

Saturday, June 23, 2012 – No Throw Away Work

I have never been a fan of throw away work. In my 20+ years of leading project management work, I have tried to avoid it at all costs because the investment tends to be too high, the payback lacking and it often doesn't provide the desired outcome. I would rather be patient enough to take the time and do it correctly.

We live in a society where too often parents look at the time they spend raising their children as throw away work. But that is not how the scriptures view it. "Children are a heritage of the Lord. The fruit of the womb is a reward" (**Psalms 127:3**). As brief as it is that is a comprehensive expression of God's view of children. Unfortunately, never before have so many parents turned from their rightful responsibility to children. They fail to understand that the blessing that they hold in their arms is a blessing from God (**Gen. 2:7**). These parents should ask themselves, "Do I really love my child?" Paul described some people as being "without natural affection" (**Romans 1:31**) – that is, they did not have, for example, the affection (love) which parents should naturally have for their children. The role of a parent has never been more important because our kids are bombarded with worldly messages that are, in most cases, diametrically opposed to what the scriptures teach. The work that parents do is some of the most critical that a human can undertake. Raising children takes work and none of it is throw away.

Children are a wonderful blessing. When children are in the home, parents learn to give of themselves; they learn to put others before themselves; they learn tenderness; they learn the great depths of love; and they are richly rewarded by the love and adoration which they receive in return from those children – children who are flesh of their flesh, bone of their bone, and blood of their blood. Children are a wonderful comfort for parents in their declining years. Parents will do well to reflect on their attitude relative to their children. When and how often have they offered thanks to God for their children? Or have they merely taken those children for granted?

Sometimes children can bring great heartache upon their parents. Some years back a young man, who I had baptized a few months earlier, came into the office at the church I was preaching for. His eyes were red, the tears streaming down his face. His words were simple, "I've lost my daughter." His daughter, approximately 12 at the time, had moved back in with her mother. This woman had years earlier left them for her drug supplier and was now trying to convince her daughter that the father was "no fun" because he was trying to instill some discipline and spirituality in the young girl's life.

I often get e-mails or notes from people with similar stories. Children have moved away from home and hooked up with the wrong crowd, or they simply have chosen to rebel

against what they classify as a “strict and unfair raising.” What words of comfort can be shared with those who find themselves in these situations? As long as there is breath in their body, your child is not lost! I am a firm believer in the teaching of the scriptures. And where parents have done a Godly job in raising their kids, I believe they can always be the opportunity for them to “come home.”

One of the best-known passages in Scripture, and one often quoted, is **Proverbs 22:6** which tells, “**Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.**” This wise advice of Solomon gives both a principle and a promise. The principle is train your children regularly, faithfully, and consistently. The promise is that “he will not depart from it.” The word “train” means “to instruct, guide, educate, discipline, and correct.” It necessitates love and care, almost endless patience, and countless hours of instruction by both word and example. It begins in infancy and continues throughout life (**2 Tim. 1:5; 3:15-17**). Solomon’s words, however, do not guarantee parents the proverbial “rose garden.” In other words, it will not always be easy. There is no such thing as a perfect parent or child. Both parents and children make mistakes. But there is a perfect God, the Father, whom the scriptures tell us “**...is not slow concerning his promise, as some count slowness; but is patient with us, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.**” (**2 Peter 3:9**)

The teaching of Solomon on child-training is complemented by Paul’s remarks in **Ephesians 6:1-4** when he states, “**Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honor thy father and mother, which is the first commandment with promise; that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth. And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.**” In this familiar passage, the Apostle delivers at least four imperatives and their counter-imperatives that teach us how to be better parents and children.

First, children are to obey their parents, “**This is right,**” Paul adds. The word nurture involves training and instruction while “**in the admonition of the Lord**” literally means putting your children in the mind of God, his love, his desire for mankind, salvation etc. But parents must be obedient to God’s Word, infers Paul. Notice that he makes it clear that children should obey their parents “**in the Lord.**” Paul’s advice, “**Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ**” (**1 Corinthians 11:1**) is solid advice to parents. Our children stand a better chance of following Christ if they first see it emulated in our lives.

Second, children are commanded to honor their parents. Notice that Paul includes both father and mother in this imperative. He begins with the father because he is to be the

head of the family (**1 Cor. 11:3**). Honoring one's parents is the first commandment with a promise, echoing Moses' words in the Ten Commandments (**Ex. 20:12; Deut. 5:16**). Note the order of these promises: "**That it may be well with thee**" and "**That thou mayest live long upon the earth.**" Honoring one's parents leads to one's own welfare and happiness which ultimately makes one's stay on earth meaningful no matter how many years one lives (**Prov. 1:7-10**). But parents should live honorably before their children. Again parents have the responsibility of teaching and setting the proper example.

Third, fathers are not "to provoke their children to wrath" (NASV reads "anger"). The Colossian letter adds, "Lest they be discouraged" (**3:21**). Fathers are singled out here because of their responsibility as the spiritual leaders in the home. The purpose of parental training is to help children grow, not to hurt or discourage them (**Heb. 12:7**). Some parents drive their children to resentment by negativism (don't do this, don't do that), constant criticism (can't you do anything right?), and harsh punishments. Paul writes in **Colossians 3:21**, "Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged". Phillips' translation of this verse is very expressive: "Fathers, don't overcorrect your children, or they will grow up feeling inferior and frustrated". Parents sin against their children when they violate this instruction. Frustration and anger should not be causes for discipline. Instead, parents should act in love, treating their children as Jesus treated the people he loved. But children need to be understanding of the pressures and challenges involved with being a parent. Everything they need and deserve from their parents (e.g., understanding, patience, love, etc.) is exactly what their parents need and deserve from them.

Fourth, parents are instructed to "bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." Note the sphere of importance: "in the Lord." This involves consistent discipline, faithful training, and daily instruction. Paul's words also remind us not only of the significance of disciplining our children when they do something wrong but they also point out the value of remembering to praise them when they do something right. But children must be listening to their parents and pliable to their instructions. Children honor their parents when they obey them and listen to their counsel. They dishonor them when they stubbornly rebel and refuse to be shaped by the Master's hand lovingly administered by their parents (**Prov. 29:15, 17; 27:11; 30:11-13**).

It is not easy being a parent or growing up today. But with God's help, we can do it. And that work is certainly not throw away.