

PARENTING

Elders and Deacons Meeting 2011

Purpose:

[Prov.22:6] “Train up a in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.

[Is.58:12] “And they that shall be of thee shall build the old waste places: thou shalt raise up the foundations of many generations; and thou shalt be called ‘The repairer of the breach, The restorer of paths to dwell in’.”

God’s Spirit is at work setting His house in order. His pattern for the home will establish it as a foundational structure in the Church; not just for today, but for generations that follow.

Introduction:

[Titus 1:5] “For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee.”

[Phil. 4:9] “Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me--put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.”

[Gen.1:9-10] ”And God said, Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear: and it was so. And God called the dry land Earth, and the gathering together of the waters called he Seas: and God saw that it was good.”

God called the work of creation that had been completed to that point “good” because it was in agreement with his will. Just as a craftsman finishes a piece of the work that he is making, and in comparing it to the drawing confirms that it matches the drawing, he is then satisfied with the work that is done to that point.

The Lord may reveal something of his plan to us, but the fulfilling of it is entirely His doing. We are involved in it because He has chosen to make us participants. Though our contribution is made simple by the enabling of His spirit, His purposes are not simplistic.

[Is.55:9] “For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.”

We see this in God’s promise to Abraham to give him the land of Canaan as a possession. His promise is clear and certain, but the fulfilling of it is on a grand scale spanning several hundred of years [Gen.15:7-18] “...and they shall afflict them four hundred years...”

Israel entered Egypt through Joseph and later his family, and emerged four hundred and thirty years later, a nation in prepared for the possession of the promised land.

[Rom.8:14-17] “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons (huios – mature sons) of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but ye have received the spirit of adoption (being given recognition as mature son), whereby we cry Ababa Father. The Spirit himself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children (teknon – one born) of God, and if children, then heirs. Heirs of God and joint

heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.”

Attributes of maturity:

1. Obedient. Having learned to hear and to do.
2. Responsible. Faithful to do what they know to be the father’s will. (Bro. Wagar)
3. Stable. Holding firm against external forces.

The Home:

The home is a basic element in the foundation of the Church. The union of husband and wife reflects the pattern of the relationship between Christ and the Church. Proper order and operation of this relationship is essential in providing a loving and orderly environment into which a child is to be born. It is important that our homes fit this pattern that we might raise families that will continue to walk in the blessed order of God’s kingdom.

The husband and wife relationship is based upon mutual love and respect as we are admonished in Eph 5. While the husband is instructed to love his wife, and the wife to respect her husband, there is a sharing of those responsibilities in marriage. Christ being invited daily into our personal lives and into our home opens the way to lift the marriage relationship to its full potential. Material wealth, entertainment, active lifestyles, etc., cannot substitute for the true value of the loving, respectful, and orderly environment of the godly home. There may be times when the family economy is sparse, but where the home is in order there will be an abundance of all that is necessary.

The birth of a child into the home is miraculous. The child arrives helpless and unable to care for itself, yet the Lord has made careful preparation for the event. The child is immediately enveloped in a blanket of love and care. Parents who have looked forward to the day with great anticipation now broaden the love and respect that they share for one another to include this little one. Each child in its own unique way is beautiful and perfect and never more so than when seen through the eyes of loving parents. When he cries, he will be attended to, no matter the hour day or night. So great is the love that embraces this new life that parents willingly give their all for his welfare. In that moment of birth their lives are changed forever. They have been given a treasure beyond riches, and they have been charged with the solemn duty of guiding these little feet into the kingdom.

The home is designed to properly provide for and instruct our children, taking them from infancy to adulthood and preparing them to take their place in the Church and in society. Much of what is taught in the home is done so by example. The child will learn much by observing and participating. They will grow to respect authority as they are taught to obey and respect first of all mom and dad. They will learn that there are boundaries and that these boundaries are for their benefit and protection. Home will be a refuge whose doors are always open and where love never wavers.

Mothers

It is not possible to look into the pattern for the home and not see that there is no equal to the one that the Lord has set to manage and care for the affairs of the home and children,

than the wife and mother. It has been my personal experience to be able to devote my attention fully to the task of providing for our family, knowing that our children were being wonderfully cared for by the most dedicated and capable person to do so, their mother.

It is important that the energies of the wife and mother be focused on the needs of the home. This is not to say that her abilities should be restricted to the mundane tasks of housework and childcare. Neither is it to say that she alone should be the one to handle these duties. But she does need to be the one to ensure that her household is well managed and her family well attended to.

