

The Duties of Parents – Part 09 - Conclusion

XV. Train them remembering continually the power of sin.

Point: This section is very encouraging to read in Ryle's book. It is very easy to become very discouraged by the sinful tendencies we see in our children. It may overwhelm us that no matter how gentle, patient, godly, and faithful we are, many of their sins persist and seem to have them stuck in a death-grip. But let us not ever forget the biblical doctrine of total depravity.

Let us look at Romans 3:9-20 together.

Ryle wrote: "You must not expect to find your children's minds a sheet of pure white paper, and to have no trouble if you only use right means. I warn you plainly you will find no such thing. It is painful to see how much corruption and evil there is in a young child's heart, and how soon it begins to bear fruit. Violent tempers, self-will, pride, envy, sullenness, passion, idleness, selfishness, deceit, cunning, falsehood, hypocrisy, a terrible aptness to learn what is bad, a painful slowness to learn what is good, a readiness to pretend anything in order to gain their own ends,—all these things, or some of them, you must be prepared to see, even in your own flesh and blood. In little ways they will creep out at a very early age; it is almost startling to observe how naturally they seem to spring up. Children require no schooling to learn to sin."

Discussion Question #1: In light of these things, what are some critical *key* biblical attributes of Christian character we must labor and pray to cultivate in ourselves?

Discussion Question #2: How has being married *in and of itself* helped to cultivate those character attributes?

Ryle wrote: "But you must not be discouraged and cast down by what you see. You must not think it a strange and unusual thing, that little hearts can be so full of sin. It is the only portion which our father Adam left us; it is that fallen nature with which we come into the world; it is that inheritance which belongs to us all. Let it rather make you more diligent in using every means which seem most likely, by God's blessing, to counteract the mischief. Let it make you more and more careful, so far as in you lies, to keep your children out of the way of temptation. Never listen to those who tell you your children are good, and well brought up, and can be trusted. Think rather that their hearts are always inflammable as tinder. At their very best, they only want a spark to set their corruptions alight. Parents are seldom too cautious. Remember the natural depravity of your children, and take care."

Discussion Question #3: What is the doctrine of Original Sin?

Let us read through Romans 5:12-19 together.

XVI. Train them remembering continually the promises of Scripture.

Point: So much of our lives is built upon how much or how little we can trust those we are with. If a child's parents, aunts and uncles, and grandparents have a long track record of kindness and faithfulness to carrying out their duties, those children will have an environment in which they feel safe and obligated to obey and please those authorities in their lives. But above everything, children need to know that what God promises is infallibly trustworthy. And they must see that we ourselves believe that.

We have this promise on our side:

Proverbs 22:6 Train up a child in the way he should go, And when he is old he will not depart from it.

Application: What a great hope this gives us if we do not yet see the fruits of our labors yet in our children! Ryle said, "Fathers and mothers, when your hearts are failing, and ready to halt, look at the word of this text, and take comfort."

Illustration: Kevin Swanson is a very dynamic speaker and writer on the cause of homeschooling, family, relationships, etc. He is also the director of Christian Home Educators of Colorado. I highly recommend his "Generations with Vision" podcast. I have a series of talks he gave on homeschooling and discipline children in which he shares this story: "One day my wife called me at work and said: 'I'm failing!' And I said, 'What?' And she cried out again, 'I'm failing!' And I said, 'failing what?' And she said, 'homeschooling! It's not working. I am failing!' And I said, 'sweetheart, I'm the director of Christian home educators of Colorado. I speak nationally on this stuff! What will everyone say?' And she said, 'well, can't we change our name and move to another state? And by the way, I know you travel around and speak nationally about homeschooling. Every thought of giving it a try sometime?'"

What's the point here? All of child-training is on a wing and a prayer. There are no fixed answers or fixed regime that will churn out the perfect, godly, believing child every time. We know the basic biblical principles, and the rest is tears, prayer, heart-ache, and hard work. You may think at times, "I'm failing!" and yes, there will be times that we are failing. But God will reward your efforts. You may think: "God never had the difficult, dysfunctional, *impossible* situation that I'm trying to do this in!" And yet we know that all God asks of us is our duty. Do what you know is right. Walk in your integrity. And God will vindicate your cause in the end.

Psalm 26:1 A Psalm of David. Vindicate me, O Lord, For I have walked in my integrity. I have also trusted in the Lord; I shall not slip.

Application: *Trust that promise from Proverbs 22:6.* And remember that Aurelius Augustine used to mock his mother's desperate prayers. And it was not until Augustine was around 32 years old that he was finally converted.

