

In the Light of the Fourth Commandment: What Is the Responsibility of the Parent, the Teacher, the Pastor and the Lay Person in Educating the Child?

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“In the Light of the Fourth Commandment, What is the Responsibility of the Parent, the Teacher, the Pastor, and the Layperson in Educating the Child?”

The fact that valuable conference time is allotted to this topic precludes that this area of the child’s education is deserving of immediate attention. We therefore ask the Lord to bless this presentation and the discussion of the paper to the end that children may be blessed.

“People were bringing little children to Jesus to have Him touch them, but the disciples rebuked them. When Jesus saw this, He was indignant. He said to them, Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it. And He took the children in His arms, put His hands on them and blessed them.” (Mark 10:13-16) In these words, Jesus shows us how very important children are to Him. Since children are so very important to Jesus, it is imperative that the parent, teacher, Pastor, and layperson do everything in his power to educate the child in the way of the Lord. Here are some objectives to strive for in this education.

1. That children be led to understand, accept, and share the Gospel as they feel and express active concern for others who are fellow members of the body of Christ.
2. That children be led to experience God’s love as forgiven sinners and express in concrete ways this kind of love (*agape*) in their personal relationships (*koinonia*).
3. That children be led to develop a conviction of responsibility and the growing skill of effective participation in the life of the Christian community.
4. That children be led to understand the nature and mission of the church and the ways in which they may participate significantly and personally in its life and activity.¹

The education of our children starts when they are born and will continue for their entire lifetime. Proverbs 22:6 states, “Train a child in the way he should go and when he is old he will not turn from it.” Not all children, however, are trained in the Lord’s path as this next example shows. “A mother recently asked for help in handling her defiant three-year-old daughter, Sandy. She had realized that her tiny little daughter had beaten her in a conflict of wills, and the child had become a tyrant and a dictator. On the afternoon prior to our conversation an incident occurred which was typical of Sandy’s way of doing business: the mother (I’ll call her Mrs. Nichols) put the youngster down for a nap, although it was unlikely that she would stay in bed. Sandy is not accustomed to doing anything she doesn’t want to do, and naptime is not on her acceptable list at the moment. On this occasion, however the child was more interested in antagonizing her mom than in merely having her own way. Sandy began to scream. She yelled loudly enough to upset the whole neighborhood, fraying Mrs. Nichols’ jangled nerves. Then she tearfully demanded various things, including a glass of water. At first Mrs. Nichols refused to comply with the orders, but she surrendered when Sandy’s screaming again reached a peak of intensity. As the glass of water was delivered, the little tigress pushed it aside, refusing to drink because her mother had not brought it soon enough. Mrs. Nichols stood offering the water for a few

¹ H. Gordon Coiner, “The Scriptural Basis for the Responsibility of the Christian Congregation in Christian Education,” *Readings in Christian Education* (1980), p.72.

minutes, then she said she would take it back to the kitchen if Sandy did not drink by the time she counted to five. Sandy set her jaw and waited through the count ... three, four, five! As Mrs. Nichols grasped the glass and walked toward the kitchen, the child again screamed for water. Sandy dangled her harassed mom back and forth like a yo-yo until she tired of the sport.”²

Probably one of the greatest obstacles to effective Christian training of children is that the very foundation of society itself, the home, is crumbling. Satan has waged a most vigorous campaign against the home, which also includes the Christian home, so that he can topple this foundation of society and ultimately gain a greater number in his kingdom of darkness.

Let us consider for a moment what has happened to the home and family life during the last few decades. According to recent studies parents pay less and less attention to their children probably because of their work or other more entertaining outside interests and activities. Due to this lack of attention and supervision of their own offspring children tend more and more to spend a great deal of their time with their friends outside the home and are influenced in attitudes and behaviors by them rather than by their parents. Even when family members are home, communication among the family membership is minimal because of the times that have been set aside for watching programs on television, many of which are sordid and demoralizing. There is hardly any time available for spiritual fortification through prayer and home devotions. Somewhere in this twentieth century living families have lost sight of their priorities. Today’s society also has become more fluid and mobile. Often parents are shifted from one city to another or even from one state to another because of their employment. This often resulted in families moving away from their grandparents or relatives who may have had a deep impact upon the rearing of children. For the children emotional stress and insecurity are often the by-products that become a part of the personality of such children.

