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The Responsible Christian Parent (Part 2)

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Series: Living Lessons From Proverbs



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The Responsible Christian Parent

(Part 2)

How many of you are parents? How many of you who are parents can honestly say to GOD, "What a joy it is to be a parent"? How many of you can honestly say to GOD, "IT'S ALWAYS A JOY BEING A PARENT"? (There you see, is the key!)

We all know that being a parent is a joy when that two year old climbs up into your arms at bedtime and whispers in your ear, "Mommy I love you," there's no doubt about it then, is there?

We all know that being a parent is a joy when that seven year old comes home from Sunday School and says, "Dad I asked Jesus into my heart this morning!" there's no doubt about it then, is there ?

We all know that being a parent is a joy when that eight year old comes home from school with a straight "A" grade card, and a note of commendation from the Principal. There's no doubt about it then!

We all know that being a parent is a joy when that sixteen year old nominates you as Parent of the Year in a contest at school or when that nineteen year old comes home from college and puts his arm around you for the first time in years and says, "Mom, Dad, thank you for all the things you've done for me." There's no doubt about it then!

But our purpose in this lesson is to so deepen our concept of joy that we can honestly come to the realization that being a parent is a joy 100% of the time; not necessarily fun; not always encouraging, but always a joy!!!

If you can go home this afternoon, and while you are changing one child's dirty diapers, and two others are crying for attention, if you can honestly say to GOD; "THIS IS A JOY!" (Not, "THIS is a JOY?"); you are beginning to understand.

If you can rescue your two preschoolers from the neighbor's roof this afternoon and honestly say, "This IS A JOY!" you are beginning to get the picture.

If you can ask your twelve-year-old one more time to do his homework, and say to God, "THIS IS A JOY!" you are coming to a mature understanding.

If you can turn that six year old over your knees amidst tears

The Responsible Christian Parent (Part 2)

and screams and administer the right hand of correction to the seat of the problem and honestly say to God, "THIS IS A JOY", it is beginning to make sense.

If you can sit up tonight waiting for your two teenagers who are out on those rain-slick highways, counting the minutes till you hear that key in the front door and know they have arrived home safely one more time, and say to God as you wait, "THIS IS A JOY," then you have come to understand the "JOY OF BEING A PARENT"

From God's perspective, being a parent is always a joy. It is a privilege that is borne out of love... for children, you remember from our last lesson, are a love-gift from God; they are HIS reward! And you may also remember, the more you have, the more you have to be thankful for! You say, "Well I'm thankful for my children, but it's not ALWAYS A JOY being a parent!"

The problem may well be in our understanding of what joy is! Or, the problem may well be in our understanding of who GOD is! But I believe until we come to see God's perspective of the joy of being a parent, we cannot become RESPONSIBLE PARENTS; and *that*, you remember, is the purpose of this study.

We have been looking at the issue of responsibility; and have come to the conclusion that responsibility is, in effect, our response to God's ability! Our first stop was at the workstations of life where we looked into the Mirror of the Scripture for a portrait of the responsible Christian at work. And then in the last lesson, we moved into part two of that study of responsibility, and began a look at the responsible Christian parent, using of course, as our primary base the Book of Proverbs, but as our textbook, the whole of the WORD OF GOD.

We looked last time at the difference between precepts and concepts, and determined that precepts were laws given by GOD and were absolute; but concepts on the other hand, were the ideas of men. The concepts were subject to scrutiny, to confirmation, to experimentation in each life to see if they were in effect, God's will for you. The concepts are optional, but the precepts are essential!

And I gave you an assignment last lesson-to take the precepts we discussed and pick ONE of them you particularly needed and begin in that area to turn knowledge into Wisdom.

They included the precepts: 1) that children are a gift from

The Responsible Christian Parent (Part 2)

GOD, 2) that the greatest gift we can give our children is an example of Godliness, 3) that the character of a child is revealed early to teach us to pray and to teach us to teach character, and 4) that no two children are exactly the same. Those were the precepts.

The concepts, meanwhile, were suggestions or ideas concerning how to implement these precepts into our lives. Today we begin to look at the rest of Scripture for the precepts that govern Godly parent-child relationships, and the outline for this study and the remainder of our look at this topic will be “The Responsible Christian Parent Part 2”.

