

April 6th, 2008
“Raising Responsible Children, Part 2”
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Psalm 127:3-5**3 Behold, children are a heritage from the LORD, The fruit of the womb is a reward.****4 Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, So are the children of one's youth.****5 Happy is the man who has his quiver full of them; They shall not be ashamed, But shall speak with their enemies in the gate.**

Thank you very much for coming to hear the message for today. Before we begin our next lesson, let us reiterate our reason for attending Church.

We attend Church to obtain the mind of Christ, meaning, to have the Bible illuminated in our minds so that we can clearly understand the principles that Jesus taught and base our daily personal decisions on those principles.

We come to Church because we want to be obedient to the Bible, which is the doctrine of Jesus Christ, in an informed, insightful and intelligent manner.

Let us briefly think back to our previous discussions on this topic. Our subject has to do with the academic achievement gap between children in our community and those in the majority community. We are discussing methods of preparing our children to bridge this achievement gap, and bring our academic achievement level up to par with that of the larger culture. I believe that the church is an appropriate place to discuss this topic, as the workings of the family is a primary focus of the Gospel. **1 Timothy 5:8** tells us:

8 But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.

On this subject, we first emphasized the necessity of conceiving children in a two-parent covenantally married family. This is because God has so designed the raising of children that the project requires both a masculine and a feminine input. The idea currently prevalent in our society that a child does not actually need masculine input in his or her developmental years is a falsehood of the first rank. The entire book of Proverbs is the chronicle of the wisdom of the wisest man that ever lived, and the focus of his exposition is educating his son as to the way that life should be lived. Solomon makes it clear, in **Proverbs 1:8-9**:

8 My son, hear the instruction of your father, And do not forsake the law of your mother;**9 For they will be a graceful ornament on your head, And chains about your neck.**

The intellectual fallacy that the parental input of men is not needed can be traced to the fact that children need an intuitive parental interaction during their infant and toddler years. Before children have the intellectual capacity for structured verbal communication, their majority of the interaction that they have require an intuitive focus by their caregiver. Women, created by God to mother children, are uniquely gifted by God to perform this intuitive task. I know that it is considered heresy in our culture to suggest that men and women are intrinsically different; secular authority dictates that we believe that the only differences between men and women are

socialized by our culture. However, a magnetic resonance imaging study done by scientists from the University of Basel in Basel, Switzerland and the Second University of Naples, in Naples, Italy, came to the following conclusion, based upon observation of MRI's of the brains of the individuals in the test:

Women but not men, independent of their parental status, showed neural deactivation in the anterior cingulate cortex, as indexed by decreased blood oxygenation level-dependent signal, in response to both infant crying and laughing.

The response pattern changed fundamentally with parental experience: in the amygdala and interconnected limbic regions, parents (independent of sex) showed stronger activation from crying, whereas nonparents showed stronger activation from laughing.

My layman's analysis of that medical jargon leads me conclude that women's brains respond differently to the stimulus of listening to a baby's cry than do the brains of men. This differentiation in the response of women and men is actually biological, not cultural, and exists because of the creative choice of God. **Isaiah 49:15** says:

15 "Can a woman forget her nursing child, And not have compassion on the son of her womb? Surely they may forget, Yet I will not forget you.

I have not been able to find a parallel passage in the Scripture concerning the interaction of men and nursing children. However, the Bible has many references about men interacting with their children once the children have the capacity for verbal communication. For example, **Ephesians 6:4** says:

4 And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.

There is a fallacy advanced in our popular culture that it is acceptable for women to intentionally become "single mothers", that is, to intentionally deprive a child of a father. It is an incorrect assertion that children do not need fathers, but it is true that the negative effects of a lack of a father's participation in his child's life may not manifest themselves as seriously antisocial behavior during the child's intuitive phase; that is, during his infancy and toddlerhood. Antisocial behavior may not register until the child reaches the age in which he or she acquires some social autonomy. The negative effects do appear earlier, but the inability of the child to act out on them publically makes them easier to ignore.

When children develop the capacity for language, fathers have a definite role to play in guiding the development of their children, and individuals that choose to ignore this reality will, generally speaking, eventually pay for their ignorance by having to deal with deportment problems of a child caused by the absence of a father. George Williams, in his article, [Quenching the Father Thirst](#), found on the website fathers.com, writes:

A staggering 70% of men in prison come from fatherless homes, and these fathers often continue the cycle since prison is an easy excuse not to be involved in their children's lives.

