

The Responsibility of Parents

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Introduction

The family relationship, established by God, is the foundation of all human society. If our homes are what they should be, we are provided with an early taste of heaven. However, if God's will is not followed, home life may become mired in misery.

Holy Scripture repeatedly focuses upon the home and family, addressing the duties and responsibilities of husbands and wives, fathers and mothers, parents and children. The blessings of heaven fall on those families that fear the Lord (Ps. 127 & 128). The spiritual emphasis that should exist in our families was exemplified by Abraham (Gen. 18:19), Joshua (Josh. 24:15), and even prospectively, by Cornelius (Acts 10:1-2, 24, 33).

Psalm 127:1-5 ... 1 A Song of Ascents, of Solomon. Unless the Lord builds the house, They labor in vain who build it; Unless the Lord guards the city, The watchman keeps awake in vain. 2 It is vain for you to rise up early, To retire late, To eat the bread of painful labors; For He gives to His beloved even in his sleep. 3 Behold, children are a gift of the Lord, The fruit of the womb is a reward. 4 Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, So are the children of one's youth. 5 How blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them; They will not be ashamed When they speak with their enemies in the gate. (NASB95)

Psalms 128:1-6 ... 1 How blessed is everyone who fears the Lord, 1 Who walks in His ways. 2 When you shall eat of the fruit of your hands, You will be happy and it will be well with you. 3 Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine Within your house, Your children like olive plants Around your table. 4 Behold, for thus shall the man be blessed Who fears the Lord. 5 The Lord bless you from Zion, And may you see the prosperity of Jerusalem all the days of your life. 6 Indeed, may you see your children's children. Peace be upon Israel! (NASB95)

Genesis 18:19 ... 19 For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment; that the LORD may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him. (KJV)

Joshua 24:15 ... 15 "If it is disagreeable in your sight to serve the Lord, choose for yourselves today whom you will serve: whether the gods which your fathers served which were beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living; but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." (NASB95)

Acts 10:1-2, 24, 33 ... Now there was a man at Caesarea named Cornelius, a centurion of what was called the Italian cohort, 2 a devout man and one who feared God with all his household, and gave many alms to the Jewish people and prayed to God continually. 24 On the following day he entered Caesarea. Now Cornelius was waiting for them and had called together his relatives and close friends. 33 “So I sent for you immediately, and you have been kind enough to come. Now then, we are all here present before God to hear all that you have been commanded by the Lord.” (NASB95)

Provision

Parents should provide their children with the basic necessities of life: food, clothing, shelter. Saints and sinners alike universally recognize this basic obligation. Fathers must provide for the physical needs of their family (Luke 11:11-13). At least initially, children are not responsible to save up for their parents, but parents for their children (2 Cor. 12:14). Later in life, children must requite their parents (1 Tim. 5:3-4; Matt. 15:1-6; 23:14). Anyone unwilling to fulfill this duty is guilty of grievous failure (1 Tim. 5:8; 2 Thess. 3:10).

Luke 11:11-13 ... 11 “Now suppose one of you fathers is asked by his son for a fish; he will not give him a snake instead of a fish, will he? 12 “Or if he is asked for an egg, he will not give him a scorpion, will he? 13 “If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?” (NASB95)

2 Corinthians 12:14 ... 14 Here for this third time I am ready to come to you, and I will not be a burden to you; for I do not seek what is yours, but you; for children are not responsible to save up for their parents, but parents for their children. (NASB95)

1 Timothy 5:3-4 ... 3 Honor widows who are widows indeed; 4 but if any widow has children or grandchildren, they must first learn to practice piety in regard to their own family and to make some return to their parents; for this is acceptable in the sight of God. (NASB95)

Matthew 15:1-6 ... 1 Then some Pharisees and scribes came to Jesus from Jerusalem and said, 2 “Why do Your disciples break the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat bread.” 3 And He answered and said to them, “Why do you yourselves transgress the commandment of God for the sake of your tradition? 4 “For God said, ‘Honor your father and mother,’ and, ‘He who speaks evil of father or mother is to be put to death.’ 5 “But you say, ‘Whoever says to his father or mother, “Whatever I have that would help you has been given to God,” 6 he is not to honor his father or his mother.’ And by this you invalidated the word of God for the sake of your tradition. (NASB95)

Matthew 23:14 ... 14 [“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you devour widows’ houses, and for a pretense you make long prayers; therefore you will receive greater condemnation.] (NASB95)

