

THE FOREST HILL NEWS

Published weekly by the Forest Hill church of Christ

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Forest Hill Church of Christ

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VISIT US SOON!

Sunday:

Bible Study..... 9:30 A..M.
Morning Worship.....10:30 A.M.
Evening Worship..... 6:00 P.M.

Wednesday:

Bible Study7:00 P.M.

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An open letter to Christians who will one day meet my children:

Dr. Brad Harrub

We are dreading it like the plague—and yet, we know there is nothing we can do about it. Our children will grow up, and one day leave home to build their own family. God blessed my wife and me with two precious souls who have brought a lifetime of joy and happiness in the few years He gave them to us for care and safekeeping. With bedraggled hair and lines on their faces, we have soaked up their morning time smiles. And with comforting arms and a plethora of nightlights, we have conquered nighttime monsters, all the while, watching their beautiful handprints fill our house. But the time will come when they grow up and move away, no longer under our guidance and care. Thus, this open letter to you.

I don't know what day it will be, or in what town you will likely see them. But chances are, in this "small world" your paths will cross one day. I hope on that day, you will remember this letter and help their mom and me out. Believe me when I tell you that we are praying for that day. For you see, as parents, we want nothing more than to hear Almighty God say to our children "Well done good and faithful servants...enter thou into the joy of the Lord" (Matt. 25:23). We want them in Heaven! Their souls mean more to us than all the material possessions on this planet. We are simply asking you to do all you can as a Christian to help us get them there.

Now please do not think we are unloading our responsibility on you. This is certainly not the case. We know that children are like arrows in the hand of a mighty man (Psm. 127:4), and it has been with forethought and determination that we have launched them towards the goal that we so lovingly call Heaven. In fact, we have centered their lives around God and His Word from the day they were delivered into this world. Bibles do not collect dust on our shelves. We try to seize every opportunity available to teach them about God, Jesus, and the Bible, and His creation around us.

We not only "talk the talk" of Christianity, but we humbly "walk the walk." When the doors of the church building are open, our children are there. We have lost count of the many gospel meetings, vacation Bible schools, and area-wide singings they have attended. They are being raised at the feet of men whose Bible knowledge and Christian example are nothing short of exemplary. But there will come a day when mom and dad's voices will not be heard as loudly as others. And sadly, there will come a time when we will not load them into our car to go to worship with us. And so, we are soliciting your help.

My wife and I do not subscribe to the idea of "political correctness." Thus, even while they are still under our care, but in instances where they may be out of our sight, if you ever see them doing something they shouldn't, correct them and, if need be, add a good swat as a reminder. Should they be running, playing, and acting like the auditorium is a gymnasium, block their path and rebuke them—remind them that tracks and playgrounds are for running. If our children look sleepy or tired in worship, please ask them what was more important the evening before that caused God to take a backseat. If they are late to worship, tell them to buy a watch. If they leave the auditorium during the sermon, kindly remind them to get "their business" done before worship begins. If they walk by without speaking to (or worse yet, almost knocking over) elderly members in the church, take them by the arm and nip the problem right then and there. If they appear to be passing notes or not paying attention, kindly take a minute to ask them what they learned in the lesson that day, and ask them why we worship. Do not be afraid to tell them if they are dressed inappropriately. And if for any reason you do not see them in a worship assembly that they should be in, please pick up the phone and call them (and us) immediately, to check about whatever might be wrong. For you see, we want our children not only to be "Christians" in name, we want them to live faithful Christian lives.

If you have the opportunity to teach either one of our children in school, or in a Bible class, please challenge them. I know many "specialists" warn that we should not push our children too hard, but we would like to see ours wrestle with a few problems. Part of learning is knowing how to think on your own. This lesson will never be learned if they are given the answers each time something is challenging. How will a child learn perseverance or diligence if he or she is handed everything on a silver platter? As parents and teachers, we must expect more from them, but be there for them when they sincerely need help.

(continued on page 3)

“PROVOKE NOT YOUR CHILDREN TO WRATH”

Roger Campbell

In two closely related New Testament verses, fathers are given these instructions: “And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord” (Eph. 6:4); “Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged” (Col. 3:21). While much is said about parents properly training children (Eph., 6:46b), much less is taught about the need for dads to refrain from provoking children to anger (Eph. 6:4a). Without any claim to have all the answers, please consider the following practical observations.

Provoke not your children to wrath does NOT mean the following:

- **Never do anything that makes your child (ren) angry.** From time to time, children will get angry at parents when they step in and “put their food down.” A three-year-old that picks up a sharp knife may pitch a fit when his mom takes it away, but children don’t need to play with knives. If we never do anything to cause a child to be upset, then we will turn a spoiled (and dangerous) brat loose on the world.
- **Never correct your children.** Jesus said, “As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten” (Rev. 3:19). Properly administered discipline is not the “provoking” of children that the Lord forbids.
- **Never tell children that something is off limits or wrong.** The Lord says that those who take part in the “works of the flesh” will not enter into the kingdom (Gal. 5:19-21). When we restrict our children from such things, they may become hot under the collar, but do not be deceived, such restriction of children’s activities is not the “provoking” that God forbids.
- **Never to force your children to do something that they do not want to do.** Many children detest chores such as cleaning up their room and may get bent out of shape when ordered to do so, but forcing a child to clean up his room is not the “provoking” spoken of in our texts.
- **Never tell your children “no, you cannot do that,” even when the matter is not sinful.** Children may throw a tantrum when a demand for a toy from Walmart or a pair of shoes from the mall is not met, but it is not because they have been unduly provoked. God has given someone the task of making decisions in the home. Children are to obey parents, not vice versa (Eph. 6:1).

Parents DO provoke their children to wrath when they do the following:

- **Show partiality/favoritism.** Favoring one child over another or giving special treatment to one over the other can cause anger toward both the parents and the pampered child. Remember what happened in Jacob’s family when Jacob favored Joseph over his other sons (Gen. 37)?
 - **Ask children for their opinion, but then consistently disregard it.** Parents need to be honest. If they have no intention of seriously considering what the child has to say, they should not ask for suggestions in the first place.
 - **Compare their children with each other, or with children in other families.** This often takes the form of a question: “Why can’t you be more like _____?” This is almost a guaranteed way to get children angry, and understandably so. Children want to be treated like individuals. We need to exhort them to do the right things and give their best effort in all activities based on Bible principles and reaching their own potential, not on comparison with others.
 - **Belittle them in front of peers or adults.** This is a very insensitive act, regardless of whether done to a five-year-old or an adult.
 - **Using insulting names.** We sometimes say hurtful things in anger that we don’t really mean and later regret. Insulting our children, even in jest, is unwise.
 - **Make all their decisions for them.** When children are small, parents naturally make most of their decisions. A time comes, though, when parents have to back off and let children, with their own distinct personalities and interests, make some decisions. Some dads provoke teenage children by trying to dictate to them where they will go to college, what occupation to pursue, or what color clothes to wear.
 - **Take no interest in their interests.** Children feel hurt when parents don’t get excited about their hobbies, sports, and school activities. They feel neglected when they don’t make an effort to attend their activities.
- There are likely a great number of other ways that parents unduly provoke children. Perhaps these practical illustrations will help more of us avoid unnecessary pitfalls in our efforts to be righteous parents who lead our children in the path to heaven.

(from *House to House Heart to Heart*, Vol. 9, Number 5)