This information, along with our knowledge of the plan of God, should dispel the myth that, in the normative case, a single parent household is an acceptable alternative to a household with two covenantally married parents as a situation in which to bring an infant into the world or to raise a child. This is not to say that a child cannot survive with a single parent; we know that children across the country survive in this situation every day. However, it should be clear to anyone listening that a child has the best chance for success in an intact home, that being one in which the mother and father are married to one another and are constantly cooperating to raise the child. God tells us in the book of Malachi that the reason for marriage and the reason that He, God, hates divorce, is that divorce interrupts the process of the production of godly offspring. **Malachi 2:15-16** says:

15 But did He not make [husband and wife] one, Having a remnant of the Spirit? And why one? He seeks godly offspring. “Therefore take heed to your spirit, And let none deal treacherously with the wife of his youth.

16 “For the LORD God of Israel says That He hates divorce, For it covers one’s garment with violence,” Says the LORD of hosts. Therefore take heed to your spirit, That you do not deal treacherously.”

So, my first point is that children actually need two parents.

David, the sweet singer of Israel, tells us in our text, in **Psalms 127:3-5**:

3 Behold, children are a heritage from the LORD, The fruit of the womb is a reward.

4 Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, So are the children of one’s youth.

5 Happy is the man who has his quiver full of them; They shall not be ashamed, But shall speak with their enemies in the gate.

Of course, raising children, like going to college, has both rewards and challenges. A wit rewrote the last three verses of the 127th Psalm thusly:

Lo, children are a burden from the Lord; and the fruit of the womb must be his way of testing us.

As the source of endless work and continual aggravation, so are the children of one’s youth.

Unhappy is the man who hears his neighbor ask, “Do all those kids belong to you?”

There is no question that raising children is work and can have aggravating moments. However, the opportunity to develop the fruit of the womb is not so much God’s way of testing us as God’s way of letting us participate on His program. We can see, from the work involved in Jesus Christ’s ministry and His sacrifice on the Cross, that God’s plan for our maturation involves our working to put the principles of His Word into practice in practical application, and raising children is analogous to Jesus’ ministry, being the practical application of a love relationship to which we are called to give ourselves sacrificially.

Let us go back for a moment to **Isaiah 49:15**, in which God tells us:

15 “Can a woman forget her nursing child, And not have compassion on the son of her womb? Surely they may forget, Yet I will not forget you.

It has become both commonplace and fashionable for parents in our time to abandon their children to institutionalized day care. The thesis of Betty Friedan's seminal feminist work, The Feminine Mystique, is that women without a career in the workplace almost universally suffer from a psychological disorder which she termed "the problem that has no name", and she prescribed work outside of the home as the solution to the problem of the emotional depression of women that take care of the home as a primary occupation. Ms. Friedan conducted an impromptu unscientific sociological experiment to ascertain the state of mind of "fulfilled mothers". She says, in her book:

"I went first to the suburban mental health centers and guidance clinics, to reputable local analysts, to knowledgeable local residents and, stating my purpose, asked them to steer me not to the neurotic, frustrated housewives, but to the able, intelligent, educated women who were well-adjusted full-time housewives and mothers."

Ms. Friedan, based on several interviews of women in this community, came to the following conclusion.

"Surely there are many women in America who are happy at the moment as housewives, and some whose abilities are fully used in the housewife role. But happiness is not the same thing as the aliveness of being fully used. Nor is human intelligence or human ability a static thing.

Housework, no matter how it is expanded to fill the time available, can hardly use the abilities of a woman of average or normal human intelligence, much less the fifty per cent of the female population whose intelligence, in childhood, was above average.

The conclusion of Ms. Friedan's book is that intelligent women that decide to become housewives are inevitably doomed to the deterioration of their mental faculties, and that the remedy for the intellectual malaise of women in America is to abandon their children to day care centers and obtain occupations in the workplace. She further concludes that women that follow this formula will be fulfilled by their careers in a way that taking care of their homes cannot duplicate.

Ms. Friedan, in her book, characterizes housewives as focused on television, vacuum cleaners, dishwashers, automatic appliances, cooking, cleaning, washing and ironing. Her thesis is that doing housework all day, to put it colloquially, will "rot a woman's brain".

