

## ***Parenthood (19): Beyond the Age of Accountability***

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**March 1996**

**M**ore worrisome than whether a child has reached the age of accountability is the son or daughter who is obviously mature enough to obey the Lord yet has refused to do so. “What are they waiting for?” the parents wonder during every invitation song. “Don’t they know the danger they are in?” they fret every time the child gets in a car with friends. What often adds to the pain is the oft-occurring refrain: “What did I do wrong?”

Sometimes a child’s refusal to become a Christian is an act of rebellion. It is the main thing that the parents desperately want their child to do but cannot force upon them. The child knows this, and thus it become a weapon with which to punish parents. Sometimes the refusal is a child’s commentary on a hypocritical or apathetic faith of the parent. The spiritual interest of some Christians is somewhere between comatose and corpse, and they just wring their hands over why little Bobbie or Susie hasn’t rushed to the front pew.

Sometimes parents *assume* that their children know more than they do about being a Christian. Assumptions may take the place of reality in the absence of any regular, meaningful conversation about spiritual matters between parent and child. It is all too easy for parents to pressure their children to “get baptized” instead of nurturing them gradually over the years to love God, respect His word, please Him, avoid His wrath and desire to go to heaven.

But a child’s refusal to obey the gospel may have nothing to do with the parents’ teaching, example or faith. The child may simply be exercising the free will which God gave them to choose death over life. There is no guarantee that another, even our own child, will love the Lord.

It is a mistake for a young person to use their obedience to the gospel as a tactic in dealing with parents. The One we need to worry most about is not the parent with the car key but the Creator who holds the Key to Eternal Life.

It is also senseless for a young person to let a weak parent become an excuse for disobedience. The failure of others – elders, preachers or parents – is a sorry excuse to throw one’s own soul away. Your example of doing right might save them!

Making a commitment to the Lord can be a fearful thing with scary responsibilities. But “*there is no fear in love*” (1 Jn 4:18). Love for God and others will give us the courage we need to honor our commitment and serve God faithfully.