

Sabbath School Lesson #8 – Season of Parenting – 18-24 May 2019

Christ would have Christian parents know that children are gifts. “Lo, children *are* an heritage of the LORD: *and* the fruit of the womb *is* his reward” (Psalm 127:3). To parents who know that children are the property of God, the following counsel is applicable: “Be kind in your speech to your children. No loud, tempestuous scolding will cure your children of any evil action. No taking your children in a passion and shaking them will convert them from the error of their ways to do God’s will. They are God’s property. As a people professing to be reformers the very best lesson that you can give your children in this age of corruption is not to indulge them to become fashionable after the worldly style. Sons and daughters are to be instructed as to what it means to be obedient to God’s requirements, what will fit you and them for a position in the heavenly kingdom” {UL 302.3}.

Sunday: Childless Parenting – In 1 Samuel 1:1-8 we read the sad story of Hannah. She was the first wife of Elkanah. During the festival, Elkanah “gave the mother of his children a portion for herself and for each of her sons and daughters, and then as a token of regard for Hannah, his first and best-loved wife, he gave her a double portion. This excited the envy and jealousy of the second wife, and she boldly asserted her claims to superiority as one highly favored of God; and she tauntingly pointed to the fact that Hannah had no children, as proof of the Lord’s displeasure toward her” {ST October 27, 1881, par. 5}. “This scene was enacted again and again, not only at the yearly gatherings, but whenever circumstances furnished an opportunity for Peninnah to exalt herself at the expense of her rival. The course of this woman seemed to Hannah, a trial almost beyond endurance. Satan employed her as his agent to harass, and if possible exasperate and destroy one of God’s faithful children. At last, as her enemy’s taunts were repeated at one of the yearly feasts, Hannah’s courage and fortitude gave way. Unable longer to conceal her feelings, she wept without restraint. The expressions of joy on every hand seemed mockery to her. She could not partake of the feast” {ST October 27, 1881, par. 6}. “Her husband, knowing the cause of her grief, sought to comfort her with the assurance of his unchanged affection, and gently chides her for yielding thus to sorrow: “Why weepest thou? and why eatest thou not? and why is thy heart grieved? am not I better to thee than ten sons?” But it was impossible for Elkanah fully to understand her feelings or to appreciate the cause” {ST October 27, 1881, par. 7}. “Hannah brought no reproach against her husband for his unwise marriage. The grief which she could share with no earthly friend, she carried to her Heavenly Father, and sought consolation from Him alone who hath said, ‘Call upon me in the day of trouble, and I will deliver thee.’ There is a mighty power in prayer. Our great adversary is constantly seeking to keep the troubled soul away from God. An appeal to Heaven by the humblest saint is more to be dreaded by Satan than the decrees of cabinets or the mandates of kings” {ibid, Par 8}.

Monday: Single Parenting – What happens if a parent die leaving the care of children to a surviving parent? We are told the following: “It is not wise to give indiscriminately to everyone who may solicit our aid; for we may thus encourage idleness, intemperance, and extravagance. But if one comes to your door and says he is hungry, do not turn him away empty. Give him something to eat, of such things as you have. You know not his circumstances, and it may be that his poverty is the result of misfortune” {CS 163.1}. “But among all whose needs demand our interest, the widow and the fatherless have the strongest claims upon our tender sympathy and care. ‘Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world’ {CS 163.2}. “The father who has died in the faith, resting upon the eternal promise of God, left his loved ones in full trust that the Lord would care for them. And how does the Lord provide for these bereaved ones? He does not work a miracle in sending manna from heaven, He does not send ravens to bring them food; but He works a miracle upon human hearts, He expels selfishness from the soul, He unseals the fountain of benevolence. He tests the love of His professed followers by committing to their tender mercies the afflicted and bereaved ones, the poor and the orphan. These are in a special sense the little ones whom Christ looks upon, whom it is an offense to Him to neglect. Those who do neglect them are neglecting Christ in the person of His afflicted ones” {CS 163.3}.

Tuesday: The Joy and Responsibility of Parenting – The responsibility of the parent can never be lightly turned over to others. God uses the teacher in the Sabbath school, church school, in our academies and colleges, in helping to train the youth; but the most *important school*, and the *one* that has the most to do in deciding the destiny of our Children is *the home school*. The greatest responsibility of child-training God has placed upon the parent.

The joy of parenting is in knowing that it is by the grace of God parenting is done. “Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord.” “Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build; except the Lord keep the city, the watchmen waketh but in vain.”

Wednesday: Parenting as Disciple-Making – In 1 Samuel 3:10-14 read about the child Samuel, how he was parented and disciplined by Eli. The religion of the child Samuel was one of faithful service in his child duties. “Samuel ministered before the Lord, being a child.” “And the child Samuel ministered unto [served] the Lord before Eli.” What did he do? – Just what a little child could do, and nothing more. He was not a priest, he could not enter into the holy place and offer incense. But he could wait on the priest, Eli. We read that after God had called him and spoken to him by night he “lay until the morning, and opened the doors of the house of the Lord.” There we get a glimpse of him at his daily service. His work was to make himself generally useful, no matter how lowly the task; and in the faithful discharge of those humble duties he was ministering unto the Lord. Samuel was taught to be a faithful servant.

Servants, no matter how menial their service, are to obey orders “in singleness of heart,” as under Christ; “not with eye-service, as men-pleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; with good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men” (Ephesians 6:5-7). “Whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men” (Colossians 3:23). This was the characteristic of Jesus, who said, I delight to do Thy will, O my God” (Psalms 40:8), and He was doing God’s will just as much when He was assisting Mary in her household tasks, or Joseph in the carpenter’s shop, as when he was preaching to the multitudes, and healing the sick. The first was the preparation for the last. So it was with Samuel, his daily childish chores prepared him to be a priest. It when he was doing his childish tasks with a faithful, willing spirit, that he was called to the highest service that could be given to a man – that of bearing a message from God to the high priest of God. Yet the service was in reality no higher than the other. What sweet simplicity is seen in the child Samuel! Prompt to answer every call, he rose from his bed without hesitation, time after time, to wait upon the aged Eli, who he supposed was needing assistance. Then, with the graceful trust of childhood, he followed Eli’s instructions, and said, when he heard the voice “Speak, for Thy servant heareth.” Yes, he heard, because he was alert to hear, like the angels that excel in strength, that “do his commandments, harkening unto the voice of his word.” In that is summed up the perfect Christian life. How many there are who missed “the high calling of God in Christ Jesus,” simply because they despise the day of small things. Like Samuel was disciplined, let parents disciple their children to be servants of the Lord.

Thursday: Fighting for Your Prodigal Child – There are Adventist parents who have neglected their duty to “train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it” (Proverbs 22:6). The training here involves not only teaching, but also practicing what is taught until it becomes a habit. Early training of children is important – to cultivate a Christ-like character in children. Given that the hearts of men naturally tend to evil, when the child is uncultured and becomes a prodigal, it might be hard to reverse the trend of evil. Hatred, wrath, variance, strife, uncleanness, are natural to every human being. The Apostle Paul, writing to Titus, said, “We ourselves were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another” (Titus 3:3). In other words, the unregenerate human nature is very wolfish. Let any child be left utterly destitute of training, and the wolfish disposition will surely develop. Whatever good traits anybody possesses are the result, either directly or indirectly, of the grace of God. “Every good gift, and every perfect gift is from above” (James 1:17). All this only emphasises the necessity of the early, and continuous training of children in the right way. Two declarations of the sure Word of God should ever be in the minds of parents, as a warning and an encouragement: “A child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame.” “Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is told he will not depart from it.”