THEOLOGY OF PARENTING:
IS PARENTING IN CRISIS TODAY?

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SUMMARY:

Theology of Parenting: Is Parenting in Crisis Today?
When a child makes all the wrong choices and chooses a path of destruction, parents often wonder if they have laid a good foundation or not. This research will show that childhood years are crucial in forming character and personality patterns. Furthermore, the foundation of every child's growth lies in their family history, in the way a child was accepted, felt understood and supported throughout its growing years. A family is not merely a passive background against which child's development takes place, family plays an active and vital role in constructing, interpreting and transmitting of social behavior, moral values as well as spiritual beliefs. Thus, the knowledge and trust in God is connected to the family and it starts in the infancy. Worshiping together as a family is definitely the most important transmitter of religious values. The goal is not only to transmit knowledge of God, but also commitment to His values.

Key words: *parenting; child; family; family worship; character development*

Introduction

It was right at the beginning of human history that parenting was put to the test. While first human family had high hopes for their children, tragedy occurred (Genesis 4:8). Ever since that first incident between two brothers, many parents wonder, how is it possible that one child can turn out so different from another, while being parented by God fearing parents and surrounded by loving family, being exposed to the same environment, challenges and opportunities for education and life.

It is true that parents are not perfect, because the virus of sin contaminates all, and that is why everyone's life has challenges, difficulties and hardships. But in spite of these, those that do the best they can hope and expect that their children will turn out to be good citizens of this world, follow God and stay faithful to Him throughout their lives. Most children do turn out good, even those that give their parents a bit of a challenge during their adolescence period. But for some history still repeats itself and certain parents, do experience heartaches because their child's perspectives and behavior seem not to be influenced by the Biblical teachings, faith and other religious experiences in spite of his/her upbringing.

While children's lives are shaped from the day they are born, adolescence is a crucial time for many young people. This is a time when important decisions are made by a child. The decisions made will determine what quality of life this person will have for the rest of his/her life. If a child makes all the wrong choices and chooses a path of destruction, parents often wonder if they have laid a good foundation or where they have gone wrong. They want to help their teenager make wise choices. These choices are especially important when it comes to faith and Christian values, and yet evidence indicates that a high number of young people leave their religious institutions. This is significant because many choices and outcomes in their lives are based on only two things: the spiritual and the moral dimensions.

There are many dimensions to ones life, but it is important to understand that every dimension of a human life is influenced by the spiritual condition of an individual, because our spiritual dimension will affect our world-view or view on life we have. It is this world-view that will determine the priorities , choices, decisions, we make in life.

It is those choices, decisions, that some find alarming. To see how teenagers today, spent very little time helping people who are poor, hungry and sick, and the priorities they have, things they consider important, values and beliefs they hold. The Bible alerts that someday we will have to give account to God for every choice we made (Eccles. 11:9; Rom 14:12).

Family Unit and Its Impact on Children

Life is often a challenge. We do not live in a stress free environment. On the one hand, the demands of life make too many parents overly busy, stressed out, with the feeling of unsatisfied marriage, job or life in general. On the other hand there is a discord between what one wants to do, is able to do and what one does.

Because parents sometimes get caught in the business of life, some tend to set a bar too low and then expect other organizations like school or church to enforce standards which child should have learned at home. But, studies have shown that enforcement of

lifestyle standards seem to be less significant if school or church enforce it, but most significant when enforced in the home situation (Dudley 1992:162). Thus, the commitment to standards of all types is basically paralleled by family enforcement of those standards (Gillespie 2004:241). What is suggested here is that rules taught in a loving, accepting environment, by parents who care, have positive benefits, but rules taught in a less accepting environment often lead to less positive or even destructive consequences (Dudley 1992:163).