1 Timothy 5:8 ... 8 But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever. (NASB95)

2 Thessalonians 3:10 ... 10 For even when we were with you, we used to give you this order: if anyone is not willing to work, then he is not to eat, either. (NASB95)

Yet, balance must be maintained. Parents often feel they must provide their children with, not only the basic necessities, but also the finer things in life. We want our kids to have it better than did we: better clothes... better house... better car... better education. However, danger here lurks. We do our children no favors, if they learn by our example that the accumulation of material possessions is the highest goal in life (Mark 8:36-37). Often less is more (Ps. 37:16; Prov. 15:16; 16:8; Eccl. 4:6). Let us not foolishly teach our children to neglect spiritual riches in the pursuit of physical wealth (1 Tim. 6:6-11).

Mark 8:36-37 ... 36 “For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world, and forfeit his soul? 37 “For what will a man give in exchange for his soul? (NASB95)

Psalms 37:16 ... 16 Better is the little of the righteous Than the abundance of many wicked. (NASB95)

Proverbs 15:16 ... 16 Better is a little with the fear of the Lord Than great treasure and turmoil with it. (NASB95)

Proverbs 16:8 ... 8 Better is a little with righteousness Than great income with injustice. (NASB95)

Ecclesiastes 4:6 ... 6 One hand full of rest is better than two fists full of labor and striving after wind. (NASB95)

1 Timothy 6:6-11 ... 6 But godliness actually is a means of great gain when accompanied by contentment. 7 For we have brought nothing into the world, so we cannot take anything out of it either. 8 If we have food and covering, with these we shall be content. 9 But those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and destruction. 10 For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs. 11 But flee from these things, you man of God, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance and gentleness. (NASB95)

Instruction

Parents should instruct their children. Parents, and fathers in particular, have the responsibility of bringing their children up “in the nurture and admonition of the Lord” (Eph. 6:4). This principle has stood since antiquity (Deut. 6:4-9; Ps. 78:5-6). Lois and Eunice are good examples of faithfulness in this area (2 Tim. 1:5; 3:15).

Ephesians 6:4 ... 4 Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. (NASB95)

Deuteronomy 6:4-9 ... 4 "Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord is one! 5 "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. 6 "These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart. 7 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. 8 "You shall bind them as a sign on your hand and they shall be as frontals on your forehead. 9 "You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates. (NASB95)

Psalms 78:5-6 ... 5 For He established a testimony in Jacob And appointed a law in Israel, Which He commanded our fathers That they should teach them to their children, 6 That the generation to come might know, even the children yet to be born, That they may arise and tell them to their children, (NASB95)

2 Timothy 1:5 ... 5 For I am mindful of the sincere faith within you, which first dwelt in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am sure that it is in you as well. (NASB95)

2 Timothy 3:15 ... 15 and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. (NASB95)

Every father should remember that one day his son will follow his example instead of his advice. Each of us have a spiritual obligation to our children. See that your children are faithful in attendance. Do not send your kids to church, bring them! You teach by example. If you forsake the assembly, or if you allow your children to do so, you are telling them that religion is not important. If you are casual about your responsibility toward the Lord, your kids will be also. God will hold us accountable for the apostasy of our children if we have not set the right example.

Discipline

Parents should discipline and correct their children. No loving father or mother will physically abuse their children. However, they do understand the importance of corporal punishment in correcting children's behavior problems.

Many today object to spanking. They maintain that corporal punishment teaches children to use aggression to solve their problems. They assert that physical discipline only perpetuates more violence. Anti-spanking advocates argue that children who are spanked are "more prone to low self-esteem, depression, and accept lower paying jobs as adults." Rubbish.

Parents must discipline their children or suffer the consequences. Juvenile delinquency usually results from a lack of loving discipline in the home. The statement "Spare the rod and spoil the child" is not found in the Bible, but many similar expressions can be found in the book of Proverbs (Prov. 3:12; 13:24; 19:18; 22:6, 15; 23:13-14; 29:15, 17). God's ways are always best. Parents must be willing to discipline their children in a responsible, controlled way to impress upon them the need for obedience and proper behavior.