V. The Joy of Being a Parent

A. The Miracle of joy

1. Joy Defined
2. Joy Described

B. The Joy of Investigation

C. The Joy of Dedication

D. The Joy of Communication

1. Consistently
2. Continually
3. Intensely
4. Personally

E. The Joy of Correction

1. The Motive: Love
2. The Time: Early
3. The Object: Rebellion
4. The Example: Animals
5. The Objective: Godliness

F. The Joy of Intercession

VI. Joyful Illustrations

A. The threefold portrait of parenting

B. Portraits of parents from God’s Living Legends

Now, what does it mean to be a joyful parent? Just what is joy? Joy is the constancy of GOD amidst the ebb and flow of life’s circumstances.

Joy is that awareness in a hospital room that God cares even more about your child than you do; and that He will heal her if it’s best. (And so even amidst this trial, you rejoice.) What is joy?

The Responsible Christian Parent (Part 2)

Joy is that quiet confidence as your child leaves home in rebellion that there will come a time when his heart will yet burn for God. (You have God's promise! And so you rejoice.)

Joy is the ingredient that sees God's strength welling up within your child because he will never in himself be strong. (And so you rejoice in his weakness.)

Joy sees a reason for that fevered brow.

Joy understands that jealous heart.

Joy comprehends those special needs of that special child.

Joy is God saying, "Though you did not choose it, nor did I, you CAN raise that child alone, for I AM God."

Joy is the nature of God flooding your life and changing its perspective.

And if we are to come to experience the *Joy* of being parents, we must come to understand what joy really is. Try this definition on:

Joy = that inner confidence in the Sovereignty of GOD that is totally unhindered by circumstances (and often even deepened by difficulty).

Happiness runs parallel to circumstance; joy actually runs counter to it! And remember, *joy is available only to Christians!* There is no time that a non-Christian can experience joy. I trust you will see why as we proceed. This will be very condensed, lest this turn into a lesson on joy instead of on parenting, but we must at least review some basics, and then you search the Scriptures on your own this week to see if these things are really so. Paul commended the Bereans for doing that, and God will commend you as well. Very quickly, a mini-study on joy: "Five Facts About Joy."

Fact #1- Joy is a gift from God to the Christian. (So only a Christian has it!)

But the fruit of the Spirit is ...joy... (Galatians 5:22 NIV)

Fruit is the natural result of life. Until you have life, you can have no fruit. Another way to word it would be, "One attribute of God produced by God in one who is inhabited by God is Joy." So if you are not a Christian, you cannot have joy. You may on occasions be happy, on occasions be even hysterical, but you cannot possess joy.

The Responsible Christian Parent (Part 2)

Joy is an expression of the nature of GOD that releases itself in the life of the Christian through the Holy Spirit. Until you have the Spirit, you cannot experience the fruits of the Spirit.

Fact #2- Just as the fruit of the Spirit is joy; the fruit of joy is people and the object of joy is the transformation of people.

Therefore my brothers, you whom I love and long for, (you are) my joy and (you are) my crown, (Philippians 4:1a NIV)

For what is our hope, our joy, or the crown in which we will glory in the presence of our Lord Jesus when He comes? Is it not you?

Indeed, you are our glory and joy!

(I Thessalonians 2:19,20 NIV)

Recalling your tears, I long to see you that I may be filled with joy. (II Timothy 1:4)

I have much to write to you, but I do not want to use paper and ink. Instead, I hope to visit you and talk with you face to face, that our joy may be complete. (II John 12 NIV)

So people are both the cause and effect of joy. God, you see, is in the people business. So joy is not an emotion to enjoy, it is a quality of God's character to impart, and as it is imparted, it returns to multiply itself and it actually increases the joy of the one who gave it away. In Hebrews 12:2, we read of Jesus who, *"for the joy that was set before Him, endured the Cross, despising the shame"*. What was the joy? By enduring the Cross, he built the bridge by which you and I could enter into the presence of GOD for all eternity. He endured the cross for people! And thus was filled with joy!

Fact #3- The catalyst God often uses to produce joy is tribulation.

Consider it pure joy, my brothers whenever you face trials of many kinds,

because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance (or character).

Perseverance must finish it's work so that you can become mature and complete, not lacking anything.

