

### **Children: A Heritage From the Lord**

Psa 127:1 A Song of Ascents. Of Solomon. Unless the LORD builds the house, those who build it labor in vain. Unless the LORD watches over the city, the watchman stays awake in vain.

Unless God has precedence in building the family structure, the parents who raise their children without Him do so in vain. There have been many very successful, happy families probably from the beginning of time, but the truly successful are those who make God the center of their lives, knowing that His word contains all the answers to achieve true happiness, both now **and** into eternity. This country would do good to have God as our Watchman, especially when it comes to future generations.

Psa 127:3 Behold, children are a heritage (*Heb.5159- properly something inherited, an heirloom*) from the LORD, the fruit of the womb a reward.

When we think of an heirloom what comes to mind but something handed down through the generations before that has a worth to it that goes beyond a resale value thus making it priceless. God has blessed so many parents down through the ages with the charge of raising godly children. And these children are to be considered gifts from Him.

Jas 1:17 Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above (*which includes innocent children*), coming down from the Father of lights with Whom there is no variation or shadow due to change. 18 Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures.

When God said in Gen 1:26 “Let Us make man” it was through only having to speak us unto existence that we were created. As His ‘firstfruits’ Christians, here considering those of us who are parents, are to take these ‘heirlooms’ that God has blessed us with and do the best we can to raise them in godly homes passing the faith down through them.

Psa 127:4 Like arrows in the hand of a warrior are the children of one's youth. 5 Blessed is the man who fills his quiver with them! He shall not be put to shame when he speaks with his enemies in the gate.

*“...the meaning is, that they would ‘speak’ to their foes in the place of conflict - for a battle occurred often in the gate of a city, as the possession of a gate, or an entrance to a city was of so much importance to those who attacked, and those who defended it. The idea is, that they would speak with effect; they would distinguish themselves; they would let their presence be known.”*  
Albert Barnes

How do our children represent us when out in public? Are we honored by their actions? Do they speak well of us? Do people see their demeanor as of having been raised in a good environment or a not-so-good one? In many or most cases their actions, whether good or bad, reflect their upbringing. We should do our best to “train up [our children] in the way [they] should go; [so that] even when [they] are old [they] will not depart from it” (*Pro 22:6*). And that way has to be on a Godly path.

Without God:  
Dysfunction breeds dysfunction.

We live in an age where many, if not most families are dealing with one sort of dysfunction or another; whether there have been multiple divorces and remarriages, no marriages at all or children that don't have the same parents as each other but still live under the same roof, many of which are run by a single parent. Often times kids are used as pawns in order for one parent to receive a tax write-off or the other for child support. Many are being taught, and in our grade schools I might add, to accept same gendered parents as if it's the norm. And in so many cases there are kids who don't even know who their real moms or dads are, going from foster home to foster home. There are even dysfunctional homes where children spend their divided times fluctuating between each parent as if considered the spoils of a custody battle, even though **they** are the only innocent party and suffer as the result of adult selfishness. Many of Paul's inspired writings deal with the family and how to have successful homes that honor God where moms and dads **are** moms and dads and where children are raised to respect that.

1Co 7:12 To the rest I say (I, not the Lord) ...

There are those who will say that Paul spoke the following out of his own understanding and thus not from inspiration. But not according to 1 Cor 2:16 where he stated, as a man among others who were spiritual, that "we have the mind of Christ." Having the mind of Christ would give a person the ability and thus freedom to judge certain things where no express command was given via inspiration. Such is the case in verse 6 where Paul wrote that he was speaking "as a concession, not a command". Thus saying, Paul judged each topic as he felt Christ would.

...that if any brother has a wife who is an unbeliever, and she consents to live with him, he should not divorce her. 13 If any woman has a husband who is an unbeliever, and he consents to live with her, she should not divorce him.

What did Jesus say was the only exception for divorcing a spouse? "Anyone who divorces his wife, except on the ground of sexual immorality" (Mat 5:32).

