

Responsibilities of Children

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Introduction

Just as surely as mothers, fathers and grandparents have divinely established roles, so also do children within a family. Therefore, let us herein consider what God's word has to say on the subject of children.

Duty Toward Parents

Children must obey their parents (Ephesians 6:1-3; Colossians 3:20). This charge is repeatedly given in the Book of Proverbs (Proverbs 1:8-9; 6:20-23; 23:22-25). Lest anyone lightly dismiss the problem of youthful rebellion, let us remember that during the Mosaic dispensation, this transgression was a capital offense, punishable by stoning (Deuteronomy 21:18-21).

True obedience is not offered with a sullen attitude of grudging necessity, but in honor and reverential respect (Ephesians 6:1-3; Exodus 20:12; Leviticus 19:3). Contemptuousness is condemned (Exodus 21:17; Leviticus 20:9). Parental abuse is disgraceful (Proverbs 19:26). Those who engage in such shameful activity are consumed with savage, filthy arrogance (Proverbs 30:11-14). Darkness and death await (Proverbs 20:20; 30:17).

The concept of honor also necessarily implies provision (1 Timothy 5:3-4, 16). Jesus condemned the scribes and Pharisees for allowing individuals to evade this mandate (Matthew 15:1-9). Those who fail in this regard have repudiated the faith and are counted as worse than unbelievers (1 Timothy 5:8).

Duty Toward Others

Young Timothy was told to manifest an attitude of respect in all relationships: older men must be treated as fathers, older women as mothers, younger men as brothers, younger women as sisters, in all purity (1 Timothy 5:1-2). Sadly, however, disrespect toward one's superiors and equals is a fact of modern life. We would do well to remember the fate of those young lads who mocked Elisha, by saying "Go up, you baldhead!" (2 Kings 2:23-24).

Adults should set the example in this regard. If parents respect civil laws, children will learn to do the same. If parents respect spiritual leaders, children will do so also. Unfortunately, many a Sunday dinner involves a large helping of skinned preacher and fried elders. When their kids get into trouble, these same folks want the preacher to talk with them. Yet, at that point, such efforts are doomed to failure because the children have never been taught any respect for spiritual leaders (2 Chronicles 36:15-16).

Duty Toward Obligations

Children should learn the value of work. A wise son gathers in the summer, but a shameful son sleeps in the harvest (Proverbs 10:5). A lazy person is a source of irritation and frustration to the one who sent him (Proverbs 10:26). He that works with a slack hand is brother to him who destroys (Proverbs 18:9). Therefore, children must be taught to make the most of every opportunity. Diligence is demanded (Ecclesiastes 9:10; Colossians 3:23-24). Those who prove faithful in small things will, in time, be entrusted with greater responsibility (Luke 16:10).

Duty Toward Companions

Young people need to be cautious regarding their companions. Joint participation in sin results in joint condemnation (1 Timothy 5:22). Therefore, Solomon said, “My son, if sinners entice you, Do not consent...” (Proverbs 1:10-19). Evil companions inevitably corrupt good morals (1 Corinthians 15:33-34). Instead of having fellowship with the unfruitful deeds of darkness, we must expose them (Ephesians 5:11-12).

Duty Toward Self

Paul admonished young Timothy to “flee youthful lusts” (2 Timothy 2:20-22). Despite being far removed from the watchful eyes of earthly father, Joseph was mindful of the omniscience of his heavenly father (Genesis 39:7-13). How can a young man keep his way pure? By heeding the Word of God (Psalm 119:9-11).

Not only should we conduct our vessels – our bodies – in sanctification and honor, we also must recognize the need for modest apparel (1 Timothy 2:9-10). The clothing of a Christian must be orderly, reflecting a commitment to the Biblical standard of purity and holiness. Nakedness is condemned in the Patriarchal, Mosaic and Christian dispensations. From a Scriptural standpoint, nakedness is defined as the inadequate covering of the body (Genesis 3:6-11; 3:21; Exodus 20:26; 28:42; Revelation 3:18). This includes complete nudity, and also partial nakedness: i.e., the exposure of the thighs, the exposure of the hips, midriff, and breasts. Therefore, we can necessarily conclude today that any clothing which inadequately covers the thigh, the hips, or the breasts is condemned by the word of God. Modest apparel is demanded (1 Timothy 2:9-10).

Duty Toward God

Finally, young people must also be mindful of their duty toward God. David’s final words to Solomon reflect this obligation: “As for you, my son Solomon, know the God of your father, and serve Him with a whole heart and a willing mind; for the Lord searches all hearts, and understands every intent of the thoughts. If you seek Him, He will let you find Him; but if you forsake Him, He will reject you forever” (1 Chronicles 28:9). In like manner, Solomon’s final admonition echoes this same theme (Ecclesiastes 12:1, 13-14).

Conclusion

We have considered the duty of children toward parents, others, obligations, companions, self and God. As parents, let us help our offspring apply these lessons. As children, let us remember our Creator in the days of our youth.