

Where Have the Parents Gone?

If there was ever a time in our history to emphasize full time godly parenting, it is now. Many of our children are wandering aimlessly through life without feeling loved and lacking direction and purpose for their lives. The result being, many of our children are addicted to drugs and alcohol, sexually promiscuous, suicidal and full of anger and fear. This has resulted in a total disregard for the value of their lives and the lives of others as well as God's authority and the authority of the world that we live in.

Truly our children are crying out for help. Are we willing to hear and respond to their cries? It is not the government's responsibility or our schools, nor even our churches. It is our responsibility as parents to raise our children to love God and glorify Him through their lives. The following information should help us understand our God given responsibilities as parents.

Children, God's Blessing. "Behold, children are a gift from the Lord; The fruit of the womb is a reward. Like arrows in the hand of the warrior, so are the children of one's youth. How blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them; They shall not be ashamed, When they speak with their enemies in the gate" (Psalm 127:3-5).

The process of raising children is actually an exercise of faith, because when we entrust our children to God, we know He will keep and guard them. "I know whom I have believed," wrote Paul, "and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day" (2 Timothy 1:12).

When we consider our children to be a sacred trust from God and train them to be accountable for their choices and actions, then we can trust the end result to Him. "Train up a child in the way he should go, Even when he is old he will not depart from it" (Proverbs 22:6).

We have an opportunity to give of ourselves without limit as we care for our children unselfishly. This selfless giving helps us become more sensitive to others and to understand their needs.

Jesus taught, "Whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave" (Matthew 20:26-27).

Our responsibility before God for our children will keep us on our knees in prayer and bring deep spiritual growth in us. As Jesus prayed for His disciples, we should pray for our families: "I ask on their behalf; I do not ask on behalf of the world, but of those whom Thou hast given Me; for they are Thine. I do not ask Thee to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one. Sanctify them in the truth; Thy word is truth" (John 17:9,15,17). In raising our children, we become aware of being responsible to God for the lives of others.

Training Children. How are parents to train their children?

First, we are to train them from God's Word: "And these words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart; and you shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up" (Deuteronomy 6:6-7; see also Genesis 18:19; Deut. 4:5-10; 11:19; Psalm 78:5-8).

Second, we are to train our children as God does: "And fathers, do not provoke your children to anger; but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4).

Third, we are to train them by example: "Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ" (1 Corinthians 11:1). We are not to expect something of our children that we ourselves are not doing. How often have we said, "Son, don't do as I do; do as I say?" This

is not a biblical response. Our children need to see in us the same Christlike qualities and actions that we desire from them.

Building Character. We should, first of all, dedicate our children to God from the moment of conception, while still in the womb. For God consecrated Jeremiah in the womb (see Jeremiah 1:5), and called Isaiah from his mother's womb (see Isaiah 44:2,24; 49:1,5).

It is up to us as parents to spend time communicating His Word to them as early as possible (from conception and birth), building character in them, and letting them see the Word at work in us. We establish a pattern for our children, either to walk in the ways of God or to reject His ways. "The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things; and the God of peace shall be with you" (Philippians 4:9).

Keep in mind that your children must grow up in a world far more complex and difficult than the days of your own youth. Take the time to be involved and to know each of your children deeply.

Always be there for your children when there is a problem, hurt feelings, or emotional upset. Being there means supportive caring and helping in a positive way. It is also important for you to participate in the special events and milestones of your child's life. By caring enough to be there for each child, you help build a strong self-concept and an inner security that would not otherwise be possible. Treat your children as your greatest legacy, because that is just what they are.

Let us purpose to become full time parents in order to raise up a generation of children who feel loved by God and by us as parents with a strong desire to glorify God through their lives. We can change the world we live in through the godly parenting of our children.