*"Our Saviour brought marriage back to its original intention, and declared that whosoever put away his wife henceforward, except for **one offence**, should be guilty of adultery. This is now the law of God. This was the original institution. This is the only law that is productive of peace and good morals, and that secures the respect due to a wife, **and the good of children**. Nor has any man or set of men - any legislature or any court, civil or ecclesiastical - a right to interfere, and declare that divorces may be granted for any other cause. They, therefore, whoever they may be, who are divorced for any cause except the single one of adultery, if they marry again, are, according to the Scriptures, living in adultery. No earthly laws can trample down the laws of God, or make that right which he has solemnly pronounced wrong." (Emp. added) Albert Barnes*

Good marriages produce children that have a good mental balance concerning life and are thus better prepared for anything and everything it throws at them. Now that's not to say there aren't good kids that come from bad families either. There are many kids that came from dysfunctional backgrounds that went on to lead productive lives, even considering what they were dealt as children. But a good marriage has a better chance of generating more emotionally healthy offspring. Which is why Paul made it a point for couples with unbelieving spouses to remain together, and not just for their own happiness and the chance of saving their partners but also for the sake of their children's contentment if they had them.

1Co 7:14 For the unbelieving husband is made holy because of his wife, and the unbelieving wife is made holy because of her husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy.

For the unbelieving spouse to be ‘made holy’ in the case of marriage only declares their marriage has been accepted before God. It does not however give them the same benefit of salvation that the believing spouse enjoys. There’s only one way for the unbeliever to enjoy the benefits of being a believer and that is to become one.

1Co 7:15 But if the unbelieving partner separates, let it be so. In such cases the brother or sister is not enslaved. God has called you to peace.

This is not another exception for divorce, as many have taught that it is. All marriages, whether of Christians, atheists, agnostics, Muslims, Buddhists, denominational couples or otherwise, are sanctified by God if consistent with His instruction to the very first one between Adam and Eve; one man and one woman no matter what, as long as both are good candidates accordingly. As Paul stated earlier in this letter concerning those who left (*v.11*), they “should remain unmarried, or else be reconciled” to their spouse. One being a Christian and the other not is no reason to divorce. To be ‘enslaved’ here means that a Christian is not under obligation to leave the faith should that be the demand of their unbelieving spouse. They should not participate in anything that would go against living righteously before God in order to please their spouse to keep them from leaving.

1Co 7:16 For how do you know, wife, whether you will save your husband? Or how do you know, husband, whether you will save your wife? 17 Only let each person lead the life that the Lord has assigned to him, and to which God has called him. This is my rule in all the churches.

How many cases have we seen where a wife or a husband became a Christians and their spouse was so influenced. Yes, sadly the opposite has been true also but, as Paul states here, there is always the strong possibility that the believing spouse has more influence on the unbeliever as long as they remain together. But even if their spouse leaves, the Christian is still to continue being faithful to the Lord in all things (*Act 5:29*). Whether they remain together or separate, the Christian is to keep the faith even if it means going against the marital demands placed on them by their spouse. Children, then, as long as the parents remain married, will not be considered illegitimate, having come from a broken home only to suffer from it.

A truly functional family.

Eph 6:1 Children, obey your parents **in the Lord**, for this is right. (*Emp. added*)

Why obey your parents?

*“Because the good order of a family, and hence of the community, depends on it; no community or family being prosperous where there is not due subordination in the household.*

*Because the welfare of the child depends on it; it being of the highest importance that a child should be early taught obedience to “law,” as no one can be prosperous or happy who is not thus obedient.*

*Because the child is not competent as yet; to “reason” on what is right, or qualified to direct himself; and, while that is the case, he must be subject to the will of some other person.*

*Because the parent, by his age and experience, is to be presumed to be qualified to direct and guide a child.*

*No child that is disobedient to a parent will be obedient to God; and that child that is most obedient to a father and mother will be most likely to become a Christian, and an heir of Heaven. And it may be observed, in general, that no disobedient child is virtuous, prosperous, or happy.”*  
Albert Barnes

Obedient children are happy children. But what does the phrase ‘in the Lord’ mean?

*“That is, as far as their commandments agree with those of God, and no further. No parent can have a right to require a child to steal, or lie, or cheat, or assist him in committing murder, or in doing any other wrong thing. No parent has a right to forbid a child to pray, to read the Bible, to worship God, or to make a profession of religion.”*  
Albert Barnes

After all, whose wrath would we rather suffer, that of our parents or of God?

Act 5:29 But Peter and the apostles answered, "We must obey God rather than men.

Eph 6:2 "Honor (Gk.5091- to prize) your father and mother" (this is the first commandment with a promise), 3 "that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land."

The fifth commandment of the ten given by Moses was to “honor your father and your mother” (Ex 20:12). They are to be of value to us. Why would this be so important that it made the list of O.T. commandments? Because their instructions, if they are godly parents, will aid us in living a longer life.

