

# Dedicated Parents

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There are admittedly many factors, involving both inheritance and environment, that may affect the overall development of children. Surely, it will not be denied that there is no single factor more directly bearing on a child's general development than his parents. This fact, arrived at through the teaching of the Bible, observation, and common sense, places weighty responsibilities upon those who bring children into the world.

Our welfare laws and our courts recognize that parents have the responsibility of providing adequate food, clothing, shelter, education, and to some degree, the proper moral atmosphere for normal child development. This moral and humane principle is rooted in the Bible.

But if any provideth not for his own, and specially his own household, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an unbeliever. (1 Tim. 5:8).

Dedicated parents understand this responsibility and, to the extent of their abilities, appropriately fill the physical needs of their offspring.

## Spiritual Needs

Unless one wants to reduce a child to mere animal life comparable to a horse or a dog, it must be admitted that normal human beings, including young/ones, are spiritual as well as physical beings. They have a will, the ability to learn right from wrong, and eventually, the power to make moral choices. Since children are not only physical with physical needs, but also spiritual, with spiritual needs, it follows that parents have a responsibility to fill these needs also. In ranking, the spiritual needs are of primary importance because they pertain to unending eternity, while the physical needs are secondary, pertaining to time and earth-life (2 Cor. 4:16-18). Yet tragically, it is obvious that modern parents often lavish upon their children the fulfillment of every desire, far in excess of their physical needs, to the utter neglect of their spiritual needs.

## Bible Emphasis

God knew that the prevailing rule in child-rearing would always be that children are products of their training (Pro. 22:6; Deu. 6:6-9; Eph. 6:4). The word *chastening* in Ephesians 6:4 suggests both instruction and correction. Dedicated parents will see that their children have the incomparable privilege of being taught the Bible from their early years (2 Tim. 3:15). Such

teaching will equip them with great principles of Truth for their lives (2 Peter 1:5-7). What we do will likely speak more loudly than what we say to our children. So often it is at this point that our influence breaks down while teaching them what is right, we practice wrong in their presence. Many a parent has caught himself/herself in the ridiculous contradiction of shouting at his child to "Stop shouting!" Dedicated parents will try to measure up to that Abrahamic example that allowed God to say of him:

For I have known him, to the end that he may command his children and his household after him, that they may keep the way of Jehovah... (Gen. 18:19).

A proper parental dedication will cause us to correct and chasten our children when they disobey (Heb. 12: 6-11; Pro. 13: 24; 22:14; 23:13-14; 29:15-17), rather than refraining from doing so.

### **Exceptions and the Rule**

In some cases, children who have been reared in Christian homes, whose parents very faithfully attended Bible school and worship, have abandoned those principles. Likewise, exceptional cases exist where children who did not have any spiritual emphasis in their homes have later come under the Gospel's influence and have become spiritually strong in spite of parental negligence. However, both of these are exceptions. Parents who are truly dedicated to their task will not gamble with the lives of their children on the unbalanced odds of some exceptional cases. Jesus warned of the tragedy of causing one of these "little ones" to stumble:

...but whoso shall cause one of these little ones that believe on me to stumble, it is profitable for him that a great millstone should be hanged about his neck, and *that* he should be sunk in the depth of the sea. (Mat. 18:6).

[**Note:** I wrote this MS for and it was published in the November, 1982 edition of *Moments of Truth*, edited by Burt Groves, published by Eisenhower Church of Christ, Odessa, TX.]

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