The familiar passage in Proverbs 31 describing the virtuous woman outlines something of the role that the woman plays in the home. This is not the description of a poor soul relegated to a life of drudgery and servitude; rather it describes the fulfilling role of a capable administrator that brings honour to her family, her husband, and herself.

Prov.31:10-31 'a virtuous woman (NIV)'

A wife of noble character who can find, she is worth more than rubies.
Her husband is full of confidence in her, and lacks nothing of value.
She brings him good, and not harm all the days of her life.
She selects wool and flax and works with eager hands.
She is like the merchant ships, bringing her food from far.
She gets up while it is **still dark**; she provides food for her family and a portion for her **servant girls**.
She **considers a field and buys it**; out of her earnings she plants a vineyard.
She sets about her work vigorously; her arms are strong for her tasks.
She sees that her trading is profitable, and her lamp does not go out at night.
In her hand she holds the distaff and grasps the spindle with her fingers.
She opens her arms to the poor and extends her hands to the needy.
When it snows, she has no fear for her household; for all of them are clothed in scarlet.
She makes coverings for her bed; she is clothed with fine linen and purple.
Her husband is respected in the city gate where he takes his seat among the elders of the land.
She makes linen garments and sells them, and supplies the merchants with sashes.
She is clothed with strength and dignity.
She speaks with wisdom, and faithful instruction is on her tongue.
She watches over the affairs of her household, and does not eat the bread of idleness.
Her children arise and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her.
Many women do noble things, but you surpass them all.

What is a Wife: (Messages to the Church, pages 368-9)

[ref. MESSAGES TO THE CHURCH, H. Holt pg.368-9]

Dad's plaque to mom: (He meant it, and she knew it).

We read in Exod. 2:1-10 "...and Pharaoh's daughter said to her, Go, and the maid went and called he child's mother..." that in spite of the wealth and access to the elite of Egyptian society, the Lord took great care to have Moses nurtured by his own mother as he was being prepared to lead Israel out of captivity into the promised land.

The difference between a mother's heart and a caregiver is evident in Solomon's judgement. 1Ki.3:16-28 "...then spake the woman whose living child (it) was unto the king, for her bowels yearned upon her son, and she said, O my lord, give her the living child, and in no wise slay it. But the other said, Let it be neither mine nor thine, but divide it..." The caregiver was willing to sacrifice the child, the mother was not – to the mother, the welfare of the child was paramount.

In our materialistic society where wealth is placed above godliness, values can become distorted. We cannot serve two masters; God and mammon. There is a need to step out (as with Joshua) and declare where we stand, and in so doing seek God's mind in all our ways. It is not that we must choose between having material goods and godliness, but we must choose which one we will serve.

Lk.16:13 "No servant can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money."

Abraham set a good example in this regard;

[Gen.13:9] "And Abram said unto Lot, Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdsmen and thy herdsmen ; for we be brethren. Is not the whole land before thee? Separate thyself, I pray thee, from me: if thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if thou depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left."

Even though Abraham had much to lose by Lot choosing the most productive pasture land (and this land was given to him as an inheritance), there was no hesitation on his part to step back and let the Lord choose what was best for him. In this case Lot did choose the best pasture for himself; however, Abraham benefited more by placing his hand in the hand of the Lord than Lot ever did from the productivity of the fertile plains. Lot ultimately lost everything when Sodom was judged, because everything he had was in the material realm. Abraham continued to grow and prosper because he made the Lord his provider.

The pattern that the Lord has set for the home is for the husband to be the provider and the wife the homemaker. While there is significant overlap in these areas of responsibility – ie. the husband certainly shares in the tasks of homecare and the wife may well bring in revenue, neither should be to the extent that it diminishes the ability to perform primary duties. For example, if the husband is regularly up all hours of the night caring for children, to the point that he cannot be effective in his job, or that the wife is working outside the home to the extent that she is not able to adequately care for her home and family, then the home will suffer. (example of the Tanzanian woman plowing with the team of oxen – the home suffered when the man did not fulfill his place as provider)

We should not be looking to just get by the best we can. We should be looking to the Lord to help us set up strong homes in good order, that provide the proper environment for raising families that will walk with the Lord all their days, and that will in turn raise families of their own that will walk in order before the Lord. That is what the scripture means when it says; **[Is.58:12]** "And they that shall be of thee shall build the old waste places: thou shalt raise up the foundations of many generations; and thou shalt be called, The repairer of the breach, The restorer of paths to dwell in."