Because of today’s high standard of living, mothers as well as fathers have entered the work force in order to afford such a type of living. In such cases often very young children are left under the care and influence of babysitters rather than under the influence and loving care of parents.

In today’s society more and more children are brought up by a single parent because of the separation of husband and wife. Divorce has gained such an acceptable status that according to statistics one out of every three marriages ends in divorce. The quarreling and bickering between father and mother that usually precedes a divorce surely must leave children with an inner feeling of helplessness, hopelessness, and a continuing harboring of pent-up frustration. Accompanying divorce proceedings there is usually a fierce struggle for custody of the children. During such times of stress we can really appreciate how difficult it must be for children to honor parents and hold them in love and esteem. In such cases the shipwreck of human lives is incalculable, especially the lives of precious children who have become pawns of human misery.

Sometimes parents who have become lax in the Christian training of their children are reminded through their conscience that they have a moral obligation to bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. They may excuse themselves by saying that they have neither the time nor the ability to fulfill their God-given duties. They feel that they can shift their responsibilities as parents entirely to the teachers of the Christian day school or the Sunday school.

In today’s society it is difficult even for Christian parents who are diligently trying to bring up their children in the fear and love of God. The spiritual advice and counsel given by parents is often negated by the worldly life style and the moral standards of their peer group rather than by the expressed will of God. Well meaning Christian parents are often criticized as being old fashioned and uninformed as to modern day living as they try to guide their own children into the paths of righteousness.

The foregoing setting in which today’s children are growing up and the problems with which they will have to grope is presented not for the purpose of painting a bleak picture but rather that we come to a realization of the problems facing us as Christian parents, teachers, pastors, and laymen and that we ready ourselves for battle against Satan and all his cohorts and that we prepare ourselves by heeding the advice of the Apostle Paul: “Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not

² Dr. James Dobson, *Dare to Discipline*, (Wheaton, Ill, 1970), p. 1.

against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; and your feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.” Ephesians 6:11-17

Part 2 – The Fourth Commandment

Honor your father and mother, that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth.

What does this mean?

We should fear and love God that we do not dishonor or anger our parents and others in authority, but honor, serve and obey them, and give them love and respect.³

God wants children to honor those in authority especially those in our home, church, and government. God gives these commands, “Fathers do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.” (Ephesians 6:4) “Listen, my son, to your father’s instruction and do not forsake your mother’s teaching. They will be a garland to grace your head and a chain to adorn your neck.” (Proverbs 1:8-9) Concerning those in authority in the church God gives this command. “Remember your leaders, who spoke the Word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith.” (Hebrews 13:7)

God also has special commands for those in civil authority and the children. “Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God.” (Romans 13:1) God has added a very special promise to this Fourth Commandment in order to bless us. “Honor your father and mother - which is the first commandment with a promise - that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth.” (Ephesians 6:2-3)

Concerning the fourth commandment it can be said that God has exalted fatherhood and motherhood above all other relationships. God does not command merely to love parents but to honor them also

God distinguishes father and mother above all other persons on earth and places them next to Himself. It is greater to honor than to love. Honor doesn’t just include love, but also includes obedience, humility and reverence. This requires that we show by our actions, both of heart and body, that we hold our parents in highest esteem, and next to God, regard them above all others. To honor someone from the heart is to truly consider them as superior. The young must be taught to remember that even though their parents may not be “with it” in their sight, they are still father and mother, given to them by God. Their way of living and their failings cannot rob them of their honor.

Luther writes:

“First then learn what is meant by honor to parents as required by this commandment. It is that they be esteemed and prized above everything else as the most precious treasure we have on earth. Then that, in conversation with them, we measure our words, lest our language be discourteous, domineering, quarrelsome, yielding to them in silence, even if they go too far. And thirdly, that we honor them by our actions, both in our bearing and the extension of aid, serving, helping, and caring for them when they are old or sick, frail or poor; and that we not only do it cheerfully, but with humility and reverence, as if unto God.

³ David P. Kuske, *Luther’s Catechism*, (Milwaukee, 1982). p. 77.