*“...vices and crimes, resulting in most cases from disobedience to parents, all shorten life; and they who early commit them are certain of an early grave. No child who disobeys a parent can have any “security” that he will not fall a victim to such vices and crimes.”*  
Albert Barnes

Parents who want for their children a prosperous and long life will raise them up to be responsible, godly adults that will avoid such temptations that lead to an early death. Such temptations as alcohol, illegal drugs, premarital sex (*which carries with it all sorts of emotional evils along with transmittable diseases*) and the list goes on. Children who are rebellious to such instruction will suffer heartache and misery and a shorter life. In the end, parents can raise their children to be responsible adults but it's the adult children who will ultimately be responsible to God for which way they decide to go.

Responsibilities.

Eph 6:4 Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

The one person who seems to have the most influence on the self-disciplinary nature of a child has to be their father. Such an influence is to be taken seriously and is to be handled as if it were

a delicate piece of porcelain. Children are as a lump of clay that a father, or father figure, molds into what they ultimately become in life. The Hebrew writer stated that “they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them” (*Heb 12:10*). Hopefully whatever ‘seemed best’ was according to godliness. The best teaching comes once a punishment has been administered and the child has been humbled. It is then when a father’s best opportunity presents itself for instruction. That’s when compassion is to be shown toward the disciplined child, in a calm voice asking him the reason for his punishment. Once answered the father reassures the child of his love for him and that the punishment was not something he ever wants to have to administer again. To be angry and hold a grudge over the child is not something a godly father would ever do. It would only further the child’s resentment toward his father and deem hypocritical whatever it was that he tried to teach him.

Col 3:17 And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.

As parents we need to ask ourselves “how would Jesus have handled this?” However Jesus would have corrected a child it would have been according to the level needed but of course out of His holiness. The Old Law taught that the Jew was to use a ‘rod of discipline’ when it was necessary.

Pro 22:15 Folly is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of discipline drives it far from him.

This is not to say we are to reserve using a paddle, or whatever you might use like a spatula, to spank a child, but sometimes it may be necessary. Sadly, we live in an age where children seem to have more rights than their parents and are thus running the household. It may have become so because of the few who went overboard in their dealing out punishments. If God’s word suggests we are to use a ‘rod’ (*paddle or anything that wouldn’t leave a mark or bruise*) to correct as the best way to get a child’s attention than so be it no matter what the politically correct crowd says, but to do so without endangering the child, either physically or emotionally. I received a few spankings in my time and haven’t lost my mind or gone off the deep end because of it. How many others have received a “good whooping” by parents or other adults in your life and it never did you anything but good? As long as it was done while the one doing it was in control. So, whatever we do in word or deed, for the child’s sake then, includes our relationships as husbands and wives.

Col 3:18 Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting **in the Lord**. 19 Husbands, love your wives, and do not be harsh with them. (*Emp. added*)

“As is fitting in the Lord” gives another example, as it is concerning children obeying their parents (*Eph 6:1*), where the wife isn’t just to do anything the husband demands unless it is sanctioned by God as being just. If it **is** just then she’s to submit to him. And it also seems the apostle understood the nature of men in that they were both harsh toward their kids **and** their wives. In Paul’s day women were considered one step above a household servant so it was necessary to remind men of the fact that “there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (*Gal 3:28*). Concerning children...

Col 3:20 Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord. 21 Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged.

Again, the same admonition to both children and fathers. Obedience to parents cannot be overstated. Likewise with fathers aggravating their children through over correcting them lest they dishearten them and they rebel. In 1 Thes 2:10-12 Paul gives an example of how a righteous father treated his children.

1Th 2:10 You are witnesses, and God also, how holy and righteous and blameless was our conduct toward you believers. 11 For you know how, **like a father with his children**, 12 we **exhorted** (*Gk.3870- implore [beg]*) each one of you and **encouraged** you and **charged** you to walk in a manner worthy of God, Who calls you into His own kingdom and glory. (*Emp. added*)

No wonder the office of overseer (*bishop, elder*) required such men as had the ability to manage his own children before he could ever manage an entire congregation.

