

THE THIRD RULE OF LIFE

by Sally Burgess, Forefront Families LLC

Rule 3 from Bill Gates to teenagers:

‘You will NOT make \$60,000 a year right out of high school. You won't be a vice-president with a car phone until you earn both.’

Wow! That socks a punch, doesn't it? What is it that leads young people to imagine they are going to immediately land a great job with dollars to match? Do they think that because of the amount of money their parents spent, or the sum of the student loans they were burdened down with to become qualified, it is their right? Are students being misled by colleges, which charge such inflated fees, to believe that there is a fantastic job just waiting for them out in the big wide world? WRONG! Even 'doctors and lawyers and such' don't earn big money when they first graduate. They have to work long hours and work their way up to that great salary.

We have a young 23 year-old friend with a Masters Degree in Biochemistry seeking a job in statistical research in the health field. She finished with a GPA of 4.0 and she cannot find a job. Instead of sitting at home moping about it, she is doing a clerical job while she keeps looking. That's wise.

I think that many young graduates have not been appropriately prepared for the real world by their parents. It is not the school's job to teach them that all is not fair in the working world. That is the parents' responsibility. Perhaps our values have concentrated more on 'our rights' than on 'earning the right'!

Getting a great job has two main requirements – the appropriate knowledge or qualifications along with the appropriate experience. Acquiring the experience is very frustrating when you can't get a job in the first place! However, there are a number of things parents can do to prepare teens for getting good, well-paying jobs.

A very important early exercise, that can begin as early as elementary school, is to encourage your child to think about careers they may like to explore. Take them to such places of employment to check them out. In fact, expose them to as many jobs as you can. Introduce them to people you may know in those fields so they become familiar with possibilities as well as requirements. In doing so, your child will more likely seek the kind of knowledge and skills for that vocation rather than waste your money on general qualifications that will not entice an employer to choose them at the interview.

Spell out realistic expectations of the working world such as Gates' Rule 3 above. As they are thinking of vocations walk them through an employment scenario. Have them pretend they are an employer in a job area of interest. Get

them to write down what this prospective employee would need to know and do. Include physical aspects, knowledge base and value expectations. Then ask your teen if he/she would get the job with their current knowledge/skill set? If not, what do they need to do to prepare more thoroughly for a successful interview?

When I was looking for jobs years ago when jobs were more abundant, I succeeded in everything I applied for. In the current work climate, this rarely happens. We can significantly enhance our teens' chances by helping them explore their options early, getting them into voluntary work for the sake of 'experience' and teaching them crucial values such as honesty, loyalty, obeying authority and respect.

Good preparation will have your children feeling confident and willing to earn their way into satisfying jobs.

If you have any comments or questions on this subject, please do not hesitate to contact us at sally@forefrontfamilies.org. We invite you to also check out our website at www.forefrontfamilies.org and our blog site at www.forefrontfamilies.blogspot.com for further assistance.