

**QUESTION #35:**  
**"THE HOME FRONT (HAPPY MOTHERS DAY)": WHAT ARE THE**  
**RESPONSIBILITIES - CHILD TO PARENT AND PARENT TO CHILD?**  
**(Ephesians 6:1-4)**

**INTRODUCTION**

Having last week closed out our celebration of everything Easter, we are moving back into our "Big Questions" series. We have three questions left and, by the time we finish, we will have fielded over three dozen questions. Today's topic comes from one of our youth - a great question that touches every one of our lives: "What are the responsibilities of parents to child, and what are the responsibilities of child to parents? Now, while we may not all be parents, we certainly have all been kids, and have in turn watched parents as they parented us. So, this is a wonderfully inclusive question to consider.

The Bible provides an incredible array of answers to both sides of this question, so we will be looking at a whole bunch of Scriptures that address different aspects of this question. Let's begin with a word of prayer before we dive in.

**TEXT**

OK; as we get into this topic, we're going to kind of move in a step-by-step way, seeing how God created this thing we call the "family," and that really needs to start at the very beginning - in the book of Genesis. After this entire wonderful, beautiful world, within an equally wonderful, beautiful solar system, and galaxy, and universe, had all come into miraculous being, as the culmination of all of God's creative endeavors, we read this:

***Then God said, "Let us make mankind in Our image, in Our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." So God created mankind in His own image, in the image of God He created them; male and female He created them. God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground"- Genesis 1:26-28.***

A couple of observations:

First, notice that God Himself is the blueprint for how He was going to make mankind - "**in Our image,**" He says. That means that, while obviously not to God's infinite extent (after all, as He said through Isaiah: "**Before Me no god was formed, nor will there be one after me"- God speaking, Isaiah 43:10b**), mankind was going to have many of God's assets - among them: the abilities to think and to reason and plan and create, and the emotional abilities of being able to love, and provide care and nurture.

Second, notice that God's first command to mankind, as a part of His blessing them, was to "**be fruitful and increase in number**" - in other words, family. How cool is that: Right from the "get-go," God intended family to be a blessing. What this tells us that God intended to use family as an integral way of directing His imprint on the world He had just made - in other words, right from the beginning, God has intended family to be a very foundational building block in impacting the world for Him. Parents and kids weren't afterthoughts but rather a fundamental part of His original thinking. And while ruling this magnificent planet was certainly part of their role within the creative order that God had put in place, it was family that received His first attention - a fundamental social arrangement designed by God Himself that God will use to provide everybody everything we need

from the first day we live and the first breath we take.

OK, so family-parents and kids-are a part of God's original creative process. And from Adam and Eve's time right on through today, the Bible tells us that God has continued to put the blessing of His perfect touch on every human being that has come down the road. The following Scriptures provide great insight into how God has worked His incredible, intimate skills into these little bundles of joy that continue to come into the world:

#### TEXTS

*[Y]ou (God) created my inmost being; You knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Your works are wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from You when I was made in the secret place, when I was woven together in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in Your book before one of them came to be-David, Psalm 139:13-16.*

*[Y]ou, Lord, are our Father. We are the clay, You are the potter; we are all the work of Your hand-Isaiah 64:8.*

*[W]e are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do - Paul, Ephesians 2:10.* OK; some amazing things we can learn from these verses:

First of all, even though people sometimes refer to certain circumstances of pregnancy that make them seem "unplanned" or as some kind of "accident," that is totally a human perspective; God doesn't see it that way at all. There are no accidents - everybody who ever was, ever is and ever will be is here in God's design for God's plan.

Second, look at how these verses talk about how intimately we have been individually put together by our Heavenly Father - being God's handiwork, that we were made and woven together - all with an eye toward the works for which we have been prepared "in advance" to do. That means all our abilities, all our strengths, all our weaknesses and disabilities, have all been designed perfectly by a Master Craftsman, exquisitely assembled and precisely fit for a place in His Kingdom's work. Even our shelf life (*all the days ordained for me*) has been determined right down to the final second - suggesting huge implications that should make us very humbled in the presence of our God, and be really important in informing how we respond to our families (and any other relationships in which we find ourselves):

First, if in fact it is true that God made me perfectly, that means that the last thing I should do is fuss about what I perceive as my shortcomings: "Oh God, why couldn't you have changed this, or made me more like that?" That's the pot asking the potter, "What in the world were you thinking?" Pots don't get that right - and neither do we. God made us - strengths and weaknesses alike - absolutely perfect. And remember: He made us with His purposes in mind. It's all about His plans, not ours.

