

The Wonderfully Awesome Responsibility of Christian Parenting

Parental obligations are amongst the most momentous pertaining to the affairs of mankind. Do we think about this incredible power to propagate the human species? Do we realize that this is the nearest approach we humans have to the divine power? Indeed, it is the exercise of divine power by mankind as God's agent. The possibilities connected with the birth of every child extend in opposite directions of advantage or disadvantage, good or evil, honor or dishonor--to wonderful extremes. Surely if men and women realized this matter from its true standpoint it would lift the begetting of children from the plane of a passion and a relaxation of intellectual and moral principles to a consecrated plane, in which the responsibilities of fatherhood and motherhood would be realized in a manner and to a degree attained as yet surely by very few. These thoughts of obligation should extend not only to the child, but also to the Creator who entrusted to humanity this marvelous power of propagation.

RESPONSIBILITY

*"Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it."--
Proverbs 22:6*

When should the parents begin this training? From the moment of begetting the mind of the mother--her thoughts, moods and sentiments--are all being impressed upon the embryo child. The cooperating husband will provide as secure, stable and cheerful an influence as possible for mother and child. The naturally minded man and woman can follow this admonition and bring about some of these influences for good, but in the Christian man and woman with spiritual hopes and promises and ideals, they have loftier sentiments, grander hopes, nobler aspirations, purer joys: and these, realizing the influence of their thoughts, emotions and sentiments upon the embryo child, are in a more favorable position than are others.

Thoughtful parents will realize that the interests of their child should be considered in all life's arrangements. Further, they should day by day and hour by hour prayerfully seek the divine guidance and blessing upon their parenting. While the development and attainment of the Christian graces is always important (faith, hope, kindness, patience, love gentleness, etc.) it is even more so when they remember that they are stamping, impressing the character of another generation.

PROVIDING

"But if any provide not for his own and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel."--1 Timothy 5:8

This verse suggests more than just providing the material needs of food, shelter and clothing. It includes moral and intellectual provisions of education in the home and schools. It means a laying aside from personal consumption in the interest of the children.

HOME ENVIRONMENT

"...Fathers, provoke not your children to wrath, but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."--Ephesians 6:4; Colossians 3:21

So far as possible the home should be bright and cheerful and clean. The mind should be directed into such channels as would be advantageous: reading, writing, mathematics and the practical duties of life. Heart culture is all important, with a constant recognition of the Lord in all of life's affairs, benevolent, kind feelings toward the world in general, and loving confidences between husband and wife. Also the conversation should be such as would stir up the nobler sentiments. The Christian parent certainly knows not to use harsh or angry words to their children (or to anybody), and discipline especially should be done in love and with kindness. Idle threats from the parent such as, "I'll beat you within an inch of your life!" or "I'll kill you!" no doubt at first convey a sense of terror to the child, yet it is not long before the child learns that they don't come to pass. Then, two things happen: 1) The child learns to disregard the parents' threats; 2) There is a corresponding loss of love and respect toward the parent. Such hasty language or yelling by the parent demonstrates a lack of control, resulting in a loss of confidence by the child, which further results in an erosion of influence.

Every child should be able to look back upon its home, however humble, however scantily furnished, as a clean place, a house of God, a holy place. He should be able to look back and in memory recall the voice of prayer at the family altar, the kind words of father or mother on various occasions, and the general spirit of peace and restfulness through contentment and submission to divine providence.

PROPER REWARDS AND PUNISHMENTS

"Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence..."--Hebrews 11:7

*"He that spareth his rod hateth his son, but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes."--
Proverbs 13:24*

Nothing is further from our intention than to urge indiscriminate and frequent use of the rod in the training of children. We have cited these Scriptures, however, to show the mistaken position of those who hold that corporal chastisement by parents, even when necessary, is wrong. The home that is **ruled** with the rod must of necessity be an unhappy home. The homes of New Creatures should be ruled by love, not by the rod. The rod is to be kept merely as an occasional necessity for enforcing the rules of love, and when it is administered it is to be wielded by the hand of love and never by the hand of anger. New Creatures in Christ, governed by the spirit of a sound mind, learn gradually that order is one of heaven's first laws, and hence that it should be one of the first elements and characteristics of the homes of New Creatures.

The Golden Rule and the Law of Love should guide father and mother in the proper exercise of rewards and disciplines. A reward may be the giving of a kiss while a discipline would be the withholding of a kiss, or a season of separation of the unruly from the company of the obedient. Their punishment may be more or less severe according to the wilfulness of the child, but never according to the standard of justice. We should never attempt to mete out to the child the full measure of what its conduct might justly demand--because we are not under justice ourselves, but under mercy, love, and are to show mercy, not only in our dealing with others, but specially in our dealings with our children.

And, in the event of the child's disobedience, and hence the need for reproof or correction, the child should be admonished from the standpoint of sympathy and confidence in its good intentions, and an expression of the parent's confidence that the child shall try harder next time and in the future as well. At times like these it is well for the parent to lead in a prayer together for the Lord's help in making this failure a profitable lesson, and ask for His assistance for the future in regards to this temptation.

