that later on.

GET THEM OUT: AGES FOURTEEN TO COLLEGE

When each of us kids in the Ramsey family turned fourteen, we graduated out of the Sunday night “payday” and into a checking account. Mom and Dad took the amount of money they would normally spend on us for entertainment, clothes, and other needs,
and they put that amount of cash into our personal checking accounts each month. If the Ramsey teens wanted to spend more money, we knew where that money had to come from, so we got to work. Denise and I babysat a lot, Daniel did a number of odd jobs, and all three of us worked in Dad’s office during the summers. We were all busy with social events, school activities, and sports, but that didn’t stop us from working.

Opening My Own Business

When I was about fourteen, Dad sat my sister and me down and told us we needed to open our own business. As you can imagine, Denise and I blankly stared back at him with our fourteen- and sixteen-year-old eyes, thinking he was crazy. I said, “Dad, that’s nuts! Why in the world do we need to open our own business?” If you know anything about my dad, you can imagine him getting excited about the idea and going on and on about profit and loss statements, managing products, and learning how to be entrepreneurs.

When we realized that he was serious, we started brainstorming how we were going to pull off our own business. Then we thought of the perfect job. At the time, Dad’s growing company was filled with more than 150 team members. Do you know what hardworking people really like at work? Food! I’m talking about chips, candy bars, nuts, cookies, and granola bars. And lots of soft drinks and bottled water to finish it off. Denise and I basically stumbled upon a goldmine!

Dad always told us, “If you fail to plan, you plan to fail.” Translation: There was no chance that he would allow us to simply show up at the office and sell snacks out of a box. If this was going to be a business, we had to run it like a business. That
meant before the owner (Dad) allowed us into his building, we had to write up a full business plan. Yes, I’m serious. That plan detailed where we would purchase the snacks and how we would pay for our start-up inventory (which Dad graciously donated to us), price our products, manage our stock, run our profit and loss statement every week, and even evaluate our competition. That’s right: competition! There were vending machines on each floor of the building, so we had to set our prices lower to attract customers.

Denise had a car by then, so every week the two of us went to the local discount warehouse and fought our way through the crowded aisles pushing a flatbed cart stacked with candy bars, chips, cookies, and cases of canned drinks. I remember barely being able to push that giant cart because it weighed more than Denise and me combined! Once we finally got all of our inventory into the car, we’d drive it over to the office, borrow a hand truck from shipping, and unload the car ourselves. Then we’d make our rounds through all the different break rooms around the building, setting up and restocking our display racks. By now you may think I am joking, but this is as true as it comes.

We replenished the snacks and soft drinks weekly, but Denise and I were both in school all day during the week, so there was no one left to “mind the store.” That meant we had to rely on the honor system. We posted our prices next to the displays and set out a collection jar for the money. There was only one rule for Dad’s team members: Don’t eat it if you can’t pay for it! That worked great . . . until the money came up short a couple of weeks in a row. I thought Dad was going to lose his mind. His own team members were ripping off his daughters! It’s kind of funny when we look back on it.
That led to a quick rebranding of our little enterprise. From that day on, our business was known as “Your Integrity Snacks.” If someone was going to take something without paying, then they had to steal from a business called “Your Integrity”!

For a few years, it seemed like Denise and I made a small fortune in loose change. I remember the first big purchase we made for the business was an automatic change sorter and money roller. We saved up for it and instead of manually putting each coin into a coin wrapper, we had this marvelous machine to do it for us. It was the best and only investment we made in Your Integrity Snacks. But every week we took stacks of rolled coins to the bank. And, of course, we had to keep our profit and loss statement updated, showing our gross income minus our expenses, which left us with a pretty nice profit every week—even after Denise charged me gas money.

The snack shop idea was so simple, but it actually made some pretty good money for us. More than the money, though, it taught two young teenagers how to run a business, serve customers, and turn a profit. Looking back, I’m pretty sure that’s really why Dad suggested we do it.

*Jobs for Teens*

By the time I was a teenager, I really understood the work-money connection. And one thing I didn’t do was nickel and dime my parents to death. They took care of my necessities and a lot of fun stuff, too; however, I never assumed they’d just give me money for whatever I wanted to do. Parents, please understand when I say we weren’t little chore-working soldiers marching around the house. Mom and Dad maintained a great balance with us when it came to work. There were times when they
would buy something for each of us and surprise us with unexpected gifts, but the overriding principle of work was taught and reinforced. My parents still raised me so that I knew that money came from work—not handouts. As an adult, I now see that as a truly life-changing lesson.

Teens should always share the chores around the house, even though as parents of teenagers, you probably won’t use chore charts on the fridge to track their jobs. Whether or not you pay your teen a commission for the work he does at home is up to you, but either way, you should encourage him to find work outside the home. Whether it’s running his own lawn care business or working retail, this is when your child will learn how to work in the real world.

An income of only home-based commissions gives your teen a safety net. That’s both good and bad. It’s good in that it reinforces the work-money connection in a safe environment, but if Mom and Dad are the only “bosses” children know, they won’t have the chance to learn other important lessons about working for—and with—other people.

When I was a junior in high school, I had my babysitting experience and Your Integrity Snacks behind me, and I was ready for something new. One of my best friends worked at a store in the mall, and I thought it sounded like fun. So I got a job there during my Christmas break, earning barely above minimum wage. I will never forget getting my first paycheck after working four long days. I was shocked! Just picture a seventeen-year-old girl looking at a pathetically small amount on her paycheck and saying out loud, “You’ve got to be kidding!” I couldn’t believe how small the amount was after so many long days of work. That’s when I learned the lesson of “just above minimum wage.”
I remember thinking I could have worked as hard babysitting and made double! I finished out the Christmas season and quit.

I learned that I am wired a lot like my dad, and when it comes to work, I’m an entrepreneur at heart. I like working for myself versus a store-type setting. Of course, there’s nothing wrong with working retail or at the mall; in fact, that’s when I learned about filling out W-2 forms, filing taxes every year, and experiencing the crushing heartache of having the government take a quarter of my paycheck in taxes and Social Security. Those are great lessons for your teens to learn by working outside the home. You may discover that your kids are wired differently. While I didn’t care for those types of jobs, my brother and sister both worked in retail through high school and college. Don’t put your kids in a box. Allow them to get creative and find a job they enjoy doing.

WORK MATTERS

I’ve been working in one way or another my whole life, and I admit that sometimes I got a little jealous of my friends whose parents didn’t make them work for anything. Now that I’m an adult, though, I have a perspective I didn’t have back then. As I travel and talk to young adults, I can tell pretty quickly if they have parents who taught them the value of work or if they have parents who just gave them a twenty every time they asked. If I am talking to teens, I know after asking just a few questions whether or not they’re afraid of working hard to meet their money goals. Those teens and young adults who were never taught to work may feel pretty privileged at the time, but I can see the train wreck that’s ahead of them. The real world is going to smack
them right in the face, and if they don’t learn the value of work, they’re going to be totally unprepared for it. They will fail.

As a parent, when you don’t teach your kids to work, you are not being kind or gracious; you are being irresponsible. It’s your responsibility to teach your kids about both money and work. It’s not the school’s responsibility. It’s not the church’s responsibility. It’s your responsibility. Step up to the plate. The direction of your kids’ lives—whether or not they’re motivated to go out and win—starts with you. You are their biggest supporter and cheerleader. A solid foundation of hard work as kids can completely change their lives as adults—but that will only happen if you, their parents, get engaged and intentional about teaching them how and why work matters.