(James 1:2-4 NIV)

Beloved think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you:

But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of: Christ's sufferings; that when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. (I Peter 4:12,13)

The Responsible Christian Parent (Part 2)

God's goal is people. God's objective is transformation. God's tool is tribulation. So when your children have a problem, God has three goals: *their transformation, your transformation, and the transformation of those who will yet benefit from both your life and theirs.* Therefore, when those dear little darlings are found on the roof next door this afternoon, be it an act of rebellion or of ignorance, GOD wants to release joy! He wants to develop patience in you, and demonstrate discipline to them. *He wants to change both of you.* Therefore His Spirit in you is waiting to release joy. At that moment of extreme trauma as you gaze in disbelief at your two native astronauts, *God wants you to experience the Joy of being a parent.*

Fact #4- The Source of Joy is the Word of God.

Jesus, speaking to the Father, said

And now I come to thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves.

(John 17:13)

And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.

(I John 1:4)

Until you know the *source* of your joy you cannot choose to release that joy. *So the more of the Scripture you work into your life, the more joy you will have to give away.*

Fact #5- Answered prayer amplifies joy.

And ye now therefore have sorrow; but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you (*It's permanent once you have the spirit*) and in that day ye shall ask me nothing, Verily, verily I say unto you,

And in that day ye shall ask Me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye ask the Father in my name, He will give it to you.

Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full (*overflowing*).

(John 16:22-24 *italics mine*)

We shall see at a later time that one of the greatest privileges we have been given as parents is the privilege of prayer. *Prayer produces joy.* It is often prompted by trials, and usually directed at the needs of people, and as it releases the power of GOD, it releases the joy! So you see, that problem or that need your child has that so drives you to your knees, is a cause for joy! *Not necessarily happiness, but joy!*

The Responsible Christian Parent (Part 2)

Can you then stand at the bedside of your sick child and be filled with joy that you are a parent? You can, because joy is a gift from GOD, imparted by His Spirit. Its object is *transformation*; its tool, *tribulation*. It is released by exposure to the WORD and amplified by answered prayer. Therefore the Responsible Christian Parent lives a life of constant joy. And the tougher your job as a parent becomes, the more cause for joy you have, because through tribulation God is bringing about transformation, either to your child, or to you, or to both. Now, let me ask you again, IS IT A JOY TO BE A PARENT? CAN IT ALWAYS BE A JOY? If you come to understand the real meaning of joy, and come to experience the power of it, you will be able to go through this next week as a parent, “counting it all joy” for whatever the responsibility, as you respond to God’s ability, He will transform you and give you joy!

Now back to the issue of being parents. If it is to be a constant experience of joy, we must examine that joy! I have listed only five sources of joy as parents that seem to be so prominent in Scripture.

We will examine just three here.

The first we discussed in the last lesson, so we will only mention it in passing. It is the joy of INVESTIGATION. We learned last time, that Proverbs 22:6 instructs us to train up our children according to their individual bent or gifts. So one of our first sources of joy ought to be the joy of investigating each child’s personality in detail that we might have the Mind of Christ where that child is concerned.

Christianity is not to be packaged and left on each child’s doorstep for him to take or leave. Christianity is a Person, a person who reveals Himself individually to people HE has designed individually to be different. His message is the same, but His method of communicating that message is distinct and unique for each of His children. As you study your child to see just how GOD made this incredibly intricate yet perfectly designed individual, you may encounter difficulty, but you will experience joy! For you will begin to behold as never before the hand of a sovereign God at work and that awesome confidence in the sovereignty of GOD that is unhindered by circumstances we have come to know as JOY! If you learn to understand the uniqueness of each child, you will come to understand even more of the JOY of being a parent.

The Responsible Christian Parent (Part 2)

Secondly, we come to the joy of DEDICATION. Let's go back to Proverbs chapter 22, verse 6 and look at the first part of that verse. We are to train up each child according to his individual bent. We decided that, but what does it mean to "train up a child"? We always assume that the word "train" here means the process of regimentation and discipline that molds their character as they go. It may mean that, and the Scripture certainly teaches that as a Scriptural responsibility, but the word "train" here has a much deeper connotation. It comes from the same root Hebrew word as the word "Hanukkah," and its real meaning is "to dedicate, to set aside; to initiate."

So to "train up" a child in the way he is bent is *to dedicate that child to the purpose of becoming God's child, no matter the cost.*

It means that as you examine how God made this child, you continually set aside this child as God's, and you make every decision relative to his or her welfare based not on what will bring him happiness, or what will give him pleasure, or what will insure him success (that's the world's way), but rather on how will that choice affect his relationship with the Living God. If giving him more "things," for instance, knowing how his bow is bent will likely dim his eyes to spiritual truth, you do not give him more things because you are training up that child. That is, you are dedicating continually that child for only one purpose in life: walking in fellowship with God.

