

live. It is not uncommon to visit a home today during mealtime and find the family eating but not communicating. At the end of the table and drawing respect from every eye is the television set. Frequently we confront this situation in the world around, and it has to be admitted that this scene is mirrored in many a Christadelphian home.

Is it right? Can this habit be justified? Paul teaches that a responsible brother in the ecclesia is one who “ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity” (1 Tim. 3:4). The Greek word for “ruleth” signifies “to stand before”. This father is providing leadership for his family. He is “apt to teach” (v. 12). He is creating an atmosphere of wholesome spirituality in the home.

Among the blessings of the faithful Israelite, described in Psalm 128, we read: “Thy wife shall be as a fruitful vine by the sides of thine house: thy children like olive plants round about thy table”. This man of faith has been blessed with children. His wife has been fruitful and he is positively happy to have the joy and vigour of children in their home. No carpets on the floor perhaps, no modern conveniences, but a perfectly happy father. His children are gathered around the evening table. It is *his* table. No one came into that house to distract the attention of those children from their father; and, together with his wife, he had a policy for those assembled children: they were growing up as “olive plants”. The little shoot is found so often at the base of the larger trees. It always looks good, a lively deep green in colour and sure in progress. Yet it will not produce a great tree in terms of size or beauty. Its sole use is to produce oil, precious, indispensable oil that will provide light for the holy place of the Temple.

What glorious lessons flow from these thoughts. This father was actively developing minds that could provide the light for Israel. So should we be. Do not let those wonderful little minds, so great in potential strength for the ecclesia, be taught by the filmstars and personalities of show business. Let the meal time be a time of family strength with happy communication among the family members and with father as the presiding influence who brings the light of divine wisdom to shine on all matters. Sons and daughters, especially as they begin to sort out larger issues of life, are really seeking to discuss their problems. If there has been a loving instruction and interest in earlier years, then they will have confidence in their parents in the teen-age years. Fathers, let us not abdicate our responsibilities and fail them in the time of need. How beautifully the Spirit describes our yearning: “Hear, ye children, the instruction of a father, and attend to know understanding. For I give you good doctrine, forsake ye not my law” (Prov. 4:1,2). The father’s law was God’s law, and he longed to impart

The process of maturation in the young man or woman comes gradually, and that is something to be thankful for, because it gives opportunity for wise instruction. We must recognize that at this time a sense of independence is developing in the individual that we would not wish to hinder. The child is gradually coming to be a person in his own right so that he can survive on his own and not be forever dependent on his parents. As he begins to think for himself, experience new emotions, mix with people in the world, parents need to realize that this is a time to show understanding, and do all they can to retain the child's confidence. At this time, children of brethren and sisters become much more conscious of being different from those they mix with, because they have been brought up differently. There is an instinctive reaction to avoid this embarrassing difference, to want to be like others, to escape from the unpleasantness of being odd. And there is in them the stirrings of the flesh to go with the world and its pleasures. **This is when all the instruction of the early years plays a vital part.** Although the world will entice the teen-ager especially, parents must remain sympathetic but uncompromising in the godly standards they have set for their children. Yet it is not wise at this time to sternly suppress. As independence comes, one must lead rather than insist, and seek to control circumstances for the child's good, with prayer to God.

Wise Restraint

Throughout the child's life, and especially in the teen-age years, restraint should be exerted in a selective manner. The parents should select occasions when they say "no" to their children's requests on what they want to do. It is not practical or useful to keep on saying "no" to every desire of the child to do what others are doing. Rather, we should wisely select important occasions where we clearly see the evil, but the child does not realize what is involved. Then we firmly say "no".

