

No Substitute for Mother

by Dan S. Shipley

Nothing, we are told, has more influence on what we become in later life than what we learn in our earliest years. And, no one, as we know, plays a more important role in these early and formative years of development than the mother. While it is true that she has no control over the sex or physical attributes of her offspring, the mother, more than any one else, is in a position to mold their disposition and character. What an unparalleled opportunity and responsibility, this business of training up children in the way they should go! (Prov. 22:6)

Accordingly, among the very first things every young mother should learn is this “*way they should go.*” It is God’s way; it is bringing them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord (Eph. 6:4). One of the biggest mistakes made by many young mothers in child rearing is in seeking the counsel of the ungodly — those who have no regard for the counsel of God (Ps. 1:1). Only too late have some realized their mistake in following the advice of prominent psychologists who encouraged “self-expression” and permissiveness in children. Regretfully, even Christians sometimes forget that God’s way is always best. No better handbook on child rearing can be found than the Bible — and the best mothers will be those who learn and apply its teachings to their children and to themselves.

Consequently, the mother must live in accord with the way her child should go. Example is one of her most effective teaching tools. As a proverb mentioned in Ezekiel says, “*As is the mother, so is her daughter*” (16:44). There are no pretentious airs at home. What we are there **IS** what we are and even small children know it. What God is to a mother cannot be hidden from her child — and it constitutes the strongest kind of a recommendation for a similar faith. Much good teaching can be nullified by the influence of a bad example. As some sage has noted, to teach right and live wrong is like feeding our children good food with one hand and poison with the other. The mother who doubts the lasting influence of her example need only to recall what she remembers about her mother from childhood — and so shall she be remembered!

It is mostly the mother who puts across the tremendously important and needful lessons concerning respect and responsibility. Regard for authority **MUST** begin at home! — and it cannot be taught too early. Proper attitudes are taught, not inherited. If, in the first four or five years of life, a child does not learn that he is responsible for his actions and that he cannot defy authority, look out for the next fifteen years or so! The mother who indulges a defiant and rebellious child invites misery and heartaches. God says that true love will not spare the rod (Prov. 13:24). As a noted Los Angeles doctor has said, “The greatest social disaster of this century is the belief that abundant love makes discipline unnecessary.” How deceived many have been!

And how deceived are mothers who say they can’t afford to take the time for such training. They can’t afford not to!

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