

Marriage, Divorce, And the Children

By Dave Roberson

Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture notations are taken from the *King James Version* of the Bible.

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Chapter 1 *God Takes Sides*

When it comes to raising children, it's too bad we weren't grandparents first and parents second. Then we'd have all the wisdom and knowledge we needed to raise our children!

The Need for God's Wisdom In Parenting

Unfortunately, that isn't the way it works. And when parents try to raise their children outside the wisdom of God, the children are usually the ones who suffer the most.

Most of us don't realize that the times we live in have very little to do with our success in raising our children. Parenting has always been the same. The Word of God is timeless and contains all the wisdom needed for turning children into adults who still want to serve God after they are grown.

If there was ever an area where we stand to lose the most, it is in this area of raising our children. What would it be like to go to Heaven without them?

As parents, we need to think about this when we make decisions based on selfishness instead of what is best for our family—especially when that decision concerns whether to stay married or to get divorced. This is a decision in which the wellbeing of every member of the family—both parents and children—is at stake.

God Sides With the Children

What side does God take in a divorce? He takes the side of the children and of the parent who will see to the children's sanctification. We see this in First Corinthians 7, where the Apostle Paul gives godly counsel to the believer who is married to an unbeliever. God includes this counsel in His Word largely because children are so often involved in this type of situation. Adults can make their own decisions, but a child cannot.

Our children will become what we as parents teach them because they are by nature imitators of what we do. They will accept as true the same philosophies we accept; they will solve their problems the same way we do; and they will lean toward the good or the bad according to what they learn from our example.

That's why God always chooses the children's side in a divorce situation, as well as the side of the parent who will see to the children's spiritual growth. God knows that the children are virtually unspoiled ground and will become what their parents teach them.

Paul speaks God's wisdom regarding this matter in First Corinthians 7:12-16:

But to the rest speak I, not the Lord: If any brother hath a wife that believeth not, and she be pleased to dwell with him, let him not put her away.

And the woman which hath an husband that believeth not,

**and if he be pleased to dwell
with her, let her not leave him.**

**For the unbelieving husband
is sanctified by the wife, and the
unbelieving wife is sanctified by
the husband: else were your
children unclean; but now are
they holy.**

**But if the unbelieving de-
part, let him depart. A brother
or a sister is not under bondage
in such cases: but God hath
called us to peace.**

**For what knowest thou, O
wife, whether thou shalt save
thy husband? or how knowest
thou, O man, whether thou shalt
save thy wife?**

We'll look at this passage further in the following chapters. But the first thing to understand regarding these verses is that Paul knew the heart of God concerning marriage. He also knew that God would take the side of the children in an adult world where the only rights children possess are the ones that adults give them.

Chapter 2 ***How the Unbeliever*** ***Is Sanctified***

Once we understand that God has the children on His mind in the marriage situation between a believer and an unbeliever, then the rest of First Corinthians 7:12-16 begins to open up to us.

Paul is talking in this passage about being unequally yoked. He says, “If an unbelieving husband is pleased to dwell with his believing wife, then let her not divorce him.” The same is true if the unbelieving spouse is the wife. The reason Paul gives for this counsel is clear: **else were your children unclean; but now are they holy.**

What Does ‘Pleased to Dwell’ Mean?

Let’s take the case of an unbelieving husband who is married to a believing wife where children are involved. The Apostle Paul said, “If the husband is pleased to dwell with his wife, let her not put him away because the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the believing wife.”

Sanctified in this situation does NOT mean “saved.” Otherwise, Paul wouldn’t have gone on to say in verse 16: **For what knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save thy husband?**

The whole reason the unbelieving husband is able to be sanctified by the wife in this situation is that he is “pleased to dwell” with her. In other words, he doesn’t protest if she creates

an atmosphere in their home conducive to raising godly children.

In this case, the husband and wife have worked out a pleasing relationship between them that includes the sanctification of the children. He agrees with her desire to take the children to church and pray with them in the home. He keeps his language clean in their presence. He abstains from drinking in front of them. He keeps his home free of filthy materials that may pervert his children’s minds to immoral standards.

A Parent’s Worldly Example

This is the kind of marital relationship Paul was talking about when he said, “If the unbelieving husband is pleased to dwell with his believing wife, let her not put him away.” If the husband chose to exhibit worldly conduct in the home, the children would become unclean. But because he is pleased to dwell with his wife on God’s terms, now are their children made holy.

You see, *sanctified* means “to be separated from the filthiness of the world.” So as long as the unbelieving husband is willing to be sanctified by his wife, she is not to put him away. Her husband has allowed her to teach him the things he needs to know for the children’s sake and for the sanctification of the home.

Chapter 3

Children Are the Target

Satan goes after children through adults. If he succeeds, he has then ensnared the children of the next generation, deceiving them to do his bidding as they grow to become adults themselves.

