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For the Love of the Family Ministries™

Missionaries to America's Forgotten Mission Field, the Family

Why Are We Losing Our Children?

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Why Are We Losing Our Children?

Several years ago we started For The Love Of The Family Ministries because we were greatly burdened about the number of Christian homes that were blowing apart, children not growing up to serve the Lord, and making a disaster out of their lives and others lives. By some estimates up to 80 percent of all children who grow up in an Independent Baptist church-home (other churches the same or worse) do not go on to live for God. After several years of counseling people about their homes, preaching in numerous churches, Bible colleges, and speaking to and counseling many pastors, missionaries, evangelists and their families, I have found that the answer lies in three areas. Number one is parental responsibility, number two is church responsibility and number three is personal responsibility. Probably some of the things I am going to say here are not going to make some people happy. I find that I generally make friends or enemies, but God knows my heart I want to help people and to present truth to help. I would ask that as you read this article read it with an open heart. If we are failing, then we do not need to keep failing, but we need to be open to Biblical change and instruction so we do not have to fail. The good news is many have not failed today and they have reared their children to grow up and walk with God. We praise God for that!

So many times parents are in total denial of their responsibility and wish to place the responsibility on the other two, church and personal responsibility. **Let me say this, much of the problem today is parental responsibility, Proverbs 22:6, I Timothy 3:4, Ephesians 6:1-4, Deuteronomy 6:6-9.** Some of the chief ingredients of rearing a rebel are as follows: 1. Hypocritical Christianity. (a) Parents who are dominated by the flesh rather than walking in the Spirit. (b) Parents who are consumed by worldly things. 2. Neglectful fathers. 3. Lack of proper child discipline. 4. Unholy associations (public schools, carnal Christian schools, carnal churches, worldly friends, etc.). 5. The parents not having a real relationship with God.

Some of the following statement was written by Dr. David Cloud, <http://www.wayoflife.org/> . to a pastor who was questioning an article I had written on parental responsibility. The article had been published by Way Of Life. I have also added observations to the statement. The problem is that these are common areas of failure that probably every parent is guilty of at least some time to some degree. It is all too easy to be hypocritical in various ways and to fail to practice exactly what we believe and preach. It is all too easy to walk in the flesh rather than the Spirit in our day-to-day relations in the home. It is all too easy for the father to neglect his responsibility to train up the children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord and, rather, to provoke them to wrath, Ephesians 6:1-4. It is all too easy to allow unholy associations to creep into our children's lives. This can happen with our children's relationships with the wrong kids even in good churches.

I do not therefore agree with parents who say, I did not do anything wrong and many have told me that. However, when we get into the issue, we find it was just not that way. In many instances the parent lost the child's heart and did not know it, or did not know they were suppose to get the child's heart in the first place, Proverbs 23:26. No parent can stand back and say he had no responsibility in his child's spiritual apostasy. The Bible's promises are too plain. Proverbs 22:6 is not as vague as many people wish to make it out to be. The wording is much more precise than that, and it definitely promises that if the children are trained properly they will not depart from the Lord.

On a daily basis I ask God to show me any sin in my life that would stand between me and Him. If we look closely enough, we can always find failure in our lives. I know that is certainly true in my own life as a father. Much that I preach and have taught in regard to the family, I have learned by my own failures and mistakes. Also, I have learned a whole lot more about it after my children have left the home and I wish I had known it when they were home!

While I don't believe parents should mope around defeated by their sins and shortcomings, I also don't believe they should pretend that they had no responsibility, I Timothy 3:4. I believe any parent that is honest can find areas of failure, and it is not unhealthy to face them. There are failures of commission (failing to do some things that we should have done as a parents, in our personal walk with the Lord before the children, in our training of the children, etc.) and failures of omission (i.e., not being Spirit filled in our relationships with our spouses and children, etc.). The solution to spiritual failure and sin in any area is not to ignore it but to face it and confess it and make it right. He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy (Prov. 28:13).

