

Lesson 31

Teacher's Manual

CHART-43

PARENTHOOD - PART I

READ & MEDITATE ON: Deuteronomy 6:6-9 MEMORIZE: Proverbs 23:13-14

INTRODUCTION

"Why didn't someone tell me about this?" is an oft-repeated question asked when young parents find themselves faced with the perplexing problems of parenthood. Rarely does anyone attempt to provide an answer. More often than not, the troubled inquirer expects no answer as such. Sympathy, maybe; but, answers? No.

Some have viewed the lack of preparation for parenthood as a deficiency in our educative system. Offering special training of various sorts, they feel that the problem can be solved through academic means—add another course to the curriculum and let the school system provide the solution.

Others prefer to assign the dilemma to the individual parents. "Who," they ask, "would be better qualified than parents themselves?" And, the solutions, they reason, can be better found at the very source of the problem.

But, neither of these views are adequate. In fact, the solutions are quite often more harmful than the problem itself.

For instance, the views of humanists who would teach parenthood in a public school system are—for the most part—opposed to the concepts of true Christianity. Such an effort would remove any traces of Christian doctrines in one generation. We can never endorse such a move. Rather, we are obligated to resist it vigorously.

What about the proposal to refer the problem to the home? Well, actually, that's where it is now. And, obviously, the arrangement is yet lacking. Why is it so? Lack of understanding is passed down from generation to generation and destroys the very family structure we would preserve!

that parents identify with God by personal consecration (Exodus 20:2-5); teach their children Bible principles (Deuteronomy 6:7-9); and eliminate worldly contamination (Deuteronomy 6:10-12).

C. Reliance On God

Parents must acknowledge their need of the church in their role of parenthood. If parents find themselves in conflict with their church, it will pay great dividends to consider the ultimate results of such a situation on their children. The true role of parenthood involves a reliance upon God. The Church is the Body of Christ. Parents cannot assume the role of spiritual guide, and live contrary to the teaching of their Church. If children observe any differences between their home life and adherence to the teachings and practices of the Church, a conflict emerges. The role of parenthood is defeated, no matter what the outcome of a particular controversy.

So, the role of parents is vital to both home and Church. Understanding and fulfilling that role is of utmost importance to us. Our dearest relationships of life are involved. Our walk with God is at the heart of the matter. With faith in His Word and a reliance on His Church, we can train up our children "in the way" (Proverbs 22:6). This is our primary role as parents. To see our children grow into adulthood with Godly values and balanced lives—this is our goal!

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II. THE FATHER'S RESPONSIBILITY TO HIS FAMILY

To be more specific regarding the role of parenthood, let's consider first of all, the father's responsibility to his family.

A. Family Leader

The father has the God-given responsibility to lead his family (I Thessalonians 2:10-12; Colossians 3:21). As leader, it is his role to guide them in all areas of life. Under God, he is to lead them in an ordered home life (Psalms 37:23). He leads them in spiritual exercises—prayer, Bible study, church attendance (Ephesians 6:4). He leads them in honest endeavors by setting a true Christian example (I Peter 2:21), and insisting that this be the rule of family life (I Timothy 3:4-5).

A father is commanded not to exasperate (anger) his child.

ficial ones. By leading them in faithful church attendance, prayer, and profitable Bible study, he will protect them from developing habits which could exclude God.

In other words, a father's responsibilities as leader, provider and protector are all interwoven. The fabric of fatherhood will unravel if any strand is omitted or neglected. The joys of playing with the children, granting some of their wishes, and even some "whims," are not diminished, but heightened by a father's careful attention to his primary responsibility to his family.

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III. THE MOTHER'S RESPONSIBILITY TO HER FAMILY

Mothers provide a relationship in the home which cannot be over emphasized. No work on earth is more demanding or more important. From the formative years throughout life, an individual will reflect the attention, or perhaps the lack of attention, which only a mother can provide.

A. Help Meet

Wise is the mother who acknowledges the headship of her husband (Ephesians 5:22, 24). Her attitude will be conveyed in a thousand ways to her children. If she is happy to accept her husband's leadership, her children will also. In fact, whatever attitude she holds for her husband will be reflected in her children. Therefore, she has a responsibility to be supportive of the father's role (Colossians 3:18). In so doing, she will strengthen and stabilize her own life as well as the lives of her children.

