

It's a big responsibility being a parent. While our children are young, we:

- provide for their every need;
- guard them;
- protect them;
- And we raise them:
 - train them to be good and righteous;
 - teach them in the ways of the Lord;
 - instil into them, morals/boundaries/values/borders;
- *Back in my day, we probably taught them to love Holdens and hate Fords (that teaching obviously absent in the Dries household)...*
- And we discipline them.
Hopefully we don't have to do that too often, but raising a child well, requires very clear boundaries, with very clear consequences...

It's a big responsibility, raising a child.

At the moment, right across Australia, and especially in Queensland, youth crime is out of control... Why? Because parents have not done their job of raising, loving and disciplining their children... And nor do the authorities do their job of punishing the wrong-doer...

So, the responsibility we have, to raise our children, is a big responsibility. Our job, is to raise our children, in the way of The Lord...

Proverbs 22:6 (ESV)

⁶ Train up a child in the way he should go;
even when he is old he will not depart from it.

But, imagine the responsibility given to Mary and Joseph, to raise the Son of God... I'm glad that I wasn't entrusted with that job.

Anyway,,,,, there comes a time, when a parent's responsibility (for raising a child) comes to an end, and we take our hands off the control, and we step back. Well still be available for our grown children (ask us for advice), but it is no longer our place to control our grown children, or even try to redirect them to what we think they should do...

And that's probably one of the hardest things for a parent to do – to step back from the roll of one who trains and protects and directs, and to begin to allow our children to be the young men and women that we've raised them to be.

There comes a time when our children:

- grow up;
- they leave home;
- they choose their own career;
- They may decide to move a long way away – maybe to another country

And as parents, it's 'hands off', and it's a sad state-of-affairs, when a parent tries to coerce or manipulate a grown child.

And of course, when they get married, the Scriptures tell us that we leave our parents, and cleave to each other to form a new family. And for most, the leaving of our family comes

well before we cleave to our wife, and that's pretty important...

Now, the question comes, "When does a parent's responsibility for raising their children end?"

- Is it their 21st Birthday?
That used to be the becoming an adult age...
- Or is it their 18th birthday?
You can go to the pub & and for most legal matters, you're considered an adult.
- Or is it their 16th birthday?
Ow, how could it be then? They're still at school....

In biblical times, it was quite normal for women to be married by the time they were 15 or 16 years old, and boys around about 18 (or younger).

In the Bible reading today, Jesus is 12 years old. Now, by the Jewish customs, when a boy turned **13**, that is when his responsibility as a man kicked in. This is when he would be responsible himself, to do all that is required by the law. And so when Jesus was **12** years old, He was right on the border between being under His parent's control and authority, and having the expectation of a man...

It makes you think, doesn't it? I suspect that sometimes we try to hold onto our kids for too long. And it also should help us to realise just how important the early years are when it comes to raising our children.

You know as well as I do, if your kid isn't doing the right thing by the time they're 13, you haven't got much hope of reigning them in.

Righto, let's come back to the Bible reading:

Jesus' Parents have taken Him to Jerusalem for the feast of the Passover. Now, that was a pretty big event.

Mary & Joseph went to the Passover every year, and that was a big commitment. They lived 128km away, and their method of transport was by foot. And so it would take them about 4 days to walk to Jerusalem, and another 4 days to walk home. **And** the journey was quite an event itself. A whole community would travel together – it was safer that way – a bandit's not going to attack a group of 100 people, and so it was a chance to walk and talk and pray and play...

And so, they went to the Passover, and that was all good, but when they were on their way home, I don't know how it happened:

- maybe Joseph thought Mary had Jesus;
- maybe Mary thought Joseph had Jesus;
- maybe they thought He was with his mates

I mean, He's 12 years old – on the cusp of becoming a man...

Anyway, at the end of the 1st day's journey, they realised he wasn't with them...

OH NO!!! We've lost the Son of God...

BTW, did you hear about little Johnny and Freddy had been naughty. They'd stolen some lollies from the local shop, and when their mother found about it, she got the minister to talk to them about stealing.

The minister thought he'd get them to understand that God is everywhere, and can see what they are doing, and hopefully that would be enough to make them stop.

So he called them into his office (one at a time), Johnny first.

