

Thankfully, the full weight of parenthood dawns gradually. The first news of pregnancy is usually received with mild shock, after which the parents' whole world begins to focus on the due date. Hazy ultrasound images, mom's physical changes and a kick from an unseen little foot all give testimony to the developing life within.

The anxiety and anticipation builds to a crescendo until, finally, faith becomes sight. Something very profound happens at the moment of birth – a realization that heaven and earth are somehow crossing paths. Those first little cries announce that life exists where it did not exist before. They eloquently testify to the harmonious working of God's grace and man's effort. They are feeble cries of new life in search of a foothold in this world, and they are powerful enough to make rubble out of a heart of stone.

At birth, the baby is not the only one to step from darkness into light. As the parents hold the life that is so needful of them, they step from the softer hues of expectancy into the blinding light of responsibility. The birth of a child is the rebirth of purpose and value, and parenthood, rightly viewed, brings great significance to human life.

But the light of responsibility also illuminates character. The demands of love, selflessness, sacrifice and dependence will reveal the soul's strengths and deficiencies. Thus parenthood is an opportunity to grow, to work daily upon our character, our spirituality, our integrity.

Parenthood is also a stewardship, for God entrusts the life He has given into our hands for the growth and development of the child unto independence. While this stewardship involves material things such as food, clothing, shelter and education, the most important aspect pertains to the spiritual welfare of the child.

Parents are greatly responsible for a child's basic concept of God, the Bible, accountability and eternity. This is such a tremendous burden that many attempt to lessen parental influence in this regard. While it is true that every adult is ultimately responsible for his own decisions, it is imperative that parents make *every* effort to demonstrate genuine faith before their children and seek to instill such within them *especially in their most impressionable early years*. Getting our children to heaven must be the primary goal of every parent.