

Christian Education: Parental Guidance Is Not An Option

There is a story about a mother who faced many hardships in her life. In a period when infant mortality was high in England, she bore nineteen children, of which only nine lived to adulthood. In a certain four-year period of her life, five of her babies died. One of her children became deformed because of the careless handling of a maid. Her firstborn, Samuel, caused her great distress when he failed to learn to speak until the age of five.

Through all these, she stayed very close to the Lord. She spent one hour each day praying specifically for each child. Every week she took each child aside for one hour to discuss spiritual matters. This lady's name is Susanna Wesley (1669 - 1742), and despite many hardships, she trusted God to do what she could not do and did what God expected her, as a parent, to do. Two of her sons, John and Charles Wesley, eventually became famous preachers and hymn writers whom God used mightily to reform England.

Planning your child's future

Parents, do you remember the day when you held your newborn baby in your arms? Wasn't he such a treasure to hold, so frail and helpless? Do you remember first training your child to respond to your voice, to take his first steps, to pronounce words, to hold the chopsticks, and to tie his shoelaces?

We all know that in Singapore, it is next to impossible for a child to be successful in life without a good education. So, even while your child was still an infant, you started to make great plans for him to attend a good school and receive proper education. While all this planning is good, what plans have

you made to prepare your child spiritually? Many Christian parents have been grief-stricken by what their children become as adults. They are shocked when they live immoral lives. They are heart-broken when their children ruin their lives because they are undisciplined and rebellious.

Parents are accountable to God

We are all too familiar with the story of Eli and Samuel and how God held Eli accountable for the misbehaviour for his two sons.

And the LORD said to Samuel: "See, I am about to do something in Israel that will make the ears of everyone who hears of it tingle. ¹² At that time I will carry out against Eli everything I spoke against his family-from beginning to end. ¹³ For I told him that I would judge his family forever because of the sin he knew about; his sons made themselves contemptible, and he failed to restrain them. ¹⁴ Therefore, I swore to the house of Eli, 'The guilt of Eli's house will never be atoned for by sacrifice or offering.' - 1 Samuel 3:11-14

You, too, are accountable to God for the way you bring up and educate your children. After all, children are a gift from God. He gives children, not as a penalty or as a burden, but as a favour.

Sons are a heritage from the LORD, children a reward from him. - Psalms 127: 3

While it is only God who can turn children of human descent into children of God, He places the responsibility on you to teach them.

"Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from It." - Proverbs 22:6

The Biblical mandate for Christian Education

In Deuteronomy 6, Moses gives a thorough explanation of how the people of Israel were

to assist their children in remembering God and His covenant.

These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. ⁷ Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. ⁸ Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. ⁹ Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates. – Deuteronomy 6:6-9

Clearly, Moses' instructions to the nation of Israel have a parallel for all Christian parents today. It is your duty to teach your child, not only what is morally correct, but also about Jesus Christ. Ultimately, you should work to see your child saved early in life.

Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me. – Psalms 51:5

Because a child is born with a sinful nature, your primary responsibility is to shape the moral behaviour of the child according to God's word and to insist on correct moral behaviour until the child understands the significance of such actions and practises them on his own. While it is only God, by his Holy Spirit, who can make anyone His child, it befalls you to do all you can to lead your child to Christ for salvation.

Taking charge of your child's Christian Education

As you get caught up with your work, meetings, and tight schedules throughout the week, Sunday School may be the only place your child gets his Christian Education. Or you may be one of those who feel that the spiritual upbringing of your child is best left to Sunday School and church. If this is the case, then change it because your child's Christian Education should permeate every aspect of his life and cannot be added on at the end of the week. As a parent, it is your responsibility to ensure that your child is

receives a proper Christian Education. The church cannot and should not assume this responsibility for you; also, you must not expect the church to fulfill your responsibility.

Christian Education at home

As a parent, you should recognise your child's weaknesses and strengths. You set limits and standards in accordance with God's word. You make clear how you expect your child to behave. You correct his wrongs and keep all promises you make to him. You teach him how to pray from a very early age. You teach him how to forgive others, by first forgiving him. You make known to him that the Bible is God's authoritative word, either through family devotion time, or by helping him with his Sunday School assignments or through story-telling. You replace the secular values he brings home from school or from his friends with Christian values. You ensure that our child's whole life is offered like a prayer to God.

As for you, uphold your child in prayer, and for yourself, pray for wisdom and guidance. You must also live your life in consistence with God's word that you teach your children. If you do not do all these things, then you labour in vain in teaching your children.

Parents – your final charge

“When the Son of Man comes will He find faith on earth?” - Luke 18:8

We live in a world full of uncertainty and moral erosion. As a parent, you have a mandate from God to teach your child in the way he should go. Like Susanna Wesley, can you say that you have the faith to trust God in what you cannot do, and to do what God expects from you? May our Lord find that faith at work in you when He returns.

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