

Where Have All the Parents Gone?

By Cindy Denbrook

We are in a crisis in this nation!! The family, which is the very core of God's creation of man, is undergoing monumental erosion. We live in a culture that is slowly deteriorating from the breakdown of the family. Our national public systems have convinced the men and women of this country that God's Word is neither absolute nor sufficient so they have redefined family according to worldly belief systems. The men and women I am referring to are the ones in the church! We, believers, have allowed our family and parental responsibilities and privileges to slowly erode away. Therefore, the crisis we have before us today is to reestablish within the church the sufficiency of God's Word and to get God's Master plan for marriage and family back into our homes.

Christian couples are continuing to biologically reproduce but there is very little actual parenting taking place. I believe this is partially due to the fact that parents do not have an understanding of the huge responsibility that God has given them and they are ignorant of their high calling as parents. The second reason I believe that parents are not doing their jobs is because of selfishness. Parenting takes an extraordinary amount of time, effort and personal sacrifice. So, sadly, in a world centered on "self" children become a great inconvenience.

Understanding that children are a *gift* from God is of paramount importance in parenting. (Psalm 127:3) He has given them to us in order to raise them up for His glory. Each parent has the responsibility to train their children in the ways of the Lord. Children were not intended to be something to just "fill up our time or egos" for eighteen years. Nor are they something to help us appear as though we are living the American dream and keeping up with the Joneses.

As counselors, when parents are having problems with their children usually the main problem is that they do not yet understand the purpose for even bearing children. They must be taught. In my own experience, I have found that there is lack of knowledge and understanding of the depth of the God given responsibility before them. Parents somehow think that if they provide food, shelter and take care of them, they have met their responsibility. They often have no idea that God

has given them the job of directing and molding their child's hearts and character. The counselor must teach parents the importance of this task and Biblically show them God's commands regarding parenting. (Proverbs 29:15b)

So, what *are* parents supposed to be doing in obedience to God?

1. Know God's Word in order to teach God's truths.

Deuteronomy 6:5-7 teaches that a parent is to love God, learn his commands and to teach them to his children. This is to be the lifestyle of the parent. He is to find opportunities throughout every day and night to teach them about God. Parents are to teach them God's commands and that He is a just, faithful God. (II Timothy 2:15)

2. Pray for your children and lead them to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.

We are to lead and direct our children's hearts to Jesus. Parents are to evangelize their children so that when the day comes of their personal accountability they will choose Him. Most of this is done on our knees. (James 5:16-17)

3. Do not live as a hypocrite.

(Matthew 7:1-5)

Our children will reject our God when they are grown if we live as hypocrites. Kids see right

through hypocrisy and they will want nothing to do with it. We need to repent openly, seek their forgiveness when we sin and begin to live a godly life. They copy what they observe in the home and what is in our hearts. They learn by our example. We need to build homes that honor the Lord. Abraham built altars to honor the name of the LORD and later Isaac did as his father. (Genesis 12:18, 26:25)

4. Correct, convict and train with the scriptures.

(Hebrews 4:12; Ephesians 6:4)

God's Word has something to say about any heart issue a child may have. The parent must get to the heart of the matter and not just deal with the outward behavior. Teaching obedience is of utmost importance in the early years. (Psalm 119:11; Proverbs 29:17). We are to be bringing them up in the training of the Lord. As they get older Scripture should be used in correction. God's Word never returns void.

5. Chasten and discipline to bring forth fruit.

The Bible says that rebellion is as witchcraft. (1 Samuel 15:23) We, as parents, are to take rebellious behavior in our children very seriously. God has placed parents in the lives of their children to be their authority and to administer justice. We are God's representative for their training and molding and we should not take this responsibility lightly.

Remember what happened with Eli's sons? Eli neglected to teach restraint and self control to his sons, so many were affected by their sin. Eli's failure as a father had huge consequences on future generations. (1 Samuel 2:12-36, 3:13-14)

6. Affirm them in who they are "in Christ."

Do not withhold encouragement and focus on their Biblical decisions and behavior. Help them to be who God made them regarding personality, likes, dislikes and opinions. Teach them that they are wonderfully and uniquely made in the image of God and that He has a particular purpose for creating them. Recognize their character qualities and focus on the inward man, not on outward achievements.

(Romans 1:6-7; 1 Corinthians 5:17, 6:19-20; Ephesians 1:4, 14, 19)

The task of parenting can sometimes seem overwhelming, but the goal of parenting is to slowly work ourselves out of a job. As God sculpts and molds our children's hearts into young adults, we should become less necessary in their lives. Slowly they begin to stand accountable before God for their decisions and behavior. If parents do not invest time and pour their lives into their children in the early years, it will be apparent during the teen and young adult years.

All this being said, we also know some of our children may choose to rebel as the Prodigal Son chose. But, when we give account as parents, if we have obeyed God's commands on parenting we can stand humbly before our God. We are accountable for what we know, even when it comes to parenting!