

November: Child Raising **Pauline Michell**

Last month we focussed on marriage and God's principles to build our marriages. I discussed the book *Love and Respect* by Dr Emerson Eggrichs. I encourage you to get that book if you want to read his tested advice for a wholesome marriage more thoroughly.

This month we are looking at child-raising advice in this challenging and sometimes difficult task. I taught a series 2 years ago on Dr Leman's book, "*Have a new kid by Friday.*" which is all on the website www.godlink.weebly.com if you would like to go through it. But today we look at some points from Stormie Omaritian's book, "*The Power of a Praying Parent.*" We know that no area of your life can make you feel more like a failure when things go wrong in your children's lives, and nothing can make you feel more like a success when everything is going well. We try to do our best, but every new stage in our children's lives presents another set of challenges. But the good news today is that our children's lives don't ever have to be left to chance. And we don't have to live in fear of each new phase of development in parenting, nor do we have to be perfect parents. But we can start right now making a positive difference in our child's present and future. It's never too early and never too late to start praying for them.

The key is not trying to do it all by ourselves all at once, but rather turning to the expert parent – our Father God – for help. Then, taking one step at a time, we cover every detail of our child's life in prayer. There is great power in doing that, far beyond what most people imagine. If you did not have a positive parenting experience to imitate, you may be trying your best, but it may seem that it is never enough. But God wants us just to keep giving our children to Him on a

daily basis. We declare ourselves to be in full partnership with God. He shoulders the heaviness of the burden, and provides wisdom, power, protection and ability to lead them, far beyond our own.

Prov 22:6 says, *“Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it.”* As we depend on God to enable us to raise our children properly, he sees to it that our children's lives are blessed. So as we keep the details of their lives covered in prayer, and release them into God's hands, God releases our minds from that particular concern and carries that burden for us. Prayer releases the power of God to work in their lives, and we can enjoy more peace in the process. Tell Him, *“I need your presence and your power, Lord. I can't do this without you.”* But when we don't pray, it's like saying we have no need of anything outside of ourselves.

We can't enforce our will onto our children in prayer, but rather ask Him, *“Lord show me how to pray for this child. Help me to raise him your way, and may Your will be done in his life.”* And God will answer our prayers in many wonderful ways. Prayer is more than just giving a list of desires to God, but it is inviting His presence and power into their lives and circumstances.

Jesus gave us a key in Matt 16:19 which says, *“I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.”* In the book, *Breaking the Power* by Liberty Savard, she shows the Greek meaning of *Binding* here. It means *to fasten, tie or weave together, unite, to cause fragmented pieces to come into one whole.* We pray binding prayers of our children's souls and spirits to God. Bind them to God's truth, His plans and destiny for their lives. Bind their minds to the perfect mind of Christ;

their wills to the perfect will of God and their emotions to the perfect love of God; their spirits to the perfect Holy Spirit of God.

And *loosing* in this verse means *to break up, destroy, dissolve and shatter into minute fragments*. So we can pray loosing prayers where our children have made wrong agreements with the powers of darkness or where they believe the lies of the enemy. We can loose stronghold thinking that has kept them bound in any area; loose them from any grip that the devil may have on their lives, from the power of this present world; and even loose them from wrong relationships.

And praying in the Name of Jesus is also a key. Jesus said, *“Most assuredly I say to you. Whatever you ask the Father in My name He will give you.”* John 16:23. Praying in the Name of Jesus gives us authority over the enemy and proves we have faith in God to do what His Word promises. Matt 18:18 also tells us, *“If two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven.”* If you pray with your husband, or with a friend, there is great power in agreement. It will also encourage you to share your prayer burdens with someone else. My husband and I pray briefly for our children most mornings. I have also been meeting weekly in the school terms with a friend for about 15 years now. We pray in agreement for our families. This is my highlight of the week and God has done many miracles for both our families.