Because of business, parents are spending less quality time with their children. Furthermore, the authority of parents has definitely declined over the past generations. Possibly it started with the urban industrial life-style which changed family structure by removing a father from the household. While mother should have been a successor to power, she is not. The present generation too often sees mother as a single parent, career women, spending long hours away from home with limited exposure to children and family time in general.

However, the evidence from a broad range of family studies has suggested that it is not so much if there are one or two parents in the family, but what is more significant is how parents relate to their children (Strahan 1994:4), and how parents relate to each other. Because of the unique role, responsibility and opportunities both parents have, studies among teenagers in particular point to the two critical views which need to be impressed upon those who decide to have children: make time for your kids and [*if at all possible*] do not get divorced (Barna 1995:120).

Of course both parents are crucial to the successful upbringing of a child. Each parent has a unique role and responsibility at home as they try to positively influence their children throughout their childhood years. But when it comes to adolescence period, while mother still continues to represent warmth, safety and nurturance of the family environment, father's role takes on a new significance in that a father generally represents to an emerging adult, window to a "real world" that he/she is approaching (Clark 2001:59). To have both parents is not only advantages but is crucial throughout child's life, especially during adolescence.

But, it is not only both parents that are needed, if they are always busy and are not willing to spend quality time with their children, the efforts of the rest of their parental behaviors and perspectives will be severely blunted (Ibid). Furthermore, how family lives, the climate or atmosphere of the home is even more vital if you want your child to develop a value system that reflects your faith. It has been pointed out that "no matter how noble our profession if our children do not experience our families as happy and fulfilling, they will not want our values" (Dudley 1992:193).

The love and security of having both parents that love each other, helps a child feel more secure and adds a layer of protection to which a child/adolescent can fall back on, when needed (Ibid.). Those that grow-up in such a family are truly blessed and they know that they have a home even when they move out and venture on their own. Therefore, family climate is an important factor that can determine not only child's outcome in school but also if young person will view religion favorably and be willing to commit to it. A family is not merely a passive background against which child's development takes place, family plays an active and vital role in constructing, interpreting and transmitting of social behavior, moral values as well as

spiritual beliefs from one generation to the next. It is interesting that the Bible points out the fact that a child learns to trust God at his/her mother's breast (Psalm 22:9).

As child grows, this learning takes new approaches. Parents continue to communicate their faith in a meaningful and age appropriate way to their children. Research indicates that worshiping together as a family is definitely the most important transmitter of religious values (Dudley 1992:202). If you want your child to continue in your faith, have family worship every day. But it is not just mere commitment to a religion that parents should be concerned about, and the knowledge about God, but how a child learns about it and what a child does with this knowledge. Because moral development of a child begins with a knowledge of God and his commandments. What is crucial and should concern parents is the commitment to an only source of salvation which is Jesus Christ.

Moses stressed the importance of teaching children God's precepts: *Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up* (Deuteronomy 6:7) . (Read also Deut 6:1-9). Family is the place where a spiritual development should be nurtured and facilitated. But this is best done in homes that are religiously united[1] (2 Cor 6:14). These kind of homes create the best environment for the development of faith and values (Dudley 1992:188). Thus, family influences child's development more than any other single external influence and therefore, has an enduring impact on the future of a child, society as well as church.

Foundation of Child's Growth

The foundation of every child's growth lies in their family history, in the way a child was accepted, felt understood and supported throughout its growing years. Family is also a place that should provide for the basic physical needs like food, sleep, security, safety, shelter, respect, love and protection. It should be a place where children can experience a sense of belonging and attachment. Family should be a place where children can maintain a positive connection with others around them as well as with the surrounding world. Children also need to have some degree of predictability in their lives, then they feel secure. A home should be a place where they can feel like they are worth something, in other words a place where one feels like he is a decent person and is loved in the eyes of others and God, just the way he/she is.

