

Fathers

by Hendrik Joubert

The youth of today fail to meet society's expectations. The concerns many have regarding the future of the world we live in are expressed in sayings similar to this. Has there been a generation who did not feel this way? There is some consolation in the fact that the *careless* youth of today becomes the *concerned* adults of tomorrow; however the concerned adults of this generation should be conscious of the fact that they set the standards of today, the foundation upon which the next generation is to build.

If one has to single out one person who should take responsibility for current state of affairs it must be the father, the one appointed by God as the head of the family. He may choose to delegate, or abdicate this role in a way reminiscent of Esau's sale of his birth right; however that does not free us of the responsibility in the sight of God. We may seem gracious and progressive in the way we do it, however the responsibility is not ours to give away, or escape from.

The father's ability to rule his own household well is one of the qualifications he must meet to serve as an elder to take care of the church of the Living God. **...one who rules his own house well, having his children in submission with all reverence⁵ (for if a man does not know how to rule his own house, how will he take care of the church of God?);... (1Timothy 3:4-5)**

Likewise, one who desires to serve as a deacon in the church of God has to demonstrate his readiness in this way: **Let deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well. (1Timothy 3:12)**

In the case of elders there is another dimension added suggesting the responsibility of the father to teach his children, and specifically in a religious context. He must have **faithful children**, or **children who believe. (Titus 1:6)** His ability to lead by example becomes obvious so that they will submit themselves to the authority to which he submitted: **But I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ,...** (1Corinthians 11:3)

Consider the following Proverb in this context: **Train up a child in the way he should go, Even when he is old he will not depart from it. (Proverb 22:6)**

The rule of each father is tested rather spontaneously. It is true that every adult makes his own decisions, however the decisions of the child of an elder is an actual reflection of his abilities to rule his own house well so that it serves to either qualify him, or disqualify him.

In the Old Testament the father was instructed to **teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up.⁸ You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes.⁹ You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates. (Deuteronomy 6:7-9)**

This seems excessive, *pushing it down their throats*, therefore they may rebel against it. Is that the problem, or is it the respect the father has for his own rules which may **provoke** the **children to wrath**? (**Ephesians 6:4**) The instruction here is to **bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord**.

An obvious disregard for the supposed important rules you bind on others are sure to cause frustration for those under your authority, and disrespect from others. We should not tell lies, but when the phone rings, or there is a knock on the door: "*Tell them I am not here.*" Do I warn my son not to smoke while I have a cigarette in my mouth? Do I forbid him to "drink" while asking him to fetch my beer? Do I tell him not to curse, while standing with the "boys," smoking, with a beer in hand spitting out these vulgar words one after another? Add your own example here...

In such cases God becomes a mere scarecrow for kids; adults do not have to worry about Him. It teaches them that once they get to a certain age they may do as they please, no need to respect and fear God.

Have you noticed how cute it is when a little boy tries to imitate his father's stance, walk or other mannerisms? Or when a little girl dresses up like her mother, struggling to deal with the heeled shoes? Our children are more a reflection of who we are, and taught them to be, than we would like to accept. (**1Peter 1:13-16**)

When I look at my children, do I consider them an upstanding members of society, but more importantly individuals who have a respect for God? **Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, For this is man's all. ¹⁴ For God will bring every work into judgment, Including every secret thing, Whether good or evil.** (**Ecclesiastes 12:13-14**)