Proverbs 3:12 ... 12 For whom the Lord loves He reproveth, Even as a father corrects the son in whom he delights. (NASB95)

Proverbs 13:24 ... 24 He who withholds his rod hates his son, But he who loves him disciplines him diligently. (NASB95)

Proverbs 19:18 ... 18 Discipline your son while there is hope, And do not desire his death. (NASB95)

Proverbs 22:6 ... 6 Train up a child in the way he should go, Even when he is old he will not depart from it. (NASB95)

Proverbs 22:15 ... 15 Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child; The rod of discipline will remove it far from him. (NASB95)

Proverbs 23:13-14 ... 13 Do not hold back discipline from the child, Although you strike him with the rod, he will not die. 14 You shall strike him with the rod And rescue his soul from Sheol. (NASB95)

Proverbs 29:15 ... 15 The rod and reproof give wisdom, But a child who gets his own way brings shame to his mother. (NASB95)

Proverbs 29:17 ... 17 Correct your son, and he will give you comfort; He will also delight your soul. (NASB95)

Consider the sad case of Eli, who failed to restrain his sons: His family suffered a terrible outcome (1 Sam. 2:12, 22-29; 3:11-14). We must discipline our sons and daughters while there is time and opportunity (Prov. 19:18; 23:13-14). Parental discipline is an expression of love (Heb. 12:5-11). Let us conform to the later example rather than the former.

1 Samuel 1:3 ... 3 Now this man would go up from his city yearly to worship and to sacrifice to the Lord of hosts in Shiloh. And the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were priests to the Lord there. (NASB95)

1 Samuel 2:12-17 ... 12 Now the sons of Eli were worthless men; they did not know the Lord 13 and the custom of the priests with the people. When any man was offering a sacrifice, the priest's servant would come while the meat was boiling, with a three-pronged fork in his hand. 14 Then he would thrust it into the pan, or kettle, or caldron, or pot; all that the fork brought up the priest would take for himself. Thus they did in Shiloh to all the Israelites who came there. 15 Also, before they burned the fat, the priest's servant would come and say to the man who was sacrificing, "Give the priest meat for roasting, as he will not take boiled meat from you, only raw." 16 If the man said to him, "They must surely burn the fat first, and then take as much as you desire," then he would say, "No, but you shall give it to me now; and if not, I will take it by force." 17 Thus the sin of the young men was very great before the Lord, for the men despised the offering of the Lord. (NASB95)

1 Samuel 2:22-25 ... 22 Now Eli was very old; and he heard all that his sons were doing to all Israel, and how they lay with the women who served at the doorway of the tent of meeting. 23 He said to them, “Why do you do such things, the evil things that I hear from all these people? 24 “No, my sons; for the report is not good which I hear the Lord’s people circulating. 25 “If one man sins against another, God will mediate for him; but if a man sins against the Lord, who can intercede for him?” But they would not listen to the voice of their father, for the Lord desired to put them to death. (NASB95)

1 Samuel 2:27-34 ... 27 Then a man of God came to Eli and said to him, “Thus says the Lord, ‘Did I not indeed reveal Myself to the house of your father when they were in Egypt in bondage to Pharaoh’s house? 28 ‘Did I not choose them from all the tribes of Israel to be My priests, to go up to My altar, to burn incense, to carry an ephod before Me; and did I not give to the house of your father all the fire offerings of the sons of Israel? 29 ‘Why do you kick at My sacrifice and at My offering which I have commanded in My dwelling, and honor your sons above Me, by making yourselves fat with the choicest of every offering of My people Israel?’ 30 “Therefore the Lord God of Israel declares, ‘I did indeed say that your house and the house of your father should walk before Me forever’; but now the Lord declares, ‘Far be it from Me—for those who honor Me I will honor, and those who despise Me will be lightly esteemed. 31 ‘Behold, the days are coming when I will break your strength and the strength of your father’s house so that there will not be an old man in your house. 32 ‘You will see the distress of My dwelling, in spite of all the good that I do for Israel; and an old man will not be in your house forever. 33 ‘Yet I will not cut off every man of yours from My altar so that your eyes will fail from weeping and your soul grieve, and all the increase of your house will die in the prime of life. 34 ‘This will be the sign to you which will come concerning your two sons, Hophni and Phinehas: on the same day both of them will die. (NASB95)

1 Samuel 3:11-14 ... 11 The Lord said to Samuel, “Behold, I am about to do a thing in Israel at which both ears of everyone who hears it will tingle. 12 “In that day I will carry out against Eli all that I have spoken concerning his house, from beginning to end. 13 “For I have told him that I am about to judge his house forever for the iniquity which he knew, because his sons brought a curse on themselves and he did not rebuke them. [restrained them not, KJV; “frowned not upon them,” Hebrew] 14 “Therefore I have sworn to the house of Eli that the iniquity of Eli’s house shall not be atoned for by sacrifice or offering forever.” (NASB95)

