

Our Kids (part 1)

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The most significant concern for Christian parents should be the salvation of their children, and it is often this matter that leads many to question their ability as parents. As tempting as it is for parents to blame themselves, though, I have witnessed over the years some of the most faithful, wholehearted, diligent Christians still produce children who do not end up sharing their faith. In fact, this trend goes as far back as the very first parents in the Bible, and so on throughout generations of faithful men and women:

- Adam produced a son named Cain, who rejected his father's faith. "*And Cain went out from the presence of the Lord*" (Genesis 4:16).
- Esau certainly did not possess the same qualities as his father and mother (Genesis 26:34-35).
- Samuel was one of the most remarkable individuals ever, yet his two sons were scoundrels (1 Samuel 8:3).
- David was a man after God's own heart, yet had one son (Amnon) who raped his half-sister, another son who took David's kingdom (Absalom), and another who allowed his appetite for wealth and vain living to set up the kingdom for total failure (Solomon).
- Most of the kings of Judah produced rotten heirs, such as Hezekiah's son Manasseh (2 Kings 20:21-21:2), Jehoshaphat's son Jehoram (2 Chronicles 21:1-7), and Josiah's son only reigned three months before losing the kingdom to the Egyptians (2 Chronicles 36:3-4).

The Bible certainly acknowledges that there is a tendency of children to turn their backs on the faith of their parents, and many proverbs warn young people about this very thing (Proverbs 1:8, 3:1, 4:1, 5:7, 7:1). The very fact that the Bible writers went out of their way to warn about this danger shows that we are fighting a difficult battle to win the souls of our kids to the Lord's side. Of course, this does not help the parent whose anxiety stems from so many bad examples in the past. While parents do make mistakes, at times, in rearing their children, what I want to do in this short series of articles is present some practical things that we can do, and some things our children need to avoid as well, in the quest to save the souls of our closest, dearest family members. They have to make the decision on their own (and we cannot blame ourselves, ultimately, for their choices), but what can we do to give them the best chance at a thriving, Christ-centered spiritual life?

Consistency

Not only in discipline and rules, but in lifestyle as well, do we need to be consistent. Let your children see that you are the same person in private that you are in public, and what the brethren see at worship is what you are at home, at work, etc. Remember a valuable lesson from two fathers who failed to live consistently, and lost the respect of their children. Eli, first of all, was serving as the high priest during the time of the judges, and ought to have known the Law well enough to raise children. But Eli failed miserably with his two sons Hophni and Phineas because he was terribly inconsistent in his discipline. "*For I have told him that I am about to judge his house forever for the iniquity which he know about, because his sons brought a curse on*

themselves and he did not rebuke them" (1 Samuel 3:13). When this seemingly godly man discovered that his sons were pilfering, carousing, and molesting women, he gave what amounted to a slap on the wrist. This failure to consistently discipline his children led to their family's destruction. Second, we have the example of David, and his son Amnon. When it was discovered that Amnon had slept with his half-sister Tamar, David was basically handicapped because of what he had done with Bathsheba. His failure to punish Amnon eventually leads to the revolt of Absalom, a blight on David's history that can never be forgotten by history.

Consistency, therefore, would include:

- The absence of profanity at home and at work (Ephesians 4:29);
- A warm love between the parents (Ephesians 5:29);
- A love for the brethren, and an ultimate regard for them above all others (Galatians 6:10);
- Only morally upright forms of entertainment;
- A definitive, unwavering devotion to the worship of God, consistently choosing not to put any activity ahead of it.