A family that responds to basic or fundamental needs stands a best chance of contributing to a positive development of children. Only when basic needs are taken care of, higher needs like pursuing a meaningful calling, wanting to make a difference in the world, developing a personal relationship with God and growing in Christ, can be considered. Jesus knew this and he always took care of people's needs first. For example: he fed them, he healed them, he took care of their basic needs first and then he called them to higher accountability, to work on their higher needs, like relationship with God or fellow human beings.

Good parents not only take care of child's physical needs, they are also able to give their children age-appropriate tasks, while being sensitive to their limitations. Too often parents overestimate or underestimate their child's abilities and overlook their child's potential or limitations in hopes of fulfilling their-own failed dreams by pushing a child into something that

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1   Amos 3:3 says: *Can two walk together, unless they are agreed*?

is not suitable for their character. But, parents should be the ones who appreciate, encourage and support a child's unique self-special talents, recognize interests and abilities of each child.

But, family support needs to be balanced with control. Furthermore, character development takes place best in a climate where reasonable limits are firmly but lovingly enforced (Dudley 1992:196). It has to be stressed over and over again that parents should not only teach, but they need to model positive values and beliefs. Teaching and modeling what one teaches will help a child develop healthy coping skills. A child will learn how to get along with people, how to resolve conflicts, how to control their temper, learn to forgive, learn to deal with disappointments, among many other things.

Parents and Transmission of Moral Values

Most parents want to pass on to their children values like kindness, politeness, trustworthiness, caring, courtesy, self control, honesty, decency and much more. They want their children to know how to give compliments, to have sympathy toward another human being or animal, to be respectful, basically to practice the golden rule, in other words to be moral. They want their children to know the difference between rightness and wrongness and thus exhibit real qualities of human actions.

Moral development could be defined as "the process whereby the amoral infant knowing neither good nor bad, becomes the moral adult who knows the good, desires the good, and does the good (Clouse 1991:764). Therefore, the goal is not only to gain knowledge, but also that the knowledge obtained becomes a normal part of ones character or life and so it can transcend into normal action.

But to learn what is right and what is wrong, to know what is good and what is bad, to understand what is just and what is unjust is not easy, because many factors influence moral behavior and some may say it varies from situation to situation. Even, our intuition does not always, in special cases, tell us what is right and wrong. Apostle Paul says in Rom 7:19 *For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do–this I keep on doing.*

When we talk about children and morality, it is important to bear in mind, that children are for the most part influenced by home because no other influence counts so much as the influence of a home (White 1952:107). It is said that when a child is born it has no conscience and no scale of values. Thus he/she is considered nonmoral or unmoral. Before one can behave in a moral way, one must learn what the group regards as right or wrong. The child "learns this primarily from the parent-child relationship, for the foundations of moral development are laid before the child comes in contact with the peer group" (Hurlock 1973:376), basically in the home.

While, it could be said that the home is a cocoon in which the child is nurtured and prepared for the larger world, children tend to identify with values of their parents and learn how to be moral from what they see in their homes, how their parents act, from what is modeled every day. Apostle Paul, in his writings, also refers to modeling when he talks about human relationships (1 Thessalonians 2:7-11). Because modeling is so influential, it is paramount that parents or those who are around children demonstrate values and live an exemplary life. Children need to see in the lives of their parents that consistency which is in accordance with their faith (White 1954:482).

Some educators indicate that by the time a child is three years of age, parents have done more than half of all they will ever do for child's character (Bushnell 1960:212). "Too much importance cannot be placed upon the early training of a child. The lessons learned, the habits formed, during the years of infancy and childhood, have more to do with the formation of the character and the direction of the life than have all the instruction and training of after years" (White 1909:380).

Thus, the central core of true morality, awareness of and concerns for the feelings of others, has its beginnings early in life in the parents' love and respect for the child and for other creatures in the environment (Stone and Chruch 1973:262). But some may point out hereditary influences as leading determinator of what a child's character will be. Nevertheless, "we need to remind ourselves that heredity never operates in isolation from the environment" (Hoffman, Paris, Hall & Schell 1988:8). These two influences work together in the formation of what a child will be like. Because they will imitate what they will see, children need to be raised in an ethical environment.

