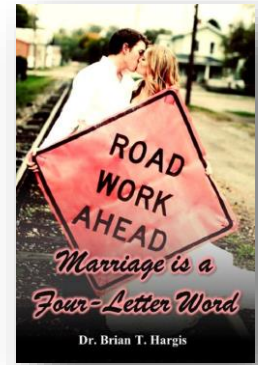


Marriage is a Four-Letter Word by Dr. Brian Hargis

From CHAPTER 9:
Reasonable Rules for Raising Rug Rats



DON'T LIVE YOUR LIFE THROUGH YOUR CHILDREN

Too many parents try to live out their failed dreams, hopes and aspirations vicariously through their children.

For example, my parents suggested for me to go to college, but never demanded it. Turning down the offer on a partial basketball scholarship, I joined the U.S. Army instead. After a few years of character building, “getting an edge on life” and “being all that I could be,” I left active duty and went to college. Had I attended college straight out of high school, I probably would have done poorly or gotten involved in the wrong crowd simply because my heart wasn’t in it.

Be careful about demanding that your teens go to college. Just because you went, doesn’t mean they must go about it your way. Statistics show that young people that are forced to go to college have a lower grade point average and a higher dropout rate.

Here’s one that intrigues me – mothers that think their daughter is the next Miss America. They send pictures in to modeling agencies, hoping to be the next cute face in the sears catalogue. They spend hundreds of dollars beautifying their daughters, entering them into pageants, making a show out of something their daughter could care less about at two years old. Then they get upset when their child doesn’t win!



Many dads are no better in their tactics. Take sports for example. Dad’s push their kids into a sport they’ve never played, and expect them to be professional athletes by the end of the season!

As I write this portion of the chapter, I am convicted in my conscious about my phone conversation with my wife today. I’m on the other side of the world, in Afghanistan, so I called her and caught her at my middle-aged son’s first day at baseball practice. How exciting for my six-year-old boy! He had his new baseball glove, his team t-shirt on, new cleats on his feet, and he was the only child out there with baseball pants. Izak felt like he was a real baseball player, and I was proud of him!

“It’s funny,” Tracy said, “Every other kid is wearing shorts but Izak has his cute, little baseball pants on and he thinks he’s the man.” A smile came across my face as I held the phone up to my ear.

“That’s my boy!” I stated. “He may not know how to play but he looks like a baseball player! When is his first game?”

“Well, this is both a game and practice,” she said. “They do both at the same time.”

“That’s crazy. Why would you do both at the same time? You gotta’ have a practice before the real deal.” I said. “What’s the score?”

“They don’t keep score,” she said.

“What?” I exclaimed, “You’ve got to be kidding me! What do you mean they don’t keep score? What kind of sissy team is he playing on?” I asked. “How will they know who wins?”

“I don’t know. They just kinda’ do their own thing. They don’t even have placement on the field. The coach just tells them to pick wherever they want to go, and Izak looks for a spot where nobody else is. Last inning, he tried to get 2nd base but another girl on the team beat him to it, so he went to the outfield.” Tracy said.

“A girl? Izak let a girl take his position?” I joked. “I can’t believe this. How soft has society become that they don’t even keep score because they probably don’t want to hurt kids’ self-esteem! What’s the sense of playing if you don’t keep score and learn positions? How will they know who won? How will they know the fundamentals of the game? Somebody’s always a winner and someone’s always a loser. Deal with it,” I expressed. “How will Izak ever experience the thrill of victory or the agony of defeat?!”



My statements weren’t directed towards my wife, but towards the lack of structure, coaching, training, and competition.

I’ve coached basketball, volleyball and most recently football... and I had heard about doing away with scores so not to offend or hurt little Johnny’s or Suzie’s character... but I never expected to hear of it happening on a team that one of my sons plays for! Not today, not while I write this chapter!

“He’s up to bat,” she said. My heart began to beat for Izak. “Please Izak. Keep your shoulder up, bat level, swing all the way through, hit it firm and get on base,” I pleaded inside me.

