



"Your success as a family, our success as a society, depends not on what happens in the White House, but on what happens inside your house."

—Barbara Bush

28-Jul-06

The Importance of Parenting

I enjoy reading the contributions of *National Review Online* writers posted at "The Corner." Most of the time, when they are not being facetious or mischievous, their comments on the news of the day are not only interesting but insightful, and decidedly from a conservative outlook. Yet, because they are a mix of characters and viewpoints, they comprise a spectrum of philosophical viewpoints. All may be conservative but they are of all stripes within that broad label.

Over the past few days, columnist John Derbyshire has been on his high horse on the subject of parenting. The 30-year-old daughter of a friend of his committed suicide, apparently as a result of her beyond-stressful relationship with her "ne'er-do-well" husband, a drug addict. Derbyshire opined that another friend's advice - never let your daughter date, much less marry, a loser - is of paramount importance to a parent to help her to avoid a hard and bitter life. So far, so good.

Evidently, this situation started Derbyshire thinking about the influence parents actually have over their children - specifically, how significant parenting practices are in determining the success of children in later life. He concluded in a later post, ". . . parental influence is less than we all think, or wish." As proof, he cites social statistics he has discovered in his research:

Your life outcomes are determined 45-50 percent by genetics, 45-50 percent by outside-the-home socialization (which is affected by parental decisions about housing, schooling, etc.), 0-10 percent by in-home socialization (=parenting). That's what the evidence tells us, as I read it. Parenting has been WAY over-sold.

He particularly excoriates Freudian psychology for overselling parenting, as Freud thought that all psychoses could ultimately be traced back to the patient's relationships with his parents. Derbyshire posits that Freud's ideas have evolved into our present-day hyper-parenting, in which parents hover over their children, exhaustively schedule their lives, and go above-and-beyond to provide them with their hearts' desires. In this, he is probably correct.

Later, when criticized by another Corner pundit for his apparently contradictory parenting practices, Derbyshire responded: "Since I've made it clear that I'm working hard at parenting myself, why am I, if it makes so little difference? Possibly no difference at all? Well, because in a competitive society, even a little difference counts, and I want my kids to do well." In other words, since his influence will amount anywhere from zero to a paltry ten percent, he will make the best use of his meager slice of the pie.

Before considering his argument any further, one vital piece of information must be brought forward: John Derbyshire is a diehard evolutionist and at least an agnostic, perhaps an atheist. As the psalmist writes, "[God](#) is in none of his thoughts" ([Psalm 10:4](#)). Any advice from mankind's Creator would not necessarily be welcome. I can almost hear him say, "Let's not drag the Bible into this. I'm talking about the *real* world."

For the rest of us who do believe in a loving Father in heaven, what is the truth about the importance of parents and their doing as good a job as possible in fulfilling their responsibilities? The Bible devotes a great deal of space to the parent-child relationship, both in terms of examples and instruction. In fact, we could assert that the entire Bible, being God's instruction manual for mankind, is *all about* God rearing His children! He gives good examples (Abraham, Joseph and Mary) and bad examples (too many to mention) among humans; offers sage advice through Solomon, Paul, and others; and patiently illustrates and explains His own methods "in bringing many sons to glory" ([Hebrews 2:10](#); see [Romans 8:29](#)). The Bible is this era's "This is the way; walk in it" ([Isaiah 30:21](#)) for rearing godly offspring to God ([II Corinthians 6:18](#)).

Therefore, it is obvious that God places a high priority on parenting. Of course, He is most interested in how a parent affects the spiritual outcome of a child's life, and is not as much concerned with how a parent shapes the child's material and economic fortunes, as is Derbyshire. While proper, godly parenting does not guarantee financial success in life, it does promote lifelong principles that can lead to wealth, position, and prestige. God, we can see, puts first things first, while Derbyshire skips straight to secondary matters, imperiling the whole program.

Of course, this points straight to [Proverbs 22:6](#): "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it." This verse has been sliced and diced every which way by preachers and parents for three thousand years, but no matter how it is viewed, the simplest meaning provides the foundation of a parent's responsibility: 1) A child must be actively trained. 2) The parent must aim his training toward a specific, desired result. 3) His early training will remain with him throughout his life. This verse, as simple as it is, exerts a great amount of pressure on the parent to be diligent, thoughtful, farsighted, and godly. Parenting is no walk in the park!

In the New Testament, Paul's concise instruction in [Ephesians 6:4](#) perhaps acts as the foundation of Christian childrearing: "And you, fathers [parents], do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord." In its essentials, the apostle's advice centers on understanding the child and his limits, particularly emotional ones, and on using God's wise instruction as a guide. Paul's teaching neatly complements Solomon's proverb, placing gentle boundaries on the parent's zeal and providing the substance for "the way he should go."

I am sorry to have to say it, but on this, John Derbyshire has fallen victim to the godless and dead-wrong ideas of [this world](#). Sadly, it could not have happened on a more important subject for a person who seems to look no higher than humanity. At least he is trying to make the most of his ten percent.

- Richard T. Ritenbaugh

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 Ultimate Father's Day](#)

by Staff

Father's Day is a time we honor our human fathers, but a time is coming, after the day of the Lord, when our ultimate Father in heaven will be honored for all eternity!

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