It means that as you examine this child's individual bent, if you see that his spiritual gift is the gift of mercy for instance, you will respond to his emotions sensitively. You will have dedicated that child entirely to be God's and God has designed him with a special gift to be nurtured and perfected. You will "train up" that child and continually initiate that child's steps according to his bent with an eye to one thing—making Jesus preeminent in his life. That child is not yours; that child is God's. So you "train him up," you dedicate continually his life to God's sovereign purposes. As you do, two things will happen. You will have joy, for you are quietly responding to the sovereignty of God, and when he is old (no longer a lad, a youth,) he will not depart from it. He will have been shaped by the hand of a Sovereign God through the life of a yielded parent who studied his life to see its bent, then dedicated that life continually to being God's and God's alone. I do not pretend to understand all that the "He will not depart

The Responsible Christian Parent (Part 2)

from it” promise means. I have heard it expounded dozens of times, and each exposition falls short of revealing what must be it’s total glory. We must, however, simply obey it’s instructions with joy and trust this sovereign God of ours to reveal the depth of its promise as we proceed. Dedicate your child to be God’s child; then shape that child according to his bent, without ever faltering a degree from that dedication, no matter how dark the clouds may be. Look for which way the winds in his life are blowing, then, set his sails in keeping with those winds so that he will sail directly into the arms of Jesus. It may even mean charting a course through the storms, but I believe that’s what that verse means. To do that will mean great joy as a parent.

The next potential source of joy for the parent is the joy of COMMUNICATION. Having examined the bent of that child’s life, and committed that child unreservedly to the will of God (no matter the cost), the Responsible Christian Parent is instructed to communicate to that child the reality of the life to which he has been dedicated.

You don’t ship him off to Sunday School, or even Bible School, and assume your job is done. Those things are helpful as tools to support what you do, but the job of communicating spiritual truth to the child has been clearly assigned to the parent—and to no one else. You may not be that child’s Sunday School teacher, but you are his or her Monday school teacher, and Tuesday school teacher. And the Scripture clearly defines what we’re to teach and how we’re to teach it. WHAT are we to teach them? We are to teach them God’s words, God’s worth, God’s works, and God’s ways; and we are to do it consistently, continuously, convincingly, and personally.

By God’s words, I mean that what we teach our children must be precepts, not concepts. Until they come to be in awe of the Word of God and trust it for what it is—the infallible, unchanging, life-changing Word of God— then they will not have a rock on which to build their lives.

By God’s worth, I mean His character. Unless they come to know what it means to serve an omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient and sovereign God who is perfect love, perfect truth, and perfect righteousness, they will not understand life in its proper context.

By God’s works, I mean the things He has done for you and for others to demonstrate His character.

The Responsible Christian Parent (Part 2)

And *by God's ways*, I mean those miraculous higher ways of the Spirit that do not conform to the concepts of men but soar like the wind beyond our understanding. The fact that he makes strength out of weakness is one of His ways. The fact that he delays timing to maximize glory is one of His ways. The fact that he chooses to build his Kingdom on a foundation of grace rather than works is one of His ways. And unless our children understand His ways, they will yield to the pressures to accept the world's ways, and the result will be confusion.

Teach them God's Words, His Worth, His Works, and His Ways, remembering they have been dedicated or set apart, "trained up" to follow no one but Him.

The Scripture is plain. Not only are we to train them up or dedicate them according to their bent, all the while communicating His word, his Worth, His Works and His Ways, we are to do it in a specific fashion. First we are to communicate it consistently.

Whom shall he teach knowledge? and whom shall he make to understand doctrine? them that are weaned from the milk and drawn from the breasts.

For precept must be upon precept; line upon line, line upon line, here a little; there a little: (Isaiah 28:9,10)

From the time they are weaned, as tiny tots you begin to build a platform of precepts; simply at first, always mindful of their individual bent, but nevertheless building precept upon precept; adding line to line. The picture is one of a building being built, a few bricks a day. You begin with a solid foundation, then, carefully select what materials will go into the first floor. You place the stones in place consistently, one now, one tomorrow. You do it with undying perseverance; unwavering faithfulness. If you see one that does not seem to fit the building or belong where you placed it, you replace it. This is no happenstance construction program. It is a planned, deliberate, consistent work.

