

THE AUSTRALIAN ANABAPTIST

God's solid foundation stands firm. 2 Tim. 2-19

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Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel,
but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in
the house.

Matthew 5:15

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For A Conservative Anabaptist Perspective

From The Editor's Desk

When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things.

1 Corinthians 13:11

The wording of this scripture verse is clear it calls us away from being what all of us once were – a child – and with that there is no disputing in the physical sense but sadly in the mental or spiritual realm many remain just that – a child.

But what does it take and who can help us to in that transition from child to adult and here we are mainly referring to the mental and spiritual side of man which does need developing and guiding, the physical is mostly taken care of by the workings of God's design.

In our earliest stages of childhood most of us have parents, a father and mother, who are our caretakers and directors until such time as we can start to take some responsibility for ourselves. Parents may also utilize the aid of others in developing the child into an adult such the school, siblings, close relatives and others within their own sphere of relationships that they consider to be of assistance in this transition from child to adult.

Countless books have been written on how this is most effectively done, those books come from widely divergent views many of which are opposed to the way that God has chosen for His people and it is vital for the transition from childhood to adulthood that the right input is applied so that the end result will be pleasing to God.

Scripture reminds us that it is the responsibility of parents to oversee and apply themselves to that process, we acknowledge that some children are more easily trained up than others, that some parents are better able to cope with the varying demands of the different personalities of their children but God has provided a plan in His word for all eventualities and this month we have a number of articles that may be of some help in that transition process.

For those who interact with children that may not be their own God also has a role to play and we believe that is to support the parents in their God given role as parents, to help not hinder, to encourage not discourage but rather by example to be a role model for children making that transition from child to adult especially one who serves God. J.V.L.



Crying for God's Help

*The righteous cry, and the Lord heareth,
And delivereth them out of all their troubles.*

Psalms 34:17

As a baby is born into this world, its healthy cry signals the first breath of life. If the first cry of life is not forthcoming, a slap on the back of the infant administered by the attending physician will initiate that all-important first cry. All children cry from time to time, and many times needs are expressed by their cries. As we grow older we are more able to express our needs by speaking, and crying usually signifies something more meaningful. Some of us cry more easily than others, but it is rare for someone not to cry at one time or another. It is rare that a cry comes forth without some kind of inner anguish or emotional stress.

This message today also brings our attention to the inner cry of the heart and soul for salvation. As we study this lesson, let us open our hearts to the many accounts in the Bible where the Lord's heart was touched by the cry of a soul in trouble. Do we understand the cry of our soul? Let us trust that the Lord understands and hears our cries. There are few people who will not respond to the cry of a child in need. Much more so the Lord will not ignore the cry of His child.

Psalm 5:1-5 ¹ Give ear to my words, O LORD, consider my meditation. ² Hearken unto the voice of my cry, my King, and my God: for unto thee will I pray. ³ My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O LORD; in the morning will I direct *my prayer* unto thee, and will look up. ⁴ For thou *art* not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness: neither shall evil dwell with thee. ⁵ The foolish shall not stand in thy sight: thou hatest all workers of iniquity.

Psalm 19:12-14 ¹² Who can understand *his* errors? cleanse thou me from secret *faults*. ¹³ Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous *sins*; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression. ¹⁴ Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer.

Psalm 22:1-5 ¹ My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? *why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring?* ² O my God, I cry in the daytime, but thou hearest not; and in the night season, and am not silent. ³ But thou *art* holy, *O thou* that inhabitest the praises of Israel. ⁴ Our fathers trusted in thee: they trusted, and thou didst deliver them. ⁵ They cried unto thee, and were delivered: they trusted in thee, and were not confounded.

The book of Psalms has many verses of prayer and praise. A little over seventy of the psalms are ascribed to King David as the author. Quite a few of the psalms express a real cry from David's heart to God for help. Let us look for the reasons why David cried to God as indicated in the text scriptures of this message. He was often tempted to think that God was not hearing him; but after telling the Lord of his desperate needs, David reassures his own heart with examples of earlier accounts of how the fathers had cried to God and how He had answered. As we read the book of Psalms, we find that David called upon God at any time of the day. The text scriptures speak of the morning, daytime, and night seasons. This portrays to us that God is available at all times. We also find that we need to hunger and thirst after righteousness to be heard by God. The teaching that God does not accept foolishness, wickedness, or iniquity is plain. The psalmist's prayer is that the Lord will cleanse him even of secret faults. He recognized that there could be areas of his life that he kept to himself that needed cleansing. Then he goes on and mentions the presumptuous sins. These are the sins that we know about, but we are not willing to seek deliverance from them. David wanted to be kept back from these. We all have times when we have spoken out of turn or entertained thoughts that were not wholesome. The Christian has a heart that reaches out to God with the cry of David of Psalm 19:14, "Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength, and my redeemer." These cries were not hopeless cries, but they do show the helpless state that David was often in. When he felt helpless, he could still cry to a source of strength and redemption. This is an example to us that we can also cry to God and come to Him with all of our distresses. The cries of the psalmist sound very much like the cries of our hearts today.