1Ti 3:2 Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, 3 not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. 4 He must **manage his own household well**, with all dignity **keeping his children submissive**, 5 for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church? (*Emp. added*)

Tit 1:6 if anyone is above reproach, the husband of one (*Gk.3391- one or first. He could be scripturally remarried to other than his first wife since there is a Greek word for first, Gk.4413- foremost: -first [of all], that Holy Spirit chose not to use here.*) wife, and **his children are believers** and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination. (*Emp. added*)

After all if he can't lead his own children **to** Christ how can he shepherd a whole flock of believers from going away **from** Christ. And how are the older generation to serve as examples to the younger?

Tit 2:2 Older men are to be sober-minded, dignified, self-controlled, sound in faith, in love, and in steadfastness. 3 Older women likewise are to be reverent in behavior, not slanderers or slaves to much (*Gk.4183- much [in any respect]*) wine. They are to teach what is good,

Seems the older women then had a bit of a drinking problem. This also has been a passage where some have tried in vain to show how drinking alcohol in moderation is not a sin. The word they cite is 'much' as though they can partake just smaller amounts in order to remain "sober" according to Paul's instructions to the wives of deacons in 1 Tim 3:11. Notice an O.T. use of the word and how it applies here.

Ecc 7:17 Be not over much (*Heb.7235- to increase [in whatever respect]*) wicked, neither be thou foolish: why shouldest thou die before thy time? (*KJV*)

Was Solomon stating that it was okay to be a **little** wicked as long as you weren't **overly** wicked? Much then refers to any and all amounts whether specifically stated or inferred. In the Greek here then it means that they are to completely avoid it. Otherwise, what kind of an example would the older women of a congregation be to the younger if they consumed alcohol in any amount?

Tit 2:4 and so train (*Gk.4994- to make of sound mind*) the young women to love their husbands and children, 5 to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind, and submissive to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be reviled.

As examples to the younger women, the older are better able to mold them, by their own experiences, to be the homemakers the Lord expects of them. How could this not make for a happy and productive family. Not that a mother can't work outside the home either. In this case we cite the "excellent wife" of Prov 31.

Pro 31:24 She makes linen garments and sells them; she delivers sashes to the merchant.

How can she do that if she can't work outside the home. Her number one concern though, is to be for her family, whatever that entails. And if the stresses of work outside the home have a negative effect on her ability to manage her home well she needs to consider what's best for her children. That is of course if she has a husband and can survive on his income alone. But too often both spouses work for things they **think** they need when it actually amounts to things they can do without until their children are raised. With that being the case the mother will be the focus of a well blessed home. And Timothy must have had such a mother **and** grandmother that Paul would comment on them as he did.

2Ti 1:5 I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, dwells in you as well.

Timothy's faith emulated his mother's and her mother's before her, thus showing the importance of the mother's spiritual relationship with her children. His mother brought Timothy up in the way he should go and Paul saw the evidence of his upbringing in that he had such godly examples to imitate. Many among us have adult children who have not imitated our faith and we are perplexed as to what to do about it. We are no longer able to have much of an effect on, or thus are responsible for, their decisions. It's not too late though for those who have young impressionable children to head them in the right direction if we understand the consequences of just allowing society to raise them for us. That's the liberal idea of "it takes a village". It **does** take a village when that village refers to the church family. Who else will teach a moral understanding of right and wrong? But there's something we, as adults, can learn from the children.

Mat 18:1 At that time the disciples came to Jesus, saying, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of Heaven?" 2 And calling to Him a child, He put him in the midst of them 3 and said, "Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of Heaven. 4 Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of Heaven.

Sadly, after commenting on His impending death, Jesus had to refocus His disciples on what it meant to be humble. As stated before, children under the Law of Moses had no status or rights and they accepted it since they were too young to know any different. They were innocent of the desire for power and were the objects of Jesus' lesson on how to be the "greatest in the kingdom of Heaven". We too can take a lesson from God's heritage, our children. After all, God is our Father and wants what's best for His children. And what's best for His children is that we all...

1Th 1:10 ... wait for His Son from Heaven, Whom He raised from the dead, Jesus Who delivers us from the wrath to come.

*“Christ's resurrection from the dead is clear proof that He is the Son of God. Such a demonstration of power leaves no doubt concerning His ability to come again to receive His disciples, as He promised, as well as save them from God's wrath against sinful men.”*

Gary Hampton

Why not have faith in the One Who “being raised from the dead, will never die again; [since] death no longer has dominion over Him” (Rom 6:9)? Why not be...

Rom 6:4 ... buried therefore with Him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, [you] too might walk in newness of life. 5 For if [you] have been united with Him in a death like His, [you] shall certainly be united with Him in a resurrection like His.

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