

# PARENTS IN THE NEW AGE

by John Gelding

Trinity  
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Trinity Sermon No. D 40

National Library of Australia Card number  
and ISBN:

0 86945 040 9

Published by the

TRINITY PUBLISHING SOCIETY

87 North Terrace,

ADELAIDE, South Australia, 5000.



## PARENTS IN THE NEW AGE

Today marks the end of National Marriage and Family Week, and the theme this week has been "Parents in the New Age."

It is a fitting subject, for today we live in a very complex age. It is an age characterized by canned music, pop groups, long hair, uni-sex, the mini and the maxi, sit-ins, love-ins, marches, strikes, war, protests and widespread rebellion and unrest. Some have described it as an age of moral decadence with a disregard for authority or personal responsibility.

Yet despite all this, someone has written, "In the New Age, the fundamental task of parents is still, as it always has been, to provide security, love and understanding. But doing this becomes increasingly difficult. Parents need exactly the same qualities as ever they did - tolerance, tact, diplomacy, patience, trust - only they need more of them, expressed with understanding of the trends that are affecting family life in the 70's."

I want to examine some of those trends as they affect us and our families, and I hope that everyone, whether they be a parent or not, young or old, will find that these things are relevant to them also.

### THE HOME.

The home has been described in many ways. Among other things, it is an area of one's life where we should find security and a warmth of affection that cannot be found anywhere else. And yet for some it can be sheer hell! It is quite common among young people today to want to leave home as soon as possible, in order to break free from the tensions and the cat-and-dog fights that characterize so many homes. Many older teenagers say they are living in a state of continual friction. There is dis-ease!

The Bible says that the home is the place where love and co-operation abound. Perhaps it would do us good to sit down and study all the Scriptural references that deal with the home and see what God has to say about it.

Regarding the husband, the Bible says he is to love his wife as Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for it

(Ephesians 5:25 f). I mention this first because there is a trend today to move away from that ideal. There seems to be a coldness and an inconsiderateness by many husbands towards their wives. A high school girl in Religious Instruction said to me recently, "If men are like my father then I don't want to be married." Love indeed is a very important ingredient in home life.

The Bible also says the father is a man who repels all kinds of immorality (Prov. 7). It speaks of him being faithful to one wife. He is a man of unquestioned morality - while the trend today is towards unashamed and open adultery.

The Book of Proverbs says he is a man who trusts and depends upon God, a man who puts God at the very centre of his life and family (3:6). He worships with the family on Sunday and sets the spiritual tone of the family.

He teaches his children (Prov. 22:6). But the trend today is to leave it to the school or some institution. He is a man who disciplines his children (Prov. 3:12). He doesn't walk away and leave it to 'mum' or others. When he is needed most he is in the home playing the role to which he was called.

Self-control is a mark of a good man. He acts rationally. He is in control of his tempers and moods. He's a moral man in that he is virtuous. He's hospitable. He is neither a drunkard, nor violent, but gentle, peaceful. He manages his own home well and his children obey him with all respect.

Yet in a vast majority of homes today, the husband is regarded as the bread-winner and in some cases he is not even that. A boy said to me some time ago that his family would have been a lot happier if his father were dead. He made no contribution to the home, either in the area of standards, morals, example or love. His economic contribution would not have been missed because it would have been one mouth less to feed.

In the NEW AGE, the father has an important place and function in the home. He IS responsible for the upbringing of his children. He IS responsible for teaching. He IS responsible for communicating the faith and those virtues that stick by a

young man and woman all their life. I know of too many fathers who in no way match up to what the Bible says. And when given opportunity to do so they run to the local club, or pub, or golf course. Recently some sociologists estimated that in some cases families spend as little as twenty minutes a week as a complete unit. No wonder it is said that hippies often come from a father-deprived background. It is of little wonder that today's young people would rather spend all their time with the 'gang' than spend two minutes with their parents. THEY LEARN MORE FROM THEIR PEERS THAN THEY DO FROM THE HOME.

