

Paying For Your Raisin'

by Dee Bowman

This business of raising kids is hard for me. I'm not sure I have what it takes to do the job right. And the scary part is that you only get one try at it. It takes gobs of wisdom and lots of patience to bring a child all the way from the cradle, through the various states of his adolescence, and on to adulthood. And sometimes the different stages it causes in parenthood are enough to alarm the most confident Mom or Dad.

I guess folks who are not Christians worry about what it takes to raise kids, too, because I notice a lot of books on the shelves relating to the subject. But I seriously doubt that their problems are as far-reaching as mine, because I am not only concerned with how my kids will fit into society, but I worry about their growing up and becoming good Christians. I figure if they learn respect for God, the Bible, and the church, they won't have too much trouble fitting into society and getting along with their neighbors. I'll tell you one thing, though—this business of raising them up to be good Christians is a far sight easier to say than it is to do.

THE RESPONSIBILITY OF IT

I used to tell my wife that if I had known what a serious responsibility it was to raise kids I probably wouldn't have had any. I didn't really mean that. That's just a way I cooked up to try and escape the reality of the responsibility of it for a moment or two. I love my kids and I want to raise them—for several reasons. First, I just like the idea of being responsible for a child learning what it is to grow up and know about God. Oh, I know there will be times when things won't go along smoothly and there will be times of heartache, but, all in all, it's worth the risk. And sometimes when that kid has responded to a difficult situation in just the right way, suddenly, in that moment, it's worth all you've risked just to be there and see it happen. I think, too, that raising kids makes grown folks better folks. You learn about love, mostly. And you learn about it in a special way, too. For instance, how it's connected to patience; how it can shine through a dirty face; and how it's not affected by little imperfections in personality. And through it all you learn that "children love your parents" was not at all what you thought it was when it was sprung on you by your parents.

DISCIPLINE

Discipline is hard, but it's part of raising kids. I don't very often know how much and when. I confess that it is not easy for me to know how much rope to let out and when I should begin to tighten the rein. Oh, I read those books on the subject. They don't know, either. One says one thing, the other flatly contradicts it. And both are likely MD's with a PhD in child psychology. Who's a fellow to believe? I know what you're thinking: "Try the Bible," you say? Believe me, I do. But that's not always as simple as it seems,

either. It's just a lot easier to find the passage and read it than it is to know when and how to apply it to the situation.

There used to be a preacher at the congregation where I worshiped. He preached about once a month on "Love, Courtship, and Marriage." Then he got married. We never heard another sermon on the subject. I was a kid-raisin' dude, until I had mine.

KIDS ARE PEOPLE

Kids are people. I've found that out. And just as there are differences in big people, there are differences in kids. No two are alike. Now, I hear that admitted a lot, but when you come to face the reality of that fact and get practically involved with it, that statement takes on an added significance. The ability to handle even two kids is doubly dangerous when you consider that no two are just alike. That means, friends, that each one must be handled separately. What works for one may not work for another, what is needed for one may not be so for the other. Now, I know the principles of truth are the same for everybody, but I'm talking about the wisdom to apply the knowledge to each diverse personality so as to bring about the best result for all concerned. Now, that's hard!

A while back, I had to do a thing that most distasteful to me. I had to apologize to one of my kids. "Perish the thought!" you say. Well, I did him wrong; and when you do somebody wrong aren't you supposed to apologize to them? Kids notice everything. And if I let my kids grow up thinking I never make a mistake and am never wrong about anything, I have committed a gross error, for they're going to find out, sooner or later, that I am human and that I make mistakes—even sin sometimes. And if they don't see me react to that misnomer in the way the Bible directs, it may well be that they decide that all truth-teachers are in reality just hypocrites and don't really practice what they preach. And when they do that, they will lose their respect for truth. Kid must learn that my failures regarding truth have nothing to do with altering that truth. I am wrong when I am wrong, even if I am Daddy!

While I'm at it, let me just here say that I am against this "buddy system" so many child-rearing experts are fomenting. I think parents ought to be parents and kids ought to be kids. I think kids have buddies enough at school. What kids need today is parents—someone who will love, instruct, even discipline them. Someone who will really care for them.

PREACHER'S KIDS

Preacher's kids are supposed to be a special lot. They're not. I used to wonder why so many preacher's kids went wrong. I don't anymore. Percentage-wise, I don't think any more preachers' kids go wrong than brethren's kids. Preachers' kids are just like any other kids. They have desires, weaknesses, frustrations. And when they are caught up in the snare of carnal impulses and succumb, they sin, just like other peoples' kids. And sometimes I wonder if even that is not attributable to what I said before. Maybe if we

preachers would say “I’m sorry” and learn to say “I was wrong” more than we do, we wouldn’t lose so many of our kids.

CONCLUSION

I once asked my Dad, “How is it that a guy like me can ever repay his parents for all you’ve done for him?”

“Son,” he replied, “Have some of your own.” “You’ll pay.”

I’m paying.