The general conclusion seems inescapable that a child's character is the direct product, almost a direct reproduction of the way his parents treat him. As they are to him, so he is to all others (Peck and Havighurst, 1962:178). We might add too, as they treat each other, so he will treat others. Apostle Paul says in 2 Thes 3:7 *For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example....* In Tit. 2:7 He adds: *In everything set them an example by doing what is good....* (see also 1 Pet. 2:21). This form of learning, copying of behavior of another is considered the most common form of learning and that is why it is easily adopted by children. But, sadly some children are not surrounded by exemplary parents, and are not surrounded by virtuous behavior that should be copied daily.

Still, one should not despair if one did not have parents who did not model good behavior. Character can change and it can be amended. In the event that one does not know or cannot determine what is good and what is bad or what is right and what is wrong the Scriptures point out that it can be a helpful guide in teaching such things (2 Timothy 3:16). The Old Testament prophetic books are full of warnings, examples of what is immoral or unethical and what is moral or ethical. But the Bible extends on this issue indicating that morality is also concerned with God and what God expects from humans, the lifestyle He wants humans to exhibit on this earth. In other words God has lifestyle expectations. Thus, He is concerned about the kind of relationship His children have with those around them. We could say that 'morality is about doing things to people that result in their rights being respected and their needs being tended to. It is not about living up to customs and traditions. It is not about fitting into society's traditional values. Morality is only about living in a way that respects people's rights and cares for people's needs' (Smedes 1991:18).

Sadly it is evident that we live in a world where such principles are not held in high esteem, valued or often practiced. Children do not know certain things. Many are not reared in environments where virtues are stressed. Some people do not believe that honesty is important. So many are incapable of distinguishing between what is right and what is wrong, based on the biblical foundation. They tend to base their decisions on their feelings, media approval, or popular culture. As a result, different things became a norm, like sex outside marriage, the use

of foul language, thinking only of my own personal needs, with no regards for others, avoiding responsibility and what comes with it, just to mention few.

Yet parents are wise if they remember that a child has a better chance of acting morally independently and making wise and appropriate choices if he/she learns at home. To be moral can be learned just like any other aspect of behavior. Children cannot make choices for which there is no basis in experience (Blackham 1980:3). That is why one cannot allow a 3 year old to determine what is safe or what is not, to do so would be considered unwise. Similarly the decision to attend school is not left to a child, if left to him/her such outcome might be devastating, he/she might never choose to go to school.

But, once they are able to comprehend, according to their age, they not only need to know that some things are wrong, they also need to know why. Even God does not require his followers to follow him blindly (Exodus 12:26,27). Furthermore, an, explanation is insufficient without experience. Too often many of our children are armed with much information, but they are experience poor. Yet, knowledge, explanation, experience would be all in vain if parents do not expect a child to do the right thing and if they don't hold him/her accountable for his/her actions. That does not mean that a child will not make mistakes. But even through error we humans learn to do the right thing.

Most parents want their children to have better life then they did, they don't want their children to experience heartaches, basically they don't want them to make the same mistakes they made. Thus, these well intended parents often try to shelter their children from failures hardships and disappointments that come in life. They envision that better life being full of comfort and security where their children are protected and shielded from all influences of evil in this world.

This is not to say that parents should not shelter their children from bad individuals and bad things that are sometimes portrayed as good, and not provide guidance when it is needed. But with good intentions parents at times devoid their children of experiences and environments that could strengthen them and foster a satisfying life later on.

