

# What Are Parents For?

Dub McClish

Someone has remarked that parents are not for raising children, but children are for raising parents. While there is surely an element of truth in the statement that bringing children into the world has a way of causing parents to mature more rapidly, this is obviously not the whole truth in the parent-child relationship. Just what are parents for, anyhow?

Surely none would disagree that it is only normal and right that parents provide their helpless infants with food, clothing and shelter until they are mature enough to provide their own. There is hardly an animal that is so utterly helpless and dependent in infancy as a human being. For this reason, our laws look upon abandonment of an infant as a criminal offense. The provision of the necessities of life for the children they bring into the world is an axiomatic obligation of parents.

In the normal course of things, children leave their parents' home and establish their own when they reach a certain age of maturity. Growing out of this practice is another important task of parents, namely providing them with preparation for a life independent of their parents. Through proper discipline of our children, we prepare them for the most successful and trouble-free life possible. Through training and provision of educational opportunities, we fit them for a means of supporting themselves and others for whom they may become responsible. Surely, parents owe their children these things.

The most important responsibility of parents relates to the training that will bring their children into God's service at an early age – and the leadership that will keep them there. Children are to be nurtured (given constant attention and care) in the chastening and admonition of the Lord (Eph 6:4). How is this to be accomplished when parents only **wish** their children could grow up to be strong Christians, but are unwilling to expend time, energy, or even right example that the wish might be fulfilled? How often bitter parents have lashed out against "the church" for failing to provide what their child needed when the child has gone astray! Let us not forget that God's first teaching unit in society has always been the home. The church can and should complement the righteous teaching in the home, but its efforts can rarely overcome the wrong or even negligent home influence.

[**Note:** I wrote this article for and it was published in *The Edifier*, weekly bulletin of Pearl Street Church of Christ, Denton, TX, May 6, 1982, of which I was editor.]

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