

“Even a Child is Known by His Deeds”

By Paul R. Blake

Introduction:

A. Proverbs 20:11 - “Even a child is known by his deeds, Whether what he does is pure and right.”

1. In infancy, every child is driven by basic needs: hunger, pain, exhaustion, stimulation, discomfort... and is completely self-oriented
2. As they become toddlers, they become aware that they and their needs are not the only needs in this world
3. They learn this by means of their interaction with other persons in their lives, primarily by means of how they are treated by others
4. If they continue to be treated by parents as if the child’s needs are the only important matters in the world, they will continue to act as if their needs are the only important matters in the world
5. The terrible twos are inevitable; this is the time when children begin to notice that there is a conflict between getting what they want when they want it versus accepting the fact that others around them have needs larger than their own
6. When parents take a firm hand in the beginning, the terrible twos will be shorter and less painful; when parents are indulgent to the tantrums that accompany this conflict their child must face, they extend the time their child will experience the terrible twos
7. When your children must face the life changing experience of learning that others have needs, too, this tough transition can be eased for them if you will be firm with them from the beginning, rather than soft heartedly, and soft headedly, giving them whatever they want
8. Have you ever seen the mother in Walmart who is struggling with a four year old who is demanding everything he sees and is screaming until he gets it?
9. Have you ever seen the mother in parents’ day at school who’s nine year old is berating her with disrespect and bad language in the presence of the teacher?
10. Have you ever seen the father sitting in the preacher’s office with his head in his hands helpless to do anything to stop his 15 year old son’s career as the community vandal?
11. Ever wonder how they got there? It didn’t start at four, nine, or 15; it started when infancy ended for the child, but not for the parents.
12. What do the scriptures teach?

B. Brother Irven Lee, author of Good Homes in a Wicked World, wrote: “Many children are abused and neglected. Some are spoiled and pampered. A fortunate few are properly disciplined. Those exercised or drilled in obedience through instruction, love, and chastening produce the peaceable fruit of righteousness. The home is the place where this fruit should grow.”

1. Heb. 12:11; Eph. 6:4
2. This teaching begins at birth and continues throughout life

I. THE BIBLE IS GOD'S CHILD RAISING MANUAL

A. "Children are not all alike and training is not easy, but the Creator has designed the child so that he is young for several years. This gives the parents time to search for skill in how to bring each into subjection (1Tim. 3:4-5). This knowledge cannot be bought at the store. Parents must seek this skill to find it. They may seek advice from others, but advice from others may be diverse and contradictory. The best counsel is always from the Bible. This book is consistent and does not vary from generation to generation according to the trends of philosophers and psychologists."

B. Prov. 22:15, 19:13, 29:15, 17

C. Discipline produces righteousness

1. "Punishment or chastening has its place as a tool for wise parents to use in nurturing their children. Many object to its use, but the Lord has always recommended it. He knows best."
2. Prov. 13:24, 19:18, 23:13,14
3. This advice was needed long before Solomon's day, and it has been needed ever since, and it will be needed until this world ends.
4. Heb. 12:5-11
5. "The child is not the one to take charge of things in the home. He is not the head of the family and should learn this lesson early in life. Every child should also be fully assured that he is loved and that he is a welcomed member of the family. The chastening is only part of the training process. Inconsistent and ineffective chastening may only agitate the problem. It is very important that the punishment be adequate to get the job done. Discipline in the home is basic and important for proper conduct at school. Good teachers would be glad if all parents were good disciplinarians. Officers of the law and employers in industry and business wish the same. There would be less crime and more peace among neighbors if each adult had been taught respect for laws and for those in authority early in life. Obedience to God is more natural for one who has first been trained by a wise and determined father and mother."

D. Bible Instruction

1. This part of the training should begin early. Teaching Bible stories and principles of righteousness help children become worthy adults. They can be taught good manners and proper behavior just as the school child can be taught grammar and mathematics.
2. Some young parents struggle with the question of discipline for unruly children in worship services. Consider the conflict:
 - a. I love my child and am concerned for their comfort
 - b. I love my child and don't want to be too harsh
 - c. I am embarrassed that my child is making me the center of attention with his crying
 - d. I want to be able to continue to remain in worship services
 - e. I uncomfortable under all of those unpleasant stares
 - f. I am uncertain how much time I should give my child to calm down versus how much others around me can tolerate
3. If you cannot sympathize with that struggle, you need to pray that God will soften your hard heart

4. So how much time should parents allow a child to fuss before taking them out? The answer depends on who you ask.
 - a. Some people get upset at the first cry; they are not the standard
 - b. Some people are not bothered by crying children, they are not the standard
 - c. What the parent thinks is an acceptable period of time, whether short or long; they are not the standard, either
 - d. Wait a minute; I'm the parent; I know what is best for my child
 - e. Remember what we talked about in the beginning: as infancy ends, children need to learn that they are not the only ones with needs; instruction in being part of a social structure begins with toddler-hood
 - f. It is not a matter of weighing the needs of your child versus the needs of the congregation to worship; the matter depends on why your child is crying
 - g. If he bumps his head, is startled awake by a loud preacher, is hungry, or wet, or uncomfortable, attend to his needs and he will calm down
 - h. If he persists after you have made a reasonable effort to help him, take him to where you can give more active attention to those needs without distracting others trying to worship
 - i. If his needs have been attended to and he is still upset, then you need to consider the possibility that it is behavioral rather than physiological
5. Digressive churches and denominations answer this question by having such things as junior worship and worship daycare so that the children are not in worship services. This is an evil travesty!
 - a. It is a disservice to children, it is unfair to young parents, and it is a dishonor to the congregation
 - b. The nursery is not a surrogate auditorium; it is a temporary solution to a temporary matter, an upset child
 - c. The nursery is where the physical needs of an uncomfortable infant are taken care of
 - d. The restroom, basement, or parking lot are the places where the behavioral needs of the child are taken care of
 - e. If you make being taken out for unnecessary fussing an unpleasant experience, it will reduce the number of incidents where they need to be taken out
 - f. It will be difficult at first, but if you take a firm hand, literally, from the beginning, it will shorten the process of adjustment for your child. Sooner or later, you will have to teach your child to respect worship services. It is easier to accomplish sooner, at a time when the child is most receptive to that kind of teaching.
6. No one has all of the answers to child rearing except for God. Seek for His wisdom where it can be found:
 - a. In His word

- b. By fervent prayer - James 1:5
 - c. Through the counsel of His faithful children who have successfully raised children in the Lord - Phil. 3:17
 - d. Prepare yourself to work hard
 - e. Prepare yourself for some unpleasant moments
 - f. Please understand that you have the support and love of this eldership as well as the good Christians around you. We are in this together; we are not us against them; we are a large family
 - g. You have the sympathies of all of the people who have raised their children. Trust me; I still have nightmares about Krystal's terrible twos
7. For the benefit of those who might be tempted to be smug:
- a. About time you preached that sermon... ask yourself where your children are today
 - b. Or for those who children are raised and faithful... pray that your children do not fall from grace; many do