Where children are obstinate and never do right unless a rod is laid on their backs, they provoke to anger both God and their parents. Thereby they deprive themselves of what is intended as a blessing and a joy to their consciences, and lay up for themselves nothing but misfortune. Therefore, it has come to be a universal complaint in the world that both young and old are wayward and unrestrained, without a sense of discipline and reverence. They do nothing unless driven to it by force, and behind each other's backs they defraud and steal to the limit. Therefore God punishes them and they sink into all kinds of filth and misery. So the parents themselves effect no remedy. One fool rears another; as they have lived, so will their children live after them. “

A strong motivation for us to keep this commandment is that God has attached a temporal promise to it saying: So that you may live long and that it may go well with you in the land the Lord your God is giving you.” (Deut. 5:16) Here we see evidence of the sincere interest taken by God in this commandment. God considers it not only an object of pleasure to Himself, but also an instrument of our welfare by promising that things will go well with us and we will enjoy a long life. St. Paul also praises this commandment by saying, “Which is the first commandment with promise, that it may be well with Thee, and Thou mayest live long on the earth.” (Eph. 6:2-3)

All authority has its roots in parental authority. When a father is unable to instruct his child the responsibility is turned over to a teacher; if a parent is ill or otherwise unable to raise a child he obtains help from relatives, friends, or neighbors. Parental authority is sometimes delegated to others appointed for the same purpose. In all cases it is God Himself who speaks to us and demands obedience.

In speaking of civil authority, Martin Luther gives the following explanation:

“The same may be said of obedience due to civil authority, which authority, as we have said, is all embraced in the estate of fatherhood and extends beyond all other relations. Here the father is not one of a single family, but one of many tenants, citizens, or subjects. Through civil rulers, as through our parents, God gives us food, home, and land, protection and security. Therefore since they bear this name and title with all honor as their chief glory, it is our duty to honor them and to esteem them as we would the greatest treasure and the most precious jewel an earth.”

“Now, he who is obedient, willing and capable, and cheerfully gives honor wherever due, knows that he pleases God, and receives joy and happiness as a reward. If on the other hand, one will not serve in love, but despises and resists authority or rebels, he should know that he has no favor or blessing.”

“Thus we have two kinds of fathers presented in this commandment: fathers by blood and fathers by office, or fathers in the family and in the state. Besides these there are spiritual fathers, who rule and teach us by authority of God's Word; as Paul glories in being a father when he says: In Christ I begat you through the Gospel” (I Cor.4:15). Now because they are fathers, honor is due them, indeed more than to all others. It must be impressed upon people at large that they who would be called Christians owe it to God to show double honor to those who watch in behalf of their souls, that they may befriend and provide for their spiritual shepherds. (Heb.13:17; I Tim. 5:17)”⁴

Parents are under obligations to obey God and they are to conscientiously and faithfully carry out all the duties of their office; not only to feed and provide for the temporal wants of their children but especially to train them to honor and praise God. The parental office is not a matter of pleasure and whim, but God has strictly commanded it and entrusted it to us and we will be accountable for the correct discharge of its duties.

Part 3 – The Responsibility of the Parent

⁴ Dr. Martin Luther, *Luther's Large Catechism* (Minneapolis, 1935) pp. 66-75.

Robert Golladay, a former pastor of Grace Lutheran Church, Columbus, Ohio, speaks of the parental responsibility expressed or implied in the fourth commandment:

“One of the first things parents ought to know is the nature and extent of their parental responsibility. It is one of the greatest and one of the most responsible things in the world to be a parent. It means in a certain sense to take God’s place, to be God’s agent in the perpetuation of the divine mystery of human life. It is one of the greatest things in the whole round of human activities to take a human life, fresh from the hands of God, and be one of the decisive factors in fashioning it into a temple fit for the indwelling of God’s Holy Spirit. It is a great thing, and should be considered one of the divinest things under the sun, to be a co-worker with God in the perpetuation of human life, and then to help train the lives of those who are to take our places, continue and improve our institutions, and finally move on, as we shall move on.”

When a baby is born it is a frail little body. It needs to be lovingly shielded from many enemies because it has a soul so precious that for it the Son of God suffered and died.

Pastor Golladay goes on to say:

“As God’s representatives parents are to teach children not only to make a place for themselves in the world, but to stand in right relation to other people. They must learn not only to respect the rights of others, and to respect the needs of others, but also to have regard for their feelings. The kingship of self-control must also be taught.