Humanity has many deep needs that only God can supply. We are prone to

be independent and heedless of the goodness of God and our need of Him. This lesson holds out to us a means of finding a source of supply for all our needs. We do not always understand the cry of our hearts. In our misunderstanding, we often grasp at things that are temporal and find temporary relief and satisfaction in those things. Life goes on, and we may live from year to year without paying much attention to the inner cry that cannot be satisfied with material things. When man comes to an end with himself, there is often a cry for the deep things of God, the eternal things. From time to time someone finds what the heart has really been longing for, and then the cry is heard, "Why didn't I know about this sooner?" Then the wasted years bring remorse and the wish that the goodness of God had been experienced earlier. The intent of this message is to help us understand the cry of our hearts and bring us to the place where we will cry effectively to God and find the Savior who fully understands the inner cry of our heart.

Many of the scriptures that our Lord Jesus referred to while teaching the people come from the Psalms. Some come from the writings of Isaiah. Both these books of the Bible are a blend of cries to God for help, praise to Him (a joyous cry), and prophecy. These prophecies told of the future and how it would be when Jesus would come. We should remember that Jesus has come, bringing with Him the promise of the Holy Ghost. The word of God tells us that the Lord is a comforter. This is also the description of the Holy Ghost. Could there be any better refuge for the crying soul?

Sometimes we feel overcome by stress, and we need to cry. It is not a shame to cry nor is it a sign of weakness. Tears can heal the body, mind, and soul. It is often an honest expression, especially when loved ones have left us for their eternal home. We are sad and we shed tears. Our hearts turn to God, and we think of eternal things. Many people have felt God very near at a time of loss. The Lord's heart had been touched by the cry and reaching out of the soul. Others have said they could not reach God with their cries at such times. Was there selfishness or blame in the crying?

Sometimes the Lord wants us to cry. When we have sinned and done wrong, the reproof of the Holy Ghost will not comfort us but rather condemn us. As we accept and confess our wrongdoing before the Lord and make restitution, He forgives us, and then His comfort for the godly sorrow

given us is real (2 Cor. 7:10). Let us not stop short of this true godly sorrow, even though the chastening hand of God is uncomfortable for a time. This is essential for salvation full and free. The Lord will always respond to the sincere cry for salvation. There is much sin about us, and we need continual deliverance from it to remain in the grace of God.

There is also a time for us to stop crying, quieten ourselves, and trust in the Lord. David speaks of quietening himself like a child (Ps. 131:2). Here we have a picture of a mother who has nursed her child for quite some time in a tender and loving way. The mother and her child have been very close. Now the child has reached the age when it is expected to eat together with the family. In a way, the mother has withdrawn herself, and the child may cry because he feels his mother's love has been withdrawn. After a time the child realizes that his mother still loves him and is still near as always. Now the child comes into the enjoyment of family fellowship and takes up the responsibilities that come with continued development. David likens his soul at this time to the state of a weaned child. There is a special joy for the Christian who has cried and felt that God has heard his cry. In confidence, trust, and fellowship with the saints, the growing Christian can enjoy the blessings of the church and live in the full realization that God is always near. Spoiled children cry easily and are nagging, fearful, and fretful. Our cries to God should not be the cry of a spoiled child wanting its own way. The Son of God prayed in great distress in the Garden of Gethsemane, "Saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done" (Luke 22:42). Christian growth will result in less crying and more simple, trusting, heartfelt prayers and songs of praise.

Some points for us to ponder:

1. The real tests and trials of life cause us to cry to God. If prayer is the Christian's vital breath, do these tests and trials help bring to us our necessary spiritual breath?
2. "And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear" Isaiah 65:24. Then why do we have to wait for answers at times?
3. Will we know when we have cried enough and when it is time to trust and be quiet?

TRUSTING IN GOD

While going through some troubling experiences lately, I asked myself the question, "Do I really trust God like I should?" If my whole world came apart and it seemed that nothing was left, would I still trust God? Could I be like Job and say, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord" Job 1:21? "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him" Job 13:15.

How strong is our commitment? Are we sometimes fair-weather Christians? When all goes well, our lives are rewarding and good, but when all goes in reverse, we become discouraged and sometimes even give up. God requires more, much more, than the way our flesh reacts to disappointing situations. We must stay on course even if life brings us unfair and troubling blows.

Paul and the other apostles lived through many painful experiences. One could get the impression that suffering was their life. It would seem like they couldn't have had so many bad experiences if they had tried. The martyrs trusted in God. Even though one must believe that they prayed every day for safety and protection, yet God saw fit to allow many to die in terrible ways. We must come to the conclusion again that God's ways are not our ways. His ways are so much higher than our ways. Even though we fail to understand this verse many times, heaven will reveal how earth-dimmed our vision really was!