When we pray for our children there may not always be an immediate response. Sometimes it can take days, weeks, months, or even years. But our prayers are never lost or meaningless. If we are praying, something is happening, whether we can see it or not. The Bible says, *“The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.”* (James 5:16) When everything seems hopeless and in spite of all our prayers for them, they still seem to be making poor choices and then reap the consequences, those times can be hard for a parent to watch, no matter how old the child. However, don't berate yourself, and don't stop praying. Keep communication lines open with your child, and declare the Word over them. Remember,

that your fight is not with your child, it's with the devil. Stand strong, because he has already been defeated at the cross. Prayer invites and ignites the presence and power of God into the situation.

Pray for their futures, and pray against the effects of past events. We don't believe in "*whatever will be will be*," and if we don't pray, it's like sitting on the sidelines watching our children in a war zone getting shot at from every angle. When we do pray, we're in the battle alongside them, appropriating God's power on their behalf.

Declaring the Word of God in our prayers, wields a powerful weapon against the enemy. God's Word is "*living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword*." (Hebrews 4:12). God says, "*My Word shall not return to Me void, but it shall accomplish what I please, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it*." (Isaiah 55:11) In other words, His Word is never ineffectual or without fruit. Even if you only use one verse that God gave you – just pray it till you receive another.

Remember that while God has a perfect plan for our children's lives, Satan has a plan for them too, which is to destroy them, and he will try to use any means possible to do so: drugs, sex, alcohol, rebellion, accidents, disease, failure. But he won't be successful if we forbid him access to our children's lives, and if we resist him and break his accusations against us and our children. The truth of the Word tells us that we are no longer condemned when we have received Jesus' life. Teach them that and pray that over them, too. Of course we also need to discipline them, guide them, and help them learn to make godly choices. Tell your younger children Bible stories, and verses, while you still can influence them.

But it's not being a perfect parent that make the difference in a child's life, because there are no perfect parents. It's being a *praying* parent that makes the difference. And that's something we can all be. Maybe your life is so busy, and you feel guilty for not praying enough. Use the time when you drive into work to pray for them, or whenever you hang up the washing, or when you are alone doing the dishes. Just talk to God and bring your children one by one to the throne of God. Watch and see what God will do. God bless you till next week when we continue looking at helpful child raising principles.

Child Raising Chapter 2 Pauline Michell

Last week we started with parenting principles and focussed on the call for us to become praying parents. We must invite the power and presence of God into the lives and circumstances of our children. We must bind them to God's ways and truth, and loose them from the lies of the enemy and any grip he has on their lives. Resist him, and break the accusations he throws at your children. Praying in the Name of Jesus and in agreement with someone is very effective when we intercede for them.

Today we look at fatherhood as a key in the lives of our children, from the book, *"Dad, the Family Coach"*, by Dave Simmons. He says men don't feel good about their lives when they are poor fathers to their children, no matter how successful they may be in their work or in the eyes of the world. And there is no greater gratification when fathering is done well. The prophet Malachi spoke about the coming of Jesus, the Messiah, in chapter 4:5-6: *"See, I will send you the prophet Elijah before that great and dreadful day of the Lord comes. He will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers, or else I will come and strike the land with a curse."* So we want to challenge the fathers today to join in this prophetic movement, to work with Jesus to father your children with His love and a sense of destiny and confidence.

You may be one of many out there who do not have good memories of *your* father. He may have failed you, or humiliated you. You may even have feelings of anger and hatred, and bitter and rebellious thoughts toward him. The sad truth is that our fathers never leave us. They hang around in our minds for the rest of our lives, and their voices keep repeating all the things we heard as we grew up. The

fact is, nothing is more powerful in a person's life than a father. He can be positive or negative; it can make the difference between success and failure in a child's life. Negative father power leaves a child twisted and bent. And if you as a dad experienced negative father power growing up, the same destructive father power will flow from you to your children. Sadly many fathers do love their children, but they do not know how to express their love and pride. They are prisoners trapped behind their personality, and don't know how to break the cycle of their own past negative father-son relationship.

You as a father can't break the cycle at the link between you and your children. You must go back and break it between you and your own dad. And even that may be a long journey to shift from negative to positive father power in a family line. We see negative father power in Exodus 34:7, *"Yet He (God) does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children and their children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation."* And positive father power is seen in Psalm 78:5-6, *"For he decreed statutes for Jacob and established the law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers to teach their children, so the next generation would know them – even the children yet to be born, and they in turn will tell their children."* So a father can send the light of God down through the next four generations, or he can send the darkness of sin down through the next four generations. As a father, what kind of legacy will you leave after you?

