



program, including my older son who handled the books, ran the game clock, and eventually, with his brother, coached the elementary team of the program. But this man, while teaching basketball fundamentals and skills, also lived out his Christian faith, not only as it related to the sport, but also to his family, the parents and spectators of the games, and the other teams. Being a Christian was who he was; coaching basketball was what he did.

Mentors are unavoidable, especially the informal kind. Berry did not include media in his list, like television and music. When he wrote his essay in 1981, the existence of the internet was still more than a decade away, let alone the social media platforms that are ubiquitous for this generation. But all of those channels will be conduits of informal mentors. Or you can help choose better ones.

The first place to start is your parents, if possible. Grandparents are some of the most wonderful mentors because they have learned from their own mistakes, the mistakes they made with you! It can be easy to say to ourselves, "But our parents didn't do that right," but we fail to give them the credit of learning and growing. It is exactly because they didn't get everything right with their own children that they can keep the next generation from continuing down that hazardous trail. Your siblings can also be good adult role models and mentors if they are kindred spirits.

Second, look for good adults who can come alongside your children in your church. In the case of the piano teacher and coach, neither went to church with us, but both are Christians. But your church offers to you a great opportunity to connect your children with older believers who can supplement and complement your parenting. And the reality is there are some things that others can say that children just don't quite hear as well from Mom and Dad, especially as the children get older.

Beyond the church are, of course, other parents in your homeschool group, specialized instructors, like music teachers or athletic coaches. But work hard to ensure they share the same values as you do. When you enlist the help of others in mentoring, you are not only infusing your children with positive perspectives, you are working to keep negative elements out. You want to be as certain as you can be that the input from you and them, especially in matters important to your family, are aligned.

In the essay I quoted earlier, Wendell Berry writes, "...parenthood is not an exact science, but a vexed privilege, and a blessed trial, absolutely necessary and not altogether possible." It is because of this very tension that good parenting allows for good mentoring as well. It's not that "it takes a village," but it takes focused parents who solicit like-minded adults to come alongside them in the journey.

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