One way the enemy deceives children is by making divorce and remarriage look common and acceptable. He wants children to think that adults go on with their Christian walk after divorce as if nothing has happened. He tries to make children believe that divorce bears no more consequences than buying the wrong car.

Thus it is obvious that the pressure Satan can bring against a marriage is not just to threaten the parents' personal happiness but also to **DESTROY THEIR CHILDREN!** Because children cannot make their own decisions, God blesses the adult who will see to his or her children's sanctification.

The Danger Of Promiscuous Grace

Believers need to be very careful with the present-day broad teaching from the pulpit on promiscuous grace (i.e. grace that gives permission to act contrary to the Word). With the divorce rate in the Church above 50 percent and still climbing, it is easy to see that Christians are letting the devil take the fight out of them in the area of marriage.

If we believe that grace gives us permission to divorce, it follows that we

don't believe there will be any real consequence for going through with it. Why should we inconvenience ourselves with trying to make our marriages work? After all, our salvation isn't being threatened. We're going to Heaven anyway, aren't we? Therefore, God must not really care if we get a divorce.

However, even though our marriages may not be the devil's prime objective, our children always are. By the time they reach adulthood, they may not even bother anymore with the formality of Christianity since the product they have grown up observing in the home seems to be no good!

Satan doesn't care how long it takes. He is willing to target the thought patterns of the children of every generation against the day they will become adults and turn away from God.

Satan's Method: *Penetration*

This is one reason Paul said we need to put on the whole armor of God—so we can stand against the wiles of the devil concerning our families: **Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil** (Ephesians 6:11).

The word *wiles* carries the meaning of “methodical, militaristic plots, ploys, and schemes of the devil.” The word *devil* comes from a Greek word that includes the meaning of “penetration.” In other words, one of the names God gave Satan to describe his nature was “penetration.” God also called Satan a master strategist.

This helps us understand the enemy's method of operation. When he approaches a generation, he does so with a meticulous, methodical plan to penetrate the resistance of that generation. He has found our children to be an easy target, and he intends to destroy them.

Satan's persistence can be likened to single drops of water that keep dripping on a rock by the hour, day, week, month, and year. Those little drops keep hitting the same spot, until finally, those little drops of water actually penetrate the rock's hard surface.

Similarly, Satan goes after children, seeking to penetrate their thought processes and their belief system little by little with a wide variety of worldly influences. His intention is to raise each new generation with his programmed mindset.

Satan will also try to destroy any faithful adults who have weathered the storms. He is out to get adults who have come through their generation with strong family ties. His biggest threats are parents who endeavor to instill into their children godly principles that will enable them to carry the Christian banner into the next generation.

Chapter 4 Let's Be There For Our Children!

We are living in the last days, and even though God's standard for parenting has not changed, sin does abound on every side. As a result of the sinful condition of today's society and the spiritual shortsightedness of the previous generations, many husbands and wives find themselves in intolerable situations in their homes. These spouses may desire a godly home where the values of God are taught, but because Satan has penetrated their marriage partner's mind, they and their children have become victims of domestic violence, physical or mental abuse, perversion, and every evil work.

Spouses caught in this dilemma often do not desire a divided home. But for the safety of themselves and their children, they must make the decision to separate.

Don't Substitute Time for Things

If you have been granted a divorce for any of the reasons mentioned above, you can rest assured that, by God's grace, you will be able to regain the ground lost through such a painful situation. But it is important to stay aware of one of the main ways the devil comes against children: He attempts to get them out from under the watchful eyes of their Christian parents who love them.

Satan is not going to accomplish that goal unless he can convince us that the first steps into his plan are going to

HELP our children rather than harm them. The principle stated in Hebrews 5:14 can help us understand how the enemy works: **But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised TO DISCERN BOTH GOOD AND EVIL.**

Paul wouldn't say we need to discern both good and evil if evil couldn't be cloaked in good. You see, the devil knows he would be wasting his time if he tried to convince us to disregard our children's needs. So he tries to get us to sacrifice our **TIME** with our children by convincing us to work to get them more **THINGS**.

For example, at one time statistics showed that America had a divorce rate between 40 and 50 percent for first-time marriages, and the percentage got higher the second and third time around. This is not even counting the number of single-parent dwellings, which was reported to include more than one-quarter of all children under 21 years of age.

One reason for these alarming statistics is that so many parents have swallowed the following lie of the enemy: that it takes the income of both parents to maintain a higher standard of living. Since these parents think this standard is important for the welfare of their children, they honestly believe no sacrifice is too great in order to accomplish that goal. They believe they are seeing to the needs of their families when they are actually depriving their children of what they need most—time with them.

As parents, we want the best for our children. However, sometimes we are deceived into believing that it is more important to prepare our children for adulthood in the natural than it is to prepare them spiritually. We often don't realize that our children's greatest need is not an extra television in their bedrooms, but parents who are there for them, guiding and training them every step of the way.