For you dads who had a great family shepherd, just continue the great legacy you inherited. And if you did not have that privilege, you need to break the cycle and start a new legacy. You as a dad need to love and accept your son, your daughter, totally, just as they are, whether they are good or bad. Don't neglect them. Dysfunctional families have troubled people and faulty systems that damage its

members and seriously hamper them from reaching their full potential. If the father has problems; the boy has problems. Dysfunctional families spread pain to all its members - even to offspring yet to be born. In dysfunctional families there is at least one member who shows some type of personality disorder and he has no self-control. He usually has some addiction, as he tries to compensate for the insecurity and poor self-esteem because of his own dysfunctional family background. And so each child is sucked into their parents' faulty relationship patterns. Dysfunctional parents produce troubled children, who grow up and start new dysfunctional families, because God designed the system to enable parents to pass themselves on. Sadly many such families today have learnt to hide their anguish and agony behind carefully constructed masks.

If you recognise these same patterns now in your life as a father, get alone with God and talk to Him about *your* dad and about *your* fathering style. Ask him for healing from your past and for wisdom to provide quality leadership in your home. But to break the cycle of negative father power, you first need to confess your anger and rebellion, and come to truly forgive your own dad. If he is still around or alive, try then to build a good relationship with him. This will be the key to becoming a dad with positive power and influence on your own children.

In a functional family, the parents have healthy self-concepts, know how to get their needs met in appropriate ways, and are secure enough to be others-oriented. The children are accepted in their process of maturing. There is open, honest, loving communication and a system of support and dependable governing. A child arrives with an empty "*tool box*" and relies on the family to fill up the "*tool box*" with all he needs for a healthy productive life. Children develop their basic *identity* from family relationships and learn about gender roles and marriage systems; and social and communication skills.

The four psychological needs a child has is for 1) significance in order to love. 2) He needs belongingness in order to bond. 3) He needs identity in order to lead, and 4) he needs competence in order to equip. To get these psychological needs met, the newborn

child is driven to find and attach to the-one-who-knows-about-life. Each child is born with 2 unquenchable drives: to find the truth and to copy the truth. He begins the duplication process so he can eventually reach maturity and perform the four functions of loving, bonding, leading and equipping of his own children. The child will copy, for good or bad, in learning how to have his needs met. Since all parents are human and bear some pain and scars from their childhood, it is impossible for children not to pick up some or many damaging characteristics along the way.

McGee classifies 4 major examples of negative father power in his book, *Search for Significance*. They are: 1) The Performance trap – your children must first meet certain standards in order to feel good about themselves. This leads to fear of failure 2) Approval addict – they must be approved by you to feel good about themselves. This leads to fear of rejection 3) Blame Game – when they fail, they are unworthy of your love and deserve to be punished. This leads to fear of punishment. 4) Shame – you see them as hopeless; they are what they are and cannot change. This leads to feelings of shame.

When parents pound these false beliefs into their children, or if they just neglect their children's needs, they establish a shame-based self-concept that brings massive pain. This sorrow weighs them down and then they learn mood-altering behaviours, that become their inner compulsions and their addictions to cope with the pain.

Ask your wife about pain in your family, and pray that God will show you how to drain some of it away. If you need counselling, to deal with some bad experiences of your own childhood traumas, it will help you become a better parent. Ask each of your children who are old enough, if there are things in your family that they would like to see changed, and to discuss problems that they feel are “*against the rules*” to talk over with you. How can you and your child make your relationship better? Ask God to help you deal with your own past pain in order to begin to heal your present family pain. Humbly ask your child to forgive you. You as a father have father power. You are stuck with it whether you like it or not. *“But what are you going to do with it?” Will you use it in a positive way or a negative way? You can establish a positive Christian dynasty of 4 generations. It's your choice. Go for it!*

God bless you till next week when we continue this study of the role of fathers in parenting.