If we could catch even a hint of the way God sees things, maybe we could understand our earthly troubles a little more. For instance, if we could look at our lives from eternity, whether we had lived ten years (which could be compared to a speck) or ninety years (a dot), both would seem very small and insignificant. We must come to the conclusion that God is much more interested in our spiritual life than years lived. We know He cares about us. The Bible tells of His caring ways and that He will provide for us. Yet His purpose is to redeem and receive into glory those who accept Him!

We believe that if we pray for our loved ones' safety, God will keep them. And many times He does. But we've also experienced times when God permitted lives to be instantly taken. It is with such times in mind that this article is written. Because our trust is more than an earthly trust, our conversation is in heaven, Philippians 3:20. We have a hope beyond this world. Our first love is to God alone, and God will take care of us when we

are His children. Even though death always brings heartache, God understands better than any mortal does. His Son (Jesus) died with the weight of the entire world's sin upon Him. Have we ever wondered if God could hardly bear the thought of Jesus' death?

For those who must go through a tragic experience, there will be sad days. There will be many questions and lonely times, and there will be a heavy load to bear. But Jesus cares, and He will help you! The church, brothers and sisters in the Lord, the brotherhood, will also be there. Comfort can be found. Trust must remain in your heart. Trust doesn't mean everything will work out like we think it should. Trust means that whatever God has for you, you'll do the best you can for Him and for others. A song says, "Only trust Him and be still: Let Him work in thee His will, For the heart that's open wide, His love shall fill!" Keep trusting Him,
Brother William



WHY NOT BE THANKFUL?

One's outlook on life can make such a difference in the journey. Given today's complexities and dangers, a person might question, "What's there to be thankful about?" For that person, the way is often weary and long. On the other hand, claiming the promises of God, another responds, "Why not be thankful?" In such a one the Christ-life shines brightly in the darkness of a self-absorbed world.

"If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" Romans 8:31-32.

"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose" Romans 8:28.

These scriptures are forceful enough to defeat any downcast and fearful attitude. But another verse is also fitting: "I know that, whatsoever God doeth, it shall be for ever: nothing can be put to it, nor any thing taken from it: and God doeth it, that men should fear before him" Ecclesiastes 3:14.

These words of Solomon touch on God's providence. God inhabits eternity, Isaiah 57:15. Thus all His works bear the fingerprints of eternity. His dealing with every person is in the context of the individual's highest eternal spiritual welfare. God is 100 percent on the side of everyone who chooses to do His will.

It is quite human to look at life as a formidable foe. And without controversy life does have its troubles and disappointments. Job said, "Yet man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward" (Job 5:7). But, in fairness, we must acknowledge that Job said that before he really "saw" God. Then he admitted, "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee" Job 42:5 and one wonders how Job saw his deep valley with his new vision?

Putting God in life's equation one has a balanced perspective of life. Or, better said, putting life in God's equation gives one a stable view. Considering the verses quoted above, and many, many others like them, girds up the spirit. One then doesn't approach life with a guarded stance, complaining and expecting the worst to happen. By faith he sees that if he will "seek... first the kingdom of God and his righteousness," God will give him the necessary things of life (Matt. 6:33). With a heart committed to the Lord, he goes forth in the expectation of good, not evil. He knows that God will take spiritual benefit out of the valleys for those who love Him. Why not be thankful?

Granted, there is sufficient trouble, heartache, deceit, and tragedy in the world to foster a cynical and downhearted look in anyone. Lacking the heavenly antidote in the heart for depression, many are succumbing to just that. They must be prodded to look for a reason to be thankful, and many believe that reason is scarce. A true Christian, on the other hand, with consciousness of God's promises and providence, starts from a different bottom line. He has to look for reasons not to be thankful—and they are scarce. The truth is that because of his faith and the attitude of his heart, he or she doesn't dwell on the negative things.

This certainly is not to say that Christians do not experience trouble and sadness. Like everyone else, they do. In many respects the benevolent providence of God treats the Christian no differently than other men, Matthew 5:45. In fact, in some ways the lives of true Christians may be more difficult than others' paths. They have committed themselves to being obedient children of the Heavenly Father, and the Father wants His children to remember where "home" is. When He sees that this earth life begins to lull His children to sleep or they begin to feel at "home" here, there is not a surer cure than trouble and test. But, again, the fingerprints of our eternal well-being mark the doings of God.

Elizabeth P. Prentiss (1818-1878) penned immortal words to this effect, "Let sorrow do its work, Send grief and pain; Sweet are Thy messengers, Sweet their refrain, When they can sing with me: More love O Christ, to Thee..." (Christian Hymnal, No. 379). Then, indeed, why not be thankful? Comparing one's situation with that of those less fortunate is not the best basis for thanksgiving. Many times those who are deemed unfortunate are more thankful than others. True thankfulness fosters compassion. At the same time, God does want us to notice the misfortunate one and count our blessings. The "suffering index" of the world surely is great today. War and genocide ravage parts of the earth. Pestilence and disease are thinning and weakening the population of various countries. Left behind is a pitiful host of innocent, heartbroken orphans. And here in our western world we have it so good. If we complain we should be ashamed of ourselves and ponder how God must see us. Why not rather be thankful?