B. Home Manager

As the father is Divinely designed for his role, the mother is uniquely qualified for hers. Her nature enables her to provide a velvet touch to the task of rearing her children (I Peter 3:1-6). Her capacity for compassionate understanding makes her a tower of peace and comfort for both her husband and her children (Titus 2:4-5). Whatever situation we find ourselves in, we feel assured that mother will understand. (See Proverbs 31.)

C. Teacher

With this unique nature there comes attendant responsibilities. Compassion must not overrule common sense. In fact, a mother

If a child lives with Security
He learns to have Faith
If a child lives with Approval
He learns to like himself
If a child lives with Acceptance and
Friendship
He learns to find love in the world.

B. Love (Listening And Praise)

Love has its own expression! Often it is heard and understood when a parent listens silently and with rapt (entirely absorbed) attention. No greater expression of love can be found than the willingness to listen when it is needed. Whether it is a stubbed toe or the details of the first date, it is worthy of total attention. Oh, for the ability to REALLY LISTEN!

Then, praise is priceless when appropriate. Sometimes, in failure a child needs praise for his concerted (total) effort, or perhaps his honorable approach. In every situation, there is an aspect of the child's behavior that is worthy of commendation. Give it! Even when you must punish a child, it pays to point out whatever good points you can.

We often do the very opposite. We emphasize the fault and minimize any worthwhile aspect of behavior. Would it not be advantageous to reverse the approach? Praise can raise a child's self-image—enlarge his potential—help him become what you want him to become. Use it, and watch the miracles it can do.

C. Instruction (Setting Limits)

To provide instruction is to equip a child for life's decisions. In setting limits, a parent provides the young person with guidelines for decisions which they must make. And, if limitations can be viewed properly, the child will appreciate the FREEDOM limitations actually provide.

For instance, young people are not fully equipped to make decisions unless they are provided with an outline of their limitations. Knowing their limitations enables them to make their own decisions within the framework of parental limits. Instead of resenting this they will really appreciate it. It may never be said, but the love that motivates parents to set limits shows through. Even though limits are sometimes accepted with an outer grumble, there is an inner release from the grappling (gripping) struggle of making decisions without guidelines.

training as well. The dictionary gives the meaning of the word train..."to mold the character, instruct by exercise, to put or point in an exact direction, to prepare for a contest." The ROD still works. The "wood shed" treatment was not just for old timers on the farm but is a Bible principle. The following scriptures describe the importance of the rod of correction: Psalms 119:67, 71, 75; Proverbs 10:13; 13:24; 17:10; 18:6; 19:29; 20:30; 22:15; 23:13, 14; 26:3; 29:15. This type of correction is to be done in love, not anger (Hebrews 12:6, 7). It is to be done with the ROD not HAND. Biblically, hands were used for blessing, not blistering (Mark 10:16). It is to be administered on the only portion of the body that can withstand pain without severe body damage—the SEAT of the child or young person.

The rod of correction (not the rod of punishment) will curb the inborn sinful nature of the child (Psalm 51:5; Proverbs 22:15), and produce the Bible results (Proverbs 13:24; Proverbs 22:6; and Hebrews 12:11).

Six-thousand college seniors were given a questionnaire to fill out. Among many things they were asked to respond to was the simple question, "What things do you wish you had known before you were twenty-one?" The following seven responses represent by far the consensus of these six-thousand college seniors:

1. How I was going to make a living.
2. That my health after thirty depended much on what I put into my stomach before I was twenty-one.
3. How to take care of money.
4. The value of being neatly and sensibly dressed.
5. That the best things in life require patience, time, and hard work. What I have received now is what the world gave me and it is what I deserve.
6. That a good education not only pays better than hard labor, but also brings the best in many other areas, too.
7. The value of absolute truthfulness in everything.

