

# Parenthood—Joys and Responsibilities



SABBATH—JULY 10

**READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY:** Proverbs 13:24; Proverbs 23:13, 14; Proverbs 29:15; Ephesians 6:4; Philippians 4:9.

**MEMORY VERSE:** “Children are a gift from the LORD. They are a reward from him” (Psalm 127:3, NIV).

**IS IT HARDER TO BE A PARENT TODAY THAN IT WAS THIRTY OR FORTY YEARS AGO?** Or are people today more aware that parenting<sup>1</sup> is harder than it was in the past? Has it become harder to find the time to be a good parent? Is it becoming harder to lead children in the right direction in this age of television and the Internet? Was life more simple in the past when we did not have flashy advertisements and tempting movies on TV?

The Bible teaches that a two-parent family is ideal. But the world is not a perfect place. There are many other kinds of families in the world. But the Bible still offers us principles<sup>2</sup> on how to be the best parent possible.

This week, we will look at some of the important principles of Christian parenting. The Bible is clear. To be a parent is both a great joy and honor and a serious responsibility.

**A LOOK AT THIS WEEK'S LESSON:** What is a good parent supposed to do? What does the Bible say about discipline?<sup>3</sup> In the end, who is responsible for the spiritual decisions children make when they get older? How important is our example to our children?

\*Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, July 17.

<sup>1</sup>parenting—raising children as children should be raised.

<sup>2</sup>principles—basic rules that are the basis for more specific rules.

<sup>3</sup>discipline—training children so they will follow God.

SUNDAY—JULY 11

**FRUIT OF THE WOMB  
(Psalm 127:3).**

The attitude<sup>4</sup> of most people toward starting a family has changed greatly. In the past, people usually had children soon after marriage. But now many couples wait for several years before they have children. Also, it does not seem unusual for a couple to have a child *before* they have been married nine months!

The question for Christians is: What should our attitudes be about children?

**How should we understand the following verses about who did and did not have children? Genesis 29:31; Genesis 30:2, 22; 1 Samuel 1:4-6, 19, 20; 1 Samuel 2:21; Luke 1:5-7, 13-25.**

God worked miracles for these women to have babies. Yet we must not think God has closed the womb of every woman who does not have children. Some women choose not to have children. Other women have a physical problem that prevents them from becoming pregnant. People who do have children must understand that they have a great responsibility for raising them well.

**What does Psalm 127:3 say about raising children?**

In Bible times (as in some cultures today), not having children was often the cause of great shame. Having a son to carry on the family's name was very important. Having many sons would usually bring great honor. So Psalm 127:3 is correct in saying that children are “a heritage [gift]” or even “a reward” from the Lord. But in a more general way, Psalm 127:3 shows a truth many modern people forget: God is the Giver of children. Even in today's sex-permissive societies, children are special gifts from God!



**Children are a gift from God.**

**In what ways is having children almost the same as the act of Creation shown in Genesis 1:26, 27? What should this example tell parents about their responsibilities toward their children?**

<sup>4</sup>attitude—how you think and feel about something.

MONDAY—JULY 12

**WHAT IS EXPECTED OF A GOOD PARENT? (Deuteronomy 4:9; Deuteronomy 6:6, 7; Ephesians 6:4).**

No one ever said raising children was easy. Babies do not come into the world with instruction manuals.

Paul reminded Timothy that we have a duty to take care of our relatives (1 Timothy 5:8). Our relatives include our spouse<sup>5</sup> and our children. We are supposed to know what is good for our children, then give them these good things (Matthew 7:10, 11). But Christian parenting requires more than just giving children food, clothing, and a house to live in.

**What is to be an important part of raising children? Deuteronomy 4:9; Deuteronomy 6:6, 7; Psalm 78:5-8; Proverbs 22:6.**



Teaching children about God is an important part of raising them.

**What does Ephesians 6:1-4 tell parents about how they should relate to their children?**

The child has the duty to *obey* and *honor* the parents. But parents cannot treat a child any way they want to. Parents must be careful not to discourage their children with criticism or by the wrong kind of discipline. Rules are important. But unnecessary rules may do more harm than good and may make children bitter (read Colossians 3:21).

“The child-parent relationship is not one-sided. Paul points out that in the home, the stronger (parents) are responsible for the weaker (children). The Bible gives us a fresh look into the parents’ responsibility. The Bible teaches that parents must respect and consider the feelings of the child. In some societies, the father’s authority is the law. But the Bible shows this is not the way a father should be toward his children.”—Adapted from *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, Frank E. Gaebelin, general editor (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publishing House, 1978), vol. 11, p. 81.

**What do you think it means to avoid making your children angry? If you are a parent, or if you work with children, ask yourself how well or how poorly you have been following Paul’s words.**

<sup>5</sup>spouse—a husband or a wife; the person you are married to.

TUESDAY—JULY 13

**DISCIPLINE—YES, BUT HOW?  
(Proverbs 19:18).**

The word *discipline* can have several meanings. *Discipline* can mean (1) training to get a certain characteristic (trait) or pattern of behavior; (2) training to develop moral<sup>6</sup> or mental improvement; (3) punishment to correct or train. All three of these meanings are close to how the Bible describes *discipline*.

Proverbs 19:18 has a lot to say about why discipline is important.

**Should physical punishment ever be a part of discipline? Proverbs 13:24; Proverbs 23:13, 14; Proverbs 29:15. Some Bible versions use the words “the rod [stick] of correction” in these verses (NIV; KJV; NKJV). So some people believe that spanking children is OK.**

But many countries have introduced laws that do not permit spanking in schools. In some countries, laws do not permit the spanking of children by their parents. So what can we say as Christians?

