

The Battle For The Home – Parent, Child Relationships

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Introduction

The Bible reveals that the first relationship instituted by God for mankind was that of marriage as indicated by these words, *“Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife, and they shall be one flesh”* (Genesis 2:24), and so it was that the home came into existence by the design and authority of God. Sometime after these words were spoken the Genesis account reveals, *“And Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived, and bare Cain...And she again bare his brother Abel”* (Genesis 4:1-2, which was all in accordance with what God had spoken (Genesis 1:27-28). God established the family and through the Bible humanity is able to understand that which God intend the family to be. This all may seem a bit simplistic, but it appears that many people have forgotten who established the family, the purpose and plan of the family, and the order in which God intends for the family to be developed.

The question may be asked, “Does it really matter or is this really all that important?” The answer is a resounding, “yes!” Yes, it does matter and it is important because God has provided the information concerning the divine pattern for the family, and because from the beginning (Genesis 1:1) Satan has been attacking the home and the divine pattern. Satan’s attacks have come at the home from every direction and one major area has been through the parent-child relationships, and so the topic of this study is “Battle For The Home - Parent-Child Relationships.”

THERE ARE CHALLENGES TO THE PARENT-CHILD RELATIONSHIPS

Challenges To Parent-Child Relationships Seen in The Bible

Cain’s relationship with his parents was challenged when *“Cain brought of the fruit of the ground as an offering unto the Lord”* (Genesis 4:3), and when *...Cain rose up against Abel his brother and slew him”* (Genesis 4:8). Cain’s decision to disobey God through worship, ultimately lead to the sin of hatred and murder, which brought about a separation between Cain and other family members (Genesis 4:11-12,16). Certainly the killing of his brother was a challenge to his relationship with his parents.

Several of Jacob’s sons challenged the relationship with their father when they sold Joseph into slavery and lied to their father making him grieve for years (Genesis 37:27-28), and David’s son Absalom challenged the father-son relationship by his actions of rebellion against David (2 Samuel 15:13-14). There are many other examples of such challenges to the parent-child relationship in

the Bible, but these demonstrate that there was a battle for the home regarding parent-child relationships from the beginning.

Evidence that there had been challenges to the parent-child relationships, there were at that time, and that there would continue to be challenges can be seen from God's commandments to children and parents in the Law of Moses, and particularly where God gives the listing of what is commonly called the Ten Commandments (*Exodus 20*). The first four commands give instruction regarding God and the worship of Him, how we are to honor God, and how we are to relate to God. Commands such as: no other gods, no idols, not take the name of God in vain, and remember the Sabbath (*Exodus 20:1-11*). Then there is the fifth commandment which is, "*Honor thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee*" (*Exodus 20:12*). The importance of the parent-child relationships can be seen in that this command ranked immediately behind the commands relating specifically to God.

There are real challenges to the parent-child relationships, which can be seen in the Bible, but at the same time there are Bible examples of successful parent-child relationships. It is a mistake to only dwell on and to only focus on the failed parent-child relationships that are recorded in the Bible, or the failures that may be encountered today.

There is the success of Adam, Eve, and Abel where "*Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof, and the Lord had respect unto Abel and his offering*" (*Genesis 4:4*). His faithfulness to God was a reaffirmation of the parent-child relationship, which serves as an example of its success. They were the only two adults who could have taught him to obey God. What a success story.

There is the success of Noah, his wife, and their sons. "*In the selfsame day entered Noah, and Shem, and Ham, and Japheth, the sons of Noah, and Noah's wife, and the three wives of his sons with them into the ark*" (*Genesis 7:13*). The family of Noah demonstrates that the parent-child relationships can be good and strong, even though the family lives in a wicked and domineering world (*Genesis 6:5*). There had to have been an unbelievable amount of peer pressure upon them all, but Noah, his wife, and their three sons triumphed in these relationships. This triumph can also be seen that the three sons chose and married women of like faith, or women whom they had converted to the faith, even though the women's own families perished in the flood. What a success story.

There is the success story of Elkanah, Hannah, and their son Samuel. The Bible says, "*But Samuel ministered before the Lord, being a child...moreover his mother made him a little coat, and brought it to him from year to year, she came up with her husband to offer the yearly sacrifice*" (*1 Samuel 2:18-19*). Obviously their godly parenting guided their son to be a faithful judge, one who was willing to stand up to the king when he disobeyed God (*1 Samuel 15:13-14,26*), and one who was faithful to God until his death. What a success story.

Then there is the success story of Jesse, his wife, and their son David. Speaking of David, the Lord said to Samuel in the selection of the next king, "*Arise, anoint him, for this is he*" (*1 Samuel 16:12*). While David was a man who made some serious mistakes along life's way he loved God and was loved by God, and taught his son Solomon to do the same (*1 Kings 1:1-3*).