A number of colleges agreed to have their senior class fill out unsigned questionnaires stating what they thanked their parents for most, and in what way their parents had failed them. None of the graduating students knew what the others had written, yet all of them said they appreciated whatever discipline their parents had administered.

F. Criticism

Our children are novices (beginners) at life, so we are to guide them. We are to educate them. The latin word "educere" for education means, "to draw out of." We often sadly attempt to educate our children by criticizing them so as to cleanse them from all their faults. If we don't respect our children, they won't respect others or themselves. Criticism destroys self-respect and creates an atmosphere of fear and distrust. Criticism is CHARACTER ASSASSINATION. Criticism is unfair because it points out the weak points and ignores the good points in a child. Children love fairness so this really destroys their respect for their parents. If children are raised with constant criticism, they may later mistake correction for criticism. They become either extremely touchy or passively expect criticism for everything they try to do.

Why do parents criticize their children? The following are some reasons:

1. We want them to be like us.
2. We think they're trying to fool us.
3. We don't want our kids to be like us.
4. We don't want our kids to be like publicized trends for young people.
5. We're reacting to our own parental criticism.
6. We're simply venting our frustrations.

G. Commandments For Parents

1. Thou shalt train thyself
2. Thou shalt train thy children
3. Thou shalt impart faith in God
4. Thou shalt learn to listen to thy children
5. Thou shalt spend time with thy children
6. Thou shalt acknowledge thy sins as parents
7. Thou shalt keep a sense of humor
8. Thou shalt treat thy children equally
9. Thou shalt praise thy children
10. Thou shalt know when to let go of thy children

D. Warnings (Holding Limits)

The limits will always be tested. You may be sure of that! The testings actually provide the thoughtful parent with an opportunity to reinforce the instructions given. This strengthens the learning process. So, when it occurs, the parent can deal with it in a calm, but determined, manner.

There is a difference between teaching and training. The Bible clearly states "to train up a child," not teach up a child. All parents train their children by the way they allow them to behave. Habits and patterns are learned, whether they're good or bad.

A classic example of the difference between trained children and taught children is found in I Samuel. In chapters one and two we read about the boy Samuel who was trained to obey. Also in chapter two, we read about the two sons of Eli, the priest. They were disobedient and immoral because they were only taught right from wrong but not trained to obey the voice of their father (I Samuel 2:25). The age-old question, "How can we train our children to obey us?" has a Bible answer.

To whatever degree is necessary, the parent should include a warning of consequences which will result from a lack of compliance (obedience). Reasoning is a powerful factor at this point, though it may appear less than effective. This vital link in the chain of parental control is easily broken. Therefore, precaution must be taken to hold to the limits once they are established.

E. Correction (Reinforcing Limits)

Should the limits be broken, there is no recourse open to the parent other than that expressed in the warnings (Proverbs 3:1-12). To weaken at this point is to lose all touch with the possibility of earning the respect and honor of a child. Call it what you will, to promise punishment of any sort and allow yourself to be "persuaded" to do less than promised is deception of the first magnitude.

Follow through with the terms and limits set forth or you will fail your child and lose his respect! As a child grows, he will carry attitudes which he has developed toward his parents into all walks of life. You owe it to your child to adhere to whatever limitations you set. Should you decide they are too severe, a change may be in order. But, never at the time the limits have been broken!

The Bible method of discipline is still the ONLY ANSWER. God created both parents and children and also the master plan of

must love her children enough to allow them to learn many of life's lessons through experiencing pain. The willingness to suffer for her children must be rightly directed, even to the point of suffering by allowing them to suffer! Their development depends on a certain amount of defeat and discouragement (See Hebrews 5:7-9.) A mother's love is so complete and intuitive that she must resist a tendency to "smother" the object of her affections. Her desire to shield and care for her young can prove detrimental (harmful) rather than beneficial (helpful). And, the entire family can suffer. A mother's love, powerful force that it is, will be all the more effective if held in check by conscious balance.

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IV. DISCIPLINE

A. Living Example (Consistency)

As mentioned earlier, a consistent Christian life will not only provide a living example for the children, it will draw forth the innate (inborn) respect and honor in each child's heart (I Peter 2:21-23). Children, by nature, tend to select "heroes." Parents who live as parents ought to live will have that honor. But, it must be earned!