Our children need our time and attention, especially through those frustrating years as they enter into adulthood. If we are there for them, they will turn to us first. But if we are not there for them, they will soon turn to another source outside the family and outside of God to get their emotional and spiritual needs met.

Make the Right Kinds Of Sacrifices

We are like every other parent who loves his or her children—we are willing to do anything to see to it that they have everything they both want and need. But good becomes evil in this area of our lives when we are willing to replace the spiritual with the natural, the eternal with the temporal.

All parents who love their children will make sacrifices. We just need to make sure that the sacrifices are the right ones. To sacrifice the most precious thing we have—our time—in order to obtain more material things for our children is not always the right choice. Often the time we use to earn the money necessary to purchase those material possessions would have been much more

wisely invested into the spiritual and moral training of our children.

We need to reevaluate our home lives with our children in mind. Do we want both dad and mom working so we can add an extra bedroom onto the house or to purchase a newer second car? Or shall we wait for God to prosper us in a way that doesn't hurt the closeness of our family?

If there was ever an area in which God will prosper us, it is this one. He will give us an abundant return, both materially and spiritually, if we are willing to make the sanctification of our children our first priority.

Chapter 5 ***Seek God First,*** ***And He Will Hear***

Our responsibility to raise our children in the ways of the Lord is one of the reasons Jesus said, **But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you** (Matthew 6:33).
WHAT BETTER REASON TO SEEK FIRST GOD'S KINGDOM THAN OUR CHILDREN?

It is glorious when a husband and wife can work so closely together for the good of their children that one is left free to see to the children's sanctification. In First Timothy 5:14, Paul states how much it pleases God when a woman gives her energy to guiding the home: **I will therefore that the younger women marry, bear children, guide the house, give none occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully.**

But there are times when husbands or wives suddenly find themselves in a single-parent situation. Other times the husband can earn very little money and the wife has to work to put food on the table. In these situations, God gives special grace. He understands because, above all else, He is your Heavenly Father; He knows more about parenting than you could ever imagine.

God Hears a Parent's Prayer

One prayer that God will answer quickly is the parent's prayer concerning the sanctification of his or her children. For instance, when parents call out to the Lord for more time to spend with their children so they can love them and guide them more effectively, this touches

the heart of God. He hears the prayer of parents who cry out for the best for their children!

Even if it means God has to move mountains to see to it that your cry for your children is heard, He will move those mountains. Remember, He is **YOUR FATHER**, and He understands parenting. When your prayer has such a godly foundation, God will turn the entire situation around in order to answer that prayer.

God holds little children in the highest esteem and will move on the behalf of anyone who sees to their sanctification. So in the case of single or working parents who desire more time with their children, they just need to turn to God with their children in mind. God can move schedules, create jobs, and cause circumstances to change in their favor. If parents really want more time with their children and will trust God to bring it to pass, they will eventually have the time they need to sow into the most valuable treasures God has entrusted them with—the lives of their children.

Consider Carefully What Affects Your Children

If you are divorced and considering remarriage, I strongly recommend that your choice be made based on spiritual values. It is easy to make choices based on lust, desperation, or even greed when you are alone and perhaps fearful. But please consider fully what the outcome will be for your children.

If you are a parent, consider carefully before you decide to take or

stay at a job. Don't do it because you "need an outlet" or because you like the power you can wield in that position at work. If this has been your mindset, you must come to grips with this all-important question: **WHICH IS MORE VALUABLE TO YOU—YOUR CHILDREN OR YOUR JOB?**

One thing I've learned over the years is that nothing seems to move God faster than little children and worship. Therefore, you will be amazed at what God can do when you begin to worship Him regarding your children, thanking Him for giving them to you and worshiping Him for providing a way for you to spend quality time with them, even on the hectic schedule of a single parent.

Whether you are a single parent or a working spouse, God wants to give you a special grace to enable you to raise your children according to His ways. This is the same kind of grace that enabled Jesus to go to the Cross and die for us so the family of God might be united, even though sin said it could not be.

But you have to make it your desire to be a godly parent. You have to make the sanctification of your children your first priority. Then God will step in as a Parent and begin to move on your behalf in answer to your prayers.

So if you find yourself unable to shape your children's values as you know God desires—cry out to Him. He will provide a way for you! His promise in Jeremiah 33:3 is yours to claim, especially when you cry out for the wel-

fare of your children—**Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and show thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not.**

Get Your Home in Order

Attention parents! God has given you stewardship over the lives of your children, and He doesn't want you to take that responsibility lightly. In this book, Dave Roberson shares his scriptural insights on the subject of divorce and remarriage, focusing on the question that matters most to God: **WHAT IS BEST FOR THE CHILDREN?**

So let God's priorities become **YOUR** priorities, and watch Him move on your behalf to help you get your home in order!

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