

Parenting in God's Kingdom

Mavis Warwaruk

I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth (3 John 1:4).

Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord (Ps. 127:3).

But bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord (Eph. 6:4).

These portions of God's Word signify how important a job we as parents have in upbringing our children, in sowing the seed of faith. What they learn as a child often remains with them throughout their lifetime.

Teach the ABCs of Faith

In our duty as parents, we are fortunate to have the assistance of God's congregation. We have our small home congregations where our children begin to learn the simple ABCs of faith. Then we have Day Circle, Sunday school and camps. This work is among the most important work in God's kingdom. As parents we find these resources a big help and a necessity to reinforce our weak teachings at home.

Living faith has remained the same through all the generations. "I will open my mouth in a parable: I will utter dark sayings of old: Which we have heard and known, and our fathers have told us" (Ps. 78:2,3). We believe the same as our believing parents, grandparents and other elders, and can take comfort in teaching our children in the same way the previous generations have taught: Put away sin as it attaches. Strive to keep a clean conscience. Only unforgiven sin can separate people from God. Preach the gospel of the forgiveness of sins often.

Encourage the youth in their daily struggles. Open your home to haps and invite the young to visit. I hosted our area's haps group shortly after my brother Gary passed away. We sang *Safe in the Arms of Jesus* in his memory. It was such a comfort to be reminded that if we remain believing we too can one day reach the shores of heaven.

For those who have lost this gift of faith, we want to show them that we still love them and their undying soul. After my husband Larry received the grace of repentance, he said he had always felt the love of the believers. This meant so much to him.

Faith Comes by Hearing

It is so important to take our children to services. "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17). Growing up, I remember parents who did not take their children to hear the Word

of God. Sad to say, they are no longer believing. My uncle Jake Ylioja sometimes said, “A church without the sound of children is a dead church.”

Children are the future of God’s kingdom. Often it would seem easier to leave the children at home or to only listen online. However, we all need the fellowship of the believers whenever possible.

For those living away from a congregation, Internet services are a big support – and they can be for all of us. One can sit and listen with the family to a live sermon or an archived sermon. Many timely discussions are also available. This is an additional tool one can use to reinforce the home teachings and give opportunity for the children to sit quietly to listen to God’s Word. Sunday school lessons are also available. Listening to God’s Word is important to all.

Even when my husband wasn’t believing, he often went to church with us where he could listen to God’s Word. When God opened his heart, he knew where to go to have his sins forgiven. It was one of the happiest moments in our family to know he was now a child of God and heaven acceptable. And we were reminded that we do not have to understand everything – all we are required to do is to believe our sins forgiven.

“Without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and he is rewarder of them that diligently seek him” (Heb. 11:6).

Resources and Helps

LLC publications are a big asset: books, audio recordings and periodicals. The *Illustrated Home Bible* is a storybook Bible that is simple, easy to read and understand and beautifully illustrated. This book is a benefit to any home library. There are many other resources as well for which to be thankful, many different aids to help us instruct our young in interesting ways.

An older book of the believers, *From Victory to Victory*, translated from SRK’s *Voitosta voittoon* (1971), includes the following instruction: “It is the will of God, you beloved young brothers and sisters, that you would receive strength through grace to walk as it is comely to a young Christian...and that you parents also would receive strength through grace to raise your children in the wisdom of the Holy Spirit” (p. 140). And from the same book, on page 8: “The Holy Ghost unites those who believe the living gospel; children, young people, middle-aged, old, rich, poor, learned and unlearned into one holy family and royal priesthood in Christ.”

Joy in Sharing and Serving

Carolyn Ylitalo

Parenting has many blessings but can also have difficulties. How do we support each other through the trials and challenges of this duty God has given?

Visits Support and Uplift

I have often been supported through visiting over a cup of coffee with believing friends in a home setting. When I take time to visit, I feel my burdens lift when I share. Many times there is not a solution, yet it feels good to have a friend that listens and simply understands, often from similar experiences.

Is it possible to reach out when we feel overwhelmed or too tired to visit? Phone calls and text messages are helpful when it is difficult to get out. Asking for help from your spouse or letting go of unimportant things can also help.

Visitors Bring Joy

My mother taught by example of having an “open door” that welcomed guests any time of the day. This included the youth, friends and elders. The practical matters of what to serve or if the house was in tip-top shape seemed to be minor details. The guests were important.

