

## ***Parenthood (12): Sacrifice***

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**P**arenthood and sacrifice are synonymous terms. The investment in raising a child is so great that personal sacrifice must be made by both mother and father. I believe God *intended* for it to be this way.

A parent must sacrifice some time normally spent on personal pleasures. A parent will sacrifice sleep, often to the point of mind-numbing exhaustion. Dad will abandon his two-door, hot-rod fantasies for a plodding minivan. Mom will sacrifice more, even some physical expectations that will be seriously altered by the rigors of growing, transporting and delivering the equivalent of an AMF bowling ball.

Parenthood is all-consuming and will change one's entire outlook on life. Is it worth the sacrifice?

Some couples say "no" and elect not to have any. At least they realize it and avoid bringing a child into a family atmosphere where neglect would be likely.

Some parents begrudgingly make sacrifices and constantly let the children know directly and indirectly what an imposition they are. This will not do, for parenthood is *more* than sacrifice, it is *loving, willing* sacrifice. It is sacrifice that helps rather than hurts the child.

Some give their all to raising children, but over the years a sense of missing out on life simmers in the back of their minds. They dutifully meet their obligations until the children are grown and then succumb to a sense that life is passing them by. "Mid-life crisis" ensues, complete with a wholesale change in personality, a juvenile lifestyle, and the discarding of a faithful spouse.

Then, of course, there are parents who sacrifice the wrong things in raising their children. As the demands of parenthood increase, worship services take a back seat to ball games, band practice and ballet. Scholastics take precedent over Bible study. The cultivation of relationships with other Christian families is sacrificed for work, school and recreational associations. These are not a matter of limited time but misplaced priorities.

One of the greatest threats to our spirituality is selfishness, and parenthood is one of the blessings God has given us to combat this tendency. Children force us to think of the needs of others before ourselves. They teach us that true pleasure exists apart from selfish gratification. The sacrifices we make for our children will, if viewed rightly, draw us closer to our God who sacrificed all for us.