Second, if in fact it is true that God made me perfectly, that means that none of us were ever a "blank slate." We all have come into the world with a specific collection of genetics (DNA) that makes us a completely unique person, a totally exclusive, one-and-only design. The late comedian Robin Williams once commented, upon the birth of his first child, his son Zach, that this little boy was at once all him and none of him. We are all that unique - nobody like us in the whole wide world!

Third, if in fact it is true that God made me perfectly, that means that how He wanted me made was directly connected with the two people He brought together to bring me into the world. All our parents were exactly the right two people for the person God had in mind when He made me through

them. Our parents are just as much an outcome of God's perfect plans as we are.

## APPLICATION

There are some major, life-impacting conclusions if God indeed had such a complete and total hand in our creation. Since we are looking at a message about what exactly parents and kids owe each other, so to speak, let's look at the conclusions we can already draw -first for kids:

**Kids (which pretty much includes all of us),** our parents are so much more than merely guardians or providers or chauffeurs or whatever. They are uniquely given to us as gifts of God. We wouldn't be who we are without them, without God bringing them together to make each one of us. Everything we are comes from them, and God will be using everything we are to perfectly fit us into His master plan for the world. Therefore, they deserve our love and respect, and all our prayers that God continue to watch over them. Why? Because they are the first, and maybe two of the most personal, gifts that God has directly given us. And, because parents are in fact God's gifts, the Bible is sprinkled with many verses that reflect God's affirmation of the rightful place of love and respect our parents should have in our lives:

***"Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the Lord your God is giving you" - God speaking (the 5<sup>th</sup> commandment), Exodus 20:12 (repeated as Deuteronomy 5:16).*** After the first four commandments are expressed - all commandments having to do with Israel's relationship with God, the first commandment to deal with relationships with the people around us starts at home, with our parents. The Hebrew word for "honor" means to show respect - through obedience to their word and acting positively to do them good versus doing anything that would bring them harm.

***"Each of you must respect your mother and father ... I am the Lord your God" - God speaking, Leviticus 19:3.*** The idea here is honoring parents in part for their part in God's creative process. Also, by using the word "respect," God is highlighting an attitude, just as honor shows itself in actions. God underscores these words by identifying Himself as the power and authority behind the command.

***The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction. Listen, my son, to your father's instruction and do not forsake your mother's teaching. They are a garland to grace your head and a chain to adorn your neck - Solomon, Proverbs 1:7-9.*** The idea here is not merely to physically hear the things parents are saying, but absorbing their wisdom as necessary to building your life. Your life will be honored by the instructions you receive from your parents.

***Listen to your father, who gave you life, and do not despise your mother when she is old. ... The father of a righteous child has great joy; a man who fathers a wise son rejoices in him. May your father and mother rejoice; may she who gave you birth be joyful! -Proverbs 23:22, 24-25.*** The idea here is that parents will always be fountains of life wisdom - regardless of age. The child who reflects that wisdom in the actions of their lives will bring great joy to their parents. And the Bible sees a child's affection for their parents as a lifetime ministry; as Paul said to Timothy: ***Anyone who does not provide for their relatives, and especially for their own household, has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever - Paul, 1 Timothy 5:8.*** But that's also why it is so important to never lose sight of our parents as gifts from God, and that ongoing care for them, especially as they age, is not a burden but rather a privilege reflecting the worship to God of a grateful heart for all He has blessed us with through our parents - think giving to them in Jesus' name, as He gave to us!

***Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right - Paul, Ephesians 6:1.*** Paul in writing this uses a Greek word that implies hearing as a subordinate, as listening to the word of one in authority - certainly a role children have in view of their parents. Such behavior, Paul adds, is seen by God as

behavior just as it should be.