Parents are to teach their boys and girls that they are not and can not be free lances in this world. This world is not built on the principle of do-as-you-please. Authority begins in heaven at the throne of the Almighty God and runs down, step by step, through all the institutions and relations of men. It is not only the divine right but the divine duty of parents to be the source of authority in the home and to make it such a sacred thing that it must be revered. Where it is not revered and freely obeyed, there the sting of disobeyed law must be felt. The divine Word itself says that there are instances when “He that spareth his rod hateth his son.” (Prov.13:24)

If we are Christian parents we know that our children have been given to us to be trained for heaven. Christ tells us that we ourselves are to seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness. And the first great good we are to seek for our children is to make them members of God’s Kingdom, and to train them to live as consistent members of it.

Happy are the parents rich in the love and respect of godly, obedient children. If they have not succeeded in their efforts at child-training as they should have liked, they will at least be relieved of an intolerable burden if they have a good conscience which tells them that they did what they could for their children’s temporal and eternal welfare.

Most blessed of all are those parents who can come before the throne of God and say to the King: **HERE WE ARE, AND THE CHILDREN YOU HAVE GIVEN US!**⁵

How important are the rules of obedience which parents set for their children? The police department in Houston, Texas drew up “Twelve Rules for Raising Delinquent Children.”

1. Begin with infancy to give the child everything he wants. In this way he will grow up to believe the world owes him a living.
2. When he picks up bad words laugh at him. This will make him think he’s cute. It will also encourage him to pick up “cuter” phrases that will blow off the top of your head later.
3. Never give him any spiritual training. Wait till he’s 21 and then let him decide for himself.

⁵ Robert Emory Golladay, *The Ten Commandments* (1915).

4. Avoid use of the word ‘wrong.’ It may develop a guilt complex. This will condition him to believe later, when he is arrested for stealing a car, that society is against him and he is being persecuted.
5. Pick up everything he leaves lying around – books, shoes, and clothing. Do everything for him so that he will be experienced in throwing all responsibility onto others.
6. Let him read any printed matter he can get his hands on. Be careful that the silverware and drinking glasses are sterilized, but let his mind feast on garbage.
7. Quarrel frequently in the presence of your children. In this way they will not be too 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 every sensual desire is gratified. Denial may lead to harmful frustration.
10. Take his part against neighbors, teachers and policemen. They are all prejudiced against your child.
11. When he gets into real trouble, apologize for yourself by saying, ‘I never could do anything with him.’
12. Prepare for a life of grief. You will be apt to have it.⁶

What are parents to do? Many parents are following one or more of the preceding twelve guidelines; they are preparing for and receiving a life of grief. However, it doesn’t have to be this way because God provides parents with unchangeable yet always relevant guidelines. “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon 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 the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.” (Deut. 6:4-9) In order to impress God’s Word upon their children, parents need to be students of the Scriptures. After parents have studied and keep studying God’s Word, then they are ready to show their children the importance of God’s commands.

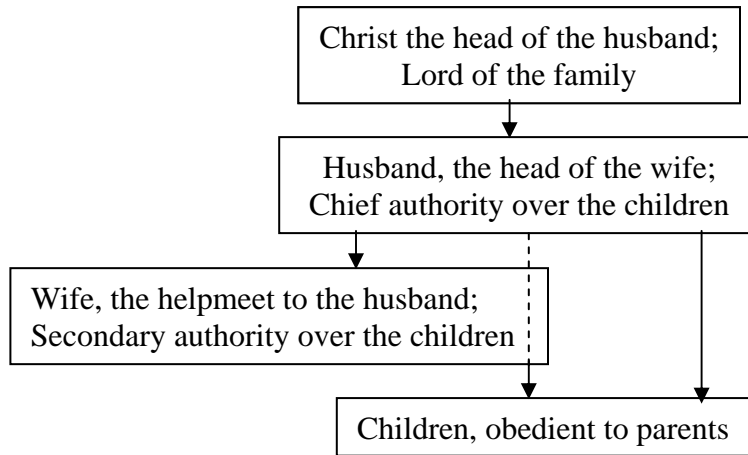
Writing to Christians in general St. Peter says, “But you are a chosen people, a royal Priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praise of Him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God: once you had not received mercy, but now you have mercy.” (I Peter 2:9-10) What a field of service the Christian home affords for this Privileged ministry. Parents – priests of the Lord! Called and ordained by God as priests unto their children.⁷

