

Responsibility of Parents To Teach Their Children

By Everett Hardin

“Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord; and the fruit of the womb is his reward,”
Psalm 127:3.

Children indeed are a heritage of the Lord. They should be considered blessings, not burdens. To those who have no regard for God, this may not seem like much. To Christians it ought to mean a great deal. It ought to quicken our interest with regard to showing true love and concern for those who have been placed in our responsibility.

A home is not in order, in God’s sight, until both parents and children realize their duty and perform it. There are certain obligations incumbent upon each if we are to make our home what God would have it be. Unless Christianity is real in our homes, we are in the process of rearing children in an atmosphere of insincerity and shame. Nothing is more detrimental to future stability than a pretentious religion void of solid convictions and loyal devotion.

It is important that we train and teach our children. The task of the father is clearly set in this regard when Paul says, *“And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath; but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord,”* Eph. 6:4. To nurture is to nourish, to rear up tenderly and carefully. We will not accomplish this responsibility by accident or without working hard at it.

In Proverbs 22:6 we can see the emphasis placed upon “train” and “teach.” *“Train up a child in the way he should go; and when he is old, he will not depart from it.”* Also in Deut. 6:6-7 we read: *“And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart; and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shall talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou riseth up.”* We just cannot afford the dubious luxury of sleeping on the job of teaching and training our children.

God’s word must be kept before them at all times. We see advertising on billboards and on signs in neon lights. It is no wonder that America is turning to liquor, drugs, and sex. This is what is before their eyes. It is on the television screen, on the computer and in all advertising. Young people turn to these things because it greets them on every hand. God wants His word kept before them at all times.

The majority of parents today lavishly provide for their children materially, but woefully fail in their spiritual training. Many children are being starved spiritually. They are being deprived of the spiritual training that their Creator wants them to have. Failure here is of the gravest sort; for though the child may be a success in life, if he loses his soul he has lost all, Matt. 16:26. All parents will have to answer to God as to how well they have fulfilled this responsibility.

Nothing is as faith-building to a child as the opportunity to view daily the dedication of parents who love God and His word. Parents need to know the Lord and the way of salvation. It is not enough to just know book, chapter, and verse. Paul said, *“I know whom I have believed,”* 2 Tim. 1:12. Parents who claim to be Christians should constantly show the presence of Jesus in their lives and manifest the joy of serving Him. Children can easily see through the veneer of pseudo-spirituality. Hearing parents talk about God and including God in their plans is an important thing for children, and it shows them how to seek God first, Matt. 6:33.

In the home children should see a place where respect and understanding prevails, Eph. 5:22-33. The home should not be a place of fussing, bickering, and contention. Among the many causes of insecurity, the most frequently encountered cause is family quarreling and marital discord. As hard as parents may try, they cannot long keep such activities hidden from the perceptive child. The home should be the child's emotional rock, Deut. 33:27, and the parent should actively supply the security which their children desperately need.

The home should be a place where the Bible is studied, and prayer is offered, 2 Tim. 2:15; I Thess. 5:17. We should take the time, and have the interest to make this an integral part of our family life. We should teach our children that Bible principles make not only for happiness in this life, but also in the world to come, I Tim. 4:8. Skill and success, merely in earthly affairs, is of little value compared to spiritual and eternal interests. The fact that a family is "active in church" is not enough. Many who have thought that such was sufficient now wring their hands and wonder what went wrong. A study and application of the Bible will produce godliness, holiness, love, courage, industry, self-control, patience, sympathy, obedience, and subordination of our will to the will of the Lord and other similar virtues and requirements.

A study of the Bible will make it possible for our children to see what sin is and to oppose the prevalent sins and moral dangers. In our time all sorts of immorality flourishes without rebuke. In multiplied ways there are opportunities for doing evil with the endorsement of society. We are paying (and shall pay even more in the future) for our sins, Prov. 14:34). Our children must be taught not to excuse sins, Prov. 14:9, and to reject the claim of many of our day who contend that there is no objective standard of right and wrong.

We must set the proper example as a member of the Lord's church. First and foremost, by obeying the gospel, and serving God faithfully. Unfortunately, some have taught their children that the church is not very important. This is done in different ways. If parents are negligent in attendance, give grudgingly, and complain unceasingly the child will decide that Christianity is not for him. In contrast to this, children are taught by positive attitudes when parents do everything possible to be at all services, and when they carry their part of the load cheerfully. Our children should learn the meaning of faith and dependence on the Lord because they first see it in us.

During the formative years it is extremely important that we be in the right place doing the right thing. Success in other areas will not make up for failure here. Children cannot be raised "at our convenience." Faith cannot be instilled when we get around to it. Our children's hearts and minds are pliable when they are young. An important reason for living is to leave with our children a similar faith that we have in God, when we are gone. Family obligations should never be secondary in our lives to anything except the Lord and spiritual matters.

Building a good relationship with your children takes one ingredient which cannot be substituted at all — **TIME!** There must be time to just talk. A child has everything to learn. Parents are the first and most important teachers a child will have. It is impossible to bring up our children unless we are with them a proper amount of time. Parents must spend hours, days, months, and years training their children. We are working with souls that will live in an endless eternity, and we only get one chance with each child. My point in all this is that this matter of spending time with children is of such major importance that the parents could well afford to sacrifice some of their own pleasures, some of their own time usually spent working, or in other matters to devote time to their children. There will come a time when your child will not want to be around you all that much. Don't neglect or throw away those precious moments.

We have the responsibility to teach our children the truth that the generations to come will have opportunity to know and obey God's will. We have not only a responsibility to the present but also to the future generation. *"That the generation to come might know them, even the children which should be born; who shall arise and declare them to their children; That they might set their hope in God, and not forget the words of God, but keep His commandments,"* Ps. 78:6-7. May God help us to be faithful to our trust.