**OK, so now, what is on the parents to consider regarding kids?** Well, before anything else, one thing above all others must be kept in mind: Our kids are not ours. They have never been ours, nor will they ever be ours. Solomon got it right when he said: ***Children are a heritage from the Lord, offspring a reward from Him - Solomon, Psalm 127:3.*** The Hebrew tells us that "heritage" in this sense represents "a portion or state of blessing assigned by God to His people." In other words, our kids are a reflection of God's blessing and grace to us. But regardless of that, and whatever the right word would be - rent, lease, borrow, whatever - nothing changes the fundamental truth that our kids have been and always will be God's. They belong to Him, and He has His plans for them. Being part of God's plan doesn't imply ownership. God is privileging parents with the awesome privilege of taking care of some of His most precious possessions. So, in view of that awesome privilege, what are parents obligated to do? How are they to express their love and thanks to God for this enormous privilege? Here's some of what the Scriptures say:

It has been said that one of the greatest kids parents can give to their kids is their love for each other. When kids see their parents' affection for each other, when they hear their words of love, kids feel free to see their home as a place of unbroken security. In as insecure a world as we live in, with all the broken homes and families, home security in the sense of a home that reflects the love of its occupants is huge. Now, in the same way that kids can be given so much by simply seeing and hearing the love of their parents, so much more importance is provided in the love and affection that kids learn that their parents have for God. As Moses told the nation of Israel: ***"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength" - Moses, Deuteronomy 6:5.*** Our Christian faith is not a religion - it is a relationship! When kids see the love of that relationship through their parents, they will be more excited and enticed to seek out the Lord on their own. When they see the joy, they will want that joy for themselves!

Parents are very much the first Bible their kids will see. Before they can ever read for themselves, they will be "reading" the place God has in a parent's life. Because they are that first portal of both information about God and imitation of God, the Bible gives some very important, but also very cool and exciting, verses about how parents are to introduce and connect their kids to God. So here are some great opportunities:

When Moses was giving his "farewell address" to the nation of Israel, he said this: ***"These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates" - Moses, Deuteronomy 6:5-9.*** In other words, make talking about God - His commands, His holiness, everything about Him - a regular part of your family conversation. Make it the "norm." Reflect the priority that God wants His commands and His holiness to be in our lives. And don't assume that, just because a kid is young, he or she isn't already picking up some sense of who God is and how much He loves us and has done for us. Remember this moment from Jesus' ministry? ***[P]eople brought little children to Jesus for Him to place His hands on them and pray for them. But the disciples rebuked them. Jesus said, "Let the little children come to Me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these" - Matthew 19:13-14.*** Because our spiritual lives are the work of the Holy Spirit, God's life can begin to penetrate even the youngest heart; remember Paul's words to Timothy: ***[F]rom infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus - Paul, II Timothy 3:15.***

Another key parent opportunity was expressed by Moses like this: ***"[B]e careful, and watch yourselves closely so that you do not forget the things your eyes have seen or let them fade from your heart as long as you live. Teach them to your children and to their children after them"- Moses, Deuteronomy 4:9.*** Don't be afraid to share your own testimony of God's place in your life. Have your kids ever heard how you came to know Jesus Christ? Do they know the story of your surrender to Him? That's a great place to start. And be honest - if you make a mistake, if you've been wrong, if you "face-plant" something, let your kids know in some sense what happened. There are few better ways of learning about God's forgiveness than about seeing a parent have a fail of some kind, and yet to show their trust in the blood of Jesus Christ that promises to cleanse from all sin. And especially don't be shy about sharing the "God moments" that you experience in your day. Teach your kids by example to be looking for how God is working and directing and protecting and loving and providing and all the things that He brings our way each and every day. Just like many of us as parents may have the chance to teach our kids how to hunt or fish, and how to be successful at it, even more important is teaching them how to "hunt" for God - to see God and how He moves and works around us every day.

Encourage your kids in their developing walk with the Lord. When they do something that reflects Christ, tell them; celebrate with them. Underscore the Lord's pleasure when we please Him - no matter what our age. Remember this scene from the life of Christ? ***[T]he disciples came to Jesus and asked, "Who, then, is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" He called a little child to Him, and placed the child among them. And He said: "Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever takes the lowly position of this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoever welcomes one such child in My name welcomes me. . . . See that you do not despise one of these little ones. For I tell you that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father in heaven" - Matthew 18:1-5, 10.*** The point? God can use anybody, at any age, to teach a lesson, to be an example. When your kids do that, enjoy it with them!

