

08 The Duties of Parents – Ryle’s Insights

XXII. Train them with a constant fear of over-indulgence.

Point: Here Ryle goes back through all of the *spanking* and chastening texts in the Proverbs. He brings up Eli’s sons, Hophni and Phineas and how Eli “did not restrain them.” He encourages parents not to make it their sole purpose to “please” their children because they love them so much.

Ryle says, “Learn to say “No” to your children. Show them that you are able to refuse whatever you think is not fit for them. Show them that you are ready to punish disobedience, and that when you speak of punishment, you are not only ready to threaten, but also to perform. Do not threaten too much. Threatened folks, and threatened faults, live long. Punish seldom, but really and in good earnest,—frequent and slight punishment is a wretched system indeed. Beware of letting small faults pass unnoticed under the idea “it is a little one.” There are no little things in training children; all are important. Little weeds need plucking up as much as any. Leave them alone, and they will soon be great. Reader, if there be any point which deserves your attention, believe me, it is this one. It is one that will give you trouble, I know. But if you do not take trouble with your children when they are young, they will give you trouble when they are old. Choose which you prefer.”

Discussion Question #1: What would you say to the person who counsels against having more children in this way: “I love children, children are a wonderful blessing from God, but I want to be able to give them a good life.”?

XIII. Train them remembering continually how God trains His children.

Ryle says, “The Bible tells us that God has an elect people,—a family in this world. All poor sinners who have been convinced of sin, and fled to Jesus for peace, make up that family. All of us who really believe on Christ for salvation are its members. Now God the Father is ever training the members of this family for their everlasting abode with Him in heaven. He acts as a husbandman pruning his vines, that they may bear more fruit. He knows the character of each of us,—our besetting sins,—our weaknesses,—our peculiar infirmities,—our special wants. He knows our works and where we dwell, who are our companions in life, and what are our trials, what our temptations, and what are our privileges. He knows all these things, and is ever ordering all for our good. He allots to each of us, in His providence, the very things we need, in order to bear the most fruit,—as much of sunshine as we can stand, and as much of rain,—as much of bitter things as we can bear, and as much of sweet. Reader, if you would train your children wisely, mark well how God the Father trains His. He doeth all things well; the plan which He adopts must be right.”

Point 1: As difficult as it is to understand, there are many desires that we and our children have which God *never* meets. There are few who always get what they want.

Discussion Question #2: There are some who believe you should have only 1 child *for the express purpose of being able to give them everything they want*. Why would it be good for children *not* to get everything they desire? And how might getting everything they want be detrimental?

Point 2: Ryle points out that our paths very often seem to be purposefully “dark and mysterious” to our eyes. It is as if our Father (remember, we are the children in His family) is saying: “Ask now questions, but follow me.” Ryle wrote, “There was a direct road from Egypt to Canaan, yet Israel was not led into it; but round, through the wilderness.

Discussion Question #3: In training our children, why might it be very helpful to them to hear from you how many times your heavenly Father has told you the same thing: “Ask no questions, but follow Me.”?

Romans 8:28-33 [28] And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose. [29] For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. [30] Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified. [31] What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? [32] He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? [33] Who shall bring a charge against God’s elect? It is God who justifies.

Discussion Question #4: Who is this passage addressed to? What are some of its precious / numerous promises?

Ryle says, “See, also, how often God *chastens* His people with trial and affliction. He sends them crosses and disappointments; He lays them low with sickness; He strips them of property and friends; He changes them from one position to another; He visits them with things most hard to flesh and blood; and some of us have well-nigh fainted under the burdens laid upon us. We have felt pressed beyond strength, and have been almost ready to murmur at the hand which chastened us, Paul the Apostle had a thorn in the flesh appointed him, some bitter bodily trial, no doubt, though we know not exactly what it was. But this we know,—he besought the Lord thrice that it might be removed; yet it was not taken away (2 Cor. xii. 8, 9).”

Discussion Question #5: Why is suffering a big part of our sanctification process?

Proverbs 20:30 Blows that hurt cleanse away evil, As do stripes the inner depths of the heart.

Discussion question #6: Proverbs 20:30 is a tough passage, but the Holy Spirit of God gave it to us in the book of God’s wisdom for life. How would you explain this to your children around the table?

Ryle says, “Now, reader, notwithstanding all these things, did you ever hear of a single child of God who thought his Father did not treat him wisely? No, I am sure you never did. God's children would always tell you, in the long run, it was a blessed thing they did not have their own way, and that God had done far better for them than they could have done for themselves. Yes! And they could tell you, too, that God's dealings had provided more happiness for them than they ever would have obtained themselves, and that His way, however dark at times, was the way of pleasantness and the path of peace.”

Point 3: We must not shy away from chastening our children. It is not that we want them to suffer, or that pain is the goal of our actions. But we want them to understand the *way* in which God deals with the children in His family. We have days of peace and days of turmoil, days of light and days of darkness. But all of them are designed for our good.

Philip. 1:29 For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake,

Discussion Question #7: When we consider the way in which God created us with an instinct that recoils from pain and suffering, this passage seems to make little sense. Why should we and our children look at suffering for Jesus’ sake as a privilege *granted* to us?

XIV. Train them remembering continually the influence of your own example.

Ryle says, “Instruction, and advice, and commands will profit little, unless they are backed up by the pattern of your own life. Your children will never believe you are in earnest, and really wish them to obey you, so long as your actions contradict your counsel. Archbishop Tillotson made a wise remark when he said, " To give children good instruction, and a bad example, is but beckoning to them with the head to show them the way to heaven, while we take them by the hand and lead them in the way to hell.””

Application: As difficult as it is for us with all of the demands, all of the exhaustion we feel, and everything in the world around us draining every last second of our time with distractions, we *must* make time every day to read the Word of God and pray. The cultivation of our own communion with Christ is a *vital component* of child training.

Discussion Question #8: How did this last Ryle quote make you feel? Especially that last sentence? Comments?