*And he said to Johnny "Where's God?" Johnny looked a bit bewildered. "Where's God?" He was getting more confused. And the minister was getting a bit agitated that Johnny wouldn't answer his question. "**Where's God!!**". Johnny jumped up and flew out of the office. He found Freddy and said "Quick. Hide. They've lost God, and they think we took him!!"*

But can you imagine: "God has entrusted to us, the Saviour of the world, and we've lost Him."

Forget about that – a parent losing a child is panic enough.

We've done it a few times – we've still got most of our 4 children...

One time, we went shopping, when our eldest child (who shall remain nameless) was only a little fella. We were in a large shop. I think it was Kmart, or something like it, when all of a sudden, we realised that Jake was missing. It started out with just a general look around. We weren't too concerned

But within a minute we were starting to get frantic. We searched and searched, and looked and could not find him. The little monkey had hidden himself in a rack full of clothes. And when we found him, he was giggling – he'd had a great old time hiding in the clothes. But he didn't laugh for long.

It was almost a replay of what Mary said to Jesus: "Why did you hide yourself from us? We were going frantic looking for you?"

But our nameless eldest Jake, he was not much more than a toddler; Jesus, He was 12.

It took Mary & Joseph 3 days to find him. A day journey away; a day to walk back; And a day to search. But when they found Him, He was probably not the spot you'd expect a kid to be. Not:

- the local swimming hole;
- the lolly shop; or
- the camel skate park

in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions.

(not like the pictures [precocious little 12 year old, instructing the great minds of His day])

Jesus would ask them quite astute questions, and they would answer Jesus by asking Him questions, and they were amazed at His understanding. He could cut straight to the heart of the issue, and He had amazing insight.

You see, at this point, Jesus was learning. He was learning about the things of God, and learning about the Jewish Law and customs. There would come a time when He would argue with the teachers of the Law (when they had it wrong), but at this point, at 12 years old, He's studying and learning.

But there's something about God that Jesus knew already. He knew that Joseph was his father by name, and Joseph was as a father (in every earthly way to Him),,, but His real father, is God...

And so when Mary says: "Son, why have you treated us so? Behold, your father and I have been searching for you in great distress." ⁴⁹ And he said to them, "Why were you looking for me? Did you not know...."

Now, at this point, Bible translations vary, and I'll tell you why. Basically, in the original Greek, the sentence appears unfinished. It pretty-much says, Did you not know that I must be in the _____ of my Father?

In the what? In the house of my Father? In business of my Father??? It's left open. Now, usually when it's left open, it's probably open for a reason, and so let's put in the word "things".

Did you not know that I must be in the things of my Father?

In My Father's house; Going about His business; Learning about the things of my Father...

And of course His parents didn't get it, but Mary treasured up all these things in her heart.

Luke told us, right at the opening of this Gospel, that he'd researched all of the eyewitness accounts of Jesus... And as I read this, I'm pretty sure he must've had a chat with Mary. She'd treasured this up in her heart and told Luke about the day they were frantic because they'd lost the Son of God...

But V51, is astounding. Jesus knew that He was the Son of God. But: **he went down with them and came to Nazareth and was submissive to them.**

The ruler of the universe, submitted to His earthly parents...

And V52 says: ⁵² **And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favour with God and man.**

It's talking about a balanced growth.

A balanced growth into adulthood, requires 4 types of growth:

- Wisdom;
- Physical growth;
- Social growth;
- Spiritual growth

1.
Jesus increased in “wisdom”.

“Cleverness”, is not wisdom. There are many very clever people, and many highly educated people, who lack wisdom.

Wisdom, is the ability to use knowledge and reason **with the help** the Spirit of God, to know the right and Godly thing to do in every situation. That’s what wisdom is.

And I reckon the way we teach our kids “wisdom”, is by demonstrating it ourselves – looking to God’s word, to help us to make wise decisions, to do the right thing.

2.
The 2nd area of development, is “physical growth”. Jesus grew in stature.

Now, to an extent, kids do that themselves, don’t they. All we have to do is add the food – they do the growing. And we just bemoan the fact that that the shoes we bought them 8 months ago don’t seem to fit any more.

But of course a parent’s job is to help them to eat right; encourage them in exercise and whatnot...

