

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).

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).

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).

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).

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.

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.

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.

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).

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?