

What Are Parents For?

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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.

Most importantly parental responsibility relates to the teaching, training, and example that will cause their children to begin serving the Lord when very young. Fathers are to lead in "nurturing" their offspring in the "chastening and admonition of the Lord" (Eph 6:4), realizing that when they leave home, they still may reject such godly efforts. Such being so, what chance do children have whose parents only **wish** their children to grow up to be strong in the faith, but who are unwilling to expend time, energy, and/or example to fulfill the wish? Sometimes parents blame "the church" for failing to provide what their straying son or daughter needed. Let remember that God's first teaching unit in society has always been the home and family. The church can—and should—complement good parental influence, but church efforts can rarely overcome wrong or negligent parental 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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