The essence is that children need not only to see parents practice what they teach, they need parents to teach them, they need knowledge or to learn what is right and what is wrong, and they also need the right kind of experience and all this takes place first at home. Furthermore, children also need a wise guide who can steer them clear of danger and who encourages, prompts, and reinforces behavior that is adaptive and successful (Blackham 1980:4). This is naturally crucial for childhood years, but is especially important for adolescence. If parents don't take interest an adolescent can feel abandoned and hurt and might be left with a feeling that parents don't care. It is true that a child can learn from unaided trial and error, but such learning is often slow and unproductive. There would be less pain, anxiety and low self esteem that inevitably results from failure, if there was less unaided trial and error.

A Transitional Period Between Childhood and Adulthood

While children's lives are shaped from their birth, it is during the adolescence period that young people make the most crucial decisions that will determine what kind of life they will have later on. It is during this time frame that a young person also undergoes changes, faces

difficult challenges, while parents hope that their child will be wise enough to make good choices.

When we talk about a young person today, we identify him/her as a teenager, or as an *adolescent,* or we say he/she is in a period of life called *adolescence,[2]* a transitional period of life that is sandwiched between childhood and adulthood. This span of time is also referred to as a period of delayed adulthood, a time of opportunities for personal growth, expanded education and social development (Rowatt 2001:18).

In other words, it is during this frame of time that adolescents are provided a second chance to revisit childhood issues and reach mature development (Miller 1974:436). It could be summed up in a nutshell that adolescence is a period of transition spanning the second decade of life during which a person's biological, psychological, and social characteristics undergo change in an interrelated manner and a person goes from being childlike to adult-like (Lerner 2002:4).

During this span of time a young person is also forced to deal with many challenging tasks. He/she needs to learn how to become independent emotionally, financially, make decisions on his/her own, learn to be responsible, in other words become fully "individuated" (Loder 1998: 296) human being. Young people are not considered individuated, even though some may think they are when they reject parental values, wear a different hairstyle, clothes, start smoking, use drugs, pierce and tattoo their body parts, or use slang language, among other things. Individuation means that one takes increasing responsibility for what they do and what they are, rather than depositing this responsibility on the shoulders under whose influence and tutelage they have grown up (Blos 1972:226). This is a long process and requires much searching and discovering of how one can best reconnect in meaningful and positive way to those around and society at large.

Usually a young person does this by examining his past life, sorting out what was learned in his/her childhood, the previous assumptions and beliefs, confronting them with new ideas he/she discovers and is faced with. This kind of learning continues as a young person accepts and discards and balances, while still testing and incorporating different things one is exposed to. This process requires a lot of sorting out, organizing, and restructuring of ideas, comparing and adopting. It is this time that frustrates parents most because they do not know if the outcome will be positive. While a child can be forced into compliance, a young person most often rebels if faced with such circumstances. But what a young person needs at this time is not so much telling him/her what he/she must do, but guide him/her lovingly and with care into making wise choices.

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2 Greek and Roman civilizations about 500 B.C. to about 400 A.D. recognized the stage of life that came to be called adolescence, from Latin word *adolescere*, meaning to grow up. Adolescence is a period of change known as puberty; it ends when the body has developed mature reproductive capabilities; psychological development; period at which one takes us responsibilities in the society at large. Generally taken to encompass the years between 10-21.

It must be pointed out that not all young people undergo this period of transition towards adulthood or individuation in the same way. There is a variation in timing, speed, and outcome of this transition. It is also important to note that most adolescents do experience healthy and positive growth during the adolescence period.

While parents in the antiquity expected their children to accept adult responsibilities once they reached certain age, the culture they lived in and the circumstances of life and the family unit had contributed significantly to a much faster transition into adulthood. Our culture today, has not made this process easier for adolescents. Adults are growing at a slower rate than in previous generations. Some young people tend to delay their adult decisions, and tend to depend on the income of their parents and often have trouble leaving and establishing their own independent lives.