The Home and Its Influence

The natural dependence of the child on his parents in early childhood preserves proper respect; but as children become adults, that respect may either melt away, or become a wonderful bond to tide them through difficult years. It will all depend on how the parents themselves behave, and what they have made the home like. Moving out into the world, the child becomes acutely aware of different ways of living, and he looks critically at his own home, himself stirred by "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life". If the par-

ents have made the home an idol's temple, if they have been making provision for the flesh, and have spent their time enjoying this life, it may well cause the children to do the same. If the parents invite friends into the home for entertainment and relaxation, in the general style of the world, the children will be induced to make the same sort of friends. But if the home is a place where the Word of God is talked about, simple pleasures suffice, and friends have minds in harmony with this, our children will look upon their home as a refuge and a strength in their struggle to walk in the fear of God in this world.

Television has become a bad feature of many Christadelphian homes, having a powerful influence on parents and children alike. It brings the world vividly into the heart of the home. We are foolish to think we can resist its powerful influence and not be harmed. The mind is gripped by it and fed with earthy sensual things. It dulls the spiritual senses, so that the mind cannot readily turn from the sensations of the screen, to the study and enjoyment of God's Word. This is so, even with discriminate use; and those who yield themselves to its lustful programmes, so easily available with the turn of a knob, will soon be overcome. The wise man tells us to turn away from evil (Prov. 4:14-15), and this is applicable to television. Paul adds: "Make no provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof" (Rom. 13:14). Perhaps if those who have television were to put a card over it with the words: "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, *think on these things*," they would rightly feel uncomfortable, and perhaps take the right steps in this matter.

Some say, "Brother X has a radio, I don't see why I shouldn't have a television". Well, there is something in that argument, and we could manage without the radio as well as the television. But the argument is not a valid one. In all things a point is reached, where, because of increasing danger, corrective steps should be taken. Let me illustrate. There may be a pond down the lane where the children play. They like playing in the water, and although there is some danger, it is not great because of the shallowness of the water. In another place there is deep water. It is the same stuff, still just water, but if the child gets into it, it will drown. We have to discern that things go from bad to worse, and from radio to television is something like getting into deep water. Its influence is so powerful that, for those who are dedicated to the ways of holiness, it is an evil in the home. The less we have of television, radio, glossy magazines, novels, sensation-loving newspapers, the more hope we have of bringing our minds into subjection to God. The

words of Jesus to his “evil and adulterous generation” will probably be found applicable to the present: “Many are called, but few are chosen.”

The World and Its Ways

Our children, as they begin to move in the world, have innocent minds and are without experience. Because the world without has a natural appeal to our hearts, it is easy for them to be beguiled and carried away. That was Eve’s unhappy position. “Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression,” says Paul. There are many things that are part of the world that may not strike us as wrong. It can be as Jesus said, “That which is highly esteemed among men, is an abomination in the sight of God” (Luke 16:15). It is therefore the task of the parents to show their children the true character of things, to see the things of the world in the light of God’s Word. We will give two illustrations.

Gambling

Frequently we set our heart on something new we would like to have. This is that basic propensity “the desire of the eyes”—things to have and enjoy. So people are continually seeking the means to get the things they want. To get money quickly, and if possible, something for nothing, seems very desirable. This spirit pervades society today, and if we are not careful we can be involved in it ourselves. People are always “trying their luck” in raffles, draws, “pools”, and the like, some of them made attractive with the assurance that part of the money will go to a good cause. The Catholic Church collects big sums of money for its building schemes by promoting “pools”. Many governments today are so far demoralized as to officially sponsor draws and lotteries. In England when Government Securities were launched, called *Premium Bonds*, half-page advertisements sought to persuade the public to participate with the luck of the draw. The jingle of the advertisement well expresses the appeal of this sort of thing:

*“Mrs. M. from Sutton Hoo,
All day would wash and darn and sew;
Her holidays were few and far;
Her husband wanted a family car;
The Premium Bonds resolved their plight,
For fortune smiled (as smile it might),
£10,000 was the happy news,
And now they’re off on a luxury cruise.”*

THE ONE-EYED IDOL

You have an idol in your home?
With one great glaring eye?
He occupies the foremost place
And I will tell you why:

We sacrifice to him our time
Because he'll entertain,
And to our bulging eyes display
All life's sorry train.

Vice and crime, and viciousness
Horror, shame and sin—
(We've wasted many precious hours
Since we have let him in).