Some common areas of failure are neglecting to spend time with our children to teach them how to know and serve the Lord (it is easier especially for us fathers, it seems, to serve the Lord alone than to serve the Lord with our children); being grouchy with them instead of being Spirit filled; criticizing them more than encouraging them; wives being bossy and non-submissive; neglectful fathers and mothers who are caught up in their own pursuits; wives of school-age children and young people working out of the home in such a manner that the children are neglected; allowing unwholesome television and movies and video games and music, etc., to influence the family; letting the children develop close relationships with worldly young people; sending the kids to a public school, college, university, or a worldly Christian school so that they become influenced by evil (1 Cor. 15:33); allowing the kids to have more personal liberty than they were morally able to handle; staying in a carnal church so that the children are adversely affected, etc.

What parent can look back over his children's lives in the home and not find failings? I have talked with many church leaders about their children who have gone astray, because I have a great interest in that in order to help others and also because I earnestly do not want that to happen in my family, and invariably they have volunteered to me certain specific failings that they were guilty of and that they know has adversely affected their children. The list of common failings as listed above is based partly on things these friends have shared with me with broken and humble hearts, and partly on my own observations and personal failings.

At the same time, every Christian parent can testify that the Lord is very merciful. Praise God, He is good, and ready to forgive; and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon thee (Psalm 86:5). It is good for fathers and mothers to face their sins and shortcomings in their family relationships. This brings healing and growth on the part of all concerned. See our article on our web site <http://www.fortheloveofthefamily.com/> , "How To Deal With A Child Outside The Home Not Living For God".

There is no spiritual progress when parents claim that they did everything right and still their children did not serve the Lord. The hardest things I have faced as a Christian have been my responsibilities as a husband and a father. It has made me face things in my life that I probably would not have faced otherwise.

Though very difficult and unpleasant at times, facing sin and spiritual weakness is not unhealthy if it is done properly before the Lord and if it results in spiritual growth.

With huge numbers of children not growing up to serve God the question needs to be asked. Why are so many children growing up to not serve God from Christian homes? If we do the same wrong things over and over, we are bound to have the same results. Some of items below were written by Pastor Bobby Mitchell, and I have written some and expanded on some of Pastor Mitchell's thoughts with his permission.

1. The parents and the children do not have a real relationship with the Lord. When I say that, they are not spending time in the Word meditating on God's Word and have God speak to them and know

how to respond and have a real intimate, personal and passionate relationship with the Lord. Obviously if the parents are not, their children are not. Proverbs 13:13 is at play in their life. By the time we are contacted for help here at for the Love Of The Family they are in full blown destruction mode. Most of these kids have parents who think walking with God is going to church when convenient or even three times a week, and doing activities which makes them spiritual. The entertainment philosophy (flesh oriented music-Rock, Contemporary Christian, Southern Gospel music, worldly activities, and practices) are leading them down a destruction path. It never fails that I hear people say we need activities to keep the young people interested! What we need to do is to teach them how to have a real heart and relationship with God. The parent needs to get the heart of the child and keep it. Most Independent Baptist parents do not have a clue on this. They live in what I call the unholy six of Ephesians 4:31, bitterness, wrath, anger, clamour (public quarreling), evil speaking and malice (desire with intent to hurt). They boil with anger because they do not have a real relationship with God. They will fail because of these six in the home. Ephesians 4:31 says, **Let all be put away from you.**

2. Most Independent Baptist people are living for the lust of the flesh and they do not know how to not do so, Romans 6:11-16. Many do not even know they are living for the lust of the flesh. They have demand lusts, Ephesians 2:3 (lusts that control behavior) and they do not know how to deal with them Biblically, Ephesians 4:22-24. It then of course leads to destruction, Proverbs 13:13 in their lives and the lives of their children. They cannot teach their children what they do not know and the child never learns at home or church how to deal with these issues. They do not know the power of God or how to Biblically change their life. Therefore, when they get old enough they have seen enough of church and it did nothing for them. Romans 6: 11-16 tells the Christian **yield** (submit themselves to God). James 4:7, **Submit yourselves** therefore to God, Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Did you see who was involved? The devil! The reason we do not yield or submit ourselves to God in the daily walk of life is because of pride, James 4:6. We think we can do it in our own power. We go our own way and make Jesus Christ non essential in our life at the point of outside pressure (point of impact) by the devil in every day life. In essence, when the heat is on, (something that did not go our way or right) we do not submit ourselves. We are not Spirit controlled but lust and flesh controlled at the point of impact. Folks, if we are living this way, and do not discipline our lives to be Spirit controlled at the point of impact, we will not teach our children to be Spirit controlled, but will by example teach them to also live this fleshly, lustful way.

