

# My Child Belongs to God

## Proverbs 29:15

The rod of correction gives wisdom,  
But a child left to himself  
causes shame to his mother.

The primary application of this verse is to child discipline. Children allowed to do as they please become causes of shame for their parents. The remedy for this is to keep after the children with spankings, thus indicating that we are actually paying attention and seeing their misbehaviors.

There is also a spiritual application to the verse.

Every Christian parent has the duty to put *himself* to death:

**Col 3:5** Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness (which is idolatry)

This sacrifice of personal pleasures, angers, improper attitudes and desires is very difficult. It is like cutting off one of our own "members"- an arm, say. These evils are so much a part of us, putting them away from us is a definite kind of self-execution. Of course, it is execution of those parts of ourselves we don't really need; parts which, in fact, are killing *us*.

But many Christian parents, while making some progress in this 'mortification of the flesh' for *themselves*, make virtually no similar progress in their *children*.

For some parents, the problem is their theology. They operate on the principle of pietism- that man's spiritual state is highly personal and individualistic and cannot be directly influenced by others. For them, Christ can only be taught to their children with the hopes that the children will become converted and desire to obey Him on their own. Unwittingly, these parents are 'leaving their children to themselves'.

Whereas, it IS a parent's responsibility to apprise his children of their responsibilities towards God, and parents cannot change their children's spirits to comply with God, yet part of the parent's responsibility is to *enforce* the Christian lifestyle on his children:

**Proverbs 22:6** Consecrate a child in the instruction of His way; even when he is old, he will not turn aside from it.

The word for "consecrate" above is the same word used when Solomon "dedicated" the Temple.

Would any good Israelite have tolerated the misuse or negligent use of the Temple? No, it was consecrated to service for God. Regularity of proper services was required.

The same principle is true for our children. We must dedicate them to God.

*We must make the assumption that God has called*

*them into His service*, and we are simply equipping them so that service may be its best.

It is usually harder for parents to sacrifice their *children* to Christ than it is to sacrifice *themselves*. We tend to think, "I've made my own choice. The life I could have lived is left behind. But my child still has his life to live. It's unreasonable to force my level of commitment on him."

And so our children are 'left to themselves'. There is no better face to put on it.

And if sacrificing them to Christ is too good for our children, we have made idols of them.

We *should* teach them the personal joy of service to Christ; but if we do *not* treat them as God's own possessions obligated to serve Him, we have abandoned them to themselves. Our proverb assures us we will regret that.