“Uh-oh, I think he’s hitting the wrong way.” She said. “The coach is changing Izak’s grip because his hands are wrong. I thought he hits left-handed?” she remarked.

“He is left-handed!” I shouted into the phone nearly in a state of panic, knowing what was happening. “Is his left side to the pitcher of his right side???” I asked.

“His left side,” she stated calmly.

“Tracy, tell the coach he’s left handed! Don’t let him hit right handed,” I demanded.

“Well, he actually does pretty good hitting that way. The other day he....” but she didn’t get to finish her sentence...

“Tell the coach to switch him to the other side!” I said with the anxiety stressing in my voice. I could hear that they were still trying to get Izak set up in the batter’s box. “Do it now,” I demanded.

“Coach!Coach!” she shouted, “Coach, he’s left handed. Izak’s left handed.” I could hear the coach say something back but couldn’t make out the words.

“Did he switch him?” I asked

“Yes, they switched him,” she said.

“What side of Izak is facing the pitcher now?” I asked just to be sure.

“His right side,” she said.

“Whew. Good!” I said. “Sorry to act like that, but do you know why it’s important to me?”

“No. Not really,” she said.

“Less than 10% of athletes are left-handed, which means that 90% or more are right-handed and are used to playing against right-handed batters, dribblers, pitchers, and kickers. Izak has an advantage because he’s left handed. The last thing I want him to be taught is how to bat and throw right-handed!”

You could sense my overbearing athletic side coming out – the basketball and football coach within me as I gave her statistic that she could care less about.

Perhaps I also have unspoken dreams of Izak becoming the super athlete that I never was. Don’t get me wrong, I was good... but not at baseball. I wish I was, but never had the opportunity.

Therein lays one of the points I am trying to make in this portion of the chapter. Just for a moment, I was caught up in making sure everything was perfect for my boy. Meanwhile mom was kicked back enjoying the game with the two other boys digging in the sand. It didn’t matter to her if Izak hit left-handed or right-handed. It didn’t matter if he played outfield of first base. It didn’t matter if he got on base or got out... all as long as he was having fun and enjoying the game.

Fathers - we have work to do. Thanks for the lesson, Lord. At this time, I will put on my writer’s cap and deliver some further words of wisdom based on experience, observation and counseling.

Many parents who want to see their children succeed become over-zealous in their support. As a coach, I have experienced fights in the bleachers from parents of opposing teams. I’ve seen parents yell and scream at their kid when they missed a shot, fumbled the ball, or stepped out of bounds. I can understand slamming water bottles and clipboards to emphasize a point as a coach... but when parents go off on their kids who are simply trying to do the best that they can, shame on them. Allow your kids to have fun and enjoy the game.

I have learned some valuable lessons with my eldest son, of what to do and what not to do. I’m a winner and I hate to lose. Too often winning is overemphasized by me, and it’s something I’ve had to harness. So, during last season of football, I expressed to my son,

“Jordan, you have one shot at playing 7th grade football. You’ll never get the opportunity to do it again. There are no do-over, no replays, no second chance, and no rewinds on life. For the rest of your life you will look back and remember the years you played football. Don’t hold back and don’t sell yourself short because of a little ache, a pain or shortness of breath. You can rest when it’s over.

Son, I want you to go out there and do the very best you can. I will not be disappointed in you! You are Hurricane Hargis. You're a lean, mean, quarterback sacking machine. You're the roughest, toughest, meanest, fiercest 7th grader ever to play the game of football.

So, get your oversized pads out on the field and give it your all! One hundred percent! And most of all son, above all else, have fun. Enjoy the game. Enjoy your youth. Now put your hand in mine and let's pray together."

For more of Chapter 9: **Reasonable Rules for Raising Rug Rats**

Check out *Marriage is a Four-Letter Word* at:

- [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com)
- [Barnesandnobles.com](https://www.barnesandnobles.com)
- [Christianbooks.com](https://www.christianbooks.com)