3. Many are not genuinely converted because of the watered down gospel presentations that are so prevalent in this day. The children are told to acknowledge a few facts, they are led in a prayer, and then they are told to never doubt their experience. Of course, over time, if they are never genuinely converted, then they either continue on trying to "fit the mold" of their church, or they just walk away from it when they are able. The sad part here is they have never been born again and think they have been saved. In my experience years ago in Bible College I would visit on Saturday. Many of the people when I would go to the door would tell me they were saved. It did not take long to figure out that I needed to understand what their experience was. I realized I needed to ask them tell me how you got saved. Many of them could quote to me the Romans Road, but they had never been to church in years! In fact, they could tell me about it with a beer in hand and a cigarette in the mouth. What

is wrong with this picture? Obviously, they had never truly repented of their sins and turned from themselves and their sin to Christ.

4. Many are told what to do, but not taught why to do it, or what not to do, but not why. They have been told that baptism is by immersion only, that the King James Bible is the Word of God in English, that women should be modest, etc. But, these things are not taught to them from the Scriptures. They grow up just thinking that these are merely the rules of life for Independent Baptists. So, they are not really convinced, or convicted, and it is easy for them to slip into other doctrines and practices.

5. The children grow up in homes that are plagued with inconsistency. The standards and practices change based on who the family is around. The family is unfaithful in their attendance to the house of God, Hebrews 10:25. The family Bible time is hit-and-miss or non-existent. The child never learns to have a relationship with God through His Word himself, which is the most important downfall. He may read the Bible some, but it is all mechanical. He is not asking or allowing God to speak to his heart. Discipline is not consistent. There is an open or even silent disagreement with what is taught by the church concerning entertainment, dress, roles in the home, etc. The inconsistency relates to young people that the parents are not really set on doing things the Biblical way. They become unstable and are easy prey for the devil and the world.

To maintain strong moral standards for your children, you must have control of their lives. If they are in a secular school or a worldly Christian school, it is very possible that you will lose the battle. The same is true for the church you attend. I would challenge you to make sure that you are in a morally strong church that will back you up with godly standards. The matter is so crucial it is well worth moving to another state if necessary. If you are in the typical church today (including many independent Baptist or fundamentalist ones) your kids are surrounded by young people who are deeply compromised with the world, whose chief goal in life is to have fun, who think a shallow devotional and a quick prayer sanctifies every sort of carnal behavior and redeems the complete waste of countless precious hours in this fleeting life. They are just as sports crazy as the world, just as fashion conscious, just as ignorant of sacrificial Christian living and service. In fact, if you are in the typical larger church, you might very well have a youth pastor that encourages worldly living (covered with a thin veneer of superficial Christianity, of course, to salve the conscience). The average church's youth department replaces secular things with Christian alternatives that imitate and are only a half step behind the world; secular sports are replaced with Christian sports, secular rock with Christian rock, secular dating with Christian dating, R-rated movies with PG-13 movies, secular tattoos with Christian. If you are in such a church, even if it is not quite as extreme as that which I have described, it will be almost impossible for you to maintain strong standards of separation from the world for your teenagers, because your efforts will be undermined by the church and by their church friends.

6. The children hear their parents criticize the pastor and other strong Christians in the church. This can result in confusion.

7. Many times when a pastor sees a young person really embrace the truth and Biblical living, the parents become an obstacle. It seems the parents are bothered by their children surpassing them in the things of the Lord. The parents pull them back and some even express jealousy concerning the influence the pastor has concerning their children.

8. The parents get their children wrapped up in the things of this world. The parents are not concerned about their children loving the Lord and walking in the light, but they are more concerned with their kids playing organized sports, becoming popular, being fashionable, seeing the latest movies, making a lot of money, having the newest video game systems, acquiring every type of technology without proper accountability regarding those "toys," etc. Through it all the dad and mom seem to be sowing thorns that choke the seed of the Word of God. This is especially true when the sports, fun, and such ever come before any of the aspects of New Testament ministry.