Child Raising Chapter 3

Pauline Michell

Last week we spoke about the importance of good fathers in a family. If a father came from a dysfunctional family, he will carry over negative father power to his own children and to the next 3 generations. In order to break the cycle, he must confess and forgive his own father and learn to love and accept his children, just as they are. When your own pain is healed, you can begin to heal your family pain and meet their needs for a) feeling significant, b) for belonging; c) the need to have a healthy identity, and d) the need to become competent to mature in a balanced way.

Today we continue looking at fatherhood from the book, *“Dad the Family Coach”* by Dave Simmons, and discuss how to develop a fatherhood heart. You may feel confused about what is expected of you and you want to run away. The New York Times magazine stated, *“The welfare world of New York is a fatherless world. The father is an impregnator. He vanishes after he has planted his seed. He is frightened by the bloom.”* Sadly this can be said for many fathers in our societies in South Africa, too. One can hardly care for and love a child while drunk or stoned yourself.

The world is also undermining the role of fathers today, and even demean the male figure, because of the many hurts that dysfunctional men have imposed on women and girls. Last week we spoke about the effects of negative father power on children. When children are ignored, mistreated, or abused, terrible losses occur in their thinking. The more severe the abuse, the greater the damage that is done. That is why studies show why a growing number of teenagers have damaged self-concepts and feed their lives with sexual promiscuity, drug and alcohol abuse. Some appear to have no conscience about crime, violence, and even

murder. Many are even confused about their sexual identities. The fact is that they are full of woundedness and pain in their own lives because of the lack of positive father power. But God had a plan to place the father as head of his family to take the responsible position and role of Shepherd in God's own stead here on earth.

God made a father like a knife – it can wound or it can save a life. It depends in whose hand you put it. Satan will use fathers to hurt or even destroy the lives of their children, but if they are put in God's hand, they will heal and save the lives of their children. Positive father power is only happening in a small percentage of homes today.

We need to remember, children do what you are, not what you say. The kind of man you are, is more important than all of your tasks, techniques and talks. Children play with your words, but work off your heart. Out of your heart come the issues of life, and that's the true source of wisdom to a child. So you must make sure *your heart* is right with God. You must know Him personally through Jesus Christ and allow His Spirit to change *your* heart and empower *you* to reach your full potential as a father. Changed fathers will change children. It is never too late to change direction.

But what exactly is the function or role of a dad? The best father you can be is the best son you can be. You must be a son of God to be the best father for your child. Unfortunately it takes more than a desire and wishful thinking to make a competent family shepherd. The good news is, God can make a family shepherd out of any old guy. Therefore I urge you, if you have not yet put your faith in Jesus, do it now. Trust his work on the cross on your behalf. Choose Christ. Pray this prayer with me now, *“Thank you for a chance to become a good father to my family. I need you to first become my Father. I give my life*

to you. Come into my heart by your Holy Spirit. Cancel my sin, so that nothing will ever separate me from You. Save also my children from death and give them this same wonderful life through Jesus. Amen.”

Let Him teach you to walk by faith and allow Him to change you step by step. Thank Him for his Holy Spirit who now lives in you and will empower you to leave behind your old life and to walk in the new way. In Jeremiah 29:11, He says, *“For I know the plans that I have for you, declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”* God wants you to learn from your mistakes and failures and go on to be a successful family shepherd. Discard the past. Don't let it hold you down. You can't change the past, but you can change the future. Make a commitment to follow God's master plan for fatherhood and secure a hope and wonderful future for your children.

The purpose of a father is to establish and maintain the family as an environment where each member can feel safe and loved, and reach their full potential. The following things will influence your father style: your temperament, your own father model, your environment, your culture, your education, your religion and your testosterone level (where you are hot and bothered or mellowed as an older man), your phase in life, and your career choice, and your personal choice – you can choose to succeed as a father.

But there are basically 4 father functions: 1) to love: Love your children with the same love that Christ loved the church; which was sacrificial love. When Christ comes into your life, he brings his unique love with Him and you can begin to use it with your family. Dave Simmons says, *“Love is a mind-set that chooses to give the gift of self for the benefit of others regardless of their performance.”* God loves *you* regardless and that is how *you* are to love your children. Give them quality time, words of affirmation; give them hugs, and a helping hand, or even a small thoughtful gift.