The parent owes it to himself as a part of his own discipline, as well as to his child, that he shall never inflict a punishment which he has not sufficiently considered and coolly, dispassionately, found to be not more, but less, than justice might properly demand.

TEACHING PROPER PRINCIPLES

"...Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."--Galatians 6:7

"Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life."--Proverbs 4:23

Many parents forget to look backward and to note at how early an age they themselves learned to appreciate principles of righteousness--how keen was our sense of justice when we were children--how we mentally approved parental discipline when we understood its motive to be for the development of character. But conversely, how we resented it if we did not see a principle of justice; if we were reproofed for things of which we were not guilty, or punished beyond a reasonable extent.

Not only is it the best and surest way of controlling a child thus to direct its mind along the lines of right and wrong, truth and falsehood, justice and injustice, but this constitutes also a training of the child in **character** when it is most susceptible to parental influence. It is character-building at a time when the conscience and judgment of the child are in their formative condition and when it properly recognizes the parent as its sole lawgiver. If this work of character-building be ignored in infancy, the work is many times more difficult in future years.

It is all-important, then, to notice that the training of a child does not consist solely in teaching it respecting its outward deportment in politeness, cleanliness, obedience, etc., but, further, and indeed, chiefly, in the establishment of right principles in the heart--proper recognition there of the mind of the Lord as being the only standard of living, both for old and young. The child who is taught to be selfish, or one whose natural selfishness is not brought kindly to his attention (though not in the presence of others) and lovingly reproofed and corrected, is missing a most important lesson at the most opportune moment.

The parents who properly and conscientiously instruct their children so will reap a benefit in themselves. For as they express these noble principles to their children they are impressing them upon their own hearts, and further will want to live as nearly as possible up to these standards. Two principles should guide: First of all love for the Lord and for the children, and this love should be guided and directed by the Word of God; secondly, the Word of God as the source of authority and instruction should be continually appealed to. Furthermore, all parents should learn to treat children with consideration.

RELIGIOUS TRAINING

"And from a child thou hast known the holy Scriptures..."--2 Timothy 3:15

The religious element of the child's mind requires special training and in this the Christian parent should be his tutor. As daily lessons in the material world are necessary and proper enough, lessons on the spiritual are essential. The parent should be as particular in this instruction as well. It is best for parents to step by step lead their children to an appropriate and comprehensive understanding of God's character as demonstrated by his Plan for mankind. The parents should not feel inclined to leave religious instruction to others, even as we don't leave our instruction merely to others, clergy or otherwise. The parents receive a wonderful benefit themselves by

instructing their family. By the time the children are of teenage years they are best served to know what God's will is concerning His creatures and how to find heavenly wisdom, comfort and guidance from the Word of God for themselves.

THE POWER OF SUGGESTION

Few recognize the importance of the human **will** in respect to health and sickness, joy and pain, obedience and disobedience, right and wrong doing--indeed in respect to every act and word and thought of life. And the child's will is specially susceptible to impressions and suggestions while the child's mind is opening to the affairs of life and the foundations of its character are being laid. Applying the law of good and truthful suggestion to his child is the secret of a parent's success. Some parents apply the principle continually without being aware of it. For instance, the mother who, every morning, greets her child with a cheery face and voice, gives her child a happy suggestion, good both mentally and physically. Discontent, one of the serious evils of our day, would find little to stimulate its growth in a family in which all were intent on giving happifying suggestions to **themselves** and each other.

The same method should be adopted in the guidance of the child's diet in sickness or health. Never should the child have aches or pains suggested, for the mind will almost certainly fasten upon these and tend to aggravate any weakness or pain. Nor should aches and ailments be made the topic of conversation--especially not at the table, where every thought and influence should be cheerful, healthful.

PROPER CONFIDENCE

The child whose confidence has been nurtured and established over time will naturally bring the many questions of life to the parent. Such questions should be expected and invited and should be given wise and respectful answers, according to the age of the child. Confidential questions should never be treated lightly nor confidences broken. Many a parent forfeits the future confidence of his child by making light of its sentiments or secrets.

RIGHTS OF MATURITY

When the age of manhood or womanhood is reached, the child instinctively feels that he has passed a line and should no longer be treated as a child, but as a companion--should no longer be commanded in anything, but requested. He should no longer be required to give a strict account in detail of all money earned, but should be permitted a larger discretion and personality than previously. Wise, just, loving parents should not attempt a violation of these rights of maturity, but rather seek from that period onward to deal with the child as with a younger brother or sister--as adviser and best friend.

If you have found these suggestions helpful, we have much more available than is written here. **EMAIL** your request for the 43 page chapter entitled, ""**Parental Obligations of the New Creation**" is found in the book **THE NEW CREATION**. Among other chapter titles it includes, "**Marital and other Privileges**," "**Foes and Besetments of the New Creation**," and "**The Resurrection Inheritance**." We would invite any questions on subjects of vital interest to New Creatures in Christ Jesus.

Courtesy of The Oakland County Bible Students