The heart and soul of true worship is thankfulness. This, of course, focuses first of all on the great grace in Christ Jesus. We would worship Him and say with Paul, "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift" 2 Corinthians 9:15. Because it comes from a true heart, being thankful and grateful is what makes worship alive and acceptable to God. Is there such a thing as grudging worship?

A point to remember is that being thankful is a matter of the heart. That being true, one cannot be unthankful in one part of life and truthfully thankful in another. Thankfulness is one. Someone has remarked that it is strange how we say we trust God for the keeping of our souls but find it difficult to trust Him with the material things. If God keeps our souls, which are of infinite worth, why can't we trust Him to supply our material needs? The one who truly rests secure in God's grace in Christ Jesus possesses the spirit of thankfulness, which permeates the whole heart.

Perhaps the most simple, yet most profound injunction in the Scriptures is "and be ye thankful" Colossians 3:15.

To wait is quite often a most trying situation, especially when it involves other people, for it seems man has so little tolerance with his fellowmen. One reason for our impatience is that we also have schedules, and it seems that ours are more important, so we wait in a hurry and become irritated."



LED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THIS GENERATION

In the very beginning of the Bible, in the second verse of Genesis, we read of the "Spirit of God." He moved upon the face of the waters.

There are many places in the Old Testament where we read how the Spirit worked with the people of God. Even though a spirit is not visible with the eye, the Holy Spirit's work is evident and builds faith. The Spirit's work is beyond what we human beings can accomplish.

In John 4:24 we read, "God is a Spirit ..." He is the author of eternal salvation. In this setting of Christ's teaching to the Jews it is related how the Jews went to the temple at Jerusalem to worship the "Father." Upon Christ's coming, a change was made in the location of true worship. We have the account of Christ teaching the woman of Samaria at Jacob's well that from then on true worshippers could worship God anywhere in spirit and truth. This is where we read, "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and truth" (John 4:24). This then lays the foundation of God's plan that His Son was upon earth with all power to perform miracles—to carry out the redemption plan for mankind.

Jesus did not stay on this earth. He Himself said, "It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you: but if I depart, I will send him unto you" (John 16:7). This promise, spoken by the prophet Joel, was fulfilled. There is no question as to the coming of the Holy Spirit or of His working in the hearts of true believers (Acts 1 and 7).

True believers need to be established as to the coming of the Holy Spirit. His work was proven in the apostles' time and has been manifested in the hearts of the faithful throughout history. The Holy Spirit is still working in this generation. We need to appreciate the Holy Spirit and continually make room in our hearts for this precious Spirit to lead us into all truth (John 16:13).

Following are some thoughts as to who the Holy Spirit is, His attributes, and the purpose of His coming.

We need to keep in mind that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost are one. Their goal is the same. Jesus' coming was, as He said, "to seek and to save that which was lost."

The work of the Holy Spirit is to carry on the growth in faith of the new-born babe in Christ. He builds them up in the most holy faith that "was once delivered to the saints" and brings them to a full stature in Christ,

Jesus refers to the Holy Spirit like as to a person, using the pronouns "He" or "Him" John 16:7, 13. The nature of the Spirit comes to us in different aspects, such as, Comforter, Teacher, Guide, and Giver of gifts. There is nothing dull or vague about the Holy Spirit, John 6:63.

Further work of the Holy Spirit is found in John 16:8 -11: "And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: Of sin, because they believe not on me; Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged."

We also read, in 1 John 2:20-21, about an unction from the Holy One. This is in the context of the deceptiveness of the end before Christ shall return in the clouds and every eye shall see Him, Revelation 1:7. This we believe to be a warning to those who may not be following the Holy Spirit.

In John 3:1-7, we read of what it takes to become a new creature in Christ. We find this to be a mystery, and Jesus speaks of it as like the wind, not knowing where it comes from or where it goes. So is everyone born of the Spirit. This much we do know that by heeding the Word and the Spirit, a change of heart takes place. Then the Spirit comes in to dwell in this temple of ours. Jesus tells us, "by their fruit ye shall know them." There must be a repentance of our self-will and recognition of our corrupt nature. Our sins must be gotten rid of through and by the shed blood of Jesus Christ. There is no remission of sins outside of this.

Living by the Word of God, as stated above, where does the true believer fit in this generation and "in times like these"? According to the Word of God and by observation, the spiritual outlook of the world continues to get darker. We are in this world, but we are not to be of this world. As it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be also in the days of the coming of the Son of man. Also, the Scriptures make reference to Lot and how fire and brimstone rained from heaven and destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah. But one consolation is the power of the Spirit, which is the same yesterday and today and will be forever.