2) to bond: You are to help your family know that they belong and

have a special place in the family. You are like a coach who helps his players know where they fit in and how to work together like a team. It starts with the quality of your relationship with your wife, and carries over to father/child bonding. You provide the pattern of togetherness and make sure each one feels he belongs. You care and protect and make each one feel valued as a part of the family.

3) to lead: You represent the family anchor, the fixed point from which the family take their bearings. You are the North Pole, the North Star, maintaining a certain level of predictability and regularity. The biblical term is the “*head*” as Christ also is the head of the church. You make sure the family follows God's plans and progresses in the right direction. You are God's steering wheel for the family, who will direct it through you. As the leader you take responsibility, and you yourself are under a higher authority. You provide stability and can motivate the family team to work together.

4) to equip: You have the primary responsibility to provide everything your child needs to reach maturity in a healthy, productive way – financially and your knowledge to help them learn to cope. You are a mentor or teacher who trains your children in God's ways, providing protection, and all they need to be successful and competent. Psalm 23 is the best example of the Lord being *your* shepherd, who cares and guides *you*; so be that to your family. In the world today all ideas are considered equally valid and nothing is seen as really wrong. But you teach them that good and evil are determined by the God of the universe and He has given us an unchanging moral standard by which to live. He also offers forgiveness from sins. Only with this understanding is a child being prepared to face the challenges that lie ahead.

Now, you may feel overwhelmed by the job description of a father, but it is something you grow slowly into and take it one step at a time. As you allow God to be your Shepherd, He will enable you to shepherd your children to reach their God-given destiny in life. Your children need you. And if your children do not live with you, maybe due to a divorce, keep reaching out to them as much as you can. Remain involved in their lives. Love them, bond with them, lead them in God's ways, and equip them for life.

God bless you till next week when we continue this study on the role of fathers in the family.

Child Raising Chapter 4

Pauline Michell

Last week we discussed the fatherhood heart and looked specifically at the role and function of a dad. We said a father must love his children, regardless of their performance; bond with them and make them feel valued in the family; lead his children by example, as he gives them stability; and then must equip them and provide everything they need to develop into maturity. As you allow God to be your Shepherd, He will help you to shepherd your family.

Today we elaborate a little more on the four functions of fathers, 1) Loving: M Scott Peck defines love as *“The will to extend one's self for the purpose of nurturing another's spiritual growth.”* When we love someone, our love becomes real only through taking an extra step or walking an extra mile. Love is not effortless, but effortful. So the desire-to-love is not itself love. Love is an intention and an action, a choice, and an act of the will.

Do we as parents love in a way that will lead to our children's development? Without this perspective, mothers push food on their already overweight children; fathers buy their children rooms-full of toys, or cupboards full of clothes – parents who set no limits and deny no desires. Love is not simply giving, but wise giving and wise withholding as well. It is wise praising and wise criticising. It is confronting, urging, pushing, pulling and comforting – with sometimes painful decision-making. Keeping a child infantile is not true love.

Children are love-seekers for the nurturing love from a father. We know that Jesus, the High Priest, so loved the church that he gave himself up for her. So a Dad is to function as a loving priest, the intercessor between God and home. Andrew Murray said, *“God placed the destiny and safety of the whole house in the hands of the father. He is*

the channel God uses to bless his family.”

Nothing makes children feel more significant and valuable than the love of a father. Worldly things can never give anyone significance, only unconditional love. This allows a child to develop a stable, positive self-esteem and builds their confidence. Love and acceptance always removes the fear of rejection. Without love, they will always struggle with painful feelings of insignificance and meaninglessness. Without Dad's love, they will try to get it from deviant characters and unsavoury groups, gangs or cults.

One of the most important forms of love, is attention by listening. The different ways of listening to children are: a) not allowing them to talk; b) or allowing their chatter but not listening to it; c) pretending to listen while carrying on with what you are doing; d) selective listening, when you prick up your ears for something, yet not understanding the whole picture; e) giving him your full attention, understanding each sentence. True listening requires great effort and is a real labour of love. But the fruit of this to a child is a feeling of being valued and feeling valuable; and then he begins to speak things of value. And the more you listen, the more you will learn about him and more you can teach him/her. Also then he will be more willing to listen to you and esteem you and your opinions. The more appropriate your teaching, the more he will want to learn from you. It becomes a creative upward cycle of growth. Value creates value. Love creates love. True listening is really love in action.

