

## ***Parenthood (20): When Children Break Your Heart***

---

**March 1996**

Parents have been granted authority over children by God, but children still wield great power over their parents. They retain the power to hurt, to disappoint, to crush the very spirits of those who gave them life and sacrificed so much for them. This is a risk every parent assumes when they bear a child.

God lamented that He had not been given due honor as the Father of Israel (Mal 1:6). He had created, nurtured, disciplined, taught, loved and blessed them in every way, yet Israel chose to reject Him and serve idols. God knows the pain of unfaithful children. How should parents handle the disappointment of a child gone astray?

Some Christians have been known to change their convictions about the Bible in order to justify their children's conduct. This happens frequently in the area of divorce and re-marriage.

Some parents show an astounding degree of blindness toward their children's behavior. The trouble they get into is always someone else's fault. Further, some parents simply turn their heads and pretend not to see what is going on, for that would bring responsibility upon them for correction.

Other parents respond to their children's waywardness by burdening themselves with excessive guilt. Most parents feel greatly responsible for their children's development, and it is easy to second guess oneself when things go wrong. Certainly God's handling of the Israelites proves that proper nurturing and oversight doesn't *guarantee* obedience. Godly parents will deeply feel the pain of a child who acts immorally or who shows no concern for the welfare of their soul. But they won't let that emotion overwhelm their good sense and their knowledge of what the Bible teaches.

Godly parents will hold a child accountable for their sinful behavior and will not pretend all is well when it isn't. They will be more concerned with the correction of the child than maintaining the luster of family image.

The situation becomes more complicated when a child is withdrawn from by a congregation. It is not easy to differentiate between incidental family association and that which constitutes the fellowship prohibited by 1 Cor 5:11.

Whatever the specific case, true love obligates parents to put the spiritual welfare and correction of children before emotions or other selfish concerns. The easy way to handle such situations is not always the *best* way.