

Responsibilities of Dedicated Parents

Dub McClish

In the normal development of family life there comes a time when the second generation leaves the first generation to establish a new family from which succeeding generations spring forth. This perpetual "family cycle" was ordered by God in the very beginning as the means of propagating the earth with humankind (Gen. 1:27-28). This was God's plan for all time (Gen. 2:24; Mat. 19:5; Eph. 5:31).

When our children come of age to seek their lifetime spouses and establish their own homes, what sort of men and women will they be, and what sort of homes will they establish? There are admittedly many factors, involving both inheritance (nature) and environment (nurture), 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 or her 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.

Physical Responsibility

Our welfare laws and our courts recognize that parents have the responsibility to adequately provide food, clothing, shelter, education, and to some degree, the proper moral atmosphere, which will foster the normal development of their children. When it is determined that a child is being deprived of such necessities, he may be taken from his parents and placed in the care of others who will provide these needs. This moral and humane principle is rooted in the Bible (1 Tim. 5:8). Paul states the principle: "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).

Admittedly, Paul is applying the principle to the responsibility of children toward their aged, infirm parents. But the principle applies with equal force to parental duty toward their children during the years when children are incapable of knowing or providing for such needs. Dedicated parents understand this responsibility and, to the best of their abilities, appropriately provide 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 children have more than physical needs because they are more than physical beings. Children are spiritual as well as physical beings. They have a will, a power to

learn right from wrong and eventually, a power to make moral choices. These characteristics all imply that man is accountable to a standard of right and wrong, which is administered by one in whom there is no wrong. The Bible plainly teaches this:

For we must all be made manifest before the judgment-seat of Christ; that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he hath done, whether it be good or bad (2 Cor. 5:10; see also Rom. 14:12; 1Pet. 4:3-5).

Since children have not only physical needs, but also spiritual needs, it follows that parents have a responsibility to fill both in the spiritual as well as the physical needs. In ranking the needs of our children, the spiritual needs are of primary importance because they pertain to unending eternity, while the physical needs, important as they are, are of secondary importance, pertaining to time and earthly life (2 Cor. 4:16-18). Yet tragically, it is obvious that many 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. Thus, Solomon counsels: "Train up a child in the way he should go and even when he is old he will not depart from it" (Pro. 22: 6). For this cause Moses commanded the fathers and mothers of Israel to use every possible moment and method to teach their children God's Law:

[A]nd thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, . . . when thou sittest... and when thou walkest ... and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up ... and thou shalt write them upon the door-posts of thy house . . . (Deu. 6:6-9).

Similarly, Paul urges In the New Testament:

And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but nurture them in the chastening and admonition of the Lord (Eph. 6:4).

Filling Their Needs

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, as did Timothy:

[F]rom a babe thou hast known the sacred [F]writings which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus (2 Tim. 3:15).

Such teaching will equip them with the great principles of faith, virtue, knowledge, self-control, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love (2 Pet. 1:5-7).

It must be remembered, however, that 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 right, we practice wrong in their presence. The mother who coaches her daughter to tell the unwanted caller at the door that her mother is not home has little chance of reasoning with the daughter about honesty. Likewise, the father who cannot "unwind" without his evening cocktail can hardly expect to register anything but hypocrisy with his teenage son as he warns him about dangerous drugs and alcohol. Many a parent has caught him—or herself in the ridiculous contradiction of shouting at a 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; cf. Pro. 13:24; 22:15, 23:13-14, 29:15, 17), rather than refraining from doing so. More and more psychologists are openly blaming permissive parents for so much widespread rebellion against authority in young people. Among these is Dr. Bruno Bettelheim of the University of Chicago. He is quoted by William Barden in his book, *Age of Aquarius*, as follows:

This is the generation that were picked up whenever they cried as infants and were allowed to express themselves uncurbed as small children . . . now they challenge authority because they fear their freedom.

He goes on to make the point that their heroes are often such absolute dictators as Ho Chi Minh, in whom they see the strong parent figures they never had, but still desire.

Exceptions to the Rule

In a few exceptional cases, children who have been reared in Christian homes and whose parents faithfully attended Bible School and worship, have wandered away from those principles. Likewise, there are exceptional cases 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 despite parental negligence. **However, both situations 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 article November 16, 1972 for publication in the *Christian Worker* of which I was associate editor at the time.

Attribution: From *thescripturecache.com*; Dub McClish, owner and administrator.