Here's a beautiful thing that should be framed and hung in every kitchen in the country. It is titled: "Children Learn What They Live" and it was written by Dorothy Law Nolte—

Children Learn What They Live

If a child lives with Criticism—
He learns to Condemn
If a child lives with Hostility
He learns to Fight
If a child lives with Ridicule
He learns to be Shy
If a child lives with Jealousy
He learns to feel Guilty
If a child lives with Tolerance
He learns to be Patient
If a child lives with Encouragement
He learns Confidence
If a child lives with Praise
He learns to Appreciate
If a child lives with Fairness
He learns Justice

"Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged."

Colossians 3:21

Exasperation (anger) is provoked when fathers treat their children in the following ways:

1. Abuse them physically
2. Abuse them psychologically
3. Don't listen to them
4. Neglect them
5. Don't try to understand them
6. Expect too much from them
7. Force them to accept adult goals and ideas
8. Put them on a performance test
9. Won't admit their mistakes to their children

B. Provider

He is also charged with the responsibility of providing the temporal or material needs of life (I Timothy 5:8). Along with this, he should always exude (express) a confidence in God to provide the means through which the family's needs will be met (Philippians 4:19). The security of a family is as dependent upon the father's attitude as on his aptitude (ability). If he displays an inner faith in God's provisions, his family will adopt and utilize it. Needless to say, attitudes of despair and dependency over economic conditions—even if the home is overly endowed with materialistic possessions—will create a fearful, faithless family. "But godliness with contentment is great gain" (I Timothy 6:6).

These are not unreasonable demands. The father who assumes these responsibilities, in faith, will find himself endowed (furnished) with the ability to discharge them. Moreover, as a man feels his God-given abilities developing to match his responsibilities, he experiences a new fulfillment in his life. He does not find any joy in declaring his "headship" amid frustration. Instead, he glorifies his Head, Jesus Christ, who provides him with the wisdom, grace and kindness needed to be the head of his house.

C. Protector

As a father leads his family and provides their needs, he will also function as the protector of its members. He will protect them against harmful relationships as he provides them with bene-

Children whose parents screamed at them, abused them and neglected them, tend to deal with their children in the same way. If they attempt to change, they are in danger of going to an opposite extreme which is as bad as the former problem.

The cycle can be broken through an understanding and acceptance of biblical principles of parental responsibility. The Bible has much to say on the subject. Much of what it does say is in direct contradiction to present-day concepts. Only as a parent exercises faith in God's Word through obedience, will any marked improvement occur. Humanists and modernists have views which have too long dominated our minds. A return to God's pattern of parenthood is our ONLY ANSWER!

CHART-44 I. ROLE OF PARENTS

A. Proper Self-Image

If there is an area of life which calls for a proper self-image, it is parenthood. Children need the strength and stability of mature parents. The parental example is illustrated in I Thessalonians 2:10-12. For instance, children at every level of development and maturity need friends—buddies. The parent who attempts to be a "buddy" will not succeed; he only detracts from the parental image. The warmth and friendliness between parent and child provides available communion which the child will utilize as he matures in life. But, the parent who abdicates (gives up) his role as leader, provider, protector and guide in an effort to be a "buddy" with his children will soon find he is neither a buddy nor a parent. Our Creator ordained that parents are to "train up a child" (Proverbs 22:6). Unless a set of parents see themselves as God sees them, they cannot present an image to their children that will reinforce their training efforts. (See Psalms 32:8, 9.) Attitudes of parents are communicated through nonverbal means. The parent who doubts his role, or his ability to fulfill his role, will communicate this fact to the child. So, facing the role and responsibilities of parenthood is a prerequisite (beginning requirement) to training up a child.

B. Old Testament Family Pattern

The role of parents is beautifully detailed in an Old Testament family pattern. (See Deuteronomy 6:6-9.) In this pattern for training, God is instructing Abraham on how to preserve his family by teaching Bible commandments. The training is to be spontaneous, natural, and constant. This is a full time and necessary responsibility. The Old Testament pattern requires