At times Christians are caused to wonder if there still is a way for them. Will there always be a way? The answer may depend on the two letter word if. Those times when the Israelite people were disobedient, God was not pleased with them. Then God, whom we would say is a merciful God, would tell His people, "If ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all

the earth is mine" (Exodus 19:5).

The Holy Spirit is here and working as much today as ever before. We realize that the world around is becoming more wicked. The Bible teaches us and warns of false teachers and that the love of many people shall wax cold. We live in a world where carnal use of science and technology wants to engulf and ensnare the very elect. But by giving heed to the Spirit, we can be preserved from evil.

The true light can never be put out. If God be for us, who can be against us? At different places in the Scriptures, we are told that we must be filled with the Holy Spirit. This is an endeavour, especially for the leadership. There is constant danger in the time in which we live that decisions and choices are made that would not be in compliance with the Spirit's leading. This may show a lack of obedience in our conduct, buying, and in nonconformity to the world. May God give us the needed grace to invite the Spirit's leading into our Christian walk of life. We know it does take an effort. Like a certain poet writes, "Take time to be holy, Speak oft with thy Lord." *Brother John*



CHILD EVANGELISM

What is child evangelism? Simply stated, it is the active outreach to make children Christians before they are accountable, and we will address it from that position.

Following is my impression of how organized child evangelism operates in nominal Christianity. Children are told the stories of the Bible. The salvation story is presented to them—Jesus dying on the cross and shedding His blood for their sins. To have salvation, make it to heaven and escape hell children are told they must accept this plan into their hearts. They are asked to raise their hands if they have done so, or they are sometimes given opportunity to sign their names someplace indicating that they are now believers. Naturally they will raise their hands in the affirmative or sign their names. A talented teacher can make this a very impressive moment for a child, and in later years, the person will testify that he gave his heart to the Lord when he was six years old (*for example*).

This is not something true believers and God's church subscribe to, and the deception is clear. However, the point here is that we would be aware

of the more subtle angles of child evangelism.

Parents have a responsibility to train their children. This is basic. It is an ongoing process and often a challenge. And its importance is great, because children are tomorrow's church.

Listed are several simple rules of child nurture followed by a few explanations of how parents can get on the wrong track.

1. Teach a child to obey.
2. Teach a child that no is no.
3. When a child disobeys, punish him. (Method of punishment relates to the seriousness and type of disobedience.)
4. Teach a child to say I'm sorry if he has hurt someone.

When a child is asked to do something, he must learn to do so to please his parents. It is wrong to include the fact that Jesus or God is pleased when he obeys or is displeased when he disobeys in the teaching program. Children are answerable to their parents, not to God.

The importance of yes and no: This point is very closely related to obedience. Again, simply stated, when a parent says no to a child, that is what it means. It does not mean, "No, I don't want you to do that, because Jesus will be displeased with you." It means "No, I don't want you to do that, period." Some explanations would be acceptable, such as, you could get hurt or you could hurt someone else, your action is impolite or is not standard conduct, etc., depending, of course, on the age of the child.

The Bible says a father punishes his child for his own pleasure, Hebrews 12:10. This sounds kind of cold, but giving some room for old English and the King James Version way of saying things, this is just the way it is. Parents punish their children when they disobey to make them be obedient in the future. Obedient children are pleasing to parents. Obedient children make family life pleasant. Obedient children are happy children. A child should not be told that Jesus will be displeased if he says bad words—Mom and Dad are displeased.

Teaching a child to say "I'm sorry" to Jesus when he has disobeyed is not correct. It does not take care of disobedience. To teach a child to say "I'm

sorry" to someone he has hurt or offended is proper. It teaches good manners and builds good relationships.

When a child disobeys and Jesus or God is brought into the picture, the child learns to be afraid of God. If he is told he will go to hell if he is disobedient is not true, because unaccountable children will not go to hell, no matter how much they disobey their parents. On the other hand, if a child is obedient and is told he will go to heaven, he is also being deceived, because he will go to heaven, not because he is obedient but because he is not accountable. So we need to keep heaven and hell out of the training procedure.

Including eternal rewards or punishment in the training process sets the stage for thinking we can earn salvation by works. So when the child grows into accountability and God calls, he is confused. He feels lost but has been taught that disobedience, or being bad, warrants hell and obedience, or being good, qualifies him for heaven, so it becomes an intellectual process. Taking it to extreme, the child, with the help of his parents, could keep tab of good and bad, and begin to think that if the good outweighs the bad, and he consistently has said "I'm sorry" to Jesus, he is justified. This person will likely have difficulty understanding redemption. Such a mindset is hard to fix and may go with a person through much of his life.