There is the success story Eunice and Timothy. Eunice had taught Timothy the scriptures from the time of his childhood (*2 Timothy 3:15*), so that years later when Paul meets Timothy as a young man, Luke writes that Timothy “...*was well reported of by the brethren that were at Lystra and Iconium*” (*Acts 16:2*). Timothy was a young person who followed the godly teaching of his mother and because of that was respected and appreciated by the brethren. He later became a faithful gospel preacher carrying the banner of the cross into the next generation. What a parent-child success story.

Then there is Joseph, Mary, and Jesus, who as a twelve year old boy said, “...*wist [know- wb] ye not that I must be about my Father’s business*” (*Luke 2:49*)? The powerful influence and instruction given by Joseph and Mary must have been a major part in Jesus realizing his responsibility toward them and his heavenly Father. The power of the parent-child relationships can be seen in that God placed Jesus in the home of Joseph and Mary. What a parent-child success story.

There are many challenges to the parent-child relationships, but the numerous successful parent-child relationships recorded in the Bible should not be forget. The successes of Abel, Shem, Ham, and Japheth, Samuel, David, Timothy, and Jesus, along with their parents, are but a few of the successes found in the Bible that are an excellent source for teaching, guiding, and encouraging Christian parents today.

The time has come for followers of God today, Christians parents, to stop whining and complaining about the world’s situation and the times that we live in, but to get busy reading and studying the Bible and putting it into practice in their personal lives and in the home.

Challenges to the Parent-Child Relationships of Today

Are there challenges today to the parent-child relationships? Yes, there are? Are there serious challenges to the parent-child relationships today? It is true that there are many discouraging things taking place in this world from a Christian’s perspective, but it must be remembered that Noah reared at least three faithful sons in a time when “*God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually*” (*Genesis 6:5*).

Think of being a Christian parent and being a member of one of the seven churches of Asia (*Revelation 2:1-29, 3:1-22*). Did every Christian home fail in these congregations? Did every parent-child relationship fail among members of these congregations? The Bible says, “...*and for my name’s sake thou hast labored, and has not fainted*” (*Revelation 2:3*), “...*thou holdest fast my name, and has not denied my faith...*” (*Revelation 2:13*), “*I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works, and the last to be more than the first*” (*Revelation 2:19*), and “*I know thy works...and hast kept my word, and has not denied my name*” (*Revelation 3:8*). There must have been some parent-child success stories among them.

Yes, there are obstacles and challenges to being a Christian parent today, but there have been and can be successful parent-child relationship even in difficult time. Yes, mass communication has enabled young people in every part of the world to have access to evil things and to be influenced very quickly. Yes, there is music, are television programs, internet sites, movies,

educators, books, and even politicians, all of which espouse ideas and philosophies contrary to sound doctrine, and to the destruction of the home and parent-child relationships, because “... *your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking who he may devour*” (1 Peter 5:8). Seeking whom and seeking what parent-child relationship he may devour.

However, that is not the end. Remember the success stories found in the Bible, and look for the success stories within congregations of the Lord’s church. Look where you are a member for within each congregation of the Lord’s church, for there are parent-child success stories. There have been challenges to the parent-child relationships since the days of Adam and Eve, but that have also been successes.

THERE ARE BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES TO BUILD THE PROPER PARENT-CHILD RELATIONSHIPS

Who Am I As a Person-Parent?

This is where we must start, this is the question we must ask because this is the question our children are asking every day? Each one of us as a parent has to look into the mirror and examine self, our heart, attitudes, motives, and see really who we are as a parent and person, for as Solomon wrote, “*For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he*” (Proverbs 23:7). Ironically, the first place where most parents want to look when there is a problem in the parent-child relationships is to their child. However, it is essential that we as parents must first look to ourselves, for when we honestly see ourselves, we will see exactly what our children are seeing.

If we are not real Christians, genuine people, and if we cannot examine ourselves looking into our own hearts and attitudes as parents, and if we cannot be honest, repent and change when needed, then the biggest obstacle and challenge in the parent-child relationship is not the music, the television, their friends, the educational system, but is it you and me. Jeremiah wrote, “*I the Lord search the heart...*” (Jeremiah 17:9). Just as God searches our heart, our children search our heart, but the question is, will we?

Who am I as a person? Our children do not care if we are the president of a bank, an accountant, doctor, garbage man, ditch digger, farmer, preacher, elder, or deacon, but our children do care about what kind of person we are, what kind of a father we are, what kind of a mother we are. Therefore, each one of us must look to the word of God, look at self, and ask, am I a Christian, a genuine Christian in life, character, and example? Am I faithful to the word of God? Am I selfish or selfless? We can fool the neighbors, the brethren, and even ourselves, but we cannot fool our children.

When Joshua challenged the children of God to follow God, his own children and grandchildren knew well that he was a man of faith and character, and that he was already walking in that direction. They knew that Joshua was not just speaking idle words, but he lived what he what he said (Joshua 24:15). Taking care of who we are first, being a genuine child of God first, will enable us as parents to accomplish what God wants accomplished.