Remember this story in the OT book of Joshua, from the time that Israel finally crossed the Jordan River into the long-awaited Promised Land? We then read this: ***Joshua set up at Gilgal the twelve stones they had taken out of the Jordan. He said to the Israelites, "In the future when your descendants ask their parents, 'What do these stones mean?' tell them, 'Israel crossed the Jordan on dry ground.' For the Lord your God dried up the Jordan before you until you had crossed over. The Lord your God did to the Jordan what He had done to the Red Sea when He dried it up before us until we had crossed over. He did this so that all the peoples of the earth might know that the hand of the Lord is powerful and so that you might always fear the Lord your God" - Joshua 4:20-24.*** Don't forget to tell the great stories from the Bible. Teach your kids all the wonders of how God worked in days past. Use Bible story books as part of their learning to read. Use them as devotionals. Make the great stories from the Bible as big a part of their education as possible. As David's worship leader Asaph wrote: ***[W]e will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the Lord, His power, and the wonders He has done. . . . so the next generation would know them, even the children yet to be born, and they in turn would tell their children. Then they would put their trust in God and would not forget His deeds but would keep His commands - Asaph, Psalm 78:4b, 6-7.*** That's the great privilege for Christian parents as teachers for God; as Isaiah wrote: ***[P]arents tell their children about your faithfulness - Isaiah 38:19b.***

Now, every parent knows that discipline needs to be a part of a child's upbringing. Certainly the Bible supports this; as the book of Proverbs points out: ***A rod and a reprimand impart wisdom, but a child left undisciplined disgraces its mother. . . .***

***Discipline your children, and they will give you peace; they will bring you the delights you desire - Proverbs 29:15, 17.*** But as important as discipline is, it is just as important that it is seen as a part of

a parent's complete and unconditional love and affection for their child: *[T]he one who loves their children is careful to discipline them - Proverbs 13:24b*. And it is hugely important that our kids understand that, even when they have done wrong, even in the middle of the discipline, our love for them is never up for grabs. And of course, such loving discipline comes with a lifetime reward: *No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it - Hebrews 12:11*.

And some really important things that all parents need to hang onto:

First, don't ever forget where our kids came from - as completely helpless human beings, gifts from God who need everything. As God has shown His grace towards us, we likewise need to show that kind of grace to our kids; as David observed: *As a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on those who fear Him; for He knows how we are formed, He remembers that we are dust - David, Psalm 103:13-14*. Remember that life brings us both information and experiences to give us wisdom - and parents have had years, and bumps and bruises of experience, to inform whatever wisdom we have gained. Our kids are just starting out on that journey, and each new phase of their lives in a sense starts that process all over again. Compassion and tenderness will be so necessary, and such a great investment that will pay back in years of solid ongoing relationships. Remember that, just as Jesus was the Good Shepherd (John 10:10), parents are, as Peter pointed out, *shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, watching over them . . . being examples to the flock - 1 Peter 5:2a, 3b*.

Second, learn who your kids are - not who you hope them to be or want them to be or think they should be, but who they are. Don't forget that their very existence is only due to God's having planned, and having plans, for their lives. The words of Proverbs may come in handy to remind us: *Start children off on the way they should go, and even when they are old they will not turn from it - Proverbs 22:6*. Essentially this verse points out that we should learn our kids in the sense of their skills and interests, but also their passions - and then encourage them to explore and develop those skills and interests and passions as much as they can. Interests flash in and out as kids grow, and fads come and go, but a person's passions are often something that remains in somebody for their entire lives. Their passions, the things that move them the deepest, are put of how God put them together. As an act of acknowledgement and worship of the One who created them, come alongside your kids to aid them in that whole process of discovery- not only for who they are, but also for who they may be in God's perfect plan.

## CONCLUSION

And lastly, for ALL the members of the family - parents and children - these words from the wisdom of Solomon: *Unless the Lord builds the house, the builders labor in vain. Unless the Lord watches over the city, the guards stand watch in vain - Solomon, Psalm 127:1*. Kids and parents actually have a great deal in common: Kids come into the world knowing nothing - and parents come into parenthood knowing nothing, too. But our God is also a Father, so I suspect He knows a thing or two about that. And Jesus is also a Son, so I suspect He knows a thing or two about that, too. So, let's take advantage of all that wisdom, and pray - kids for parents, and parents for kids. And don't let the prayers ever end; certainly the needs never will. You see, just like any other endeavor, a family is only as strong as its foundation. Make sure the Lord is the one - the only one - who is the builder of the home. Nobody will ever be disappointed in the result. Let's pray!