As a mother now myself, I have nonetheless found that at times it feels difficult to invite guests when I’m feeling tired. I remember when my husband asked who we should invite over one day after church. I was pregnant and thought of the tasks I wished to complete before anyone would come. I gave him a funny look. He asked me why I didn’t want to have company anymore, as this wasn’t my first tired Sunday. I told him, “I don’t mind the company if you do the cleaning and run to the store.”

It felt good when dad and the children scurried around to straighten up so when the guests arrived, I was able to enjoy the day.

I have learned that I don’t always need to entertain, yet when I push aside the everyday duties and make time for visiting, my joy increases. Perhaps that is why I didn’t perceive my mother getting tired when serving her guests. I only saw the joy when the visitors came.

Precious Memories Are Made

The world around us often teaches that it’s most important to have “quality time” with children. My dad has taught me that quality time happens in quantity time. When we spend time with family and friends we make meaningful and precious memories. When we take time to visit other parents and friends, and

also our own parents, we find those gold nuggets of fellowship and encouragement to continue on. Let us remember that when we serve others, we often receive more than we give.

Thank You for our friends and escorts; hand in hand we journey home. In the bonds of peace and freedom, mutual joy and love we own (SHZ 351:3).

Faith Comes by Hearing

David and Karen Young

Advice from elders is timeless when they encourage us to bring our family to the hearing of God's Word. "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17).

At gatherings of God's children, we feel joy! "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith" (Rom. 1:16,17). The gospel comforts and gives strength. Singing songs of Zion with fellow believers at services, camps and discussions also brings peace to restless hearts.

Peace and comfort enfold us while attending and as we leave congregational events and camps. God's gatherings instruct and encourage weak and faulty parents. We often go home from such gatherings uplifted, thankful for a fresh start, making new promises as parents. We learn together with our fellow believers – escorts in faith who share the same spirit – and peace, comfort and joy abound!

God gives guidance in Hebrews 10:25: "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching."

Gracious God, we pray to You: Shepherd all our children. We are foolish, slow of heart. Father, You must lead them. Carry our beloved young; keep their hearts from evil. May a guardian angel be with them as they travel (SHZ 429:1).

Evening Ritual Renews Faith and Hope

Aaron Riutta

As a father of a large family with many demands on my time and energy, I along with my wife Kim must get creative and make it a priority to set aside time for our family and ourselves.

One thing we have done for a few years is to gather in the living room with all the children before bedtime. We take a few minutes to sing songs and say prayers together and sometimes take turns saying

things we are thankful for. For a few brief moments, the challenges of the day are forgotten. We give thanks to God for all that we have.

When we take this time to pause at the end of the day, we realize how abundantly God has blessed our lives. No matter what has taken place during the day, my children and I can bless each other with the gospel of the forgiveness of sins. We can go to sleep with peace in our hearts, assured that this precious gift of forgiveness and faith is so much greater than the challenges in everyday life.

Thank You, God, for Being beside Me

Lars Anderson

All people experience trials and difficulties – no one is immune. We can look back to the first human couple and read about the struggles they had to experience because of their fall into sin. Adam and Eve went from living in paradise where everything was provided for them to having to work for their food, shelter and all that was needed to survive. God provides and blesses us with all that we have in this life; it's His will that we work for our daily bread still today.

We don't have to look very far, however, to become discontent. The Internet and social media have made us more connected than ever before. It's easy to look through this medium to see how others portray their lives. Without even realizing it, we can become envious and discontent. We may try to secretly compete with each other or wish to live the same ideal life we see pictured. We can begin to criticize others or have ill feelings towards them.

If we fall too far into this trap, it can lead to depression or anxiety when we feel we can't keep up or be able to have the same, seemingly beautiful life. It's easy to fall into comparing – it's a natural human tendency. We remember that Cain was very jealous of his brother Abel and even killed him because of this.

As we experience trials or difficulties or find ourselves struggling to feel joy in our life, is there something we can do to help?

Count Our Blessings

What does this mean? For me, this can be as simple as saying a short prayer of thanks to God when I recognize or realize my blessings. It can be thanks for a good night's sleep when I wake in the morning, that God has given a new day or that the sun is shining. God hears all our prayers!

