

The Old Paths

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“Providing For Our Families”

Jarrod Jacobs

Paul told Timothy, “*But if anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for members of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever*” (I Tim. 5:8). I believe most Christians are aware of this passage and have an interest in providing the necessities of life for their children financially. Many parents willingly sacrifice in order that their children might not be in want. If necessary, there are many parents who would sacrifice their health in order to provide their children with medicine. Some would go without nourishment in order that their children might eat and not go hungry. In considering the love a parent has for a child, many parents willingly make sacrifices for the physical well-being of their children.

While we certainly must provide for the physical necessities of our children, let us understand that if we spend our lives merely providing for the financial comfort and security of our children, we will have been negligent in our duties before God. There is more to “providing” than merely providing in a physical sense! To provide food, clothing, and shelter for our children, and not to provide for their spiritual needs is to fail in our duties as parents. Just as our children have physical needs, our children have spiritual needs which must be met if they are going to be the kind of people God wants them to be. Too, if we are the kind of parents God

wants us to be, we will not be negligent when it comes to providing for our children’s spiritual needs.

Some Mistakes Made Which Result In Not “Providing” As We Should.

In our daily living, we can get our priorities mixed up if we are not careful. We may end up focusing more on the “minors” and less on the “majors” if we do not open our eyes to what is most important. Perhaps by taking some space here to note some mistakes often made today, it will help us in avoiding these mistakes, or repenting of the mistakes already made while there is still time to change! As we begin this study, let us understand that we are talking about parents who are concerned people and have good intentions toward their children, striving to give them all the “advantages” possible in this life. Yet, they are making some major mistakes when it comes to providing for the spiritual needs of their children. Let us consider four mistakes many parents make.

Mistake #1: “I am going to allow my children to make their own decisions about spiritual matters.”

Would these same parents say: “I am going to allow my children to make their own decisions about premarital sex”? Would they say, “I am going to allow my children to make their own decisions about drug use”? How about drinking alcohol, or driving a car on the

road before legally allowed, staying out all night, whether or not they will finish high school, etc.? Parents would not allow their children to make those decisions on their own because the children are not able to make such decisions. Yet in spiritual matters, many parents throw away restraints, and allow their children to do as they please! How foolish. Parents must provide children with the necessary training now and show them what is right in preparation for the day when they will make their own decisions in life (Prov. 22:6; Matt. 5:16; Titus 2:2-6; Eph. 6:4!)

Mistake #2: “My child is too young to sit through a sermon, so we won’t be coming to church until he/she is older.”

The later one starts on his spiritual training, the harder it is to teach him! (Remember: Prov. 22:6) If a young child is not taught that “in this family we assemble with the saints and worship God” (Jn. 4:24; Heb. 10:25) and is not taught to sit still at an early age, what makes us think that an older child will suddenly know how to do it? Yes, small children cry and fuss. A small child that cries is natural. Yes, as they get older, these children need to be taught, and at times, need to be taken out, worn out, and brought back in (Prov. 22:15); but this is the only way they learn! Delaying a child’s learning of God and learning how to behave during worship times is a detriment. (At times I have seen the “older” ones act just as bad or worse than the babies.) Procrastination lays the groundwork for children (and parents) never assembling with the saints to worship God at all!

Mistake #3: Assuming that all spiritual training begins and ends in attending

two Bible classes per week.

This is the opposite extreme of mistake #2. Some among us are faithful to bring our children and grandchildren every time the doors are open. Yet, if we assume this will sufficiently satisfy a child's spiritual needs, we are sadly mistaken! A child's spiritual needs must be satisfied daily (just like the parents!). They need to be taught God's word and trained daily if parents are going to sufficiently provide for their children. Wouldn't I Peter 3:15 apply to our children? This verse stresses the need for giving an answer to everyone who asks you! This would include our family!

Let's understand that our children need training and instruction on a daily basis. Our Bible class teachers, while they do a great job, cannot teach a week's worth of Bible lessons to our children in two classes a week! Parents, let's get to work (Eph. 6:4; Titus 2:3-5; etc.)!

Mistake #4: "I didn't have _____ when I was growing up, and my child will not grow up without _____. He/she will not have it as bad as I did."

Why are we as parents so intent on giving our children things we "didn't have"? Perhaps it is what we "didn't have" that has made us what we are today! Why not start today and give your children what you "had"! The drive for children to have things better/easier than we did is not uncommon, but is that always conducive to their spiritual well-being? Many times, it is not.

Some Pointed Questions Concerning Providing For Our Children

- ♦ When children are brought up thinking that all they want and desire will be handed to them,

how can they appreciate the necessity of work (Lam. 3:27; Eph. 4:28)?

- ♦ When children are not taught to obey mother and father, nor taught to respect the authority of their father, how can we expect them to respect the authority of God and obey our Father in Heaven (Eph. 6:1-3; Heb. 12:9)?

- ♦ When children are not corrected, how can they learn that there are consequences to their actions when they deliberately disobey and flaunt the rules that have been laid down by God (Prov. 19:18, 13:24, 22:15, 29:15, 17; Heb. 12:5-11)?

- ♦ When children are brought up without responsibilities, are not held accountable around the house, and in other ways, how can they be taught to take responsibility for their soul, realizing they will one day be held accountable before God (Acts 17:30-31; Rom. 14:11-12; II Cor. 5:10; Jn. 5:28-29)?

- ♦ When children do not see their parents reading the Bible, praying, speaking kindly to one another, and interested in spiritual matters in other ways, why should they feel compelled to take an interest in spiritual matters themselves

(Matt. 5:14-16)?

Conclusion

I realize one could point to several people in this world who, despite their parents and despite their surroundings have obeyed the Lord and are serving Him faithfully today. Yet, these are the exceptions, and not the rule! Further, why bring up a child in such a way that he already has two strikes against him before he even reaches the plate?

Let us as parents consider well our influence, and what exactly we are "providing" for our children (I Tim. 5:8)! If we have done nothing but feed, clothe, keep them in good physical health, and educate them in men's wisdom, we haven't done a thing for them, seeing as the outward man is passing away (II Cor. 4:16; Matt. 16:26)! They need to be taught the ways of God, to respect His will, and serve and live for Him all the days of their lives! Parents, please heed this warning, because for some, I'm afraid reality will not hit them until the day they see their children cast into Hell!

May God help us all to not be negligent in our duties as parents, but get busy in the Lord's work providing for our children while there is still time and hope for them (I Tim. 5:8)!

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Preacher/Editor: Jarrod Jacobs **Phone: (270) 589-4167**