Child Development

It has been a remarkable experience to raise a family from infancy to adulthood. We have been permitted to both be both observer and participant in the miraculous handiwork of God. As our children grew and matured and found their place, we too, as new parents, had to mature and learn and find our place. The unfolding development of the child is as miraculous as the birth itself. It is not possible to participate in this experience without acknowledging that there is a greater hand at work than human understanding can grasp.

In beginning stages of life, the child's world is the mother's arms. Little by little the world expands taking in surrounding objects and faces until this little life begins to find its place in God's greater purpose. An event monumental in scope, yet made simple in practice by the wisdom of God.

A young child has three notable attributes that are very effective in his development; (1) a remarkable memory, (2) an energetic drive to explore and experiment, and (3) an unquestioning trust. At times, these can be both a blessing and a curse for the parents. The things we say, the things we do, the examples we set, will be remembered and they will be copied whether good or bad. Our children will be taught by us – they will observe and they will do. Our desire is that they will learn from us to do what is right. We want to be counted among those who 'raise up the foundation of generations to follow'. I can remember my father saying, "you will know how well we have raised our children by the way our grandchildren walk", and I am beginning to understand that that is true.

What is important;

A few basic things done well can be of great value in the long run, and they are mostly independent of finances.

1. The home foundation based upon a godly, loving, respectful husband and wife relationship.
2. Dedication. Giving the child back to the Lord.

[1Sam.1:26-28] "And she said, Oh my lord, as thy soul liveth, my lord, I am the woman that stood by thee here, praying unto the LORD. For this child I prayed; and the LORD hath given me my petition which I asked of him: **Therefore also I have lent him to he LORD there."** **the LORD; as long as he liveth he shall be lent to the LORD.** And he worshipped t

Whereas Hannah took the child Samuel to serve in the temple as she had promised, we raise the child in our home. Even so, the child belongs to the Lord and we will raise him as the Lord instructs.

The dedication is of value. It is an anchor point for us and for the child. It provides the opportunity to remind the Lord that the child belongs to Him.

3. Each child receiving the individual love, care and attention they need (Nicolae Ceausescu, Romanian orphanages)
4. The child learning to obey and respect the authority of the home (proper discipline)

5. Good manners, the result of learning respect for others.
6. Honesty and morality taught and practiced.
7. The affairs of the home in order, administered in wisdom following the pattern of the Kingdom. Wisdom belongs to the Lord and He will give it to us when we ask.
8. Maintaining an appropriate balance between work and pleasure; not forgetting to keep the Sabbath day holy.
9. The child personally giving their heart to the Lord, and beginning a walk and relationship with Christ.
10. Participation in family devotions and contributing to ministry in the Local Church.
11. Adequate preparations being made for the child's future.
12. The child accepting responsibility and learning the value of work and self discipline – beginning at home.
13. The child learning to share and co-operate with siblings and friends
14. Building a wholesome parent/child/family relationship

Parent / Child Relationship

We meet the child at their level. It is interesting to observe the antics of grown adults as they go to great lengths to extract a response from a baby. We participate in activities that are of interest to the child. We throw our wholehearted support into their sports, music and other activities in which they may be involved. I am sure that the Lord treats us much the same way; He meets us where we are so that a loving, trusting relationship can be established and nurtured to its fullness.

A young child has an inherent love for parents and family. It was so rewarding to come home from work to be greeted by three little faces that couldn't wait to spend time with their dad. This makes it very easy for us to connect, and it is so important that time is spent with them as a relationship develops. A loving, caring, trusting relationship is an essential ingredient for healthy development. It has nothing to do with wealth, expensive toys, or beautiful houses, but it has everything to do with our time and how we spend it. They need and deserve our time. Where this is absent, the child may fill the void by substituting other friendships, not all of which may be wholesome. Building a wholesome relationship early will insure that it is in place throughout the years, particularly at times when parental input may be most needed. It will require an investment of our time and effort, but it will yield benefits far beyond the investment.

Initially the parent/child relationship is all nurturing and play, but it is not long before the elements of instruction and discipline begin to emerge. In an environment of love and trust the child begins the lessons of life. Obedience is key if the child is to learn wisdom

Discipline

First and foremost the task of teaching our children is centered around obedience. Benjamin Franklin said 'first teach a child to obey, then teach him what you will'. This is consistent with the scriptures which say;

[Pr 22:6] “Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.”

