

Fundamentals of Parenting (4)

Biblical examples

As we continue the discussion about child development, I thought it would be helpful to present some biblical examples of parental influence on their children before we delve into more topics in child development. The Bible has many examples of the influence of parents on their children, whether positive or negative. We should benefit from these examples as Moses the prophet said towards the end of his life to the people of Israel: ***“I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live;”*** (Deuteronomy 30:19).

Positive examples

1- Jochebed, the mother of Moses the prophet. This woman was great in that she worked as a surrogate mother for her own son when the daughter of Pharaoh adopted him. During his nursing period, which we don't know how long it lasted, she managed to feed him the faith in God and to have a sense of belonging to the people of Israel more than belonging to the Gods of Egypt and its people where Moses lived for nearly 40 years.

2- The mother and the grandmother of Timothy: in the first Epistle to his disciple Timothy, Saint Paul praises him for his sincere faith. Saint Paul attributes Timothy's faith to his mother and his grandmother as he referred to them by their names, and that Timothy attained this faith from these two righteous women, ***“I am reminded of your sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice and, I am persuaded, now lives in you also.”*** (2 Timothy 1:5).

Negative examples:

1- Eli the priest and his children. The Bible did not say much about Eli's faults, to the contrary we see him as a man who knows God's. He knew that God Himself spoke to his disciple Samuel, as he indicated: ***“Speak, LORD, for your servant is listening.”*** Nonetheless, the bible records many instances where Eli was lax and too lenient with the serious flaws of his children.

First, Eli's children unlawfully took from the sacrifices that were offered by the people. Eli learned about the sins of his children that reached the extent of committing adultery on the tabernacle of the Lord. He learned about their sins from others rather than being watchful over his Son's behavior.

Second, despite the seriousness of their faults and their transgressions towards God and the people of Israel, his reaction was very lax and lenient lacking any disciplinary actions, “So he said to them, “Why do you do such things? I hear from all the people about these wicked deeds of yours. No, my sons; the report I hear spreading among the Lord's people is not good.” (1 Samuel 2:23-24). His lax reaction was disproportionate and inadequate compared to the seriousness of the offense. Does this lenience reflect his love towards them? Certainly not. His true love towards his children would have necessitated a more firm and strict approach to rectify them. He lacked a good balance between love and discipline as we indicated in the previous article.

Third, God sent a prophet to Eli and revealed to him what will happen to him and his children because of their faults. He also revealed to him how disappointed God is because of his lenience towards his children at the expense of his ministry, ***“Why do you honor your sons more than me”*** (1 Samuel 2:29). Unfortunately, Eli still did not take a firm action towards his children.

Fourth, God sent a final warning message to Eli through Samuel while he was still a young man, ***“For I told him that I would judge his family forever because of the sin he knew about; his sons blasphemed God, and he failed to restrain them”*** (1 Samuel 3:13). Unfortunately, Eli didn't act with a firm action towards his children. The result was that he and his children were lost. **Love without discipline is spoiling that leads to destruction and it should not be even called love.**

2- David and his son Adonijah: It was said about Adonijah that he ***“put himself forward and said, ‘I will be king.’”*** (1 Kings 1:5). That is to say his heart was haughty to the extent that he tried to take the Kingship to himself, while his father still alive. The Bible present to us an explanation to Adonijah's behavior, ***“His father had never rebuked him by asking, ‘Why do you behave as you do?’”*** (1 Kings 1:6). Adonijah was not used to be rebuked, turned down for a request he made, or to be held accountable for his actions so he dared to want to be a king while his father is alive.

Through these few examples of biblical characters we can see the extent of parental influence in the lives of children and the importance of balanced parenting as previously discussed.

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