

Parenthood (13): The Joys of Being a Parent

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Most of our articles have dealt with the problematic aspects of parenthood. For the sake of balance, we should consider as well the joys of the “office.” God in His infinite wisdom has arranged the stages of life so that each has its challenges and its rewards for parents. The physical and emotional challenges of infancy (the exhaustion of constant care, sharing attention with a new person, etc.) all melt away with the first smile or the first look of recognition. There is an indescribable joy in seeing a child do things for the first time: the first wave “bye-bye,” the first word, the first step. Each is a confirmation of personhood, an acknowledgment that life is taking its proper course.

Early childhood brings many painful experiences such as the anguish of seeing others mistreat the children we would give our lives to protect. But during these years we see our little ones begin to carve out their own niche in the world. Their scholastic and physical achievements, their ability to function and make decisions in our absence portend the coming days of independence.

Too, parents find great enrichment in explaining the deeper meaning of the world around them. Conversations tackle more adult themes. Biblical discussions increase as children begin to analyze their surroundings. Children at this age also become good companions in their own right, able to play games, enjoy travel and understand subtle humor.

Then there’s the teenage years, notorious for taking all the “fun” out of parenthood. The bright, carefree days of childhood are often eclipsed by some degree of sullenness, withdrawal, and rebellion as our children begin to grapple with their own self-identity in the face of impending adulthood. Even the efforts of parents to make the period easier for the child are often rejected as an unwelcome imposition.

Of course, not all teenagers react adversely to adolescence. For those who handle it well, these years can be ones of blossoming friendship between parent and child. Great satisfaction comes from seeing an adult climbing out of the child’s body.

Finally, the greatest joy of all is seeing your child become a Christian. Surely that moment in time makes all the years of challenge worthwhile.

A parent’s joy should end full-circle with loving children and grandchildren to care for them in their old age. Truly, *“children are a heritage from the Lord”* (see Ps 127:3-5).