



What Parents Owe Their Children

Luke 15:17-24

A survey indicates that 85% of parents said that they felt uncertain on how to raise their child effectively. That's why today we will look at:

Five Things Parents Owe Their Children

I. UNCONDITIONAL LOVE

Jesus told the amazing parable about the Prodigal Son. When the prodigal son in Luke 15 comes home (story of coming home to our heavenly father), have you really noticed what the concern of the Father is?

Have you ever thought about the *extra-ordinary unconditional love* the Father shows when he takes his son back? He welcomed him, hugged him, loved him, accepted him.

His father did not say when he got home, "Hey boy, you smell like a pig sty." "I told you so. I told you if you'd leave you'd mess yourself up." "Did you kill anyone, get anybody pregnant?"

No, he hugged his son, loved him and unconditionally accepted him back into the family.

Now scripture doesn't say what happened in following days -- whether he sat down with his son one day and said, "*Son I really want to talk with you about what happened and what should you do now differently . . .*" It doesn't say -- I suspect as a loving father he did do something like that -- as a parent I think so. But what I know is - the

First Response he gave his child was "*I love you, no matter what you've done. Period.*"

That is unconditional love, and that is what God has for all of us. He loves us in spite of our sinfulness and Jesus died for us to forgive us even though we will never deserve it.

That same type of love (not perfect like God's) is what we need to give our children **MORE THAN ANYTHING ELSE!**

- Listen carefully - there *are* consequences for bad actions, but until they know that we love them *in spite of their actions*, good or bad, we better not just deal with consequences.
- Love is necessary and first.

We need to ask the question - **On what basis do we love our child?** Do we love our child on the basis of

- ❖ performance
- ❖ behavior
- ❖ career choice
- ❖ potential
- ❖ compliance
- ❖ need
- ❖ or just because they were given by God to us? **UNCONDITIONAL LOVE?**

I read in a book: "Are your children like our children? *They call home when:*

- they wrecked the car
- they broke up with a friend
- they wrecked the car
- they wanted to drop out of school
- they felt all alone
- they wrecked the car
- they needed a ride
- they want money
- they wrecked the car
- they wanted to celebrate
- they wanted to cry
- they wrecked the car

I'm speaking as much as a parent as a Pastor. I think all of us have a tendency to look at the other

side, the *conditional side* -- I'm talking about the first response to a problem. We want to teach something, we want to vent our displeasure (and we are displeased -- our children already know it) -- instead of first providing unconditional love.

This came home to me personally a number of years ago. After we came to this church, a family sold us car for a very generous price. Our oldest son Jesse was a new driver and we needed more transportation and funds were tight. The car was a four-wheel-drive Jeep. It was nicer than I would've ever hoped to get - leather seats, sunroof.

However this was the period when Jeep ran TV ads depicting their vehicles driving into swamps and into snowbanks, disappearing, and coming out the other side unscathed. One day I was watching one of those commercials with my son and panic struck. "Jesse" I said, "don't you ever try something like that with our Jeep, do you hear me?" "Sure dad."

Well, soon after that I went off on a preaching exchange with some other pastors. We were driving to Kentucky and after the first day of driving we checked into our hotel rooms. That's when I called home. Nina said, "Honey, I've got something I have to tell you about. Now, I don't want you to get upset, but I was at the police station today with Jesse." "What happened!" I exclaimed. "Well Jesse had the Jeep today and he and _____ (name withheld to protect the innocent) drove to the State Forest to test out the four-wheel-drive." At this point my heart was beginning to sink. "He was driving on a winding road and had an accident. Everyone is all right, but the car was damaged pretty good."

Well when Nina got done explaining she said, "Maybe you can talk to Jesse before we hang up. Here he's right here."

What happened next I have to tell you I am not really proud of. I did everything wrong that I am telling you, you need to do right. I was so angry and disappointed that I told Nina, "No, I don't want to talk to him. You know I told him point blank not to do what he did. I don't have anything to say to him."

Then we hung up and I sat in my hotel room just angry, and late that night God showed up. And God reminded me about unconditional love - the kind he has for me and the kind he wants me to have for my children. And suddenly he impressed on my mind that this incident, and how I chose to handle it, was going to affect the type of relationship I would have with my son for the rest of his teenage years, and maybe longer.

The next day I called home and spoke to Jesse, "Jesse yesterday you made a big mistake, but I made a bigger one. I just want to let you know something right now that I hope you'll never, ever forget. Jesse, whatever happens in your life, including what happened yesterday, I want you to know that I love you. Nothing you will ever do, good or bad, will ever change that. You are my son and I love you no matter what. When I get home we will figure out together how to handle this problem, but until then I want you to know that I love you just as much as I ever have."

He accepted that, but I got to tell you, I think God put 600 miles between us to give me some time and a chance to get it right, because our relationship was at a crossroads. Dad, mom, there will come a

time that, if you let your children know are that you love them only conditionally long enough, that no apology will ever make up for it.