How can parents carry out their God-given responsibility of being priests to their children? They must have a firm foundation built alone on God’s Word. Parents need to have a living faith in Jesus as their personal Savior. Having living faith means that parents will need constant and continual nourishment from the Bread of Life. This nourishment should include regular feedings from God’s Word during worship services, family devotions, personal Bible study and the like. Parents also need to Pray individually, as a couple, and with their children. Prayer is a command of God of which parents should make much more use. Prayers need to be made by the parents for the children and by the children for the parents. Parents need to impress upon their children the many different requests that can and should be made in prayer: prayers of thanksgiving, prayers for stronger faith, prayers for help in trouble, prayers for guidance, prayers for others, and the list will go on. Parents can very easily and meaningfully present God to their children through symbols and pictures which have been seen at home, church, school, or elsewhere. Also, parents together with their children need to be Christian witnesses to the world. Together they witness: that God takes charge of both parents’ and children’s worries; and that God takes charge of both parents’ and children’s warfare against the devil, world and our own sinful flesh. Finally together as one Christian unit – parents and children will endure all things for the sure hope of everlasting life.

⁶ Larry Christenson, *The Christian Family*, (Minneapolis, 1970), pp. 88-89.

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 157-158.

God holds parents accountable for the discipling (discipline) of their children. The child's obedience is not merely desirable or preferable; it is required. "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord." (Ephesians 6:1 & 4) God has provided order for all of his creation and he also has provided order for the family. The diagram below pictures the order with which God made His family.



What is the responsibility of the parent toward the child in regard to discipline? LOVE. The central ingredient in discipline is an informed and exemplary love. Christian parents love God and show this through their words and actions. Love gives the feeling of security which is necessary in a Christian parent-child relationship. INSTRUCTION. Parents are the child's first and best teachers. Parents also need to make use of all the different Christian Education agencies which the church provides for their children. OBEDIENCE. This is very important because most of the world's problems come from either disobedience to God or disobedience to man or both. "In Christian discipline all training in obedience must emphasize again and again the motivation of responsibility to God, which lends purpose to obedience."⁸ PRAYER. Martin Luther said that diligent prayer is more than half of learning and it is more than half of child training as well. Concerning prayer, it brings God's power into our problems and it gives us confidence as well as knowing that God will support and direct us. KINDNESS – FIRMNESS. Both Law and Gospel come into play in the process of discipline. "Where punishment and forgiveness, love and firmness go hand in hand. and where parents themselves live by these principles, child training will be successful."⁹

"Parents who took for ready-made techniques to use in achieving discipline expect too much. Parents differ and children differ, and each must capitalize on his own strengths and overcome his own weaknesses. Achieving discipline is largely a matter of relationships between parents and children. One achieves the desired results one way, one another. There are, however, some fundamental principles to observe in purposeful child training."

1. Know what you want and how to achieve it.
2. Give children enough to do.
3. Be quiet, pleasant, and confident.
4. Make the home as attractive and comfortable as possible.
5. Be consistent.
6. Punish out of love.
7. Let forgiveness play its appropriate part.

⁸ William A. Kramer, "Christian Discipline in Child Training," (St. Louis, 1978) p. 10.

⁹ Ibid., p. 11.

8. Begin at birth.¹⁰

Part 4 – The Responsibility of the Teacher

When we consider the responsibility of the teacher we are confining ourselves mainly to those men and women who have been called to teach in the Christian day school; however, many of the ideas presented will fit nicely for the Sunday School or Vacation Bible School teacher as well. The congregation has entrusted such called teachers with one of the most responsible positions, that of assisting the parents in the Christian education of their children. As persons who have been called to assist the parents in the Christian training of their children, teachers have many of the same responsibilities as those given to the parents. There are, however, a number of responsibilities which a teacher has that need to be stressed.

First, the teacher should consider himself or herself a servant in the work of the church called for the specific purpose of assisting the parents. It therefore follows that the teacher is responsible for working toward effecting a close cooperation and working relationship with the parents. A beginning in this area could be made by having each teacher visit with the parents of the children in his or her home and thus become acquainted with the parents and the children and the environment in which they live. Mental notes could be taken as a result of such a visit which could contribute not only toward a wholesome working relationship with the parents but also which could contribute toward and effective understanding of each child, his personality, his strengths and his weaknesses in the freedom and security of his home environment. This effort at understanding the child should self evidently continue during his school days, for it is difficult to teach a child unless you first “reach” him.