You teach them continually, without swerving, the principles of God. You teach line upon line, a little at a time, precept upon precept, building one truth on the strength of the one before it; testing them to see if they really understand; using every visual aid available, from nature to circumstances to reinforce the precepts. Let them watch an eagle soar; then teach them the principles of God's power. Let them watch an ant build; then teach them the principles of God's diligence; let them watch a raging storm, then teach them the principles of God's power; let

The Responsible Christian Parent (Part 2)

them watch a sunset, then teach them the principles of God's mercy, "line upon line." You have enrolled them in the University of Eternity and committed them to a degree in faithfulness. You are the professor assigned to their class. You must teach them consistently.

Secondly, there is the joy of teaching them continuously.

And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart:

And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.

And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes.

And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates.

(Deuteronomy 6:6-9)

Notice the passage says parents, you make sure the Word is in *your* heart. Otherwise you have nothing to teach but empty phrases. With the word in your heart, you have a storehouse of real communication.

Then you teach it to them carefully. The word "diligently" in the King James literally means "with great care". You do your homework. You prepare carefully. You teach it with great understanding.

But the main thrust of this verse is that you teach it continuously. The Word is not just the subject of your weekly family altar. It isn't an addendum to the six o'clock news. It is the news. You teach it by everything you say and everything you do. It is your constant source of instruction. You don't mix it with the humanistic garbage of the day and water it down to be more palatable. You don't mix it with the psychology of the day to make it less in conflict with what their peers will hear. You teach continuously the Word of God. You talk about the Word while you're sitting in your house. You relate life to the Word in your daily conversation. While you walk by the way, it's the basis on which you build all your decisions. It's the basis of how you relate to the problems they encounter at school and you encounter at work. When they lie down at night, you teach them to meditate on the Word, to cleanse their minds so that the Spirit may have control over the battle for their minds as they sleep.

The Responsible Christian Parent (Part 2)

You talk of the Word when they rise up in the morning. The first thing they hear ought to be songs of praise. You bind them for a sign on your hands. Memorize the word, meditate on it, talk about it, sing about it, witness to it, claim it in prayer, let the Word be your every breath, like frontlets before your eyes. Saturate your home with the Word of God continuously. You have “trained them up”, you have dedicated them to be God’s exclusively. Then ought they not to be fed God’s Word continually? Morning, noon, and night, the Word, the Word, the Word—lovingly, sensitively, patiently, understandingly, but faithfully. Teach them and show them the Word.

Thirdly we are to convincingly teach them.

And he said unto them, “Set your hearts unto all the words which I testify among you this day, which ye shall command your children to observe to do, all the words of the law.”

(Deuteronomy 32:46)

In other words, the Word is not a viable alternative in their lives. The Word is *God’s only course* and *man’s only choice*. To offer it as anything less to our children is to deny them the freedom that accompanies absolutes. Discern the difference between precepts and concepts. Create the concepts according to the bent of their bow, but the precepts, oh the precepts, teach them convincingly, intensely, without apology. Tell them never to lie. Why? It is an absolute precept. Period. Command them to obey the precepts of God.

And fourthly, we are to teach them personally. The word must be more than a classroom experience; more than just doctrine; more than just knowledge. It must have worked for you and you must be able to personally relate how it worked for you to give credibility to it’s place in their lives.

Only take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen, and lest they depart from thy heart all the days of thy life: but teach them thy sons, and thy sons’ sons;

Specially the day that thou stoodest before the Lord thy God in Horeb, when the LORD said unto me, Gather me the people together, and I will make them hear my words, that they may learn to fear me all the days that they shall live upon the earth, and that they may teach their children.

(Deuteronomy 4:9,10)

The Responsible Christian Parent (Part 2)

And the Lord said unto Moses, Go in unto Pharaoh for I have hardened his heart, and the heart of his servants, that I might shew these my signs before him.