But now? He dominates our home
For GOD? We have no time
Our eyes are dimmed by "Gunsmoke"
Our minds are filled with crime.

"I bring into your living room
Bartender, harlot, thief
And from the slick commercials
I give you no relief.

"I brainwash children, and prepare
Their minds by what they hear;
I make attractive - violence,
Sin, cigarettes and beer".

You speak of your delinquents?
And deplore their vicious deeds?
But I continue merrily
To sow the carnal seeds.

The cheating wife, or husband.
Is the accepted thing;
We're living in a "modern" world
Go to it! Have your fling!

Away! with outworn "standards",
Our day is modernized;
Such things as right or wrong
For sin is glamorized.

I set the world's criteria!
I am the household god!
(If you protest against me,
You're a puritanic clod!).

I'm the one that rules your home!
From God I turn your heart!
I fill your mind with banal trash
By foul, hypnotic art.

Once family altars occupied
The place where now we see
The glaring eye of Cyclops,
For lo he's called "T.V."

ADDITIONAL PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS

Throughout the articles in this section, numerous practical suggestions are offered for implementing godly principles in parent-child relations. Following are some additional points learned from experience that may also prove useful.

Do Not Minimize Childhood Fears

Do not belittle or minimize the fears of children. Share some of your own childhood fears with them and show them that everyone has some kind of fear. Work with them in order to deal with their particular fears. This is an excellent opportunity to draw in the concept of “our” angel (Matt. 18:10) watching over us. Tell your child to ask God to send the angel to comfort and protect him when fears crop up.

Listen to Your Children

Let them express their feelings even if half what they say is wrong. Discuss with them and patiently explain the correct position. They are more likely to listen if we also listen to them.

Give a Farewell Blessing

Send the children off to school in the morning with a blessing. Say something simple like “The Lord be with you” or “Remember the Truth in your life today”.

Work to Eliminate Television

If there is a TV in the house, work towards its eviction. TV is the thief of time and a waster of the mind. The average child in the States watches five hours per day. Start by reducing that to one or two hours per day and then reduce it further so that some days become entirely free of television. Begin to introduce your child to the idea that life can be lots of fun without relying on the TV. Point out to older children the bad points of TV and the deceptiveness of the advertising so they are able to see the medium in a realistic light. When a person watches TV, it is said he is one level above a sleep mode. Think what this is doing to the minds and bodies of our children. There has been much written on

the adverse effects of TV upon children. Look around for studies which bring out these facts. TV watching has eroded the art of good conversation, reading and writing. It is a recognized fact that our language is suffering because we are watching instead of reading and we are listening to simplistic dialogues designed for the most elementary intellect. Apart from a tiny percentage of the material presented on TV, what is seen is of no real benefit. In fact, it is detrimental because among other things, we are trapped into enjoying evil vicariously and developing too fertile a fantasy life. TV is a major curse of modern family life. Courage is needed to discard it but all the benefits will fill the vacuum with many blessings. **“Be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind”** (Rom. 12:2).

Mothers Do Not Interfere With Discipline

Mothers, let father administer discipline and punishment when necessary. Mother's overzealous sense of protection and interference can ruin the effectiveness of father's leadership and discipline. Even if Dad is not 100% right in "reading" every situation, discuss this issue in private and away from the children. A strong father figure, respected by mother, will also be respected by the children.

Do Not Prolong Punishment

Don't let a period of punishment last unduly long with the children. If punishment is necessary, let them know the reason why, then carry it out and let that be the end of it. Never send a child off to school or to bed in anger. "Let not the sun go down upon your wrath."

Play Games The Child Likes

Fathers play with your children the games they like to play. They may or may not be ones you enjoy yourself. By so doing you cement a bond of affection with the child and provide yourself an opportunity to teach principles of unselfishness, fair-play and happiness in the good fortune of another. However, a great mistake will be made if one insists the child unwillingly participates in recreational activities of the parents' selection. We need to avoid living our dream through our children or despising their ineptness at an activity in which we hoped they would excel.