Obviously children are sent to school to learn. It is therefore the self-evident responsibility of the teacher to teach children. Of foremost importance is the instruction in the Word of God so that children may be made wise unto salvation through faith in their Savior, Jesus Christ. In cases where unchurched children or neglected children are enrolled, every effort should be made to ascertain as to whether or not they are baptized. If not the teacher should consult with the pastor for the purpose of finding a God-pleasing approach to the situation. In addition to courses in religion, teachers are also responsible to teach children all the other branches of learning so that children can develop their gifts and talents and successfully become useful citizens, capable of earning an honest living for themselves and their future families. In these branches of learning the Christian teacher has been professionally trained that the entire curriculum is presented with the view that both teachers and pupils might “edify the body of Christ” and that as a result of the application of the Word in all these branches of learning children might through the power of the Spirit “grow up into Him in all things, which is the head, even Christ.” (Ephesians 4:15)

Probably an area of a teacher’s responsibility that is of great concern and difficulty is the area of Christian discipline. Applying the Law and the Gospel to the lives of children who are so different one from another in personality, problems, and previous upbringing is often so difficult that the Christian teacher is constrained many a time on bended knee to implore the Lord for guidance and help in this so great a task of directing the children in the paths of righteousness for His name’s sake. As he sends his supplication heavenward, he prays:

Each time before I face my class,
I hesitate a while,
And ask the Father, Help me, Lord.
To understand each child.

Help me to see in every one
A precious soul, most dear,

¹⁰ Ibid., pp. 11-13.

And may I lead that child through paths
Of wonder, not of fear.

Help me to teach with patience
And wisdom from above,
That they may learn truths from Thy Word,
The wonders of Thy love.

Dear Father, as they look to me
For Christian guidance true,
I look to Thee and humbly ask
That Thou wilt teach me, too.

The responsibilities of a teacher in assisting the parents in the Christian training of the children may seem at times to be so overwhelming that it may cause the Christian teacher to question his capability at fulfilling all the demands of his calling. Even the great Apostle Paul at times also felt this way and had to be reminded, “My grace is sufficient for thee: for My strength is made perfect in weakness.” (II Cor. 12:9) If we on our part have been faithful stewards in His vineyard God will bless the labor of our hands, for He Himself has promised: “For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: so shall my Word be that goeth forth out of My mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.” (Isaiah 55:10-11)

In imploring the Lord of the Church for divine counsel and guidance, the Christian teacher prays:

Another day has dawned, another long full day,
But ere I go to teach, O God to Thee I pray.
I thank Thee for the will, the power, the blessed right,
To lead immortal souls in ways of truth and light.
And yet I feel how small, how futile all my power
Unless Thou grant Thy help and grace to me each hour.
Let me not dim for one the brightness of this day.
Teach me that I may teach; and by Thy grace I pray
Grant me Thy wondrous love that I may touch their souls
And turn their eager hearts to high and noble goals.
Give me for I am frail, Thy patience so divine
That I may deal with them in tenderness like Thine.
Let me be kind to them, the dull who often call,
The trying, restless ones, the weakest, poorest, all.
Oh, let me not forget that for each little one
The Savior ever pleads before Thy holy throne.
Grant me strength, Thy love, Thy wisdom deep and free,
So shall the day be bright and blest for them and me. Amen.

Part 5 – the Responsibility of the Pastor

Because the pastor’s call is broad and comprehensive, it also includes responsibility for the work done in the Christian day school. His call makes him the pastor of the teachers while their calls establish them as co-workers with the pastor in the Christian day school. Usually the Pastor’s call does not require of him to be

active in a teaching role in the school as the teacher is, but his call makes him the “overseer” also of this phase of congregational activity. As such he will visit the school and its various classrooms. His purpose will be to show his interest and his willingness to counsel and encourage. The pastor will attend faculty and board of education meetings to assure himself that the school is fulfilling its function in relation to the total educational program of the congregation. Although the final responsibility for the supervision of the school remains his, he will recognize the specific calls which the teachers and principal have to work in this area.

The pastor will promote the Christian day school, informally and formally as occasions present themselves. The pastor will concern himself with recruiting students for the school. An especially helpful tool in studying and planning the school’s future enrollment is a file of all the children in the congregation. This file remains current by immediately adding the names of the newly baptized infants and of the children of new members, and by removing the names of those whose membership in the congregation has ended.

