

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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Helping Other People Raise Their Children

Someone once quipped, “Few things are more scary than an angry mother.” This is certainly true for a child who finds himself on the wrong side of his mother, but even more frightening for someone a mother perceives as hurting her children. This fear, exacerbated by a hyper-sensitive culture, means that many shun offering help when it comes to other people’s children. Sadly, this often deprives a child of voices that offer encouragement and provide guidance in building a relationship with God. It is a trend that must be reversed.

Before proceeding, it should be noted that rearing a child is first and foremost the responsibility of parents. Throughout the Bible, God has made it clear that parents are to “train up a child in the way he should go” (Proverbs 22:6). Early in the history of God’s people, Moses explained the duty of family in this regard: “You shall teach them to your children, talking of them when you are sitting in your house, and when you are walking by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates, that your days and the days of your children may be multiplied in the land that the Lord swore to your fathers to give them, as long as the heavens are above the earth.” (Deuteronomy 11:19-21). In the New Testament, training is placed squarely on the shoulders of fathers: “Fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord” (Ephesians 6:4). Children, in turn, are to accept the teachings of their parents. The book of Proverbs is replete with these admonitions. Parents are the frontline of teaching life skills and building a relationship with God.

While parents are the front line, God fully knows that a “support staff” is essential in making the challenging duty of raising children a bit easier. This is clearly illustrated in His commands to older women: “Older women [...] train the young women to love their husbands and children” (Titus 2:3–4). According to Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance, the implication is to teach a young woman how to have maternal “fondness” for her children. While feelings are associated with love, the teaching under discussion is much

more than feelings; it is deliberate action that displays a mother doing all she can for the betterment of her children. Who better to teach this skill than those who have experienced raising children? A young mother does well to seek out and accept this help from older women. There is often a fierce streak of independence in new parents who want to show the world they know what they are doing. As well, there is often a spirit of hyper-humility found in older women who feel they have nothing to offer. Both attitudes must be dismissed so that godly instruction can occur.

While not specifically addressing the father-child relationship, the apostle Paul instructs older men to also teach the next generation. They are to “urge the younger men to be self-controlled” (Titus 2:6). A young man often has ambitions to conquer the world. Having a child may not put those ambitions to rest, and rather than spending the time necessary with his young family, he spends his youth climbing ahead in his career. It may also be that all of the boy has not been removed from the man and, as a result, he leaves his wife to provide almost all the care for their children as he engages in his fun. Older men should take an active role in gentle instruction; they should explain that no amount of earthly wealth or fun can equal the value of precious opportunities available in children’s formative years.

Godly adults can also have a direct impact upon another’s child. One readily available occasion is in children’s weekly Bible classes. Most local churches have developed age-specific opportunities for learning. Christians within these local churches should work diligently to make their efforts a success. This requires both men and women to dedicate themselves to preparation and delivery of effective teaching for other people’s children. Often, churches find only a small group of adults willing to help in this way, but this should not be the case. Both younger and older Christians have vast resources to offer children. Youth offers excitement and enthusiasm, while age offers wisdom and maturity. Older Christians should not view their age as a reason to quit teaching. Younger Christians should not excuse themselves due to a lack of experience. Working together, adults of all ages can offer what children need to grow in their faith.

Encouraging words are also an excellent way of helping other people’s children. As Paul admonished the Thessalonians, “Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing.” (I Thessalonians 5:11). While all Christians are in need of encouragement, it is especially needed in youth. Young people making life-changing decisions need a chorus of experienced and grounded voices. Godly men and women who have experienced life are in a good position to help youth transition into the journey.

Modelling Christ-like behavior is essential in having a positive impact on other people’s children. Children learn by seeing others; thus, adult Christians must always be cognizant of their example. When coming to worship, children should see adults eagerly joining in worship, participating in Bible study, and listening intently to the sermon. No matter how tempting a cute baby’s smile may be, adults should refrain from playing with the baby

while God is being honored. This not only disrupts the worship of neighboring congregants, but also makes a young mother's job even more difficult in training her child. Outside of worship, children should see Christ-like behavior in older Christians at the grocery store, the ballfield, and every place where one's example is in view.

As Paul ended his letter to the Romans, his conclusion addresses a lady who had greatly impacted him: "Greet Rufus, chosen in the Lord; also his mother, who has been a mother to me as well" (16:13). May every older Christian take up the good work of encouraging other people's children. The godly influence exercised toward young people may very well influence the path they choose through this life.

- Greg Chandler

A Painful Operation

In 1809, Dr. Ephraim McDowell's examination of a patient revealed that she had an abdominal tumor that would soon kill her. Though abdominal surgery was unheard of in those days, the woman finally persuaded the doctor to operate.

After a twenty-six-minute surgery the doctor removed a twenty-two-pound tumor. Since there were no anesthetics in those days, the woman's pain was almost unbearable. Why, then, would she so forcefully insist that the doctor inflict this agony upon her? Quite simply, because she preferred the pain to its alternative – death.

One of the most painful examinations that any sincere seeker of truth must experience is the self-examination that God requires of us all. "Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you? — unless indeed you are disqualified" (2 Cor. 13:5).

Our goal should be to examine our life with the same objectivity that God uses in evaluating our character. Since He knows all about us (Heb. 4:13), and because His "gauge" is the only accurate one, we should appreciate any proper correction in our life.

If the exam reveals a flaw in my character, and if I want to avoid spiritual death, I will gladly accept the correction. If I want to die, I can simply ignore the warnings or refuse to take the examination. It's that simple.

- Rick Duggin

The Devil Laughs

- To hear a man say he has no way to attend the services when he can attend all the sporting events held within miles.
- To hear a woman say she can't attend the services because she has nothing to wear, when she can parade herself before hundreds in any uptown bargain basement or movie.
- To hear parents say they cannot make their children attend Bible study when they can make the children attend public school, go to the dentist or doctor, or anywhere else they choose to have them go.
- To hear a man say he doesn't have money to give to the Lord — as he breaks open another pack of cigarettes or sticks a cigar in his mouth.
- To hear a Christian say he wants to see the gospel preached in all the world, and then puts only 50 cents or one dollar in the collection plate to be sure he is doing his part.
- To hear some filthy-tongued hypocrite tell a smutty and nasty story to attract attention of other weak and feeble-minded people.
- To hear some spineless church member excuse sin by saying, "Oh, I guess there's no harm in it just this one time."
- To hear some seemingly-pious preacher talk about love and unity, and then bring something into the church which God's word says nothing about, thereby causing division.

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- > "One thing we can give and still keep - our word!"
 - > "Have you given away any of your faith today? 'if the salt has become tasteless, how can it be made salty *again*? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled under foot by men!"
 - > "Many people use mighty thin threads when mending their ways!"
 - > "Prayer is the one weapon the enemy cannot duplicate or counterfeit!"
 - > "Progress always involves risk - you can't steal second base and keep your foot on first!"

THIS WEEK'S LESSONS: Sunday morning: "*Our Devotions to God!*" (Text: Matt. 6:1-8, 16-18); Sunday evening: "*The Credentials of Jesus!*" (John 5:31-47).