

## **WHAT WILL YOU LEAVE YOUR CHILDREN?**

Parents constantly worry about the future of their children. Many times this focuses primarily on money or material things. Parents make all sorts of plans for their children's future. They may be very careful to provide the funds for their college education. They also may make elaborate plans so that their children will have a substantial inheritance so that they can have some of the "nicer things in life". Many parents will sometimes make the statement: "I want my children to have a better life than I did." There is no doubt that this has contributed greatly to the "hurry-up crammed" lifestyle that characterizes so many families today - trying to accumulate all we can - after all, "we're doing it for the children". Certainly, I am not saying it is sinful to have wealth, but that cannot be our main focus in life Matt 6:33.

There are several reasons why this type of thinking and lifestyle described above is so very dangerous. First, it neglects some plain warnings from Scripture such as in Lk 12:15 where Jesus taught us to beware of covetousness and Matt 16:26 regarding the value of the soul over material things. This type of thinking and lifestyle does, in fact, lead to covetousness and greed. Ultimately this kind of an attitude toward material things will lead to a forfeiture of heaven (1Cor 6:9, 10) because of the sin of covetousness among other things.

Our focus here, though, is on an equally important reason. Our concern here regards the damage that parents do to their children when they adopt such a lifestyle

I read some years ago about a teen survey that sheds some light on the theme of this article. This survey was funded by the San Francisco Theological Seminary (Presbyterian) and sponsored by the seminary's Youth Ministry and Spirituality Project which sought cooperation and equality from 17 denominations. Despite this survey's denominational origin it did reveal some eye-opening truths. The survey's overall assessment of American teens was: parents don't live spiritually themselves and therefore don't teach spirituality to their children. It seems that many parents are more concerned with "making a living" than they are in "making a life," both for themselves and their children.

God has always expected parents to lead and guide their children in spiritual truths. When the nation of Israel was about to enter Canaan (the promised land), they were given strict instructions regarding how they were to teach their children Deut 6:4-9. After they had passed over the Jordan they were given instructions regarding a memorial they were to erect that would be a reminder for them to teach their children Josh 4:2-7 and 19-24. It is evident that Israel was not successful in teaching their children because their descendants departed from God Josh 24:31; Jud 2:7, 10. Scripture bears out the fact that one reason they were not successful in teaching their children is that they themselves did not practice that which God had commanded. The only way future generations can know God's will is for them to be taught Psa 78:1-8. However, this teaching is more than just saying words; it involves training, which requires quite a bit more than just "telling" Prov 22:6. Children, according to Scripture, are either provoked to anger, that is bringing them to the point of exasperation or they are taught and nurtured and the word that is translated "nurture" involves the whole teaching, training and disciplining process Eph 6:4; Col 3:21

The parent's faith must be instilled in their children. Eunice and her mother Lois were able to do this with Timothy and Eunice possibly didn't have any help from her husband because he was a Greek, but she was still successful in instilling faith in Timothy 2Tim 1:5; 3:15. Will we repeat the same sad tragedy today that was the case in the generation following Joshua or will we embrace our God given responsibility of living the Christian life and depositing it into our children through our example and our teaching? Obviously, even when parents do the best they can, some children deliberately do not follow their teaching as was the case in Lk 15:11-32. God taught His

children (Israel) yet the majority of them left His teaching. So, one cannot automatically assume that parents have been derelict in their responsibilities just because one of their children decides not to follow their example and teaching. However, a child “deciding on their own” to desert their parent’s godly teaching is the exception rather than the rule. The rule is: if a child is taught and trained properly they will remain faithful to God Prov 22:6. Sometimes parents learn the Truth of God’s word later in life after their children are grown and gone from home, these parents will make every effort possible to make God’s word known to their children.

We must remember that our children are a gift from God Psa 127:3 and they are ours only for a little while until we give them back to God 1Sam 1:11, 22. However, while we have them, with what will we fill them? If we do nothing or not enough, we’ll end up with teenagers and grown children who will illustrate our failures as parents 1Sam 2:22; 3:13. They will belittle our failures to teach, lead and guide, that is, “nurture” them. They will live for the flesh which will be the evidence of our failures.

The time to begin is NOW. Begin while your children are young and teachable 2Tim 3:15. Read God’s word to them, tell them and talk about Bible stories daily. Let them see you reading and studying God’s word. Sing Bible songs with them and, pray with them daily. Make use of opportunities to make spiritual application of everyday life events. And with all this we also must live what we teach them; even children can spot hypocrisy Rom 2:17-24

What will you leave your children? Being God-fearing, Bible-believing Moms and Dads is the best thing you can leave your children. Living such a life yourself and instilling such in your children is the only kind of life that lasts into eternity Matt 6:19-20. It ensures God will have His heritage Eph 1:11. Children naturally look to us as guides for meaning to life. May God help us to teach our children the truths they need to get through this life, and prepare them for the life to come. (JLH)