Once a child has learned obedience he becomes teachable. It is almost impossible to teach an undisciplined or disobedient child.

The measure of importance that the Lord places on proper conduct of a child in our homes (‘what matters to the Lord matters’)

Ten Commandments:

[Ex 20:12] “Honour thy father and thy mother; that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.”

Qualification for eldership/deaconship;

[1Tim.3:2] “A bishop (elder/deacon) then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, temperate, sober minded, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach; not given to wine, not violent, not greedy of filthy lucre, but patient, not a brawler, not covetous, **one that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity. For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God.**”

Abraham: God’s promise being contingent upon our children continuing to walk in obedience before the Lord;

[Gen.18:17-19] “And the LORD said, Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do; Seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? **For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment; that the LORD may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him.**”

Responsibility of children

[Eph 6:1] “Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honour thy father and thy mother which is the first commandment with promise, that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth.”

[Col 3:20] “Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord.”

Purpose of discipline

Proper discipline is not retribution for misbehaviour. Proper discipline changes behaviour from bad to good. It puts an end to misbehaviour. If the behaviour isn’t changing, then the method of discipline should change until there is evidence of positive results. There are times when this can be challenging, but it is important to reach the place where misbehaviour has been corrected. Every child is different, and what works for one may not work for another.

To exercise discipline is to reach a point where the will to rebel is broken, and respect for the authority of the home is maintained.

[Prov.22:15] “Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him.”

[Prov.29:15] “The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame.”

Children are to honour and obey their parents. A child that learns to honour and obey parents will honour and obey other authorities; elders, teachers, employers, the law. Failing to teach a child to obey authority is a great disservice to the child that will cause them difficulty throughout his life. Authority has been set by God, honouring that authority is honouring to God.

Discipline in practice

Discipline and love go together.

[Prov.13:24] (Revised Standard Version) “He who spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is diligent to discipline him.”

[Prov.3:11-12] (Revised Standard Version) “My son, do not despise the Lord’s discipline, or be weary of His reproof, for the Lord reproves him whom He loves, as a father the son in whom he delights.”

Start young.

Example: pouring concrete – when concrete is first poured it can be made to fit any shape, it is totally pliable. As time goes on it begins to set, and changing becomes more and more difficult. A diligent effort is needed in the early formative years (0-3 years) to lay a careful and consistent foundation of order and authority. The following years will be to reinforce and build upon what has been established.

A child wants and needs boundaries.

A child will find a sense of security in knowing where the limits or boundaries are. When we do not provide these limits, the child will misbehave more until some limit is reached. Even knowing the limits at a very early age a child will test the waters. This provides the opportunity to reinforce the boundaries and the fact that they are firm.

Guidelines:

1. Mother and father need to be in unity. Resolve differences behind closed doors, but always speak with one voice.
2. Don’t bluff, if you say it, do it every time.
3. Similarly don’t use false scare tactics to frighten the child into obedience (ie. the bougey man will get you). Your word is sufficient. They will quickly come to realize that you mean what you say, and you will do what you said you would do.
4. Be consistent, what is ‘no’ today is still ‘no’ tomorrow.
5. Don’t discipline in anger (ie. count to 10)
6. Be careful about over-reaction because of personal feelings (anger over something that is unrelated, or because the child has affected something of personal value which the child may not be able to appreciate) – consider from the child’s perspective

7. The punishment should be no more severe than needed to get the proper response.
8. Ensure understanding before correcting.
9. If a mistake is made in disciplining, apologize to the child
10. Don't control the child's body, control the behaviour. The child is in control of his own body. Avoid physically restraining a child to prevent them from disobeying – let them disobey and then correct. It is important that they learn obey instruction.

Illustration of the sapling and the support stake and tie.

Stake must be strong enough and straight (parents must walk and conduct themselves right before it will be possible for them to train the child in a right path)

There is a tie that surrounds the sapling that is firmly connected to the stake

The tie cannot be too tight or it will damage the sapling

The tie cannot be too loose or it will be ineffective

Illustration of the climbing rose

Prune off the branches that are not desirable and tie up others to place them where they should be.

Preparation for the future

The entire formative experience is in preparation for the day the child will leave home to find his or her place on their own. When they leave home for the first time they may carry a few clothes and personal affects, but what they carry with them that is of real value will be what has been instilled within.