

Parenting: What is the Parents' Responsibility?

Ricardo Campos, Teaching Elder Grace Chapel, Orange, CA June 12, 2011

I. Introduction

As parents you want your children to live long and prosper, to succeed in every area of their lives. This too is God's desire. But how can parents ensure that this will happen? Is there something they can do, something they must do in order ensure this? God says, "Teach them about life, but teach them according to My wisdom."

II. What is the Parents' Responsibility Toward Their Children?

Children are a command and blessing from God. Having children takes careful planning and consideration. However, having children is not a suggestion, it is a command from God (and it can be by adoption not just natural birth), Genesis 1:28. And although they are sometimes not considered a blessing, children are in fact a blessing from God, Psalm 127:3.

What are you supposed to teach your children? God commanded Israel to teach their children about life. However, this was to be done by means of God's Law, which governed every aspect of life: theological, economic, social, sexual, personal, etc. That is, God wanted Israel to teach their children how to live life according to God, Deuteronomy 6:6–9.

What attitude are parents supposed to instill in their children about God's Word? That it's the most important thing in their lives: it should be on their mind when they sit, walk, and lie down, Deuteronomy 6:7. That is, it's supposed to be the arbiter through which they filter every thought, word, and action. Why? Because if they don't live according to God, it will cost them dearly in life, Deuteronomy 6:10–15.

Are both parents responsible to instruct their children? Yes, Proverbs 1:8. Each parent will have a unique perspective on life based on God's Word. And the child needs both.

Why should parents teach their children the importance of God's Word? Because it will determine what kind of life they will have; will it be a peaceful one or not, Proverbs 3:1–10. And "peaceful" doesn't mean without trials or suffering, but peace in the midst of life's suffering, Romans 5:3–4; Philippians 4:11–13. In addition, if you train your child in God's Word, they will not depart from it when they grow up, Proverbs 22:6. But this also means that if you train your children the wrong way, they will follow that too.

At what age should parents begin instructing their children in God's Word? As soon as they're able to understand instruction, that's when you begin instructing them in God's ways, Proverbs 4:1–4. However, this doesn't mean that you teach them a theological lesson at age two. Instead, you bring God's Word down to their level and relate it personally to their lives.

Make your instruction personal, vivid, and lasting. When you teach your children God's Word, try to make it as interesting as possible and relate it personally to their lives. God wants to connect with your children on a personal level. He wants them to follow Him and see Him in everything they do, at home, school, and beyond. Solomon taught his sons with vivid imagery and he related God's advice personally to his sons' lives, Proverbs 5:1–6.

Don't just talk the talk; walk the walk. God demands that parents be an example for their children, Proverbs 20:7. When parents do this, their children will model their behavior and be blessed for it.

What happens when you fail to instruct your children in God's wisdom? Parents who fail to instruct their children in God's ways will suffer for it, Proverbs 10:1. Your children may despise you over it, Proverbs 15:20. They may also mistreat/abuse you and bring you shame, Proverbs 19:26.

What must you do in order to rejoice (and not grieve) over your children? Yes, children can and do disobey your instruction. Thus, the guarantee God gives you as a parent is not "Do this and your children will never misbehave." Instead His guarantee is that if you train them (especially from an early age) to follow His wisdom and they follow it, then they will live a peaceful life and you will rejoice over it, Proverbs 23:24–25.

How do you keep your children from being a source of humiliation? Instructing your children in God's wisdom and them living by it will prevent criticism and taunts from others, Proverbs 27:11. It will also prevent your children being a source of shame, Proverbs 28:7.

Don't contribute to your child's misbehavior. In Ephesians 6:1–3 God commands children to obey their parents because this is what they're supposed to do and it'll lead to a long peaceful life. God then commands parents not to contribute to their child's anger, Ephesians 6:4a. Thus, parents must look at their own hearts and behavior toward and around their children to see if they are contributing to their child's anger. God then commands parents to teach their children His wisdom, a wisdom that is supposed to include the do's ("training") and don'ts ("admonition/instruction") of life, Ephesians 6:4b.

Don't neglect your parental responsibility or abuse your children. As the parent, God gave you the authority not your child. They are supposed to obey you "in all things," not the other way around, Colossians 3:20. Parents are also not to provoke their children in a manner that causes them to be so disheartened that they lose motivation in life, Colossians 3:21.

III. Conclusion

God urges parents to teach their children His view of life, His way of thinking, His way of solving life's problems. If parents do this and their children follow God's advice, then you and your children will have a life of peace.