Most often these kind of individuals are even stuck in this period. It has been suggested that "No growing up occurs if there is nothing to grow up to. Without the adult connection adolescence becomes a Neverland, a Mall of Lost Children" (Morrow 1999:110). They will never grow-up if they only hang around other young people. Additionally, most young people are interacting all day long through a screen. To develop intellectually one needs to relate to older people, older things (Stein 2013:29). Stating plainly, parents can be this adult connection that can help guide a young person through adolescence into adulthood.

While much more could be said about the uphill battle of a child who has entered adolescence, and the difficult journey toward adulthood, the above indications are just a touch of an iceberg when one describes a demanding period called adolescence. The conclusion is obvious, a period between childhood and adulthood is a very difficult period to pass through. Taking notice of the difficulties, perhaps jokingly, Mark Twain, and American writer remarked: "When a child turns twelve you should put him in a barrel, nail the lid down, and feed him through a knot hole. When he turns sixteen, plug the hole" (Mueller 1999:15).

World of Adolescents and morality

In order for us to understand young people, we need to have some knowledge of the world that affects their lives. Perhaps the biggest change that affects the lives of many, comes from technology and because of it, the world we live in today, is much different from what it used to be. The technological innovations have in some respect made life better and easier and it also has contributed to a more positive development of most people young and old. Many individuals, especially young people, have become dependent upon the new digital conveniences for entertainment, information, products, content and social networking. Like no other generation before, young people today are presented with a chance to exploit and utilize all forms of technological tools. Thus, because of globalization, social media, the exporting of Western culture and the speed of change (Stein 2013:28) young people world wide, are more similar to one another than the older generations within their nations.

But, even though technology promises unlimited possibilities, at the same time, it presents unique challenges, for it introduces tremendous levels of temptation to many, especially young people. For example the Internet is sometimes used by sexual predators who try to take

advantage of unsupervised youth. Even cell phone with its capacity to send text-messages has sometimes become hazardous for mobilized youth.

We could also mention television and what Hollywood serves through its movies and shows. Adolescents ages 8-18 (in US) spend more than 50 hours per week consuming media on phones and other devices (Steinmetz 2013:45). For example, in US young people grow-up watching reality-TV shows, most of which are basically documentaries about narcissists (Stein 2013:30). The propagated lifestyle is not realistic and affects our children and changes them for the worse. Among other things, they become less active socially and more neurotic and reports have indicated that they have lower levels of self-esteem (Steinmetz 2013:45).

Furthermore, this same world also presents unique challenges for all especially young people. For example, AIDS was not such an epidemic among the previous generations. Drugs, alcohol, violence, divorce, homelessness, issues of non-employment, loneliness, depression, suicide just to mention few, were not so evident in the past. Additionally, struggles with the problem of evil, pain, sickness, hunger, and death are still observable. Not to mention poverty and majority of youth who live in poor countries around the world who are marginalized, disconnected and deprived of things young people have in the developed countries. But even when they complete their education and expect to find employment, this generation has the highest likelihood of having unmet expectations with respect to their careers and the lowest levels of satisfaction with their careers at the stage that they're at, which is sort of crisis of unmet expectations.[3]

While today we talk about world without borders, where noone is isolated and distant any more, and the problems that plague the remotest corners become evident to most in an instant, it also testifies to a certain fact that our children, our families, and the way we parent children all is in crisis. Today, we have become aware, more than ever, that the effects of evil are stronger than ever, and it is seeking to take hold and destroy our children, but not only destroy them, yet also influence them to do atrocious acts of unspeakable wickedness, and thus, hurt many around them. We are confronted with young people who lack not only the kind of empathy that allows them to feel concerned for others, but they also have trouble even intellectually understanding others' points of view (Stein 2013:29). Thus, these kind of individuals are incapable of distinguishing between what is right and what is not right and what should be worrying to many is that they do not have an ability to base their decisions on biblical principles.[4] Individuals who had little or no parental guidance, who lack proper education, who face physical and emotional challenges, who have no sense of healthful living and most of all are biblically illiterate.

