

Family Ministry: Authority and Position of Parents

Introduction – As parents, we wield authority over our children. But we do not have that authority because we are bigger or smarter. And it has not been given to us for our own pleasure and purposes. It is representative authority. We are acting on Christ's behalf and we will be called to account.

Our First Duty: Remember the Covenant (Deut 7:9) - Covenant-keeping is promise-believing (John 6:29). We must not rear our children in fear or in presumption, but with faith in God's faithfulness.

Faith Without Works is Dead – Evangelical faith never exists without corresponding works. But the works are never the ground of our assurance. God's Word is our assurance. Believing grace manifests itself in the fruit of the Spirit and in works of righteousness.

Representatives of Christ – Our authority as parents comes from God's establishment of the government of the family. As such, we represent Christ in this government, and we do so in the offices which He holds. Those offices are of Prophet, Priest, and King.

Family Prophet (Deut 6, Eph 6:4) – We have the duty to teach and train our children in Christ. The 'paideia' of God is the 'disciplined education and training' and it involves all of life. Deut 6 shows us how extensive this training is to be.

Your First Priority is Your Own Personal Obedience (Deut 6:1-5) – You cannot physically or symbolically drop your children off for spiritual training apart from your own. Your training must be rooted in your own fear of God (v2), love of God (v5), single-mindedness towards God (v4), and obedience of God (v1). Nothing undermines your efforts to parent your children more than hypocrisy. Your justification and sanctification must be evident to them – they must 'see' your belief.

Then You Pass It On (vv 6-9) – Then you are qualified to teach, informally and formally, in every situation that life brings. You must study the Word and you must study the frame of your child. If you do not think, plan, and put this into practice, it won't happen.

Biblical Worldview Everywhere – The world must be understood according to the Word of God. What are clouds? What defines beauty? How do I know what is good and what is evil? How should my country be governed?

Family Priest (Job 1:5, Heb 5:1-4) – Job understood, as all parents must understand, that they serve a priestly function as well in their homes. A priest was responsible to lead the people in maintaining communion with God.

Learn to Worship (Ps 122:1-5) – We learn how to worship God in a way that is pleasing to Him, and then we must instruct our children. Our instruction at home must be in how to worship, including how we control our mind and bodies. This is the Lord's Day and we are His people. He has promised us that He will be God to you and to your children after you – so we don't send them off to 'children's church'. They are to participate with us.

Instruct in Repentance and Confession – We must teach them the seriousness of sin, of the need to confess those sins, and of the atoning work of the cross. But we don't want them simply to be ashamed of sin – we must teach them to love holiness.

Sympathetic Compassion – The priest had to be a man so that he could have compassion. We must teach compassion and mercy while teaching the fury of God's wrath upon sin.

Family King – The kings of Israel were required to write out a copy of the law and to be acquainted with all of it. They were then to use it as their standard for judging the land.

We Must Have a Copy – Parents must have a well-worn Bible, because they are well acquainted with God's law. The children should see that Bible being used to decide matters.

We Must Apply That Law – As we rule in the home, it must be clear that we are following God's commands. The home is not an autocracy, nor a democracy; it is a theocracy. That means, with regard to our children, we must administer discipline as commanded (Prov 29:17). We do so with humility and love (Prov 13:24) and in the promises of God (Prov 19:18).

Your Home, Not Theirs – As the head of the home, you must set the standards. Sin is not allowed to stay in your kingdom. The children must learn that sin has consequences and that sin affects everybody else covenantally (Deut 5:8, 1 Sam 2:29-31). They will learn to obey through your godly restraint, discipline, encouragement, chastisement, rewards, teachings, reprovings, commendations, challenges, and exhortations – and all done by faith.

Unavoidable Offices – If you are a parent, you have no choice about whether or not you are a prophet, priest or king. The way God made the world, you always are. Your only choice is whether you will be a faithful office holder, or an unfaithful one.

Always Teaching – Abdication teaches, silence teaches, and so does faithful handling of the Word. What are you teaching your children about how the Word is to adorn your life, "*taking every thought into captivity*" (2 Cor 5:10)?

Always Ministering – Are you bringing your children to the Lord in prayer, in family worship, and to this service? Do you handle them as a compassionate priest, or do you judge without regard for your own weaknesses? Are you taking responsibility before the Lord for all that occurs in the home?

Always Ruling – God's law is to be upheld, and God's forms of chastisements are to be implemented. You do not get to choose your own laws, nor your own judgments.

Dave Hatcher, August 26, 2001