
Words of Truth

Teaching Your Children Is Not The Church's Responsibility

By: Brian A. Yeager

Lest we get entangled in stupid wrangling of words, I shall state from the beginning of this article that I AM NOT SAYING THE LOCAL CHURCH CANNOT TEACH CHILDREN. I am fully aware of the fact that the church is the pillar and ground of the truth (I Timothy 3:15). I am fully aware of the fact that the church is to have a reputation of spreading the Gospel of Christ (I Thessalonians 1:5-8). I am fully aware of the fact during times of teaching public audiences there is often children present (Matthew 14:14-21). I am NOT saying that the assembly should not have children. In fact, the assembly of the saints is not supposed to be closed even to unbelievers (I Corinthians 14:23). In fact, what I will be teaching in this article is not a conclusion of mine at all. We will be discussing whose responsibility it is to train up children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

What we are going to discuss in this study is that the parents of children are the ones primarily responsible for teaching and training their children. The reason for this article is that some have erringly thought that bringing their children to a "Bible class" is the beginning and end of their responsibilities in teaching their children the Scriptures. This is an erring conclusion on many levels. Some of those things will be studied through in this article. So, get your Bible open and compare what is written here with what the inspired word of God teaches. Let's start with the Biblical pattern of who is expected to teach children the will of God.

And The Pattern Shows...

Notice how the Scriptures show us that teaching children the Scriptures is primarily the work of parents, not any other collective group of people: *"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... And it shall come to pass, when your children shall say unto you, What mean ye by this service? That ye shall say, It is the sacrifice of the Lord's passover, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, when he smote the Egyptians, and delivered our houses. And the people bowed the head and worshipped... Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up... Therefore shall ye lay up these my words in your heart and in your soul, and bind them for a sign upon your hand, that they may be as frontlets between your eyes. And ye shall teach them your children, speaking of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, when thou liest down, and when thou risest up... Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honour 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. And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord” (Genesis 18:18-19, Exodus 12:26-27, Deuteronomy 6:4-7, Deuteronomy 11:18-19, and Ephesians 6:1-4).

The Scriptures show us that a child that has been raised correctly will continue such in his or her life (Proverbs 22:6). Parents who teach their children the Scriptures will do well in raising those children to be faithful to the Lord. Consider the following: *“When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also... But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works” (II Timothy 1:5 and II Timothy 3:14-17).*

Where, in all that you just read, do you find the local assembly of Christians taking on the primary role of teaching children? The fact is, you don't read a hint to such an idea at all in the Scriptures. While children are and can be present when the Gospel is being taught, they are not the focal point of any recorded public teaching in the Scriptures. The innocence and humility of a child is what most teaching is trying to get adults to resort to (Matthew 18:1-4). Thus, another application should be considered when it comes to whom the church is focused on teaching.

The Church Is Focused On Saving And Edifying Rather Than Raising Children

What sins do children have to repent of? Doesn't sin require the ability to know right from wrong (James 4:17)? Doesn't obedience to the Gospel require the ability to reason from the Scriptures (Acts 17:2)? The church is responsible for self-edification (Ephesians 4:16). Are children really capable of being part of said work? The fact is, many churches that are "teaching children" are really just babysitting. Many efforts are made at the request of parents, but not by the command of the Lord or example of churches recorded in the Scriptures. While children can and should incidentally learn from assembling with the local church with their parents, the real work the church is doing is not going to be focused on children.

Conclusion

As a parent, I have long stood upon the premise of the Scriptures that my children are my responsibility. From all of the Scriptures we've looked at there is no other conclusion that can be reached. In fact, even the qualifications of elders and deacons clearly demonstrate that the spiritual training of children is to the parents and tied directly to fathers (I Timothy 3:1-13 and Titus 1:5-9). Therefore, don't expect the church to take the responsibility of helping your child in the development of their spiritual being. If you have children or grandchildren, YOU should be teaching them by word (Deuteronomy 4:9) and most of all by deed (Proverbs 20:7). They should hear and see Christ in you (Titus 2:1-8). Parents, you decided to bring children into this world. Own your responsibility. What you do or fail to do in this area is something, as with all things, that you will stand accountable for before the Lord (II Corinthians 5:10).