The big questions behind their decision to trod on a wrong path is how they determine or reason or decide what is right and wrong. While ethical world is huge, simple stated some individuals rely on code of ethics which they observed and learned in their families, church and

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3   (Quoted in **Time** magazine by Stein), says Sean Lyons, co-editor of *Managing the New Workforce: International Perspectives on the Millennial Generation*.

4   "They're not into going to church, even though they believe in God, because they don't identify with big institutions; one-third of adults under 30 (in US), the highest percentage ever, are religiously unaffiliated" (Stein 2013:34).

society around them. This form of making moral decisions is the easiest and it leaves so little to doubt. Thus, young people recognize that there are standards and laws by which one must live to be accepted by the society they live in. For example, sex outside marriage is wrong not only because the Bible condemns such actions, but many individuals believe that it is beneficial if a young person stays obstinate until married. It is interesting to note that most rebels who argue against some forms of ethics, eventually return and embrace what has been proven to work through centuries.

Many parents have a tendency to use code of ethics when confronting their troubled youth. Some run into difficulties when they try to enforc certain standards which young people do not find meaningful or central to their lives (like when they emphasize that Christians do not go to the movies or listen to certain type of music or play computer games). It would be wiser if parental efforts were focused more on teaching of values in areas young people do not understand as being vital to their life, like abstaining from certain at risk-behaviors, not smoking, drinking alcohol or using drugs. Adolescents need a wise guide who will patiently and lovingly with care clarify good choices from bad.

Then there are young people who prefer situation ethics when making moral decisions. National Study of Youth and Religion (in US) found that the guiding morality of 60% of millennials[5] in any situation is that they'll just be able to feel what's right (Stein 2013:28). This should be alarming to many. For those preferring situation ethic, no absolute right or wrong exists and so they base their moral decision on unique circumstance. Thus, things might not be right according to the human code of ethics but they are right or good in human terms. An example would be when a young person withholds the truth in order not to get a friend in trouble or a young lady lies to her parents because they forbid her to see someone she loves, in other words lying for love. This form of decision making is actually very difficult, because it requires much wisdom and experience which young people do not have at their age level, and they do not realize that they have not obtained it yet.

Yet still other group of young people sum-up their moral philosophy in a phrase: "Do your own thing." Basically for them nothing is wrong if you are honest and live as you see fit. Thus, their moral decisions are spontaneous, unprincipled and unpredictable. But it is interesting to notice that an individual who eschews all moral laws, might not always be immoral. We have an example where Jesus condemned outdated "laws" or we might call them today standards, which various religious groups of his time held in high esteem. He often tried to unburden people in hopes of returning them to a more simpler morality which was to love their God with all their heart and their neighbor as themselves.

So many young people think they control their own faith, so they can pick and choose what they want to do, what they want to believe, and who they want to serve. They often assume they are their own masters. They have strong desire for justice but without morality. They claim that they are spiritual but not religious. Basically they lack biblical foundations which help guide a young person to live a moral life which leads to a successful life.

When children enter their teens or period of adolescence, their personality traits become clearly visible. While this is a period of new opportunities for change, weak foundations

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5   Millennials consist, depending on whom you ask, of people born from 1980-2000 (Stein 2013:28).

from early years do become visible and defects in character will surface. Children will echo their parents' values, habits, preferences that were modeled in their home.

Some instead of making good decisions that can lead them forward in life, the choices they make impact their future for the rest of their lives. Others without notice, engage in behavior that closes off their options and limits their possibilities. Yet still others cross that forbidden border and questioning time begins and sadly some leave their religious institutions. It is estimated that perhaps 40-50% of all teenagers reject their parents' spiritual values entirely (Dudley: 2000:35). The highest risk period for abandoning spiritual values is during late teens and early 20s-- about 16-25 (Dudley 2000:23). Of course there is always a chance that even when parents have done all they can such an individual might make wrong decision altogether, abandon parental beliefs, his/her faith, choose a wrong path to follow and turn out for the worse. But parents should remember that while weaknesses in family ties contribute to dropping out of church, studies do point out that the same life-course factors, marriage and parenting, tend to pull the apostate back into the church (Dudley 2000:24).

