

The Wonderful Task of Rearing Children

Mark Twain humorously said, “When a child becomes thirteen, put him in a box with a hole in it; when he becomes seventeen – plug up the hole!” If one is operating outside of personal experience with Christ, we can see where exasperation to the point of wanting to give up can come into play. For those who know Christ, we see this business of rearing children as a God-ordained assignment attached with rewarding adventure both in this life and beyond. So we are not looking for boxes in which to put our kids; we are looking for an opportunity to let them become leverage to shake the world, influence society for good and even more importantly, bring absolute glory to God in their lives. God’s Word says, “And did not he make one? Yet had he the residue of the spirit. And wherefore one? That he might seek a godly seed...” (Malachi 2:15). We see God is saying to parents, I have brought you together to be one flesh, which means to love each other and to give me another generation like that will promote righteousness in the earth. What an awesome task! Christian parents should be honored to be in such a role. So how will we accomplish such an important job? I submit to you that we:

1. Lean on God.

The Bible says, “The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms: and he shall thrust out the enemy from before thee; and shall say, Destroy them” (Deuteronomy 33:27). Here are three observations I want to share with you about this glorious verse of inspiration. A) We may come to God! God in His glorious eternity says, I have carved out time for you; come to me! The Lord knows the responsibility is too large for our frail human shoulders, so He says, I can handle it – give your burden to Me. I am your refuge. A refuge is a condition or place of safety from pursuit, danger or trouble. In His kindness and goodness God says, I am all of that for you! B) God declares He is here and there for you. Yes, God is in His heaven making it all well with the earth below. How thankful we are that He is also with us, as near as our next fall. He declares, “... Underneath are the everlasting arms.” The Bible tells us, “The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD: and he delighteth in his way. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the LORD upholdeth him with his hand” (Psalms 37:24). He knows we will not always be everything we are supposed to be as parents, but He wants to catch us, stabilize us, and lead us in the right way. 3) The battle is the Lord’s. Our Lord says, “...and he shall thrust out the enemy from before thee...” (Deuteronomy 33:27). If the Lord is doing the fighting for us, we have nothing to fear. “...For the battle is the LORD’S...” (I Samuel 17:47). The Lord has programmed us to lean on Him. Jesus said, “I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing” (John 15:5).

2. Love each other.

I still believe the greatest thing a dad can do for his kids is to love their mom. Show me a loving adult and I’ll show you his or her parent who modeled it before him or her in their youth. More is caught than taught. We can teach love, but by far, the kids will learn to love from an example set before them. When I have to put something together and I see all the screws and bolts on the floor before me, I can really get confused. Then if I have the instruction manual, it becomes clearer, but then it really clears up if in the instruction manual includes pictures and diagrams. We must take love from the cold academic form to the world of passion that comes from the felt love between two people. “Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God” (I John 4:7). “Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it” (Ephesians 5:25). “...Teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children” (Titus 2:4). When at those times we feel like things are not going right and we feel like giving up, we should always take comfort in knowing that “...love covereth all sins” (Proverbs 10:12).

3. Leave the results in God's hands.

It is difficult to deal with, yet so very true – our kids are people, too! They have our same capacities, weaknesses and strengths. And they also have volition. They can choose. We cannot get inside of them and push their buttons and make them do the right thing. We can discipline them when they do wrong and praise them when they do right. Eventually, however, they will be growing up and we cannot be there to make every decision for them. One of the most valuable gifts we can pass on to our children is wisdom in decision-making. When we have effectively done this, we can be at rest. It will be difficult, but trust the Lord. Do not always rush to interfere with their decisions. Sometimes suffering the consequences for making wrong decisions will do more than your cajoling, scolding or interference. A child needs to know that Mommy and Daddy will not always be there to cover for their errors. One of the saddest people you'll meet is the adult whose parents were always doting and enabling them. What a kid needs is “mothering,” not “smothering” - “fathering,” not “facilitating.” We can only hold the bike seat for a little while; if they ever balance a two-wheeler, it will come when we let go. They must take the risk of falling and scraping the knees. It is worth it because the pay-off is balance and years of pleasure in bicycling.

The Bible promises: “As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man; so are children of the youth. Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them: they shall not be ashamed, but they shall speak with the enemies in the gate” (Psalm 127:4,5). Notice God likens children to arrows. If they are to be effective as the Bible says, “in the gate,” then that means we, like an archer, must aim and launch those arrows into the world. An arrow will never be effective unless it is let go. At this point, we must trust God to bring back to their young hearts and minds what we have taught them. The wonderful task of rearing our children culminates in leaving the results up to God.

- Pastor Pope -

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