Proper child nurture does not make Christians out of children. It is a preparation for a future relationship with Christ. It sets the stage. The objective of child nurture is to build good character. This actually makes the challenge of rearing children easier than when you mix it with subtle or even blatant child evangelism and so try to force the child to be the kind of person you want him to be. What kind of child do you want your child to be? Then train or teach him to be that way. Do not mix in material related to Christian living. That kind of teaching comes later, after the child has become accountable, has truly repented, and has accepted Christ as his Saviour.

There are things about God which children should be taught. He is like a father; he loves children. He created all things, including man. Teach honesty. Teach a child to work. Teach social graces. Teach moral values. Teach that a good way to live is by the golden rule. Train a child to understand that if he wants good to come his way, he must be good to others.

The parent knows this is a scriptural principle but does not need to dwell on that fact as he teaches it to his child. Teach him to be nice to Joe, and he will be nice to you. Do not teach that the Bible says that if you will be nice to Joe, he will be nice to you, and you should always do what the Bible says because then Jesus will be pleased with you.

Should children be taught to pray? Yes. Simple prayers like "Now I lay me down to sleep" and "Come, Lord Jesus, be our Guest," for example, are good to learn for bedtime and for meals. This forms good habits. But to teach them to understand the meaning of the prayers or instruct them a lot about praying from their hearts or minds is incorrect. A child's salvation does not hinge on his prayers. If a child disobeys, he should not be instructed to go pray and ask Jesus for forgiveness. The child deals with the parents only.

Children learn from example. The parents' love for each other, their loyalty to each other, and the simple joy of living are caught. Love for the Bible and its contents are caught as well when parents read or tell them the stories from the Bible. The learning of common songs at home and church, learning to listen attentively to the messages in worship services, and going to Sunday school are exercises that set the stage for a child to respond positively when God's call to salvation becomes a reality.

Children are children and will come up with interesting comments. Sometimes they are way out. Parents do not need to be alarmed, but they should listen for repeated inconsistencies in their children's talk and correct their teaching program rather than to try to correct the child's statement. For example: a four-year-old telling his sibling he will go to hell if he does something bad. Children should not be taught doctrine.

Parents have a great opportunity. The above is something that teachers in our schools, Sunday school teachers, and school boards should keep in mind as well. It may play a more vital part in child nurture than we think. When child nurture becomes complicated, and children and instructors get confused, it is a good time to review what is being included in the teaching program. What is unnecessary, and what is being left out?

To make children responsible to God when they are still children by evangelizing them does them a great injustice.

Brother Timothy



SHEPHERD PARENTS

In John 10:4-5, our Lord says, "And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him; for they know his voice. And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers."

A father is to be the lead shepherd in the home; the mother is the shepherdess and is submissive to the shepherd. The husband is his wife's shepherd also. In olden times, the shepherd led the sheep to green pasture and water. He protected them from wolves and bears. He was with them, leading and guiding. This is an example of a properly involved father. "He goeth before them."

The uninvolved father is like a "negligent" modern shepherd. He puts up a fence that keeps the sheep within. He can go in the house and sleep. He need not worry much about the sheep, for his farm is fully automated. And yet, for all his automations, his sheep suffer for want of attention from the shepherd. Their pastures get overgrazed, and they suffer from disease. Sometimes the shepherdess must try to fill the gap while the shepherd sleeps. And sometimes the shepherdess wants to be the lead, but it never seems to work.

The faithful shepherd worked hard, but he knew his sheep, and they knew him. A stranger's voice they would not follow. The negligent shepherd that used the easy modern method moved more sheep with less effort, but he didn't know his sheep, and they didn't know him either. In fact, they were drawn to the voice of the stranger and wanted to be in his "pastures."

Are your children longing for the evil one's pastures? Where have you been? Do you know your children? Our children have their own will and

must choose to follow Jesus, but let us not excuse ourselves if we have failed them. Humbly confessing our failing can bring healing to our homes. There is much pressure on us fathers to be uninvolved with our children and wives. We get caught up in our material pursuits and work. And we encourage one another to be materialistic by constantly comparing ourselves by our houses, clothing, and vehicles. We praise those who are wealthy or well-known and reflect negatively on the poor and downtrodden. Wives can also put pressure on their husbands to make more money than needed in order to maintain a higher standard.

A man's salvation is dependent upon his leading or shepherding of his family. He must not shirk his responsibility. He must be an involved shepherd, paying careful attention to the lambs God has given him. Our occupations and possessions will matter little in eternity. But what a blessing to see the children God entrusted to us following the Chief Shepherd! There is also much pressure on mothers. The feminist movement has undermined God's role for man and pushed women into the headship in the homes of the world. This spirit is even creeping into the church and has had some effect on us. We must resist this wicked spirit. Part of a married woman's salvation is dependent on her being submissive to her husband and loving her children: "... she shall be saved in childbearing" 1Timothy 2:15.

A father who fails to properly love his wife and children will not lead and structure the home life. Devotions will be neglected. Discipline will not be administered. The wife will struggle to keep her place. And what a sad situation when a wife wants to lead, and she strives with her husband for the headship. God is not pleased with them.