I came to some conclusions after reading Ms. Friedan's work. First, Ms. Friedan did not use a normalized distribution of the population to develop a statistically accurate sample, but sampled women to which she was referred by mental health professionals. Understand that these women had to have been mental health patients at some point in their lives to be interviewed in the first place. An objective reviewer could logically conclude that a sample of people who had been under the care of a mental health professional would yield a different result than a normal distribution of the general population.

Secondly, Ms. Friedan's thesis is focused on performing housework, and completely ignores the most important task that a housewife has to perform, that being the training and supervision of her children. While I can conceptually agree with Ms. Friedan that sweeping the floors all day would not sufficiently exercise an intelligent brain, I find it much more difficult to agree with the assumption that supervising the formation of young minds would fail to produce the stimulation that women require to maintain their mental balance.

I would also question whether or not a job the workplace is necessarily more mentally balancing than raising children. The question is, how much more intellectually satisfying are jobs outside of the home than the freedom and leisure inherent in the task of keeping a home and raising children. How do the stresses of the two environments compare with one another?

Ms. Friedan's assumption is that the workplace is inherently more satisfying for women than being at home, but she gives no objective proof to verify her assertion. While she interviews homemakers suffering from some type of malaise, she does not interview a similar number of working women to see whether or not their workplace experiences are as satisfying as her assumption indicates.

Nonetheless, Ms. Friedan's conclusions have become conventional wisdom in our society. Women now consider abandoning their homes and children as the norm, and participation in the workforce as a requirement for satisfaction. How has the lack of individual attention and personal care for the family by the mother affected the family structure?

In order to answer this question, I think that we need to consider the Biblical purpose of parents. **Proverbs 22:15** tells us:

15 Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child; The rod of correction will drive it far from him.

What does the Bible mean by foolishness? **Romans 8:5-8** tells us:

5 For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.

6 For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.

7 Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be.

8 So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

I find the easiest way to distinguish between flesh and spirit is to think of the dichotomy between the emotions and the intellect. Foolishness in the heart of a child indicates that a child is born with a fully developed set of emotions, and a total lack of intellect. Every decision that a newborn child makes is based upon the child's emotional reaction to that which they feel. Babies cry when they are hungry without regard for the time of day; they are totally focused on the sensations that they feel, regardless of how they affect or inconvenience other people.

The natural state of immature human beings is emotionally driven self-centeredness. Contrast the totally self-centered state of an infant with the totally self-sacrificial state of Jesus Christ, the most mature man that ever lived, who was so other-directed that He gave His life to save the eternal lives of the very people that hated Him. As He was dying on the Cross, in **Luke 23:34**:

34 Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do."

The Biblical purpose of parents is to emulate the example of the Christ; to change the thinking of their children from the foolishness of self-centeredness to the wisdom of self-sacrifice. God has scheduled children to travel from their original childish, foolish, emotion-driven, self-centered mindset in which they are born to the mature, intelligent, rational, other-directed mindset to which Jesus wants them to go, and parents have an eighteen year assignment as the engineers driving the train that is transporting their child to God's desired destination. Children do not have the capacity to drive themselves; if the designated parents do not drive the train, it is a pretty safe bet that the destination will not be reached. It is good if a parent can simultaneously build competence into their children while building character, but character is the most important component; competence without character is really a vain accomplishment.

1 Corinthians 13:1-3 tells us:

1 Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal.

2 And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.

3 And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing.

God spent a lot of time having the Children of Israel live under a set of codified laws to prove that we, because of our sin nature, do not have the capacity to conform to an objective set of rules. God proved that, because of our inherently self-centered nature, the only way that we can have a suitable relationship with Him is if He provides us with hands-on caregiver, the Holy Spirit, whom He sends to indwell us, to bring us to maturity in the same way that a mother is sent to care for her child. The relationship that God intends to exist between mother and child is analogous to that which exists between us and the Holy Spirit, as **Romans 8** describes. **Roman 8:3-4** says:

3 For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, 4 that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

The flesh is our self-centered emotional component that rejects any constraints, even as does an infant child. The law gives us God's constraints, but we do not have the capacity to keep the law, because of our self-centeredness and emotionality. However, God also gives us the Holy Spirit to perform the task analogous to that of a mother, with the intuitive focus to communicate to past our flesh to our spirit, which is our intellect, and prepare us to discipline ourselves to do that which God wants us to do. **Romans 8:9-11** describes:

9 But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His.

10 And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.

11 But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.

Jesus describes this new life to Nicodemus as being born again. Just as the Holy Spirit is the God-ordained guide to lead us to Christian maturity, mothers are the God-ordained guides to lead their children into from the intuitive state to the intellectual state. Understanding that which God is trying to accomplish by sending children into the world and the role that He expects parents to play in their development, I hope that we can understand the reason that God gives children intuitive mothers that can understand their non-verbal communications and personally supervise their early childhood development. The rationale, developed by Ms. Friedan, that mothers should abandon their children to institutionalized child care so that mothers can avoid the malaise of housework seems to miss the point of God's plan for families. Childhood development and marital harmony and longevity, rather than the avoidance of housework and personal aggrandizement, is the focus of God's plan for marriage. I also challenge the assertion made by Ms. Friedan that the role of mothers that do not participate in work outside of the home is any less satisfying than of those that do. There are benefits to those that have a different perspective about staying at home that Ms. Friedan espouses. A mother sent this e-mail to an advocate for mothers that stay at home to raise their children.

I am constantly faced with an issue. How can we stay-at-home, husband adoring, kid-loving, school-volunteering moms to get along with other moms? I do not bash my husband, I do not complain about my kids homework not getting done, or spending too much time at work or commuting. These conversations come up quite frequently when I'm at my daughter's school or at her after-school activities.

I have no problems joining in with the conversation, but when one mom starts on about her husband not doing his share of the housework and childrearing, I can not join in with her complaint. I comment, "I don't have those problems. My husband is my manly hero. He works hard to take care of the family, and when he comes home, I am more than happy to serve him his dinner. I enjoy taking care of him, because he takes care of me."

This usually ends the discussion for me. The conversation with the other moms either stops dead in its tracks or I am turned away from.

This secretly pleases me. When I get home to my handsome man, I want to show him how much I love and appreciate him. Maybe this isn't such a problem after all. I enjoy keeping the conversation going because I am happily married, and am glad to be able to take care of my husband and children.

There are actually many women, like the author of this e-mail, that do not subscribe to Ms. Friedan's hypothesis, and rather have a Biblical focus. Paul gives us the general idea of God's focus in **1 Timothy 5:14**, saying

14 Therefore I desire that the younger widows marry, bear children, manage the house, give no opportunity to the adversary to speak reproachfully.

Proverbs 31:10-31 discusses a virtuous wife, that being one that has a focus on her children and a home based business making garments both to sell and to clothe her own family. The conclusion of this passage of Scripture, **Proverbs 31:25-31**, tells us:

25 Strength and honor are her clothing; She shall rejoice in time to come.
26 She opens her mouth with wisdom, And on her tongue is the law of kindness.
27 She watches over the ways of her household, And does not eat the bread of idleness.
28 Her children rise up and call her blessed; Her husband also, and he praises her:
29 “Many daughters have done well, But you excel them all.”
30 Charm is deceitful and beauty is passing, But a woman who fears the LORD, she shall be praised.
31 Give her of the fruit of her hands, And let her own works praise her in the gates.

Both of these passages of Scripture indicate that a woman that manages her house and cares for her children as a full-time occupation is in the will of God. As a matter of fact, **Proverbs 14:1** tells us:

1 The wise woman builds her house, But the foolish pulls it down with her hands.

Children in their formative years need loving, nurturing, directive supervision. Children need the administration of a hand-on supervisory parent that loves them and can communicate this love both intuitively and verbally. The key to early childhood development is to provide children with the deep, personal relationship that which they need. Infants and toddlers need individual attention from a caregiver with an intuitive focus, and are not prepared for institutionalization; our schools do not accept children less than five years of age because, in the normative case, it takes five years of maturation in a supportive environment for a child to develop the emotional stability required to deport themselves properly in an academic environment.

Mother is the person equipped and ordained by God to supervise this early childhood maturation, just as the Holy Spirit is the person ordained to supervise our adult maturation into the image and likeness of Christ. If we actually want to bridge the achievement gap between children in our community and the larger population, we must not only endeavor to return to the norm of having children only with the context of marriage, but the marriages that we make must be so stable as to allow the mother to practice the hand-on supervision of the children that are produced, in accordance with the plan of God.

In order to bridge the achievement gap in our community, we need to return to the plan of God for our families. The thinking of the psychologists and the sociologists may give us some interesting food for thought, but the master planner is still God, and we should use His blueprint to build our houses. **Psalms 127:1** tells us:

1 Unless the LORD builds the house, They labor in vain who build it; Unless the LORD guards the city, The watchman stays awake in vain.

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