What Am I As a Person-Parent Doing, or Not Doing?

This might be called the practical aspect of parental responsibilities in the parent-child relationships. God has instructed parents in their responsibilities, so what am I as a person-parent doing to fulfill this parent-child relationship? (*Proverbs 22:6*) - *“Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.”* The word “train” indicates that the responsibility clearly lies upon the parent to initiate, instruct, and guide the child in what is essential for life and eternity. The training process includes instruction, being an example, and really knowing the child. The phrase *“...in the way that he should go...”* points out that we must genuinely know our children. Why is it that all too often our children know us, but we do not know them? Knowing our children can be accomplished by spending time with our children doing things that they enjoy, rather than their spending all their time doing what we prefer. This is not to imply that our children are to think of themselves as the center of the universe or that what they want they should get, but this goes back to the parent examining self, motives, attitudes within self and toward the child.

(*Ephesians 6:1-4*) - This passage is filled with valuable lessons for the parent-child relationships, which must be put into practice. (*Ephesians 6:1-2*) – *“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.”* While the instructions are to the child, in reality the instruction is to the parents first in that parents must teach their children to obey them. Parents are to teach their children that obeying and honoring is the Lord’s will and that which is right. The children cannot accomplish these things without the proper training and example.

(*Ephesians 6:4*) – *“And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath, but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.”* Children will obey and honor when first, they are not provoked to wrath by their parents. Too many parents say, “obey me, honor me” all the while provoking their children to wrath. Provoking the child to wrath may be done by calling the child demeaning, insulting, or belittling names (stupid, idiot, moron, etc.). Some parents have made this a substitute for proper discipline, but demeaning a child certainly is not discipline in the Lord. Naming calling accomplishes nothing except destroys the parent-child relationship. Provoking to wrath may be done by not dealing with the child in an age appropriate manner. Children must be given responsibility, expectations, and discipline in according to their age and personal capabilities, which may be one of the lessons found in *Proverbs 22:6*. Provoking to wrath may be done by the parent saying, “do not” to the child and then doing what was said not to do. There may be many ways to provoke a child to wrath, but probably the quickest way is with hypocritical actions, feigned faith, being Mr. or Mrs. Christian in public and at worship, but then not being a Christian in the home or in the manner of dealing with the children.

(*Ephesians 6:4*) - *“bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.”* Those are power words with great responsibility. The whole idea is that of building up a solid spiritual life in the child. All of the training, instruction, teaching, guidelines and boundaries set, and respect for authority is done with the social and spiritual maturity of the child in mind. What am I as a parent doing?

What am I not doing? Do I act or talk as if the children are in the way and just a bother? Portraying this attitude either subtly or openly toward the children will inhibit the ability to admonish them in the Lord. As parents we need to remember that it was our choice and our decision to bring them into this world, or adopt, and when we do either they are our responsibility, and their salvation and ours is at stake. Do they have a sense of “belonging” in the family, do they feel just as important as everyone else in and outside the family, and do they know that they have an important part in the functioning of the family? In other words, do they really know that they are loved? When they do they will be less likely to battle with the parent for control and challenge parental authority.

How Am I As a Person-Parent?

Am I mature and spiritual in my thinking and actions? Am I fair, just, merciful, and forgiving with other people and my children? Our children will know if we are or are not. When we think about bringing up our children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord these things will be included. Things such as who we are and what we are a person-parent will determine the kind of parent-child relationships that we will have. As parents we must put into practice the words of Paul, “*Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom...*”(Colossians 3:16). As a person-parent do I respect the authority of God and his word (2 Timothy 3:16-17)? The most important factor that every Christian parent must bear in mind at all times is that how we teach our children to view authority is how they will react to God and his word. That respect for biblical authority in the home must begin with the parents. How much apostasy is in the church today because as children, those who are now leading were not taught or shown the respect of authority needed to read and heed the Scriptures? How am I as a parent with regard to authority relating to the workplace, laws of the land, and the Bible?

Conclusion

This topic is an essential point of study because God has spoken. Good parent-child relationships are important in any home, but godly parent-child relationships are essential for the Christian home. It is essential that these relationships should be godly because of the eternal salvation of the children, the parents, and for the eternal good that can come about through the Lord’s church. The answer to all parent-child relationships will be found in the word of God because “*According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hat called us to glory and virtue*” (2 Peter 1:3).

Important Bible References Relating to the Parent-Child Relationships

“He that spareth his rod hateth his son, but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes” (Proverbs 13:24).

“Whoso curseth his father or his mother, his lamp shall be put out in obscure darkness” (Proverbs 20:20).

“Train up a child in the way that he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it” (Proverbs 22:6).

“Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child, but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him” (Proverbs 22:15).

“Withhold not correction from the child, for if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die. Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell” (Proverbs 23:13-14).

“The rod and reproof give wisdom, but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame” (Proverbs 29:15).

“Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them” (Ecclesiastes 12:1).