Unconditional Love provides:

1. **Security** - brings emotional, physical, psychological security
2. **Intimacy** - brings a freedom to share and importantly a freedom to fail and not have to hide it.
3. **A Nurturing Environment** - in this type of family atmosphere.

II. WE OWE OUR CHILDREN CORRECTIVE DISCIPLINE

Discipline is basic to Love.

Proverbs 13:24 If you refuse to discipline your son, it proves you don't love him; for if you love him, you will be prompt to discipline him. (Living Bible)

Unconditional love includes Discipline. If you don't discipline your children THEN you don't love them unconditionally. If you love your children then you will learn how to apply Corrective Discipline.

Interesting Survey:

- 69% of parents in survey feel they discipline their children correctly,
- but 81% disapprove of way other parents correct their children. (How typical! - "I'm doing all right but those others, they're not.")

Houston Police Department wrote: RULES FOR RAISING DELINQUENT CHILDREN

1. Begin from infancy to give your child everything he wants - this way he will grow up to believe world owes him something.
2. When he picks up bad words, laugh at him - this makes him think he's cute and he will pick up more of them.
3. Never give him any spiritual training until he's 21, then let him decide for himself.
4. Avoid teaching them "right" from "wrong" - it may develop a guilt complex - this will result later when he is arrested for stealing a car that society is against him and he's being persecuted.
5. Pick up everything he leaves laying around. Do everything you can for him so he will be experienced turning over responsibility to someone else.
6. Let him read any printed matter he gets his hands on. (Be sure to sterilize the silverware so he doesn't get germs, but let his mind feast on garbage.)
7. Quarrel frequently in the presence of your children, this way they will not be shocked when the home is broken up later.

8. Give a child all the spending money he wants, never let him earn his own - why should he have things as tough as you had them?
9. Satisfy his every craving for food, drink and comfort. See that his every sensual desire is gratified - denial may lead to harmful frustration.
10. Always take your child's side against neighbors, teachers and policemen - they're all prejudiced against your children.
11. When he gets into trouble, apologize by saying, "I never could do anything with that child."
12. Get ready for a life a heartache and grief for you probably will have one.

In Hebrews, the writer tells us some important things about discipline. God's and ours:

Hebrews 12:6-11

DO NOT PUNISH but DISCIPLINE.

Punishment is "getting back"

Punishment is "out of anger"

The kind of discipline the Bible refers to is never "out of control."

LET ME PASS ALONG A HINT TO PARENTS (SORRY TEENS)

I have learned by experience that the No. 1 complaint of teens when denied a request is "*You just don't trust me.*" Parent, do you know what that means? Absolutely nothing. I have found that teens will say that even though they actually *are* hiding something - they know that this accusation makes parents feel awful.

But teenager, the issue is not trusting you. We trust you, what we don't trust is your inexperience. We know because we have been knocked around the block a lot - it's not because we're smarter, in fact there's a good chance you have a higher IQ - but we know a lot of things that you can't know yet.

Correct discipline will DO FOUR THINGS:

1. CHILDREN WILL RESPECT THEIR PARENTS. Not because they are perfect in discipline, but because it shows children that we care (v. 6 & 8). In fact, because we belong to God he disciplines us - almost like a sign of being in the family that he disciplines us.
2. CHILDREN WILL DO RIGHT. In v.11 it tells us it causes children to do right. (Maybe not at first, but eventually...)
3. CHILDREN WILL FEEL SECURE - believe it or not, one of the greatest sources of feeling

secure is to know where the limits are. When a parent sets limits the child feels safer. The child knows they are loved. They may fight those limits constantly, but take them away and you will have real problems. (Story of young girl...)

4. CHILDREN WILL LIVE AT PEACE - Look at v.11 again. The reality of discipline is universal and Never Fun, but did you notice the response to discipline is that it produces a life of peace.

III. TIME TOGETHER

- 100 YEARS AGO parents spent **54%** of their waking hours with their children.
- TODAY spend **18%** of their waking hours with their children.

"Parents are prone to give their children everything except the one thing they need most. That is time: time for listening, time for understanding, time for helping and time for guiding. It sounds simple, but in reality, it is the most difficult, and the most sacrificial task of parenthood."

Emma K Hulburt

Erma Bomback in her column published this article called "*When the Children Have Grow Up*" -- "One of these days you'll shout 'Why don't you kids grow up and act your age.' And they will. Or 'You guys get outside and find something to do and don't track all the dirt in on the carpet.' And they will. And you'll straighten up the boys bedroom, neat and tidy, candy wrappers discarded, toys tucked away, vacuumed up all the unidentifiable crumbs, hangers in the closet and you'll say, 'Now I want it to stay that way!' And it will.