Conclusion

It is important to bear in mind that the roots of human behavior are very complex, and many outside influences can counteract the work of the best parents. It is a known fact that events we experience in life, individuals we meet, things we see, touch our everyday lives and can influence us and our children for the better or for worse. While parents sometimes feel guilty for the mistakes they have made, the Bible points out that God forgives all sins, even imperfect parenting, when confessed. It is comforting to know that God also offers His Holy Spirit to compensate for what parents do not accomplish. Perhaps difficulties and failures should not be viewed so much as indicators of failure, but as events that build character and test our resolve to know, love and serve God (Barna 2003: 27).

However, it is parents who are responsible for laying of a foundation for child's character development. If the family fails, the other institutions which deal with the child face a tremendous, usually impossible, handicap (Havighurst and Taba 1949:191).

It is a generally accepted belief that the childhood years are perhaps the most important ones in forming character or broad personality patterns. But, as indicated previously, character can change and there is possibility for growth and modification, and hope for those that did not have proper upbringing. It is said that character formation is the work of a lifetime (White Child Guidance 1954:162). While "trends persist but change is continuous" (Bernard 1978: 259). Therefore, character continues to mature throughout life, but adolescence is a period in which the character structure is refined for all of later life.

As stated previously children enter their adolescence echoing their parents' values, but as time goes on, some will reject their parental values as they experiment in anything new they think is worth trying. However, young people have to go through a developmental task where they all must construct a set of values that will help them function successfully in the society they are part of. The good news is that once these formative years pass, most will make a partial return to parental values and come out with adult value system that will help guide them for the rest of their lives. These values, opinions and priorities will not be like

the ones their parents have, they will be new, but they will be rooted in the personalities of their parents.

The road to maturity is risky and difficult. But the following indicators can help a young person avoid at risk-behaviors: 1) the home plays important role. "Success can come only as a result of a concerned effort;" 2) Being close to parents "who hold spiritual values, provides protection for youth.... The issue of modeling is very important;" 3) Teaching children biblical truths, are important factors which can help a young person make wise decisions; 4) "Holding of high standards in home has protective influences, but only as these standards are lovingly enforced by caring people who are perceived to really care (Dudley 1992:267-268).

Jesus summed the mission of every parent in one sentence: love your God with all your heart and your neighbor as yourself. When parents live according to this command and a child embraces this concept as part of his/her life, parents have truly fulfilled their parental mission.

SAŽETAK:

Teologija roditeljstva: Je li roditeljstvo u krizi danas?
Kad djeca donose pogrešne odluke i izabiru put propasti roditelji se često pitaju je su li postavili dobre temelje odgoju svoje djece ili ne. Ovo istraživanje će prikazati kako su djetinje godine bitne u oblikovanju karaktera i stvaranju obrazaca osobnosti. Pored toga, temelj djetinjeg razvoja se nalazi u obiteljskoj povijesti, načinu kako je dijete prihvaćeno, shvaćeno i poduprto tijekom godina odrastanja. Obitelj nije pasivno okružje u kojem se dijete razvija, već ima vitalnu ulogu u stvaranju, tumačenju i prenošenju društvenog ponašanja, moralnih vrijednosti, kao i duhovnih vjerovanja. Tako je spoznaja i povjerenje u Boga usko povezano s obitelji i počinje u djetinjstvu. Obiteljsko bogoslužje je definitivno najvažniji prenositelj vjerskih vrijednosti. Cilj nije prenijeti samo znanje o Bogu, već i opredijeljenost Njegovim vrijednostima.

Ključne riječi: *roditeljstvo; dijete; obitelj; obiteljsko bogoslužje; razvoj karaktera*

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