But a big trap for parents, is we live in a nation that worships sporting stars. And some parents are so driven because their little Johnny/Mary has the talent to represent Australia... And rather than encouraging a balanced growth, **physical** growth and **physical** training consumes the parent/child/whole family... And they tell themselves, I’m doing it for my kids – giving them the very best opportunity..., – but are they?

Too often, it's teaching the child, "This is the most important thing in the world"... And do you know what suffers?

- Wisdom may suffer;
- Social development; and
- spiritual development.

3.

A third area of development is to know how to get on socially. Jesus didn't only grow in favour with God – He also grew in favour with man. That means He knew how to interact with people.

Some Christians seem to take it as a badge-of-honour if they're a stench in the nostrils of their ungodly neighbour, but being unnecessarily offensive or condescending, doesn't help bring people to Jesus...

As parents, we need to teach our kids how to socialise (even with the ungodly), but in a Godly way. How do we do that? We model it. And we talk to our children about their interactions with other kids, and with adults. Basically we teach them how to be good friends; and kind; and caring; and selfless – putting others first, but not take on the ways of the world.

4.

And as you know, I always leave the most important point until last: "spiritual growth". Jesus grew in favour with God (talking about spiritual growth).

Unsurprisingly, within the world, “Spiritual growth” (a growth in Godliness) has pretty-much zero priority. But development that does not include “spiritual growth”, is an unbalanced growth.

And this isn't only about our kids – this is about ourselves too. Sometimes, even as adults, our spiritual development becomes stunted.

Physically and socially, we might have everything altogether. Our career or our business might be rocking on nicely,,,

But how's your prayer life? Yeah, probably not as good as it once was.

How's your relationship with God? Has it grown in the last 5 years?

Our spiritual development is something which should just go on and on.

And the way we best encourage our children to grow spiritually, is for them to see that this the most important thing for us...

When Mum & Dad:

- pray;
- read the word;
- make worship and fellowship together with their brothers & sisters in Christ the most important part of their week, our kids learn that...

Spiritual development – growing in favour with God, and it's not just about learning stuff. Spiritual development is about growing Spiritual fruit – becoming like our Heavenly Father.

Let's finish up:

The point of this passage, is Jesus had a unique attachment to the Father. It was a little painful for His earthly parents, because Jesus as the Son of God, meant His relationship with the Father, took priority over every other commitment and every other relationship...

But do you know what else Jesus taught us? **His** Father in Heaven, is **Our** Father in Heaven.

As God's children – as disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ, **our** relationship with our Heavenly Father, is unique. Our relationship with God takes priority over every other opportunity/commitment/relationship, because He is our Lord.

Do you know what that looks like???

- Why wouldn't you expect me here – worshipping with my brothers & sisters in Christ?
- Why wouldn't you expect he here – studying God's word?
- Why wouldn't you expect me here – going to a quiet place for a bit, to pray?

- Why wouldn't you expect me here –
visiting the lonely (when I could be earning some
overtime)

Did you not know that I must be in the things of my
Father?

Let's pray:

Lord Jesus Christ,
Let us (like you), be in the things of our Father.
May it be totally normal for us
to be found in the house of God;
May it be totally normal for us ,
to be active in the business of God;
To be serving You with our whole hearts.

Lord today, we want to pray for the parents in this
church.

Lord, Give us wisdom,
as we raise the children You have entrusted to us.

Help us to propagate a balanced growth:

- Wisdom;
- Physical growth;
- Social growth; and most importantly
- Spiritual growth

Lord, as adults, help us to model this ourselves,

and may it be obvious

(not for show, but because that's the way it is)

May it be obvious, that we must be in the things of the
Father.

Lord, help us to grow deeper and deeper in You,
and that the fruit of Your Spirit
would develop in our lives.

And we pray for our children,
that as they grow,
that they would mature into young men and women of
God.

And help us, when our job is finished,
to be able to take our hands off,
and entrust them to You,
Letting them be the young men and women
they have grown to become.

And Lord, we pray for what we call "the prodigals",
for the children who have wandered from you:
In Your mercy, and by Your spirit,
We pray that You would touch them,
and bring them back,
to be Your children

in Jesus' Name,
Amen.