The husband must love his wife enough to reprove her gently; so that for the sake of her soul, she will willingly submit to him and not out of mere compulsion. If a father is in his place, it will be easier for the mother. A father must have a vital prayer life to find grace and wisdom from God. Family devotions should be considered very important and enough time allowed for them.

It is important to confront a child's will with a loving, firm commitment. If discipline is harsh, it is probably coming too late and inconsistently. An-

grily disciplining a child may bring results, but it will bear bitter fruit later. A father must especially care for his sons from little on up. He must train them to be men. Some say this starts when a boy is three years old and that an "absent" father can cause a boy to be effeminate and not know God's place and role for him in later years. The absentee father is a plague throughout the world. Perhaps we will need to accept a lower standard of living in order to obey God in this. Let us not be guilty of neglecting our homes, but let us fulfill our highest calling. With God's help, one can be that faithful shepherd. For in that path is love, joy, and peace, and it leads us to God and heavenly home.

Brother Jay



A FATHER'S PITY

Mothers are generally more emotional and pliable than fathers. But deep in the heart of every proper father, there is a tender spot that relates to his children. The Psalmist noted this and used it to illustrate the heart of God, our Heavenly Father. David said, "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him" Psalm 103:13.

The fatherly pity David speaks of is a feeling of pure sympathetic sorrow for a child's suffering, especially when that suffering is a result of father's own discipline. This should not be confused with the lack of fortitude that will cause fathers to be permissive just because they do not want to run counter to a child's wishes. The pity godly fathers have is akin to God's yearning toward a penitent sinner who has come to the end of his way. There is a natural fleshly feeling that rises up in fathers when they see their children suffer—whatever the cause may be. But there is a difference if the cause of the suffering is from an outside source or from the father himself.

It is one thing for parents to see a child hurting because it has been injured in circumstances unrelated to the father and mother's control. Much keener is the feeling of sympathy should the injury have been of father or mother's cause, even though unintended. And yet, going a little farther to reach the point, what are a father's feelings when in deep concern he has

deliberately affected a suffering through some discipline, or the promise of it?

This touching of the quick of a father's heart requires two conditions. First, his heart must be properly disposed toward the child in question. Any bitterness or ill will, malice or offense, or selfishness will be like a callus over a father's heart. In that condition, hardly anything will touch his heart. Secondly, it is the contriteness and yieldedness of the disciplined child more than anything else that touches a father's heart and moves him to pity. There is something in a true father that melts when he realizes that this child is totally helpless, submitted, and dependent upon him. The child's spirit begs forgiveness without any words being said. Rather than feeling like a lord and proceeding further (which would have no redemptive point), he is deeply humbled and broken himself. He, therefore, genuinely comforts, instructs, and forgives his child. The result is that blessing of which Malachi spoke: "And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers" Malachi 4:6.

What depth of mercy and wisdom in David's words, "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him"!

It is necessary to raise up a standard of behaviour in our homes. Our children need to clearly know what is acceptable conduct, and what is not. Children who grow up in a home without clear and definite standards are often at a loss as to how to rightly relate to society. They are insecure, and, deep inside, they feel cheated. However, some fathers, while rightly ruling the home with a firm hand, have also governed with a hard heart. Children from such a home will toe the line out of fear in their father's presence. But they may also leave home with a warped idea of relationships that will mark them for years.

Our homes need fathers with a firm hand that will not spare, but that hand should be governed by a soft heart. Discipline is a must, but punishments that repeatedly leave fathers and children estranged do not reach the desired end. Starting at a very young age, let us strive for that manner of discipline that ends with father and child melting together—the child in brokenness and submission and the father in humility and tenderness toward the child.

Our Heavenly Father, through Christ Jesus, brought judgment and mercy

together (Psalm 85:10). When we were disobedient and rebellious, His holy judgments seized hold upon us, and we were doomed to eternal punishment. Like a father would grip the little hand of his small son that has been apprehended for wrongdoing, so God's hand gripped our sinful hand. There is no escape from that just wrath upon sin—except there be a melting together between God and us. Sinners must repent and completely yield their hearts to the Lord, giving full acceptance of their deserving the Father's sentence. When the Lord sees that trembling heart and broken will, He has always been moved to pity and is ready to forgive. Then there is reconciliation.

The Apostle Paul instructed Timothy to "make full proof of thy ministry" 2 Timothy 4:5. It surely is not misusing the Scripture to say that Christian fathers should make "full proof" of their fatherhood. Multitudes have fathered children, but they are not truly fathers. To have such a heart that pities, in the genuine and spiritual sense, is a part of that full proof that fathers have accepted their God-ordained position.

May God grant that we fathers have a heart that is like unto His and that we deal rightly with those entrusted to our care.



