



"A child is not likely to find a father in God unless he finds something of God in his father."

—Austin L. Sorensen

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Are We Losing Our Children?

The frenzied pace at which we live takes its toll. Stress, anxiety, pressure, and busyness are the norm in our Western, civilized nations. The demands of life leave many—perhaps even most—adults gasping for breath and struggling to shoulder the load. But what effect is this pace having on the next generation?

This week *The London Telegraph* brings us news of a new trend among British schoolchildren known as "daisy-chaining." Judy McRae, a sexual health nurse in London, explains:

Colleagues are coming across reports of groups of young people having sex in large groups. It is known as daisy-chaining and is obviously very worrying as far as sexually transmitted infections and pregnancy is concerned. As we understand it, it involves groups of older teenagers going round to each other's homes and having sex in a similar way as swinging. It is very new and is only just starting to be talked about.

This grave and disturbing trend may be new in Britain, but her former colony has already been through this. In 1999, PBS *Frontline* produced a report on "The Lost Children of Rockdale County" (a transcript can be found [here](#)—though it is not for the faint of heart). It chronicled a similar story just outside of Atlanta, Georgia, in which high

school and even junior high children—some as young as 13—were involved in a web of multiple sexual partners over the spring and summer of 1996.

By the time it was over, 17 young people tested positive for syphilis, while more than 200 others were exposed and treated. Cynthia Noel, a registered nurse with the Rockdale County Public Health Department commented, "You don't expect to see a 14-year-old with 20, 30, 40, 50, or 100 partners. You expect that of someone who is more into the line of being a prostitute or something. And these girls were not homeless. They were not abused in any way. These were just normal, everyday, regular kids"—from middle- and upper-middle-class homes.

These were not poor kids. They had their own TVs, VCRs, cell phones, pagers, and many even had their own cars—including a number with BMWs. The report points out that these activities, as in Britain now, mostly took place in homes while the parents were at work or away on trips. Therein lies a major source of the problem: The parents were more involved in providing material possessions for their children than they were providing what really matters, a stable, secure home with nurturing and instruction. The teens had the gadgets—what they needed were families.

The PBS *Frontline* report repeatedly came back to the role of the parents in the lives of these teenagers, and the fact that many of the parents felt powerless against the culture. "What can you do about it? You know, you can't lock a kid in a closet, 13, 14, 15 years old," one parent said with resignation. Another lamented, "I think what it is is we've lost control over our children. You can't spank them now, or they'll turn you into the police. . . ." But underlying all of the identified "causes"—television, external groups, peer pressure—was the fact that the parents were more interested in their own lives than the lives of their children. The children were "lost" because the parents *let* them wander away.

The latest perceived threat to American culture has been identified as homosexuality in general and homosexual marriage specifically. This is not entirely incorrect: When perverse relationships and lifestyles are portrayed as normal and even to be sought after, the foundation of the society—the family—is in grave danger of disintegrating. However, can we honestly say that homosexuality is a *more common* threat to the average family than dysfunction and/or parental apathy? Would homosexuality even be a threat to the culture if the family unit were truly intact? Rising rates of homosexuality are better seen as a symptom of a damaged family than a cause.

In God's preparatory instructions to Israel before entering the Promised Land—and to us, before entering His Kingdom—He makes our parental responsibilities plain:

And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates. ([Deuteronomy 6:6-9](#); see also [Deuteronomy 11:19](#))

Teaching at all times requires continual, active involvement, not passive observance. It demands that a higher priority be placed on instruction than on a higher salary or more possessions. It calls for the willing sacrifice of that most precious of all commodities: time. As adults, the pace of our lives may indeed be frenetic, but if our children are not properly instructed and cared for even in the midst of chaos, they, too, may become "lost."

The above stories do not represent all teenagers. While they may not be isolated incidences, they also are not the norm—so far. There are encouraging signs that a part of the culture is coming to its senses and is determining to provide security and nurturing to the next generation. Homeschooling is increasing at a tremendous rate across this country. More women are recognizing that the cost of "having it all" in terms of careers and generous salaries is too high—that it does not reward with families and children but loneliness. Mothers—married and unmarried—with children under three are leaving the workplace. But what is most needed is for the *fathers* to shake off the shackles of materialism, narcissism, and feminism and to provide for their families what is truly needed: leadership, security, attention, involvement, and instruction. We cannot afford any more "lost" children.

- David C. Grabbe

From the Archives: Featured Sermon

[Parenting \(Part 1\): Principles](#)

by Richard T. Ritenbaugh

In the aftermath of the Columbine massacre at Littleton, Colorado, Richard Ritenbaugh observes that the parenting practices of our people leave a great deal to be desired. Because of our upside down emphasis on the youth culture and its characteristic selfishness or self-centeredness, the family is crumbling and deteriorating. Play and

work are at the top of our priorities while God and family have moved to the bottom. God, as an active hands- on parent, has placed parenting on the top of His priority list. If we neglect parenting, we place our salvation in peril. Parents have a God- mandated responsibility to train up godly offspring, nurturing them in righteous behavior and basic life skills, spending ample quality time with them. The church is only as strong as its constituent families. The whole purpose of God is family.

From the Archives: Featured Article

[The Century of the Child](#)

by Martin G. Collins

Though experts proclaimed the twentieth century the Century of the Child in 1899, from a biblical perspective our social advancements have made life worse for our children. Martin Collins shows how the Bible predicted this of the end-time generations. (Also includes the inset "America's Lost Children.")

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