I am always amazed when I go to a church and the pastors teenage children are dating or have a boyfriend or girl friend. Lets be clear, **a teenager is not mature enough to handle these types of relationships.** If the pastors family is doing this, they are leading their congregation in the wrong direction and setting a poor example. Folks, the parents responsibility is to get the heart of the child and keep the heart of the child. A child wanders spiritually because his heart wanders. Every spiritual issue is a matter of the heart, Ephesians 6:6. A child's heart wanders because of the opposite sex and then their heart gets hardened to the authority of their parents (or anyone else) and the things of God, and then their heart gets stolen by their boyfriend or girlfriend. Then horrible things happen. They need this time in their life to mature and then develop their relationship with God without this huge pressure of the opposite sex in their life. Most pastors are trying to set a good example here. However, many have just given up trying to instruct on this matter and they are doing a great injustice to their children and to the congregation.

Our girls were told from an early age, we did not want them considering the opposite sex and they need not even think about dating or having a boyfriend or a girl friend.

9. The young people are not really involved in the ministry of the church until they are pressed to do so in their late teens. Too many are just observers and not participators. All that is expected of them is to sit and be entertained instead of training and serving. They are not taught that we exist to glorify God. Practically, they are being taught that the ministry exists to make sure that they are having fun. They are not taught to "buy in" to the work of the ministry. Eventually, they realize that the world's entertainment is better and they look for fulfillment in getting involved in worldly groups and activities.

10. Christian young people are not taught to pray, study the Bible, meditate on the Word, memorize the Scriptures and apply them practically in real-life situations. Real life then comes along and they don't respond Biblically or care to respond Biblically.

11. Young people grow up knowing of all sorts of sin in the church that is not dealt with scripturally. Of course, they also see young people leaving the church and that not being dealt with Biblically. They don't realize how wicked this is and they have no fear of God concerning it.

12. The bar is set too low for so many young people. They are treated as if they are expected to be "silly teens." As long as they don't do a few really bad things and as long as they do a few good things they are treated as if they are godly. So many of the young people in churches that I have been familiar with are good (in the commonly used sense of the word) **but they are not godly!** Good kids will eventually get devoured by the world, but truly spiritual ones will develop into mature Christians. Too many are treated according to the worldly concept of "teenager hood." The Bible speaks of infants, children, young men, young women, and older men, and older women. I think that a lack of teens understanding that they should be godly young men and young ladies is hurting many.

13. Young people have heard very little of the "fear of God." They have a warped image of God that magnifies his love and mercy while almost completely ignoring his holiness, majesty, and wrath. Subsequently, they walk in pride and rebellion.

14. Too often the preaching to young people is just fluffy and light, and often-times it is just motivational speaking. Too many young people do not grow up really learning sound doctrine and being taught through books of the Bible. Too many preachers that are youth-focused are trying to be "cool" and "hip." The average youth ministry today is just replacing worldly activities with Christian worldly activities.

15. I am more concerned about the Bible College issue now than ever because of the levels of apostasy I see there. I have seen so many kids that leave their local church for Bible College end up with less of a desire for God than when they left their church. I counsel many kids who are Bible College graduates who do not have a clue! They forget about their local church, pastor, parents, and it was fun time while they were there. Most of that though is fueled by youth groups that are fun city and the same for many Christian schools. Teaching a child how to have a servant's heart and encouraging them to do so is really not on the agenda. I have also seen that many of these kids go to a Christian college and never leave. They stay there, get married, attend the church that has the school and really never go on to serve. They kind of get lost in the crowd and really do not have to do much of anything. How many smaller local churches or their local church could use them there? Mark 10:45, For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister (serve), and to give his life a ransom for many. Many Christians have not been taught to serve, do not want to serve, or do not know how to serve.

I am finding several Pastors who are starting to take the position that maybe it is not such a good idea to send them off to Bible College, that they can be trained in the local church. Some have started local church Bible Institutes for this purpose and some are having them do study through correspondence.

