

## God-centered Home

Mary Ann Yaconis

A newborn baby epitomizes innocence and dependence. The child is a gift for his or her parents to love and nurture to the end that God may be glorified. The charge in Ephesians 6:1-3 to nurture children is a daunting challenge, and it is one best met by raising children in a God-centered home.

Genesis 2:24

For this cause [marriage] shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and they shall become one flesh.

A God-centered home is one in which the couple leaves their parents and cleaves to one another. The long-term relationship in the family is that of the couple. Children remain in the family until they marry, beginning their own family.

A Child-centered home is one in which the children are the focus of attention rather than God and the husband/wife relationship. Pleasing and serving the children is the prevailing theme of the child-centered home. This is in contrast to a God-centered home in which each person is committed to pleasing and serving God. A Christian family is not a democracy wherein the children have an equal vote. Father and mother are the decision-makers and the central unit of the family. In a God-centered home, children learn:

- To serve others with joy
- To obey parents the first time with a good attitude
- Not to interrupt parents who are speaking to each other
- To understand they will not always get their own way
- To have input into family decisions but not necessarily an equal vote
- To understand that God has given their parents other responsibilities in addition to meeting their needs
- To suffer the natural consequences of their sinful and irresponsible behavior
- Not to speak to parents as though they were peers but honor them as spiritual authorities
- To esteem others as more important than themselves
- To fulfill various household responsibilities
- Not to divide parents over disciplinary issues
- Not to be more intimate with either parent than the parents are with each other\*

Child-oriented homes tend to foster anger and rebellion in children. Parents who develop unbalanced relationships with work, recreation, or the children set the stage for a home that caters to children in an unhealthy way. When parents are bitter and resentful toward each other, the children acquire the bitter thoughts, motives, and actions displayed by their parents.

Hebrews 12:5

See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble, and by it many be defiled.

Bitterness begets anger that leads to rebellion. Parents avoid this problem by maintaining their personal relationships with God and each other. Children are very resilient, so when parents make mistakes, children are not damaged. But, if parents continue in unloving and sinful ways, children are dramatically affected in negative ways. When the marital unit is solid, the children experience love and security.

Proverbs 29:15

The rod and reproof give wisdom, But a child who gets his own way brings shame to his mother.”

A child who views himself as equal with his parents becomes angry when his desires do not get placed on equal status with the desires of his parents. Children need to learn how to express their needs appropriately to their parents. They feel welcomed to do this when parents listen carefully and respond appropriately.

Philippians 4:9

The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things; and the God of peace shall be with you.

Some parents use the Bible to teach, reprove, correct, and instruct children but do not live what they expect of them. By their hypocrisy, these parents provoke their children. Legalism (elevating man's laws to the level of God's laws) is another action that is detrimental to children's well-being. Examples of God's laws are: love God; do not lie; do not steal; and obey parents in the Lord. Parental laws are: bedtime; eat your peas; no dating until 16. Having these rules is important in order for a family to function properly. However, when they are elevated to the status of God's laws, they become a problem. A child as he matures may request changes in the family laws, such as curfew time. He will not be able to make changes in God's laws. They are unalterable.

A God-centered home accepts God as the focus of the home. The husband and wife are the unit that is one flesh and remains until death. Children are an added blessing. Children thrive by living in a home that provides wise reproof and consistency in teaching and living biblical principles. Parents provide a solid basis for children to mature when they clearly define God's laws as those that are to be respected and obeyed in contrast to man's laws that can change with circumstances.

Suggestions for repenting from provoking children to anger are:

- Identify the specific ways you have been provoking your child.
- Confess these sins to God.
- If the child is old enough, ask the child to forgive you.
- Develop a plan to replace the sinful areas with biblical alternatives.
- Practice love and good works toward your children.\*

\*adapted from: Priolo Lou, The Heart of Anger