The Editor of a recent morning newspaper had some very important things to say about parents, and in referring to fathers he wrote, "The claims of work and the lures of sport and mateship keep some fathers away from home for most of the time. If men with working wives are not prepared to take some family responsibilities apart from paying the bills and administering the sterner forms of discipline, it is not surprising if problems arise with children.

Now you mothers who have been nudging your husbands for the past five minutes! The Scriptures also show that you have certain responsibilities to perform. In the NEW AGE your role as a wife and mother, amongst other things, is primarily to strengthen the love that binds you all together and perhaps most of all, to make your dwelling place a "home", not a "house", where everyone merely sleeps and eats.

The kind of mother and wife you should be may be found in Proverbs 31. Take time to read it for yourself. Get in a quiet corner and ask yourself as you read, "Am I reliable and trustworthy? Can my husband really trust me? Do I manage the home well? Do I waste time, or am I the busy kind of person I should be in and around the home?" Take time to look up I Peter 3:1-5 and ask yourself, are you really patient, particularly if you have an unbelieving husband. Think and meditate on I Timothy 5:10, which says that you should be known by your love, charity and hospitality.

These are but some of those contagious qualities which will pass from you to your children. You're a model for their future, and I believe that by the grace Of God you can be all that you

are meant to be as you humbly submit yourself to the Word of God.

It cannot be said enough that prayer, Bible reading and public worship will also strengthen the home in the NEW AGE. You may be interested to know that over 80% of young people who appear before the Children's and Juvenile Court have never been to Sunday School or had teaching in the home. The home is a place where there is growth and where spiritual truths can be deepened and re-inforced through the lessons of life.

#### MORALITY.

We would be very foolish if we shut our ears to the reports and rumours of what young people are saying and doing today. There is a moral revolution going on all around us. If you are over the age of 20 you may be assured that what you were taught is being challenged by young and old alike. Your values, no matter how precious and meaningful to you, are labelled "obsolete." For many the Christian ethic is so old-fashioned that it is not worth talking about.

Take marriage, for example. The Prayer Book says that it is "till death us do part." Yet today there are people trying to pass legislation to make divorce easier. It is no longer "till death us do part." In America, 1 out of 3 are divorced, and it is interesting to note that only 1 out of 500 are divorced where there is prayer and Bible reading in the home.

But a worse trend than above is that "Marriage today", as Mia Farrow the film actress put it, "is just for the birds." The Prayer Book says that marriage was ordained by God for three reasons:

1. The procreation of children
2. That the natural instincts and affections, implanted by God, should be hallowed.
3. It was ordained for the mutual society, help and comfort, the one ought to have for the other, both in prosperity and adversity.

But some are teaching that you need not get married to enjoy these three privileges. Even a few clergy, and thank God

they are in a minority, hold that Christian morality must be updated, and teach that all that matters is whether you love one another.

Furthermore, your children are tempted to believe that pre-marital sex and extramarital affairs are the norm. Vending machines in some overseas universities containing contraceptives are accepted as part and parcel of modern life, and Australia will not be far behind in following their example.

Amid the confusion in England over morals, the Archbishop of York some time ago spoke with British television star and singer, Adam Faith, and it was revealed that there was a great gap between the thinking of the older generation and the young minds of today. A little later Adam Faith was asked by the British Medical Association to advise THEM on modern standards and morals.

One thing parents have learnt (at least, we hope) is that it is no good saying to young people in this NEW AGE that the modern trend is wrong "because Daddy says so," or "You'll go to hell if you don't do what I say."

The young are suspicious of much of what we say and stand for, because we pay lip service only to the Bible. The Bible says, "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife", and that is exactly what society is doing. The Bible reminds us of the seriousness of committing adultery in our minds, and yet man feeds on filthy literature and illustrated, suggestive, pornographic magazines. A girl once told me that her parents removed certain magazines whenever the clergy came to lunch. Let's admit it; basically we ARE phonies! God's Word speaks of having a 'pure mind', and yet we reveal to our children, and possibly to those around us, that it is far from the case.

