

# The Duties of Parents and Children

*Taken from 'Christian Behavior'*

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## **The Duties of Parents and Children**

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## Touching Parents

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If thou art a parent, a father or a mother, then thou art to consider thy calling under this relation.

Thy children have souls, and they must be begotten of God as well as of thee, or they perish.

And know also, that unless thou be very circumspect in thy behaviour, to, and before them, they may perish through thee: the thoughts of which should provoke thee, both to instruct, and also to correct them.

1. To instruct them as the Scripture saith, and to *bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; and to do this diligently when thou sittest in thy house, when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.* (Ephesians 6:4, Deuteronomy 6:7)

Now to do this to purpose.

First, *Do it in terms and words, easy to be understood:* affect not high expressions, they will drown your children. Thus God spake to his children, and Paul to his, Hosea 12:10, 1 Corinthians 3:2.

Secondly, *Take heed of filling their heads with whimsies, and unprofitable notions;* for this will sooner learn them to be malapert and proud, than sober and humble. Open therefore to them the state of man by nature: discourse with them of sin, of death, and Hell; of a crucified Saviour, and the promise of life through faith. *Train up a child in the way he should go; and when he is old, he will not depart from it,* Proverbs 22:6.

Thirdly, There must be much gentleness and patience in all thy instructions, *lest they be discouraged,* Colossians 3:21.

And fourthly, Labour to convince them by a conversation answerable, that the things of which thou instructest them, are not fables, but realities, yea, and realities so far above what can be here enjoyed, that all things, were they a thousand times better than they are, are not worthy to be compared with the glory and worthiness of these things.

Isaac was so holy before his children, that when Jacob remembered God, he remembered that he was the *fear of his father Isaac*. Genesis 31:53.

Ah! when children can think of their parents, and bless God for that instruction and good they have received from them, this is not only profitable for children, but honourable and comfortable to parents. *The father of the righteous shall greatly rejoice; and he that begetteth a wise child, shall have joy of him*, Proverbs 23:24-25.

#### *Touching Correction*

First, See if fair words will win them from evil: This is God's way with his children, Jeremiah 25:4-5.

Secondly, Let those words you speak to them in your reproof, be both sober, few, and pertinent, adding always some suitable sentence of the Scripture therewith; as if they lie, then such as Revelation 21:8, 27. If they refuse to hear the Word, such as 2 Chronicles 25:14-16.

Thirdly, Look to them that they be not companions with those that are rude and ungodly, showing with soberness a continual dislike of their naughtiness, often crying out to them, as God did of old unto his; *Oh! do not this abominable thing that I hate*, Jeremiah 44:4.

Fourthly, Let all this be mixed with such love, pity, and compunction of spirit, that if possible, they may be convinced, you dislike not their persons but their sins. This is God's way, Psalm 99:8.

Fifthly, Be often endeavouring to fasten on their consciences the day of their death and judgment to come. Thus also God deals with his, Deuteronomy 32:29.

Sixthly, If thou art driven to the rod, then, 1. Strike advisedly in cool blood; and soberly show them, 1. their fault; 2. How much it is against thy heart thus to deal with them; 3. And that what thou dost, thou dost in conscience to God, and love to their souls; 4. And tell them, that if fair means would have done, none of this severity should have been: This, I have proved it, will be a means to afflict their *hearts* as well as their bodies; and it being the way that God deals with his, it is the most likely to accomplish its end.

Seventhly, Follow all this with prayer to God for them, and leave the issue to Him.

*Folly is bound up in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction will fetch it out, Proverbs 22:15.*

Lastly, Observe these cautions.

1. Take heed that the misdeeds for which thou correctest thy children be not learned them by thee. Many children learn that wickedness of their parents, for which they beat and chastise them.
2. Take heed thou smile not upon them to encourage them in small faults, lest *that* thy carriage to them, be an encouragement to them to commit greater.
3. Take heed thou use not unsavory and unseemly words in thy chastising of them, as railing, miscalling, and the like; this is devilish.
4. Take heed thou do not use them to many chiding words and threatenings, mixed with lightness and laughter; this will harden: Speak not much, nor often, but pertinent to them with all gravity.

## Of Children to Parents

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There lieth also a duty upon children to their parents, which they are bound both by the law of God, and nature, conscientiously to observe. *Children, obey your parents in the Lord; for this is right.* And again, *Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is well pleasing to the Lord;* Ephesians 6:1, Colossians 3:20.

There are these general things in which children should show forth that honour that is due to their parents from them.

First, They should always count them better than themselves. I observe a vile spirit among some children; and that is, they are apt to look over their parents, and to have slighting and scornful thoughts of them; this is worse than heathenish: such a one hath got just the heart of a dog or beast, that will bite those that begot them, and her that brought them forth.

*But my father, etc. is now poor, and I am rich, and it will be a disparagement, or at least an hindrance to me, to show that respect to him as otherwise I might.*

I tell thee thou arguest like an *atheist*, and a *beast*; and standest in this, full flat against the Son of God. Read Mark 7:8-13.

Must a gift, and a little of the glory of the butterfly, make thee that thou shalt not do for, and honour to thy father and mother? *A wise man maketh a glad father; but a foolish son despiseth his mother,* Proverbs 15:20. Though thy parents be never so low, and thou thyself never so high, yet he is thy

father, and she thy mother, and they must be in thy eye in great esteem. *The eye that mocketh at his father, and that despiseth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and the young eagles shall eat it*, Proverbs 30:17.