And that thou mayest tell in the ears of thy son, and of thy son's son, what things I have wrought in Egypt, and my signs which I have done among them; that ye may know how that I am the Lord.
(Exodus 10:1-2)

The Scripture is plain. God's parents are to teach God's children not only by expounding the Word, but by relating to them the wonderful things God has done in their own lives. Our children need to know how and when we became Christians. They need to hear about those times when all hope was gone, and we prayed, and God miraculously met our needs. They need to know about the swelling of the Jordan in our lives, and the grace God gave us at that time. We ought to read them from our Book of Remembrance, if we have one, of the times God demonstrated his power; the time He miraculously provided Dad that job, the time He so perfectly healed Grandpa when there was no hope, the time He sold the house on the very day it had to be sold, the time He led us to speak to that man on the plane who had been praying for someone to come and help him.

Experience without the Word lacks credibility; but the Word without experience lacks reality. So teach them the Word, but personally declare to them how GOD has honored the Word in your own experience. He hardened Pharaoh's heart so He could demonstrate His power. Why? So they would tell their children in times to come, "Did I ever tell you about how God delivered his people?" And he has allowed certain things in your experience to allow His power to be known to you so that you might tell your children and your children's children about this wonderful God who not only is who He says He is, but who has done so many wonderful things for you.

So we are to teach them about His Word, His Worth, his Works and His Ways. And we are to teach them, consistently, continuously, intensely, and personally. As we do, JOY, real JOY, will come pouring into lives. There is real joy in being a parent. We have looked at the joy of investigation, the joy of dedication and, the joy of communication.

Next time we will look at the joy of CORRECTION (and it can be a joy!), and the joy of INTERCESSION (oh, what a joy), and hopefully seek from the Word some illustrations of the joy of

The Responsible Christian Parent (Part 2)

being a parent from the Living Legends of Scripture.

But the issue at stake as we close is whether or not you and I really understand this concept of joy as it relates to being a godly parent. If we don't, the principles we are learning are nothing more than replays of what we have heard a thousand times, and they will do little to change the course of our lives. Right now, those of us who are parents face another week of investigation, dedication, and communication. There will be moments of great happiness; moments of great anguish; moments of great helplessness. The key to this lesson is found in 1 Thessalonians:

In everything you can give thanks, for this is the will of God
in Christ Jesus concerning you. (1 Thessalonians 5:18)

No matter the circumstances, you can literally have a week filled with joy. I cannot promise you there will not be pressures, perplexing decisions, or major problems. But I *can* promise you, on the authority of the Word of God, that the JOY of the Lord is your strength.

I would like to suggest, in closing, that some of us need to take a deep breath again and rededicate ourselves to the task of becoming joyful Christian parents, acknowledging once more God's ownership of our children. (Some of us need to do that every day.) Because joy, you remember, comes from resting in the sovereignty of God, in spite of the circumstances, knowing that even tribulation brings about transformation!

Say it with me, "Those children are not ours! Those children are not ours! They are God's!" He has chosen to give us, as parents certain response-abilities. And as we, in turn, respond to His abilities, He becomes responsible for the outcome. Let's relinquish ownership again and be filled with joy! Right now, if you are a parent, please bow your head and let's pray together in closing. (And if you're not a parent, pray for those of us who are.) Let's pray.

Dear Lord,

*By Your grace, may I become a more responsible parent.
May I investigate how you made each child. May I dedicate
each one continually to only one purpose in life, serving
you. And may I communicate to each of them by Your
grace,*

CONSISTENTLY (line upon line, precept upon precept)

The Responsible Christian Parent (Part 2)

CONTINUALLY (as they walk by the way; when they lie down; when they rise up)

CONVINCINGLY (commanding them to obey your laws)

PERSONALLY (communicating the personal miracles you have done for me)

May I teach them...

Your WORDS (what You have said)

Your WORTH (Who You are)

Your WORKS (what you've done) and

Your WAYS (Those marvelous ways that are oh, so much higher than ours.)

But Lord, I hereby, once again, give them back to you.

(Name each child by name, sons and daughters.) I give you

_____, and _____ and _____.

Lord, thank you for their weaknesses. Even use those weaknesses to show forth your strength, Lord. Use even their rebellion to create a void that only YOU can fill!

But, Lord, teach us to rest in your sovereignty and thus be filled with JOY no matter what they do! And dear Lord, as this week progresses and as the pressures and the problems of being a parent close in on us, Lord, please whisper in our ears, "Count it all JOY! Count it all JOY! Count it all JOY!" so that, as we rest in YOUR Sovereignty, our joy might be multiplied, your name might be glorified, and we might shout rejoicing, "Oh, Dear God, what a joy it is to be parents!"

In Jesus Name,

Amen.

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