

May 13, 2007 (SS)

**BEARING THE DIVINE IMAGE IN THE HOME:
FRUITFUL MULTIPLICATION::
CHILD-REARING IN COVENANT CONTEXT (PART 3)
GENESIS 17:1-14**

3. COVENANT AND ITS RESPONSIBILITIES

Covenant Conditionality: The danger of presumption is raised as an objection to teaching about privileges of covenant. Real danger. But the covenant is not limited to privileges. It also has responsibilities.

If we are going to be faithful in our child-rearing in the covenant context, we must teach the *conditionality* of the covenant. If you are not faithful in your responsibilities, you will be cut off ... no more privileges.

Teaching the whole counsel of God in this area is of absolute necessity for the parents as well as the children. Both parent and child must know and live according to the fact that there is no privilege without responsibility. There is no reward without perseverance. The inheritance that God promises is not “automatic.” I.e., just because you are baptized you are guaranteed to be saved in the end, to participate in the final resurrection of the dead and share in the glory of Christ. That teaching is biblically reprehensible!

The Necessity of Faith: The “rock-bottom” requirement of every covenant member is *faith*. Each one of us—parent and child—has the responsibility to respond appropriately to God’s word given to us in his covenant. Cf. **He 11:6**

Faith is looking to God’s word (*commandments & promises*) in such a way that your whole life is molded by it. Biblical writers have no problem going in between “faith” and “faithfulness.”

If you truly believe that God has a final inheritance for you according to what he has promised, then you will live in such a way so as to inherit the promise. Someone who says, “I have faith in God” but lives without pursuing holiness, without which no man will see the Lord (**Heb 12:14**), is a liar.

A. THE PARENT

As a covenant member the parent has responsibilities *as the parent* in regards to rearing children.

But what does walking by faith look like in parenting? (1) Parents must look to the commands and promises of God concerning their children.

Looking to God’s commands and promises requires two things of us as parents: (a) we must know the commands and promises of God and (b) our thinking and living must be shaped by those commands and promises (i.e., we must live in conformity to God’s word).

Note **Deut 6:6**: These things must first be on your hearts as parents.

I realize that most all of us have busy schedules nowadays. That is probably not going to change too much. This does not excuse us from the responsibilities that we have before God to have these things on our hearts *so that* we may train our children. We may have to do some serious evaluations of our schedules if they are keeping us from our covenantal duties regarding the training of our children. This would include learning God’s word.

(2) You must employ the means that God has given you for the faithful rearing of your children.

God ordinarily works through the means of parents being diligent in their instruction and correction in order to bring up faithful children who will inherit what God has promised.

Cf. **Ge18:19** “For I have chosen him, *that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing righteousness and justice, so that* the LORD may bring to Abraham what he has promised him.” It would be through faithfulness that YHWH would bring to Abraham what he had promised him. God’s promise to Abraham would not be realized apart from faithfulness.

Looking to God in faith concerning your parenting means, in part, that you realize that all of your hope for the “success” of your child-rearing is in God. Apart from the work of God in your life and the life of your child, everything is lost. But looking to God in

faith as a parent also means that we should expect to realize the promises of God for our children when we have been faithful to employ the means God has given to us.

Cf. **Pro 22:15; 29:15**

We are called as parents to raise up wise children, and wisdom has its foundations in the fear of the Lord. We are to rear our children, remember, to love God with all their hearts, minds, souls and strength. But they are born with the opposite of wisdom, folly or foolishness, bound up in their hearts. God promises that faithful discipline will drive it far from them. Faithful discipline—the rod and rebuke (which includes instruction)—will be a heart changing for your child.

When you do what God says, you are acting in faith and, therefore, being a faithful parent. To do otherwise is to put your own word above God’s word, which is unbelief or a lack of faith.

The goal of your child-rearing is to mold your child to be holy, therefore living consistently with his covenant status. He is to grow to be a faithful worshiper of God with all that this means. It is not just to be “well-behaved” (though that will be a “product”).

Do you pray with and for your children? Are you acknowledging your dependence upon God in your child-rearing? Are you praying with your children so that they know that you are dependent upon God and they should be also? Family worship is a good context for this.

Do you consistently instruct your children? Do you teach them in the ways of our faith? Are they learning what it means to live in relationship with God and what that looks like in their day-to-day living? Do you consistently correct your children? Are you sporadic with your correction so that your children do not know whether it is right or wrong from day to day?

Consistency is the weakest area in all of our parenting lives. Consistency is difficult. Generally speaking, the reason we are inconsistent is because we are *self-centered*. That is, we simply don’t want to do what we are supposed to do. We want to do what *we* want to do, what is enjoyable for us. We cannot live “for the moment” but for the long-term. Involves self-denial.

If you say, “I’m believing God for faithful children,” but do not employ the means God has given (e.g., instruction, correction, prayer, etc.), then it is not true that you are believing God’s promises. You are being presumptuous and lazy. You are engaged in wishful thinking not biblical faith.

Prayer without the rod is presumption. The rod without prayer is provoking.

B. CHILDREN

Our children must also learn to live by faith. This will take a particular form in their childhood years that will shape the rest of their lives. Cf. **Pr 22:6**

(1) They must look to the commands and promises of God

Our children’s responsibilities are quite limited when they are small and are increased as they grow older. When they are young they essentially have one specific covenant obligation: Obey father and mother. Cf. **Ex 20:12; Eph 6:1-3; Co 3:20**

Our children must be made aware and steered clear of the danger of presumption. They cannot be led to believe that their obedience or disobedience really doesn’t matter. They must understand that they must live faithfully.

(2) They must employ the means that God has given them to live as he has commanded.

(a) Teach your children how to worship.

(b) Teach them to read and how to read the Scriptures.

(c) Teach them how to pray.

(d) They must learn how to live with and depend upon the body of Christ, the church (cf. Eph 4.17-32: *faithful speech; anger; respecting others’ property; work; edifying speech; forgiveness*)