
Words of Truth

Don't Ignore Your Child's Bad Behavior

By: Brian A. Yeager

When we obeyed the Gospel of Christ we were supposed to count the cost of discipleship? Amongst those questions we were to ask ourselves was if we loved God more than our own families. That would even include our own children (Luke 14:25-33). Most who profess to be Christians would emphatically state that they love God more than anything else. Yet, when push comes to shove, does that include a mother loving her God more than her own children? Are fathers able to put God first over the children they love and adore?

I recall one time teaching a class many years ago about the need to practice biblical discipline on all that walk disorderly (II Thessalonians 3:6). After going through various passages to illustrate the different actions to take in different situations (i.e. Matthew 18:15-17, Luke 17:3-4, Romans 16:17-18, I Corinthians 5:1-13, II Thessalonians 3:14-15, etc.), I ended the class by stating that such actions include even our own physical families. To prove the point I illustrated how that Jesus saw all disciples alike (Matthew 12:46-50) and how we needed to follow that example (I John 2:3-6). After the class ended I was approached by a young sister in the faith. She had several children. She said she just did not know if she could not keep company with one of her children if they grew up, obeyed the Gospel, and needed to be withdrawn from. I know many have shaken their heads when I have recalled this story in the past. It is easy to shake your head at someone else. What about us parents though? What will, have, would you do if you had to obey God in taking some action against your child?

Now we could go many directions in this study. I want to simplify it a bit though and talk about how actions of children, both young and old, cannot be ignored by parents. This study will not be the Brian Yeager opinion feast, but rather what God expects us Christians to do in regard to how we view our children. What you will see is that He does not want us to look at our children and ignore their faults. The fact is, He wants us to always take action in some way. That could be spiritual. That action could be physical. At times the misbehavior of our children may require both spiritual and physical responses from us. To jump start our study, we will look at a father in the Scriptures who ignored his adult children's misbehavior.

Don't Be Like Eli

Eli was an Old Testament priest (I Samuel 1:9). Eli had two sons (I Samuel 1:3). His sons did not know the Lord (I Samuel 2:12). Eli was very old, and heard all that his sons did

unto all Israel; and how they lay with the women that assembled at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation (I Samuel 2:22). He confronted them (I Samuel 2:23-25). That was not sufficient for God (I Samuel 2:27-36). God held Eli accountable for not restraining his sons from doing their sinful deeds (I Samuel 3:13). Think about that? In a time when God winked at ignorance (Acts 17:30), He did not ignore this transgression. Eli's sons made him look terrible and the effect went far forward. What about if we leave our children to misbehave and do nothing about it?

What If We Just Observe Our Children's Bad Behavior?

Let's see the answer to this question from the Scriptures: *"The proverbs of Solomon. A wise son maketh a glad father: but a foolish son is the heaviness of his mother... He that gathereth in summer is a wise son: but he that sleepeth in harvest is a son that causeth shame... A foolish son is a grief to his father, and bitterness to her that bare him... The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame"* (Proverbs 10:1, Proverbs 10:5, Proverbs 17:25, and Proverbs 29:15).

From the Scriptures above, you can see that when you leave your child uncorrected it brings shame to you. You then become like Eli in the sight of God and faithful brethren. Don't allow the fact that judgment is in the future delay you from immediate corrections if need be. Delayed judgment often leads people to continue in sin (Ecclesiastes 8:11). Understand this, if we ignore our children's bad behavior, God will judge us for that. It is sinful to ignore the transgressions of others.

The Sin Of Ignoring Sinful Behavior

As Christians, we should abhor that which is evil (Psalms 97:10 and Romans 12:9). We should not be able to go along and get along amongst evil (Proverbs 28:4 and Ephesians 5:6-11). We should withdraw ourselves, individually, from unnecessary involvement with those contrary to God's will (I Timothy 6:3-5 and II Timothy 3:1-5). We should have no place amongst evil (II Corinthians 6:14-18). There is no qualifier in the Scriptures when it comes to our children. In marriage, there is (I Corinthians 7:9-15). In parenting, there is not. Therefore, it is a transgression of God's law to ignore the behavior of our children both young and old. That means it is sinful (I John 3:4). That means we'll be lost if we don't repent (Romans 6:23).

Conclusion

For your sake and your children's sake, do not ignore their bad behavior. Love them enough (Proverbs 27:5) to teach them physically which will effect them spiritually (Proverbs 23:13-14). With our young children this may mean strong discipline (Proverbs 22:15). Our "adult" children may need avoided (as addressed above). Leaving it alone will do nothing!