First of all, we must not forget that discipline is different from culture to culture. What seems right in one culture might not seem right in another culture.

Second, we must realize that spanking can be a dangerous “weapon” for a parent or a teacher who is frustrated or

angry. When we are frustrated, we do not think carefully about positive discipline for a stubborn child.

Third, spanking must be given only when other discipline has failed.

“Parents should not use the rod (stick) if it is possible to avoid using the rod. . . . Many times you will find that if you will reason with children kindly, you will not need to spank them. Reasoning with children will lead them to have confidence (trust) in you.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Child Guidance*, p. 250.



**Always try other methods of discipline before spanking a child.**

**How is the way in which God disciplines us as His sons and daughters a model (example) for how we can discipline children? Hebrews 12:6-11. What principles can we learn about disciplining our children from Hebrews 12:6-11? If you are a parent,**

<sup>6</sup>moral—having to do with knowing what is right or wrong.

or if you work with children, ask yourself, do I spank children because I am angry? Or do I spank based on the principle shown in Hebrews 12:6-11?

### WEDNESDAY—JULY 14

#### YOUNG PEOPLE MUST DECIDE FOR THEMSELVES (Proverbs 1:8-15).

**Christian parents have a challenge to do everything they can to encourage their children to stay close to God and the church. But in the end, who is responsible for the children's choices as they grow older? Proverbs 1:8-15.**

The disciples believed religion was something for adults. But Jesus wanted the children also to come to Him (Matthew 19:13-15). Jesus took time for the children. He talked to them and blessed them. Christian parents, and other adult church members, must try to bring children to Jesus.

But each person, young or old, must finally make his or her own decision about becoming a follower of the Lord. No pressure should be used. Children should not sign up for baptism just because their parents want them to be baptized. But this does not mean parents do not need to encourage children to make a choice. Parents should try to make the path as easy as possible for their children to accept Jesus.

<sup>7</sup>role model—a good example.

**What does Matthew 19:16-23 teach about choosing to be saved? We need to remember that children are free to choose Jesus. What does this freedom to choose tell us about how careful and loving we must be in guiding our children in the right directions?**

We can tell our children about Jesus. We can read to them daily from a good children's Bible. We can teach them how to pray. We can take them each week to the children's Sabbath School. We can make sure we have videos in our home that are worth watching. And we can help our teenage children make wise choices about music, books, films, and the Internet. We can make sacrifices to give our children a Christian education. But the most important part of Christian parenting is to never stop praying for our children.

### THURSDAY—JULY 15

#### BEING A ROLE MODEL<sup>7</sup> (Philippians 4:9; 2 Timothy 1:5).

**What principle do we see in Philippians 4:9 that is important for parents to know?**

It is easy for people to look as if they are good Christians. You can fool almost all the people almost all the time.

But you cannot fool your children as they grow older. Children will see things about their parents that no other people will see. So it is very important for parents to make sure that their lives follow what they say they believe. This does not mean parents are perfect. It means only that their children can see how sincere their parents are in practicing their beliefs. This shows that parents need to be humble and willing to apologize to their children even when they make mistakes. How parents live will influence their children so much more than what they say they believe.

**What role models did Timothy have in his youth? How did these help him to control his life? 2 Timothy 1:5. What message is in 2 Timothy 1:5 for all adults who work with children?**

In his book *Passing on the Torch*, Adventist sociologist<sup>8</sup> Roger L. Dudley writes: “I like to think of values as a buffet where all the tempting dishes are shown. At this buffet, youth will choose the things that interest them the most. Which things will they choose? They will choose things that are the most colorful and attractive, the most delicious and the most tasty! It is not our responsibility to force our values upon our young people. It is our responsibility to show that our values are so attractive and tasty that these young people will see that our values are much better than other values. Then our children will freely choose our val-

ues.”—Hagerstown, Maryland: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1986, p. 117; adapted.



**Do your children know that you live what you believe?**

**Why is loving our children the same way Jesus loves us, the most important thing we can do for our children?**

#### FRIDAY—JULY 16

**ADDITIONAL STUDY:** Read Ellen G. White, *Mind, Character, and Personality*, vol. 1, pp. 131–186.

“Parents may do everything to help their children give their hearts to God. But the children may choose not to give their hearts to God.”—Adapted from *Child Guidance*, p. 173.

<sup>8</sup>sociologist—a person who studies patterns and trends in society.

“Children copy their parents. So parents should take great care to be good examples. Parents are to be kind and polite at home. But parents also should be firm. Then they will see their children show the same traits. If parents are good, honest, and honorable, their children will be good, honest, and honorable. If parents respect and worship God, their children will respect and worship God also.”—Adapted from *Child Guidance*, p. 215.

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

1. Many times the Bible calls God our Father, and us His children. What can we learn from how God deals with us about how we should deal with our children?
2. Suppose a parent realizes that he or she has been a very poor role model for his or her child. The child is now 18. He no longer goes to church, and he follows a lifestyle that does not agree with Christianity. What should the parent do?

**SUMMARY:** Every child is a gift from God. Having children brings joy. But having children also brings heavy responsibility. Parenting requires training children and teaching values to children. Discipline given in love always will be an important part of parenting. But most important of all is that parents and other adults involved in the raising of children live and practice their faith. Adults need to be good role models.