Many kids from good homes and churches graduate high school and are pushed into the Christian college environment. Sadly, most (prayerfully, not all) of the Bible colleges are anemic in their teaching and practice. There is almost an idolatry of fun and good times at many schools. One college has even been heavily promoting a water park with a wave pool and a place for the young

ladies to tan (as if that is so important). When I visited that same school I was awestruck with the amount of money and time put into "fun." The young adults are, in a great way, withdrawn from their parents, church, and pastor. What little time they have with godly teachers and staff is outweighed by the influence of so many worldly students in the dorm rooms and activities. There is a mixture of doctrinal persuasions among many of the student bodies. Their parents and pastors are compared to those of the others and often the lowest common denominator is embraced in matters of holiness. Endless debates rage among peers. The "pillar and ground of the truth," the local New Testament church, is downplayed.

Finally, all of this starts with a pastor who is not program oriented, entertainment oriented, but Word oriented. Remember many pastors are coming out of the lukewarm, in the process of apostasy, Bible College with this philosophy. We send our children there and then wish we did not.

At the time my daughters went off to Bible College, I visited several and found there were problems with almost all of them in the areas I described above and there seemed to always be a problem with one of three things. They were wrong on the Bible, music, or standards. The pride and arrogance of many were appalling as well. I asked myself the question over and over, I am not comfortable with any of this. But it is the thing to do to send my daughters to Bible College. They need to meet a Christian young man etc. Dr. Don Jasmin has recently written an outstanding book that should be read by every Fundamental pastor and parent. It is called Why Do Fundamental Schools Go Apostate? <http://www.fundamentalbaptistministries.com/>. It chronicles the Northfield schools of D.L. Moody and the poor decisions Moody made. Dr. Jasmin points out, we as pastors and parents send our children to schools that we are not comfortable with and think it will not affect our children? If a school is in the midst of apostasy (and fundamental schools do apostatize), our child can be there for four years under that influence. Also, the unsuspecting parent sends their child off to what is suppose to be a good fundamental college and the atmosphere of worldly dorm roommates, activities, and emphasis on fun rather than living for God; undoes a lot of what parents have tried to do in their children's lives. Many times sending a good kid off to Bible College will ruin them. Our daughters were grounded spiritually and knew how to have a relationship with God before they went. In many instances they had to fight for their convictions, standards, and their godly walk. If they had not been grounded they would have been devoured. If I had it to do over I probably would not have sent them, or at least to where I sent them, but I unfortunately did not know any better at the time. I am thankful for their desire to serve God today and I am thankful for Gods gracious compassion in the matter.

I was recently in Canada and had lunch with a wonderful older couple who told me how they had sacrificed much and worked hard for the spirituality of their children. The wife was a nurse, but stayed home and home schooled their children. When it came time to send them to Bible College they visited several and sent them to what they thought was a good Independent-Fundamental Baptist school (one we all know). While their son was away, through phone calls and talking with him they became concerned about what seemed to be a difference in his life spiritually which they felt was not good. They visited and stayed awhile and were appalled at the fun atmosphere, worldly roommates, dress, desire, and activities of the students etc. They decided to rent a house in the

community, stayed there, and had their son come to live at home with them while going to school. Soon things changed back to a young man with an intimate relationship with God, his parents, and a desire to walk with God. They are convinced if they had not taken such a bold step they would have lost their son. Folks, I counsel many Bible College graduates and it is appalling about where they are in the destruction of their life. We as parents need to be discerning about this matter as well and not be deceived by the publications that tell us about the big numbers, big buildings, and huge churches being built by people who are building empires. One of these schools recently said. The way to keep our kids is to have more programs for them. Folks, we are already programmed to death! That is not the answer it is a major part of the problem.

Finally, on this subject I have seen many times a Bible College; usurp the authority of the New Testament pastor and local church. This is not Biblical and has led to the down fall of many.

