

8. Season of Parenting (2Q 2019—Family Seasons)

Biblical material: Gen. 18:11; Jer. 31:25; Matt. 11:28; Psalm 127; Prov. 22:6; 1 Sam. 3:10–14; Phil. 3:13, Psalm 127:3.

Quotes

- Each day of our lives we make deposits in the memory banks of our children. *Charles R. Swindoll*
- You want to mess up the minds of your children? Here's how – guaranteed! Rear them in a legalistic, tight context of external religion, where performance is more important than reality. Fake your faith. Sneak around and pretend your spirituality. Train your children to do the same. Embrace a long list of do's and don'ts publicly but hypocritically practice them privately... yet never own up to the fact that its hypocrisy. Act one way but live another. And you can count on it – emotional and spiritual damage will occur. *Charles Swindoll*
- Don't worry that children never listen to you; worry that they are always watching you. *Robert Fulghum*
- Always kiss your children goodnight, even if they're already asleep. *H. Jackson Brown, Jr.*
- Everybody knows how to raise children, except the people who have them. *P. J. O'Rourke*
- Remember that you are not called to produce successful, upwardly mobile, highly educated, athletically talented machines... Giving your children great opportunities is good; it is not, however, the goal of parenting. Christlikeness is. Above all, seek to raise children who look and act a lot like Jesus. *Chip Ingram*

Questions

Passing on the faith; transmitting values; teaching a child in the way he should go—how does it really happen, and what expectations should we have? Many parents torment themselves when their children go wrong—but is it all down to parental influence? Don't children have choices too? How can you get children to listen to you? How does this relate to God?

Bible summary

Gen. 18:11 references Abraham and Sarah becoming parents. God promises help to those who grow weary (Jer. 31:25). Similarly Jesus promises rest (Matt. 11:28). Children are a heritage from the Lord (Psalm 127). While not an absolute guarantee, Prov. 22:6 indicates early training in knowing God is a blessing later in life. Eli's failure to discipline his sons ends in tragedy (1 Sam. 3:10–14). We press towards the mark (Phil. 3:13).

Comment

There are many schools of thought regarding the raising of children. In the words of Joseph Wood Krutch, "It is... sometimes easier to head an institute for the study of child guidance than it is to turn one brat into a decent human being." For theory is no substitute for the practice—the highly practical day-to-day experience of being a parent.

In terms of real impact and importance, the title of “parent” is surely one of the most significant. As a parent, you have the greatest opportunity to influence another life, to build and create, or to demean and destroy. A child in all his or her own potential is a wonderful gift, not to be disparaged or misused. The consequences of being “parent” are great—in both senses of the word.

Most of all, when we recognize the amazing truth that God identifies himself using parent terms. In describing the way He is, God chooses the closest and most intimate of human relationships—those of the family. Knowing this, and how we are God’s children, then as parents we understand that we reflect God to our own children.

As Christian parents, we are all still trying and being trained, and cannot claim to have all the answers. As our children often remind us, we’re not perfect parents. (The fact that they feel at liberty to tell us such things, is, we believe, a positive factor!) We need to find principles to help; ideas and ways to handle some of the immense challenges of being a parent today. There are joys and sadnesses, victories and defeats, times of wonderful togetherness and times of disappointing separation.

We should strive to be realistic. We may have ideals, but should not try to follow an idealistic view of being a parent. With all its recognized challenges, being a parent is meant to bring happiness and love and togetherness. Even when things go wrong, badly wrong, you as a parent should always believe that this is a most important aspect of your life, and not abandon your responsibilities. For ultimately a new person is in the making, and your child has the same choices and responsibilities you have as a human being. You cannot force their choices, and “only by love is love awakened.” As the word education means, it is a *leading* and not an *imposing*.

In this way we replicate the process God uses in dealing with us. Understanding our innermost thoughts, and our true natures, he seeks to lead and guide us so that as his children we may truly carry his name, representing him to the wide universe. For just as much as our children speak of us, we speak for our heavenly Father.

Ellen White Comments

Children are committed to their parents as a precious trust, which God will one day require at their hands. We should give to their training more time, more care, and more prayer. They need more of the right kind of instruction. . . . {AH 161.1}

Parents, in the training of your children, study the lessons that God has given in nature. If you would train a pink, or rose, or lily, how would you do it? Ask the gardener by what process he makes every branch and leaf to flourish so beautifully, and to develop in symmetry and loveliness. He will tell you that it was by no rude touch, no violent effort; for this would only break the delicate stems. It was by little attentions, often repeated. He moistened the soil and protected the growing plants from the fierce blasts and from the scorching sun, and God caused them to flourish and to blossom into loveliness. In dealing with your children, follow the method of the gardener. By gentle touches, by loving ministrations, seek to fashion their characters after the pattern of the character of Christ. {CG 36-37}