]The pastor remains shepherd also of the children in school, even though the teachers share in shepherding them. It is a part of the pastoral wisdom to encourage the children to see in him a friend and thus to win their confidence. He retains responsibility for counseling and disciplining the children. Because this is a responsibility shared by the teachers, principal and pastor an orderly procedure should always be followed. The disciplining and counseling should begin with the teachers, who may refer difficult cases to the principal and ultimately to the pastor. A sharing of information by all involved here will certainly benefit the child. The pastor will in every way seek to cooperate with the faculty for the welfare of the teachers and the welfare of the school.

The Christian day school is a congregation’s most comprehensive educational agency for the children; however, it is not the only educational agency over which the pastor has supervision. Some of the other agencies which serve the same objective of bringing Jesus closer to our children are Vacation Bible School, Sunday School, Lutheran Pioneers, Confirmation instruction, etc. The pastor can do much to encourage his people to make use of all the possible educational agencies for their children. Blessed is the congregation where pastors, teachers, and parents work in close harmony so that the child might

SEE JESUS MORE CLEARLY
 LOVE JESUS MORE DEARLY
 FOLLOW JESUS MORE NEARLY
 SERVE JESUS MORE SINCERELY.

Part 6 – The Responsibility of the Lay Person

There are many areas of assisting parents in the education of their children for which sincere and dedicated Christians could assume responsibility. Where congregations have a Sunday School or a Vacation Bible School a lay person could volunteer as an instructor of children in the truths of God’s Word, assist them with the chief parts of Luther’s catechism, and through such teaching and a Christ-like example lead children toward a sanctified life. A lay person who has aptness for teaching should be a willing volunteer for the pastor who, as a rule, has the responsibility for securing and training teachers for the Sunday School and setting up its curriculum. A willing lay person could also contribute toward the education of children by volunteering as a teacher’s aide in the Christian day school. There are many areas in which such paraprofessionals could contribute in the educational process.

Being willing to serve on the Board of Education surely would be a worthwhile contribution. Members of such a board often have to make many decisions affecting the educational endeavors of the congregation. People on such a board with a spirit for Christian education could indeed have a positive influence. A lay person with a genuine spirit for Christian education can in many cases convey this spirit throughout the entire congregation and be an influence to parents in sending their children to the Christian day school or the Sunday School or Vacation Bible School.

By their financial support of Christian education many persons can lend a hand even though they may not have any children benefiting from these agencies. Finally, all lay persons should assume the responsibility for giving children a Christ-like example of Christian conduct, worthy of emulation. For the lay person who maintains, “THERE IS NOTHING I CAN DO” we would recommend the reading and serious consideration of the words of the second stanza of hymn 496 of the Lutheran Hymnal:

If you cannot speak like angels,
 If you cannot preach like Paul,
 You can tell the love of Jesus,
 You can say He died for all.
 If you cannot rouse the wicked
 With the judgment’s dread alarms,
 You can lead the little children
 To the Savior’s waiting arms.

Part 7 – Conclusion

While Christ our Lord and Master sojourned here on earth He gave us many evidences of His love and spiritual concern for children. Probably one of the more touching scenes is portrayed for us in Mark 10 where children were brought to Jesus that He might touch them, and the disciples rebuked them that brought them. But when Jesus saw it, He was much displeased and said unto them:

Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God.

Verily I say unto you, whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein.

And He took them up in His arms, put His hands upon them and blessed them.

Children are indeed precious to Jesus, so precious that He died for their sins. May the Lord grant us His wisdom and grace that we may share with our children the joys of everlasting life prepared for all of us by Christ Jesus, our Lord.

TOPICS OR QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Is Christian discipline properly administered in most of the homes? If not, what measures might be initiated to help parents with this difficult but vital application of Law & Gospel?
2. Is there a need for educating the parents in the area of their parental responsibilities in the Christian training of their children? If so, what measures might be taken to Provide for this need?
3. What special measures could be initiated to assist the single parent in the Christian education of children?
4. Studies of the home consistently point up the lack of meaningful communication among the members of the family. Why is this so? What can be done to improve this situation?
5. Sometimes the parents permit the child to decide as to which school he or she will attend. Why does this happen? Should it happen? Is this an area that needs attention?
6. What measures can be taken by the church or school to provide children with a way to attend church services in such cases where parents themselves do not attend?

7. Parents and children are in greater need for counseling today than a decade or two ago. How can pastors or teachers find sufficient, time in their busy schedules to provide adequate counseling?

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