DEVELOPING PROPER SELF-ESTEEM IN OUR CHILDREN

The world of our day puts a lot of emphasis on building self-esteem in children. Great care is taken to spare children from situations and incidents that could possibly mar a child's self-esteem. At times the impression is given that children's self-esteem is so fragile that only professionals understand how to develop self-esteem properly. Many of these efforts seem to cater to the innate proud nature of man. How concerned should Christian parents be about this matter? What is God's way for developing proper self-esteem in our children?

There are a few scriptures that have impressed me recently as I thought about these questions. I am left with the impression that God's way in this matter is practically opposite of man's way.

Here are the scriptures used as the basis for the following thoughts:

"Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged; and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again" Matthew 7:1-2).

The Golden Rule: "And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise" Luke 6:31.

God's question to Cain: "If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted"? Genesis 4:7.

All of the above scriptures relate to the eternal law of God of sowing and reaping. "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap" Galatians 6:7. This truth cannot be side-stepped. The two verses from Matthew 7 and Luke 6 are Jesus' own words, and it will happen just as He says. In the light of these verses and many more that could be quoted, how shall we go about developing a proper self-esteem in our children?

Teach proper esteem (respect) for others. Teaching our children esteem of others is probably the most important part of developing proper esteem for themselves. This needs to start while they are very young and beginning to play with other toddlers. They need to be taught respect for others' property, to be unselfish, to share, and to be sensitive to the feelings of others. Seemingly malicious acts against our child should be minimized.

As they grow older, a process of inward reflection needs to develop. We help this by looking at how their actions might have caused some of the mistreatment they may be experiencing. A wise parent will always be slow to judge the other child as being the culprit. This position of the parent will probably come under greater test as the children grow older and become more skilful at covering up their mistakes.

Much, or most, of teaching respect to our children, is done by example. What are our children observing in us when we address others? How do we respond when others address us, especially older individuals? What do they hear us say about others? Do they sense we're sensitive to and considerate of others' feelings?

Parents need to be very alert to subtle ways in which their children show disrespect toward them. One of these areas is when children make their parents appear slow to catch on. This may be somewhat true, especially in our day of rapidly changing technology. But if a child highlights this too

much around others, it shows a lack of respect.

Teaching respect includes common courtesy, good manners, and politeness. The child or any person who learns to esteem and respect others will discover that others respect them. In turn, their self-esteem will be balanced, too.

Teach forgiveness. There is probably nothing that shackles a person more than being unforgiving. Unable to forgive, we remain bound by self. Although we cannot teach forgiveness to our children in the measure Christ taught it because that takes a new-birth experience, we can direct our children in that way. As they forgive others for the inevitable hurts, injustices, and misunderstandings that come their way, they'll be free to go on unshackled by bitterness. The parents' attitude and reaction in these circumstances plays a major role in teaching forgiveness.

Teach self-discipline. Teaching self-discipline is accomplished in many ways. This also begins quite young. Following a healthful daily routine is one of the more obvious ways of teaching self-discipline. A normal time to get up, have meals and devotions, and regular bedtime establishes the fact in children that to synchronize with the rest of the world a person cannot simply do as he or she pleases. A regular regimen has a way of creating a sense of self-worth, also. Finishing what they begin, even down to small details such as cleaning their dinner plate, disciplines self. Requiring that the work get done before playing is a good teacher of self-discipline. Disciplining to help learn control of one's temper is of great importance.

Children and adults like to be friends of disciplined individuals because they are kind, gentle, good, and predictable. Disciplining ourselves has the added reward of a good feeling inside rather than the guilt that lack of self-discipline brings. Show me an undisciplined person who feels good about himself.

Teach responsibility. Teaching responsibility plays a very important role in developing right self-esteem. Probably the greatest contributing factor in this is it makes a person feel useful. It gives a purpose to existence and a sense of fulfilment. Children can actually feel like they are contributing to the family's welfare. In our day teaching responsibility might take some in-

genuity, but it will return a good measure, "pressed down, and shaken together" (Luke 6:38).

Teach tidiness and personal neatness. Keeping oneself clean, neat, and his or her surroundings reasonably tidy lifts one's spirit and how you feel about yourself. Boys and girls should have their faces washed and hair combed and be dressed properly when about the house, especially for meals. This is a matter of respect for others as well as for themselves. Being taught to put things away, pick up after themselves, and make their beds are useful means of teaching children respect, responsibility, and self-discipline.

A part of this that may seem insignificant but is none-the-less important is personal posture. How much more alert we feel when we sit up straight or stand straight! Personal posture has a great bearing on how we perceive others and on others' perception of us. It even affects how we feel about ourselves.

In conclusion, we'll summarize it this way: If we focus on raising responsible, respectful, disciplined children in the fear of God, they will likely have healthy self-esteem. These children will be well adjusted and better prepared to face life with its give and take and the injustices that come their way. They will also be useful and appreciated in the kingdom of God. "Train up a child in the way he [they] should go ... " Proverbs 22:6.

Brother Daryl



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