St. Paul's advice to the Philippian Christians was that if they believed in goodness and valued the approval of God, they were to fix their minds on the things which are holy and right and pure and beautiful and good (4:8). When that happens, we have a basis that is firm and reasonable to pass on to our children. It may mean reading some good literature to explain the logic and sensibility of good morals, but the effectiveness of what we teach will very much depend upon the kind of person

we are.

#### THE WORLD.

A characteristic of this NEW AGE is a deep desire to find peace and something to believe in. There is also a thirst for freedom. There is a desire to break free from the shackles of institutionalism.

That there is disorder, confusion and chaos in the world among the old and the young, we only have to read last week's newspapers. There is a widespread restlessness. We were all grieved to hear how four youths lost their lives in America this week because they campaigned for peace. It is a symptom of the world's sickness.

Add to this, people in public places who cannot act or live in a responsible way, and we have further evidence of a sin-sick world. It is not surprising that our young people today are turning to mass movements, becoming drop-outs, hippies and so on because of the emptiness and purposelessness of so many lives. It is a searching and enquiring generation we have bred, and there are no answers to the basic needs of life which make for peace, happiness and purpose. The parent needs to realize he is more than a 'key' to a young person's future. He is the one who gives a sense of direction and helps the young person to develop those inner and yet latent potentialities to their full, and these can only be realized in Jesus Christ, and through the power of the Holy Spirit.

One further concern for parents in this NEW AGE is the problem of drugs. I learnt the other day that if you have children who are at present between the ages of twelve and fourteen, by the time they turn 21 they would have been offered drugs. And it is estimated that 50% of these children would have had some first-hand experience of them. Add to that vice, alcohol, smoking, gambling and delinquency, and we see something of the enormous job a parent has to teach and guide the young people of today.

The fact is, the old Gospel has still real power to change the world. It can transform today's young people, and do it in such a way that they too will possess the mind of Christ in all

things. They will be citizens in both kingdoms, and people you may rightly be proud of. But you, as a parent, may need changing yourself! You will have to come to the Lord Jesus Christ and seek His forgiveness before you can forgive others. You will need to know personally the redemption that is only available in Christ if you want your children to be saved from the evil and emptiness of this NEW AGE. You will need also to know the power of the Holy Spirit if your children are going to reach the maturity which is available alone in Christ.

It may be painful to admit that we don't reach the ideal we preach, but God will give you and me the resources and the equipment we need to have for our children's sakes in the 70's.

If you are seeking answers to some of the seemingly insoluble problems of your home and the world, St. James in his epistle says to you, as he says to me, "If ... any of you does not know how to meet any particular problem he has only to ask of God ... and he may be quite sure that the necessary wisdom will be given him." (1:5f, J.B.P.)

If you are looking for some kind of plan and guide as parents, God's Word will show you the kind of person you should be, and, at the same time, show you how to be an effective parent for your children's sake.

Perhaps the greatest thing you can pray for and do in the 70's, in this NEW AGE, is to ask God the same thing Jesus asked of His Father for His family, the disciples who gathered around Him. You remember He said, "Father, for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth." (John 17:19). This is how we, as parents, can meet the trends and challenges of this NEW AGE.

A READING LIST

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Letters to an engaged couple.
- \* TOWARDS CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE Capper & Williams  
An approach to the ideals of Christian Marriage.
- \* SEXUAL RESPONSIBILITY IN MARRIAGE M. Davis  
Discussion of psychological aspects
- \* THIS MARRIAGE BUSINESS M. Warde  
From early stages of Marriage to raising Children.
- \* THE DEATH & REBIRTH OF A MARRIAGE A. & M. Harvard
- \* THE CHURCH AND THE CHILD A. & E. Capon
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- TALKING IT OVER AT HOME (Public Affairs  
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- \* YOUR TEENAGERS M. Batchelor
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