

WILL OUR CHILDREN CLIMB THE HIGHEST MOUNTAIN?

Since I first heard the song "Climb Every Mountain" many years ago in "Sound of Music," I have been stirred by it. At each Harding graduation ceremony, our celebration ends with a student singing that song. It never fails to bring tears to my eyes!

As so dramatically stated in this musical challenge, it is those who follow their dreams that assail the high mountains of achievement, usually not only to their own benefit, but to the benefit of others as well. I am sure all parents would like to raise children who would dream big dreams, significant dreams, useful dreams; and then have the courage to dare, the willingness to pay the price, and the tenacity to follow through until the mountain had been climbed.

Extensive research targeted the "achievement motive" (French, McClelland, French) during the 1950s to discover the personal attributes of high achievers, and how these attributes were gained. It was found that high achievers were drawn by long range goals rather than by momentary rewards, that they were self-confident, responsible, highly interested in knowing the results of their work, got good grades, were active in school and community affairs, chose highly qualified persons for working partners, were resistant to outside social pressure, and were moderate risk-takers in things that involved the use of their own abilities, but not in areas of purely chance factors.

In order to gain insight into how these qualities were developed, mothers of both high achieving and low achieving children were quizzed as to their parenting techniques. Some very interesting information was gained.

Mothers of high achievers demanded industry, mastery and achievement at an earlier age than did the mothers of low achievers. They taught their children how to do things for themselves, and how to accept responsibility and fulfill it. By the age of seven, they had taught their children to be street wise, to do difficult and new things on their own, to be energetic and active, and encouraged them to be competitive. They also taught their children to be socially developed, with freedom to create friendships.

The question of discipline was important. Comparatively, the high achiever mothers placed a limited number of restrictions on their

children, but from an early age expected those restrictions to be mastered, and put into practice.

Perhaps most importantly, the mothers of high achievers were diligent in giving positive reinforcement to their children. They were quick to evaluate the accomplishments of their children in a favorable way. They were liberal in giving hugs and kisses to show their pride for their children, and to demonstrate how prized their efforts were. I think I could find Biblical passages to support all of the above.

However, it seems to me important to note that the highest mountains for our children to climb are spiritual. To name a few, I would include conversation of the body, mind and soul to the gospel of Jesus Christ, the choice to live separated from the sinful powers, values, and lifestyles of this world, the ability to determine direction and effort on the basis of the Word of God, the courage to stand for right and truth against a hostile world, the prizing of a higher citizenship than any of this world....a heavenly one, an eagerness because of love to share the salvation message with others, and an enduring vision of eternal life with the Divine and the redeemed that will keep them keeping on. May God so help every Christian parent!

Carl Mitchell