Recognize the Cause of Our Trial

Sometimes we can take steps to change our trial or difficulty. Of course, this may not always work depending on the trial. But as an example, if we have become discontent because of what we see on social media, we can work to change the amount of time we spend online. Or we can even delete or suspend our accounts. If the news of this world causes anxiety, we can turn off our radio and news feeds. If we suffer from depression or anxiety, we can also reach out for professional help.

Speak with a Trusted Friend

A friend might be able to see things from an outside perspective that can help in some way. They can listen, comfort or seek help on our behalf. A believing friend can comfort with the gospel of forgiveness.

Trust in the Gospel

The gospel heals a wounded conscience. It comforts and strengthens us to know our matters are in order and we are heaven-acceptable. Trials and difficulties are not a punishment from God because of our sinfulness, yet God allows trials in our life to try our faith. We should not blame God for our difficulties. Instead, let us remember to give thanks to Him that we are still a child in His kingdom and that He cares for us daily.

Worry

Carl Kangas

Ahh, worry. It is such a senseless emotion. Even so, there are areas in a parent's life that can especially cause worry: providing for the family and the faith life of our children.

With regard to providing for the family, Jesus Christ counsels: "Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof" (Matt. 6:30–34).

We parents often focus on temporal things to the detriment of the most important spiritual matters. Timothy puts this into perspective: "But godliness with contentment is great gain" (1 Tim. 6:6). This

short verse contains much instruction. Godliness, or personal faith, is first. Godliness also includes caring for the faith life of our family. When godliness in this sense is placed above all else, we can be content knowing that God will provide for the daily temporal needs of our family.

And yet we wonder: how can I make sure that my children remain in faith? What should I say to them if they fall into sin? What if they struggle in faith in their teenage years? How will I handle my children when they face puberty? There are so many things to ponder and yes, worry about.

Be assured, dear parent, God is with you in your home. His Spirit is in every room, watching, listening, teaching, comforting and guiding.

Be calm. Be comforted. Try not to worry. As Apostle Paul wrote to Timothy: “I thank God, whom I serve from my forefathers with pure conscience, that without ceasing I have remembrance of thee in my prayers night and day” (2 Tim. 1:3).

God hears your prayers and is with you through His Word and His Spirit. Trust in this and love your family with all your heart.

Processing Emotions

Angie Rintamaki

Life contains both happy and difficult experiences. Therefore, feeling bad is a normal part of the human experience. Why then do we often try to push the negative feelings away or ignore them? We certainly don't have a problem experiencing positive emotion, do we! During this past year I've been getting help with managing thoughts and feeling my negative emotions. I'm finding it very helpful to better understand what my thoughts are rather than spin in them. Our thoughts determine feelings, which determine action. Thought work is like exercise for the mind.

To begin with, I needed to write my thoughts down, to get them out where I could actually see them. Thoughts are like sentences in the brain, they're not all facts even when they feel to be so true.

Feelings exist for a time, and many times they eventually pass. Sometimes we use external things or actions to escape negative emotions. Some examples of this are emotional eating, smoking, overspending, overworking and even buffering with social media. I'm a food “buffer-er.” I wouldn't have thought it possible, but I'm learning instead to feel the emotion, feel the urge for food and then just let it go. (Not that I don't still enjoy a good round of chocolate!)

I'm also trying to help my family identify thought patterns that affect behavior and actions. However, not everyone is interested in learning it. One of my family member's usual response is, “It's not rocket surgery!”

Nevertheless, as believers we know how our sin-corrupt flesh remains within us. It brings trouble to our life every day, despite our efforts to control it or battle against it. When sin burdens the conscience, that is not a negative thought one can just let go of. The gospel is the only cure! It cleans the conscience and brings contentment and peace.

I trust that God will bless my life and the lives of my loved ones. Even as I discover ways to handle thoughts and emotions, I want living faith to remain foremost. I wish to remain reliant on God's guidance and help. As Solomon wrote in Proverbs 3:5,6: "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths."

Discussion Points

1. What resources have you found that have helped in teaching your children?
2. Do you know prodigal sons or daughters whose childhood teachings have led them back to God's kingdom? What has this spoken to you?
3. How have Internet resources been helpful in your teachings?
4. How can we be a good example to our children?
5. In parenting, what have been your greatest helps?