Discussion Question #4: How many here have ever had the same thought as the *wife* of the *Director of Christian Home Educators of Colorado*, "I'm failing!"

Proverbs 24:16 For a righteous man may fall seven times And rise again,

Micah 7:6-8 For son dishonors father, Daughter rises against her mother, Daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; A man's enemies are the men of his own household. [7] Therefore I will look to the Lord; I will wait for the God of my salvation; My God will hear me. [8] Do not rejoice over me, my enemy; When I fall, I will arise; When I sit in darkness, The Lord will be a light to me.

Discussion Question #5: How has God used your failures as a parent to make you a better parent and a better Christian?

Ryle wrote (one of the most encouraging 2 paragraphs I have ever read):

Think, too, *what the promise contains*, before you refuse to take comfort from it. It speaks of a certain time when good training shall especially bear fruit,— "when a child is old." Surely there is comfort in this. You may not see with your own eyes the result of careful training, but you know not what blessed fruits may spring from it, long after you are dead and gone. It is not God's way to give everything at once. "Afterward" is the time when He often chooses to work, both in the things of nature and in the things of grace. "Afterward" is the season when affliction bears the peaceable fruit of righteousness (Heb. xii. 11). "Afterward" was the time when the son who refused to work in his father's vineyard repented and went (Matt. xxi. 29). And "afterward" is the time to which parents must look forward if they see not success at once,—you must sow in hope and plant in hope. "Cast thy bread upon the waters," saith the Spirit, "for thou shalt find it after many days" (Eccles. xi. 1). Many children, I doubt not, shall rise

up in the day of judgment, and bless their parents for good training, who never gave any signs of having profited by it during their parents' lives. Go forward then in faith, and be sure that your labor shall not be altogether thrown away. Three times did Elijah stretch himself upon the widow's child before it revived. Take example from him, and persevere."

Application: Take heart. God knows your labors. God knows your faithfulness and your failures. God knows that in your heart of hearts, you desire good for the souls and lives of your children. Do what you know is right – *even if their eyes are glazed over and they look bored or frustrated by you*. Do what you know is right – *even when they seem excited and happy that you are being faithful*. Do your duty regardless. Persevere! Be bold, be strong, play the man, be watchful!

XVII. Train them, lastly, with continual prayer for a blessing on all you do.

Point: Pray for your efforts to bear fruit. Bathe your family worship times in prayer. Bathe all of the covenant children of your church in prayer. Keep that "Covenant Children of Bridwell Heights Presbyterian Church" in your Bible – and say the names of all those children back to God – and then pray for all those things listed here on the back of it. Raising the next generation to know Christ and walk in truth is a burden all of us must have *together* as this church family. Rejoice with the victories, mourn the hardships – but do it together as a Christian family that loves one another's children. Please pray for my children even as I pray for them and even as I pray for your children by name every day.

Illustration: Why is American Christianity going insane today? Do you think it has anything to do with a generation of parents who did not do well training their children in the ways, truths, and doctrines of the Word of God? Why are "conservative" Christians actually buying the arguments from goofy books like "God and the Gay Christian: the biblical case in support of same-sex relationships."?

Discussion Question #6: Why are young people today buying shallow, very poor, unbiblical argumentation in support of false gospels and other forms of immorality?

Remember that word from the very first lesson: "abdication." That is what our culture is all about these days. We are paying that bill now.

Ryle wrote: "The Lord is far more willing to hear than we to pray; far more ready to give blessings than we to ask them;—but He loves to be entreated for them. And I set this matter of prayer before you, as the topstone and seal of all you do, I suspect the child of many prayers is seldom cast away."

Point 2: Look at each child you have as a gift given to you by God – no matter who they are or what they are like – they are exactly who God designed them to be for your sake, their sake, and His glory. And pray for them. Ryle said, "You cannot name their names before the mercy-seat too often."

Ryle wrote: "Fathers and mothers, you may take your children to be baptized, and have them enrolled in the ranks of Christ's Church;—you may get godly sponsors to answer for them, and help you by their prayers;—you may send them to the best of schools, and give them Bibles and Prayer Books, and fill them with head knowledge:— but if all this time there is no regular *training at Home*, I tell you plainly, I fear it will go hard in the end with your children's souls. Home is the place where habits are formed;—home is the place where the foundations of character are laid;—home gives the bias to our tastes, and likings, and opinions. See then, I pray you, that there be careful training at home. Happy indeed is the man who can say, as Bolton did upon his dying bed, to his children, " I do believe not one of you will dare to meet me before the tribunal of Christ in an unregenerate state."

Final anecdote about missionary John G. Paton