17. The local New Testament church is treated by many parents as optional instead of vital to spiritual growth and New Testament Christianity. Unfortunately, many churches are not doing their job in regard to the training of our children. I preach in many churches. I am concerned about the philosophy in the local church that we do whatever is needed in a worldly way to reach people. Many of the brochures I receive from those having conferences make me cringe. Worldly themes and activities that are nothing more than appealing to the lust of the flesh, Romans 6:11-16. If it did not have Christian words in it I would have thought it was done by a secular institution. However, with that philosophy, we are teaching our church people that we are to use a methodology of the world rather than teaching them to walk with God even in the way we reach others. Unfortunately folks, the local church is contributing to the downfall with a fun activity, mentality. It is permeating all that is being done. What we need are true New Testament churches that seek to build strong families and that do not hinder the families by such worldly things as entertainment-focused youth departments.

The proper biblical goal for a godly family is to reach the world for Christ, to fulfill the Great Commission as it is modeled in the book of Acts, which is through church planting and trying to reach others for Christ. In many instances, our young people are not taught the need or much of an emphasis is put on this. They need to be taught to see the world as God sees it, lost without a Shepherd and in need of a Saviour. Most of the young people I counsel, have no desire to see anybody saved or even care that they should be saved. They are interested in the me, mine, my philosophy. They have not been taught that the goal of their life should be to glorify God, I Corinthians 6:19-20.

Why not? Most of them have never went on visitation or even know how to lead anybody to Christ. My question is why have they not been taught how to share the gospel or their own testimony with another person? They have no burden for the lost. In our church, we have a good number of people who come visiting on Saturday morning. Many of them are teens. They have went through an evangelism class several times. We want them to witness, serve, and show they care about someone other than themselves.

The churches responsibility is to help all members of the family develop their desire to have a real,

intimate, personal, and passionate relationship with the Lord and to serve the Lord, not just be a carnal Christian to be fed as a baby all their life.

18. Personal Responsibility-Realizing **every Christian** has a personal responsibility to respond to the Spirit of God. Up to now in this article I have talked about the responsibility of the parents and the church. However, you as a Christian still must make the decision that you want to have a real relationship with God. Yes, you need to be taught how, and that is where much of the failure is today. **But if you do know how then you are responsible for what you have been taught. If you do not know how then it is time to learn.** We are glad to help you do that. I understand many are confused about what it means to have a real relationship with God and really, what they have been taught it means. This is a parent and church responsibility. Unfortunately, it has created much confusion (who is the author of that, Satan).

The coldness, carnality, and bad choices, of your heart, will lead you down a path of destruction. I ask many people when I am out preaching, do you believe Romans 10:13, For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved? I hear amens and Yes sir! I then take them to Proverbs 13:13, Whoso despiseth the word (does not give proper attention to) shall be destroyed. Do you believe that? Silence! It is just as much a promise as Romans 10:13! Folks, every person has to take their own responsibility for their choices and life is made up of choices. **My choices** need to be guided by the Word of God and my relationship to it. **Your mom and dad, grandparents, your pastor, your church, your Christian school, your Bible College cannot live your life for you.** They can guide you, instruct you, teach you, pray for you, (and they are responsible to do that Biblically correctly) but you will have to have a desire in your life to walk with God. But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, **and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.** By doing it properly they should have put that desire there.

In this age of blame throwing, how many people blame others for their own poor decisions? The Bible makes it plain, the parents, the home, and the church, set the stage and have responsibility, **but so do you!**

The goal of every Christian parent in life should not be to rear a good kid or have students who are excelling academically, are great athletes, and so forth. The goal is to equip our children, these young saints for the work of the ministry (Ephesians 4:12, Mark 10:45). Our goal as Christian parents is to train them to stay on the road of usefulness to God. If, in the end, they are unusable to Christ, they are not handling life spiritually and wisely, both they and we have failed.

Christian you need to take spiritual responsibility for yourself! I have good news for you today. No matter where you are in your life. No matter if you have lived in rebellion, disastrous sin, and made a mess of your life. It can change starting today. Where is my hope? For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, **that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.** Your hope and your answer is in Gods Word and there is hope for you today. It starts with making a right decision today, that I want to live for God and be **spiritually**

responsible to Him through his Word. If you need help today, you need to understand God loves you and wants to have a relationship with you. You can change, Ephesians 4:22-24, and God wants you to change. If you need further help please contact us here at For The Love Of The Family, <http://www.fortheloveofthefamily.com> .

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