

THE NEXT GENERATION

“Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord. Fathers, do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged.” — COLOSSIANS 3:20-21

Our children will be the next generation of moms and dads and of leaders, teachers, researchers and caregivers for this planet and for humanity. How we raise them will make all the difference.

The goal of good parenting is to rear children who are not discouraged, who are full of hope, and whose hearts are free to pursue those hopes. Hope is looking forward to the future in such a way that gives confidence in the present, which allows them to pursue their goals. It is the opposite of discouragement, which Paul warns of in his statement, “Fathers, do not embitter your children.”

Parents without Christ will likely give their children hope in a good education as a key to their future, which, in turn, gives them hope in achieving professional success as a key to satisfaction, and in earning good money as a key to comfort. These are valid, but what if our child is not academically inclined? Many will grow into young adults, disappointed and even embittered because of unattainable expectations instilled by their parents. Possessions, performance, position are not where a child’s goal should be, but many parents unwittingly give them hope in that direction, because it’s a normal part of life, and they’ve allowed themselves to be conformed to the expectations of society.

As parents, we need to know God ourselves and for God to be the goal of our children's lives. Their hope should be in Him and in the outworking of His will and purpose in their lives. We need to give our children a loving, caring home where parents are in harmony, loving each other and loving God. We also need to give them structure, routine, discipline and boundaries. Paul said, "Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord." But the onus is on us to teach our children to obey.

It used to be said that we want our children to "be good", but now the greater consensus is that we want them to "be happy". Happiness is one of those things that if we go for it, we'll probably miss it. In the Christian life, holiness is the goal, and happiness is the consequence. Our children are entrusted to us by God. Parenting is a privilege, and in teaching them about God and His love for us, we honour Him and we honour our children. For the next generation, that makes for a bright and promising future.

PRAYER: Dear Father, I pray for every parent who has yet to come to know You. May your Holy Spirit draw them, because in knowing You, they have a secure fortress for themselves and for their children.

TO REFLECT UPON: Am I teaching my children about God and His love for us?