Proverbs 19:18 ... 18 Discipline your son while there is hope, And do not desire his death. (NASB95)

Proverbs 23:13-14 ... 13 Do not hold back discipline from the child, Although you strike him with the rod, he will not die. 14 You shall strike him with the rod And rescue his soul from Sheol. (NASB95)

Hebrews 12:5-11 ... 5 and you have forgotten the exhortation which is addressed to you as sons, “My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, Nor faint when you are reproved by Him; 6 For those whom the Lord loves He disciplines, And He scourges every son whom He receives.” 7 It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you

as with sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline? 8 But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. 9 Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them; shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits, and live? 10 For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but He disciplines us for our good, so that we may share His holiness. 11 All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness. (NASB95)

Fairness

Parents should deal fairly with their children. The principle of fairness is exemplified by God: He is not a respecter of persons. Just as there is no partiality with God (Acts 10:34; Rom. 2:11), there should be no partiality among parents (Prov. 24:23). A failure in this regard can tear families apart. Isaac favored Esau while Rebekah favored Jacob (Gen. 25:27-28). Jacob was partial unto Joseph (Gen. 37:3-4). They all suffered the consequences. Esau sought to kill Jacob, who was forced to flee for his life. Joseph was sold into Egyptian captivity by his jealous brothers. Let us avoid the trap of favoritism and follow instead the rule of fairness.

Acts 10:34 ... 34 Opening his mouth, Peter said: "I most certainly understand now that God is not one to show partiality, (NASB95)

Romans 2:11 ... 11 For there is no partiality with God. (NASB95)

Proverbs 24:23 ... 23 These also are sayings of the wise. To show partiality in judgment is not good. (NASB95)

Genesis 25:27-28 ... 27 When the boys grew up, Esau became a skillful hunter, a man of the field, but Jacob was a peaceful man, living in tents. 28 Now Isaac loved Esau, because he had a taste for game, but Rebekah loved Jacob. (NASB95)

Genesis 37:3-4 ... 3 Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his sons, because he was the son of his old age; and he made him a varicolored tunic. 4 His brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers; and so they hated him and could not speak to him on friendly terms. (NASB95)

Love

Parents should love their children. A house may be equipped with all the latest appliances, but it is not a home unless it is filled with love (Prov. 15:17; cf. 17:1). Love should reign supreme within the family circle (1 Cor. 13:4-7; Titus 2:3-5). However, do not just tell your kids that you love them. Show them (1 John 3:18).

Proverbs 15:17 ... 17 Better is a dish of vegetables where love is Than a fattened ox served with hatred. (NASB95)

Proverbs 17:1 ... 1 Better is a dry morsel and quietness with it Than a house full of feasting with strife. (NASB95)

1 Corinthians 13:4-7 ... 4 Love is patient, love is kind and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant, 5 does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered, 6 does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; 7 bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. (NASB95)

Titus 2:3-5 ... 3 Older women likewise are to be reverent in their behavior, not malicious gossips nor enslaved to much wine, teaching what is good, 4 so that they may encourage the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, 5 to be sensible, pure, workers at home, kind, being subject to their own husbands, so that the word of God will not be dishonored. (NASB95)

1 John 3:18 ... 18 Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth. (NASB95)

Love does not mean letting the kids rule the roost. Sometimes it is easier to just “give in” and let them have their way. However, parents should have more wisdom and maturity than their children. When the need arises, parents should be willing to say “No” and then have enough backbone to mean it.

There are times when children attempt to manipulate their parents by saying, “If you loved me, you would let me _____.” A loving parents should reply, “Been there. Done that. Didn’t work for me. Won’t work for you.” Because parents have greater maturity and wisdom, they will often not allow their children to engage in certain activities precisely because they love them.

Conclusion

Children are a blessing from heaven above (Ps. 127:3-5). A good man will leave an inheritance to his children (Prov. 13:22). What kind of inheritance are you leaving behind? Will it be a noble example of faith and devotion, or will it be a worthless example of neglect and unbelief?

Psalms 127:3-5 ... 3 Behold, children are a gift of the Lord, The fruit of the womb is a reward. 4 Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, So are the children of one’s youth. 5 How blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them; They will not be ashamed When they speak with their enemies in the gate. (NASB95)

Proverbs 13:22 ... 22 A good man leaves an inheritance to his children’s children, And the wealth of the sinner is stored up for the righteous. (NASB95)