

Families

The teaching of the New Testament organizes families: husbands and wives, children and grandchildren, parents and grandparents. It is common for parents to think that, as they grow older, their children will care for them. Certainly, children in a happy home come to predict tranquility based on the behavior of their parents. The New Testament lays down some rules.

The parents are for the children, not the children for the parents.

In speaking of supporting our children, Paul said: "For the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children." II Cor 12:14. Fathers especially are to nurture and admonish their children spiritually. In Eph 6:4, they are told: "And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord." Fathers are also responsible for the physical nourishing of their children: The Lord said: "9 Or what man is there among you who, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? 10 Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent?" Matt 7:9-10. Young women are to "manage their homes" and "be busy at home" (I Tim 5:14; Tit 2:5). Central to family life is the duty of parents to take care of the physical needs of the children.

However, children are not without obligation to their parents: "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. 2 'Honor your father and mother,' which is the first commandment with promise: 3 'that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth.'" Eph 6:1-3.

The duty to provide extends to the older members of the family.

Paul writes: "But if any widow has children or grandchildren, let them first learn to show piety at home and to repay their parents; for this is good and acceptable before God." 1 Tim 5:4. In this day of social welfare programs, it is easy to forget that the Bible gives us the command to see after the physical necessities of our parents and grandparents. Just because older people have the means does not mean that they have the necessities. Sometimes they do not get proper food in the house, do not go the doctor, or do not even keep their places clean. In James 1:27, the word *visit* requires that we look after orphans and widows with the idea of taking care of them. This is true of all orphans and widows, but it is especially true of those who are our relatives. What can we do to help them?

- See that they have proper food and medical care.
- Help them keep their place clean.
- If necessary, let them live with you.
- Take them to church.
- Visit them and fellowship in their difficulty.

We can be worse than unbelievers.

Of course, we are to take care of the spiritual needs of children and parents too. But if we ignore their physical needs, we are worse than unbelievers. Paul said, "But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever." I Tim 5:8. The scriptures govern the treatment of our relatives. The golden rule says in Matt 7:12: "Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets." Therefore, we should do unto our family members as we would have them do to us. Gal 6:10 says: "Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith." If we are to do good to all men, how much more so ought we to do good to our very own relatives?

Conclusion.

Parents and children in conflict with one another should be mindful of their God given responsibilities and duties to one another. Doing the will of God will breach any breaks that occur in the family walls, assuring happiness in the present and helping to secure an eternal reward in heaven.

Study questions.

1. Should children save up for their parents; or the parents for the children?

2. What kind of man would give a son a stone and snake when he asks for food? -

3. What should he give him? _____
4. How does Paul say that we learn piety? _____
5. Where is it to be first applied? _____
6. In writing to Timothy and Titus, what responsibilities does Paul give to younger women? _____
7. What are some of the things we can do to help family members in need? _____
8. If we fail to take care of our family members, we are worse than what group of people? _____
9. What is the best way to secure the walls of family from all harm? _____