You'll prepare a perfect dinner with salad that hasn't been picked through, cake with no finger tracing in the icing, and you'll say, "Now there's a meal to be proud of." And you'll eat it alone. They'll be no more gates in doors to stumble over, no more pile so dirty clothes so deep you have to reinforce the floor underneath. No more sand in the sheets, wet knotted shoestrings, tight boots and lost hair pins. No more baby sitter to find. No little league games, no car radio blaring, no baby on your lap, having your own roll of scotch tape, think about it? No more knees to heal, no more responsibility -- only a voice crying out, "WHY DON'T YOU GROW UP!" And only the echo of silence saying "I did."

IV. A CHRISTIAN MODEL

Children do what children see. Need examples?

A study reveals that

- if both the mother and father attend church regularly... of their children remain faithful to God. 72%
- if only dad attends regularly. 55%
- if only mom attends regularly. 15% (wow dads, did you get that message?)
- if neither attends regularly 6%

It's the same Hebrew root word for *Parent* and *Teacher*. I.e., as parents were to be teachers, it's our job to be models for our kids.

Ephesians 6:4 *Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord. (NIV)*

CHILDREN LEARN WHAT THEY LIVE

- If a child lives with criticism, he learns to condemn.
- If a child lives with hostility, he learns to fight.
- If a child lives with ridicule, he learns to be shy.
- If a child lives with shame, he learns to feel guilty.
- If a child lives with encouragement, he learns confidence.
- If a child lives with praise, he learns to appreciate.
- If a child lives with fairness, he learns justice.
- If a child lives with security, he learns to have faith.
- If a child lives with approval, he learns to like himself.
- If a child lives with acceptance and friendship, he learns to find love in the world.

by Dorothy Law Nolte

We know the passage "*Train up a child the way he should go . . .*" (Prov. 22:6). I read one thing that said, "*Train up a child the way he should go . . . and then walk that way yourself once in awhile.*"

V. A FOUNDATION FOR THE FUTURE

Proverbs 22:6 *Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it. (NIV)*

This is a PARENT'S PHILOSOPHY.

Parents - remember - the main job of a parent is to PREPARE your children for the FUTURE. . . .

1. **We Supply ROOTS** - security system they need
2. **We Give WINGS** - so they can go out and live a life that's productive. Remember that's our goal. Don't forget our goal - to like the mother bird push them out of the nest so they can fly.

"Effective parenting - know both its limitations and its potential. Even great parenting cannot guarantee the outcome of a child's life, cannot always control the behavior of a teenager, cannot force moral attitudes, cannot perceive the final product.

We need to remind ourselves that good parenting can AIM for right values, show consistent love, teach self-control, teach self-respect, model forgiveness, demonstrate faith in Jesus Christ.

Effective parenting **MAKES THE TOOLS AVAILABLE** for young people so that he/she can choose a complete life.

But even though we may make every tool available (listen children, teenagers) the child may choose not to use those tools. All children are equipped with their own human (free) will.

We strengthen their wings, teach them how to fly and then let them go - and that's the hard part. When a child becomes a young adult accountability shifts from the parents to the individual and their own relationship with God.

- If they have peace working in a car wash, who are we to say they should have been a astronaut.

It's an act of faith to release our young people, and **EMOTIONALLY SUPPORT THEIR CHOICES**. Our support is perhaps most important on the emotional level. (listen carefully mom and dad) The parent who withholds emotional support or fights the child's decision hangs a millstone around that young person's neck. Young people don't necessarily need their parent's money, they don't need their parents to pull strings, and they may not need (or want) their parent's advice, **BUT THEY DO NEED A WARM HUG, AND ENCOURAGING SMILE AND ANY OTHER SIGNAL OF GENUINE ACCEPTANCE**.

THE BIBLE tells us "*so then each of us will give an account of HIMSELF to god.*" (Romans 14:12). As parents we should be content with that. Young persons old enough to be out on their own don't have to give an account to their parents anymore, . . . they are accountable to God."

WITH THAT I want to leave you parents with a **PARENTS' PRAYER LIST**. It's good to pray for your children. . . .God hears the heart cry of every

mom and dad. "God I am not a perfect parent and I have blown it many times."

But when I heard those 12 my heart said "yes that is what I want to pray." If that happens for our children, then Nina and I can die happy parents.

PRAYER: Now God put a hedge around the families. Protect them. Give us parents wisdom and grace. If anything can be said about FBCM let it be that people can say, "there are strong families."

A PARENT'S PRAYER LIST

How to Pray for Your Children

1. That they will know Christ as Savior early in life.
2. That they will have a hatred for sin.
3. That they will be caught when guilty.
4. That they will be protected from the evil one in each area of their life (physical, emotional, spiritual).
5. That they will have responsible attitude in all their personal relationships.
6. That they will respect those in authority over them.
7. That they will desire the right kind of friends and be protected from the wrong friends.
8. That they as well as their mate will be kept pure until marriage.
9. That they will be kept from the wrong mate and saved for the right one.
10. That they will totally submit to God and actively resist Satan in all circumstances.
11. That they will be single hearted, willing to be sold out to Jesus Christ.
12. That they will be hedged about so they can't find their way to the wrong people in the wrong places and the wrong people cannot