2) Bonding: It is the creative art of deep knowing and skilful placing of each person into a special place in the family. There the child's belonging-ness is met. It means to form an attachment, a place to fit, making a child feel closeness, uniqueness and specialness, developing trust and security. God created us with the need to feel attached and not

lonely. Without God, loneliness waits like a vicious set of jaws that clamps on and does not let go. Each one must first bond with God, through Jesus Christ. Then God created the family where this need is also to be met. You as Dad must get to know each child right from birth. Without bonding he/she will struggle with feelings of isolation and aloneness for the rest of his life, affecting all relationships. Even though he may belong to many clubs, groups, or societies, without Dad-bonding, he will never feel like he belongs. Robert McGee says, many negative symptoms come from poor bonding: shame, depression, self-hatred, emptiness, addictions, fear of being known, loneliness, denial, feeling attacked, anxiety and fear. Bonding is the glue that holds a child together, and it must come from the father.

A child feels bonded when you accept him for his value, not on a performance basis. Let them be their age. Show unconditional acceptance. A child first bonds with his mother, then bonds with his father, then his playmates, then his young friends, and then mature young adults and then to his wife and his own sons and daughters.

3) Leading: As a father *you*, not your wife, must lead your family. Be a man, and be the leader. But be mature enough to choose to place yourself into submission of a higher authority. You are to realise that you are not at the top of the command chain, but are a link, and your purpose is to impose the will of a higher power, not your own. This will teach your children how to fit into a chain of command and to learn obedience, watching a father walking in obedience to God. How can you expect your child to learn obedience if you, the father, constantly show disobedience to God and are subject to your every selfish whim? Fathers must lead by example.

Each one's identity or "*I am*" is only properly established when he meets the "*God, I AM*". But in the family, you as Dad provide each one's personal identity in relation to you. It goes by your name. Whereas you identify yourself with your job, your wife tends to identify herself with you, and your children begin taking all their cues on self-identity from you. They read and interpret you. If you provide good leadership, they build a secure self-identity by the age of six. Inconsistent leadership, makes them confused and they

struggle to nail themselves down. A child also establishes gender roles by his/her interaction with Dad. Without that identity they feel incompetent, useless, and that they don't matter. The world also tries to give false identity from wealth, fame, experiences or drugs.

A father leads from his heart and focuses on the heart of his child. Colossians says, *"Fathers, do not exasperate your children, that they may not lose heart."* This means, do not *provoke*, or *angrily frustrate*. If you deal with a child in anger, you will produce an angry hostile person, who irritates and frustrates others; or else he loses heart and become crushed in spirit. Leading means to bring up and discipline and instruct with the aim of changing behaviour to make it acceptable. Eph 6:4 tells Dads to *"Use God's wisdom, be personally involved, to nourish them with biblical principles on discipline and motivation."* You may be a successful leader or executive at work, but know nothing about leading your children. At home, profit is not the bottom line, but character, convictions and vision.

4) Equipping: Dads provide children with the right environment and wisdom to cope successfully with life. You help them master doing the right things and doing things right. You are a mentor and model, with close supervision, and you help in discipline, encouragement, correction, confrontation and a calling to accountability. You are interested in their growth and are willing to commit time and energy to the relationship with them. You also provide tools, and resources, eg, adequate food, shelter, education, recreation and clothing. You provide a healthy spiritual environment or church, and disciple them to follow in God's ways. Your child sees you are the one who *"makes it happen."* Dad's inspire their children to achievement. The less Dad equips them, the less able they are to cope with life and the more dependent on others they become to meet their physical, emotional and psychological needs. They will even have more health problems and have trouble making decisions and delaying gratification, and become the needy people in our society.

Get involved in the lives of your children. Tend the garden of their lives, provide everything they need and take pains to keep out the weeds. Protect and provide a safe zone. Mentor, and share skills and knowledge. And minister and impart spiritual growth and maturity to them. Fathers, love, bond, lead and equip your children. God bless you until January when I will be back with more Monday teaching.