Secondly, Thou oughtest to show thy honour to thy parents, by a willingness to help them with such necessaries and accommodations which they need. *If any have nephews or children, let them learn to shew pity at home, and to requite their parents*, saith Paul, *for that is good and acceptable before God*, 1 Timothy 5:4.

And this rule Joseph observed to his poor father, though he himself was next the king in Egypt, Genesis 47:12, Genesis 41:39-43.

But mark; Let them requite their parents.

There are three things, for which, as long as thou livest, thou wilt be a debtor to thy parents.

1. For thy being in this world: they are they, from whom immediately under God thou didst receive it.
2. For their care to preserve thee when thou wast helpless, and couldst neither care for, nor regard thyself.
3. For the pains they have taken with thee to bring thee up. Until thou hast children of thy own, thou wilt not be sensible of the pains, watchings, fears, sorrow and affliction, that they have gone under to bring thee up; and when thou knowest it, thou wilt not easily yield, that thou hast recompensed them for their favour to thee: How often have they sustained thy hunger, clothed thy nakedness? what care have they taken that thou mightest have wherewith to live and do well when they were dead and gone; they possibly have spared it from their own belly and back for thee, and have also impoverished themselves that thou mightest live like a man. All these things ought duly, and

like a man, to be considered by thee, and care ought to be taken on thy part to requite them; the Scripture saith so; reason saith so; and there be none but dogs and beasts deny it. *It is the duty of parents to lay up for their children; and the duty of children to requite their parents.*

Thirdly, Therefore show by all humble and son-like carriage, that thou dost to this day, with thy heart, remember the love of thy parents.

Thus much for obedience to parents in general.

Again, if thy parents be godly, and thou wicked (as thou art if thou hast not a second work or birth from God upon thee) then thou art to consider, that thou art more strongly engaged to respect and honour thy parents, not now only as a father in the flesh, but as godly parents: thy father and mother is now made of God thy teachers and instructors in the way of righteousness: Wherefore to allude to that of Solomon, *O Son, hearken to the law of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother; bind them continually upon thy heart, and tie them about thy neck*, Proverbs 6:20-21.

Now to provoke thee here to consider.

First, That this hath been the practice always of those that are, and have been obedient children; yea, of Christ himself to Joseph and Mary, though he himself was God blessed forever, Luke 2:51.

Secondly, Thou hast also the severe judgments of God upon those that have been disobedient to awe thee. As,

1. Ishmael, for but mocking at one good carriage of his father and mother, was both thrust out of his father's inheritance, and the kingdom of Heaven, and that with God's approbation, Genesis 21:9-12, Galatians 4:30.

2. Hophni and Phinehas, for refusing the good counsel of their father, provoked the great God to be their enemy. *They hearkened not to the voice of their father, because the Lord would slay them*, 1 Samuel 2:23-25.
3. Absalom was hanged, as I may say, by God himself, for rebelling against his father, 2 Samuel 18:9.

Besides, little dost thou know how heart-asking a consideration it is to thy parents, when they do but suppose *thou mayest be damned*: how many prayers, sighs and tears are there wrung from their hearts upon this account?

Every miscarriage of thine goeth to their heart, for fear God should take an occasion thereat to shut thee up in hardness forever.

How did Abraham groan for Ishmael? *O*, saith he to God, *that Ishmael might live before thee*, Genesis 17:18.

How was Isaac and Rebekah grieved for the miscarriage of Esau, Genesis 26:34-35.

And how bitterly did David mourn for his son, who died in his wickedness, 2 Samuel 18:32-33.

Lastly, And can any imagine, but that all these carriages of thy godly parents, will be to thee the increase of thy torments in Hell, if thou die in thy sins, notwithstanding?

Again, if thy parents and thou also be godly, how happy a thing is this? how shouldst thou rejoice that the same faith should dwell both in thy parents and thee? thy conversion, possibly, is the fruits of thy parents' groans and prayers for thy soul, and they cannot choose but rejoice; do thou rejoice with them. 'Tis true, in the salvation of a natural son which is mentioned in the parable; *This my son was dead, and is alive again; was lost, and is found; and they began to be merry*, Luke 15:24.

Let therefore the consideration of this, that thy parents have grace as well as thee, engage thy heart so much the more to honour, reverence, and obey them.

Thou art better able now to consider the pains and care that thy friends have been at, both for thy body and soul; wherefore strive to requite them: Thou hast strength to answer in some measure the command; wherefore do not neglect it.

It is a double sin in a gracious son not to remember the commandment, yea, the first commandment, with promise, Ephesians 6:1-2.

Take heed of giving thy sweet parents one snappish word, or one unseemly carriage. Love them because they are thy parents; because they are godly; and because thou must be in glory with them.

Again, if thou be godly, and thy parents wicked, as often it sadly falls out:

Then, first, let thy bowels yearn towards them; 'tis thy parents that are going to Hell.

Secondly, As I said before to the wife touching her unbelieving husband, so now I say to thee, Take heed of a parroting tongue; speak to them wisely, meekly, humbly; do for them faithfully without repining; and bear with all childlike modesty, their reproaches, their railing, and evil speaking. Watch fit opportunities to lay their condition before them. *O! how happy a thing would it be, if God should use a child to beget his father to the faith? Then indeed might the father say, with the fruit of my own bowels hath God converted my soul.* The Lord, if it be his will, convert our poor parents, that they, with us, may be the children of God.