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Children...the best job!

Parental care for our children is the safeguard of our future.

by James McBride

A potential 750,000 members of "*the next generation*," in the United Kingdom, are conceived annually - though one in four (185,000 last year) never see the light of day - deliberately destroyed in the womb.

The death of a *desired* new-born, however, is agony for the parents. The infant has been carried for nine months in the mother's womb - a living part of her. Then gone - a perpetual memory. Happily, the vast majority live on, sometimes causing heartbreak but almost always a joy, certainly as a babe. Then what? Let's focus on those live births.

Born With Purpose

Gaze on that new-born "bundle of joy" and you envisage what? Certainly you picture health and happiness for the infant, success in one field of endeavour or another, perhaps a great artist or musician or scientist. Some might even see a future politician!

But what of the precious formative months and years? Which child guru do you follow? Or, is folklore best - the way grandmother recommends? There's a supermarket of ideas of child-rearing out there. Yet every sane new parent knows guidance is necessary; children cannot simply be left to their own devices.

The excitement of watching your child grow is almost unbearable: that first toothless smile, the first crawl, the first mumbling of "ma ma" and "da da" or "pa pa," or the first stumbling attempt to walk. The aware parent doesn't want to miss those unrepeatable milestones, events often accompanied by joyful parental tears. But those days end, and life marches on.

The Next Generation

The Bible has a curious expression: "*Better the day of one's death than the day of one's birth.*" Few of us achieve much in the first couple of decades of life. It's a time of preparation. It's a time for laying the foundation on which is built your contribution to civilization. You are not remembered - unless by the parent - for being born but for your legacy. Beyond your genetic inheritance you don't, in your early years, add much to that foundation. *But your*

parents do.

The most important job is not that of the President, or the Queen, or a brilliant scientist, or a top military commander. The most important job is to prepare *the next generation*.

In those early years you instil the habits for a lifetime: why you don't torture the cat or pull the legs off a frog, how to deal with anger and disappointment, how to interact with your peers, your values (the difference between right and wrong), what is greed and how to share, when not to interrupt a conversation, patience, grooming, good eating habits, consideration and respect for others, self-respect, together with self-discipline and personal responsibility. All essential for a civilized and successful human being who can positively contribute to society. And all must be taught - largely by direct parental example.

That, in part, is a road-map for every new-born - and the parents are responsible to instil those fundamental values. The alternative is wild growth - a tree unpruned and grotesquely distorted.

Cuckoo's Nest

It has been said that the best experience, sometimes, is someone else's experience. And there are plenty of horror stories to learn from. Our media highlights the abuse, the neglect, the teen and pre-teen gangs, the promiscuity. Talking heads express their abhorrence of feckless parenting. Government imposes law upon law. And then "respectable parents" hypocritically dump their precious offspring on strangers - and not always from "economic necessity."

Birds in general lay their eggs - and then jealously guard their young. Most other creatures follow suit. Yet human infants barely dry from the womb are farmed out for a price. They crawl the nursery floor along with a dozen other squalling infants and toddlers. Staff, often half-trained, are at their wit's end seeking to control the noisy mayhem. Older "inmates" run wild, learn to swear and spout street talk, add new "naughtiness" to their own, and pick up every sniffle and tummy bug.

Can you be sure that what you are told about the “high quality of service” is what actually happens when you have left - for your workplace? And, above all, that the staff will reflect your personal values? “Group socialization” has a powerful effect on behaviour - indeed, is considered by some psychologists to be more powerful than either nature or parental influence. Nursery behaviour will tend towards the lowest common denominator.

Increasingly, psychologists emphasize the need for continuity of care. And care that is best provided in the home and jointly by the child’s mother and father. Many experts believe the increase in childhood dysfunction arises from deviation from this norm.

In the United Kingdom nearly seventy percent of working women are mothers of younger children. Financial pressures - and, too often, the career ladder - drive many out of the home and into the work place. Keeping the bills under control often needs a double wage - especially when that wage is, for both, the minimum. We might ask why that’s the case.

A major cause - spell that “curse” - is the present UK Government’s appalling ideology of encouraging mothers into work in the name of sexual equality and liberation, and “helping the economy.” Generous tax-funded financial support for nursery fees is one such measure - driving up public expenditure and necessitating increased taxation. And that’s more pressure on the family finances. The need for a second income is understandable. Or, if you are a single parent, the need for an income. (Here, too, we might ask *why* that situation has arisen.)

Concern for your child’s well-being should drive a family to exert every effort to care for their children at home - despite the cost in lowered material standards. It’s a calamity that Government and society in general undermines what has been the safe and proven human experience for millennia.

Teach At Home

The foundational principles of life are laid in the home, and as stated, direct parental example is the key. Sound training is not, of course, a guarantee your child will never trouble you. (Peer pressure is powerful.)

The Creator informed our first parents that the consequence of their stupidity would be: “...*in sorrow shall you bring forth children.*” If, however, you prepare yourself the chance of success increases. Vandalism, anti-social behaviour, week-end wasters, drug taking - and teenage problems - are less likely when these principles have been actively taught and encouraged and exemplified in the

home. Sadly, in all levels of society they are neglected. Few of us grow up in the perfect home.

Blessed is the mother who can confidently expect her chosen nursery to be as effective in accomplishing these challenges as well as she personally could. On your way to work, plonk your three-month old baby - and he or she is still a baby - in a nursery. It’s not unusual, believe it or not! Will the staff, however skilled and dedicated, duplicate your expertise, your compassion, your capacity to comfort? Perhaps most important will they consistently instil those vital spiritual values you desire for your precious child?

The Most Important Job

It’s possible, of course, that “financial pressure” is self-imposed. So - a few questions. Why do you need extra income? Do your “basic living costs” include expensive purchases - new car, jewelry and cosmetics, plasma television, luxury holidays, keeping up with fashion? Is your home beyond adequate? Etc. Are you a shopaholic? Perhaps wrapped up in the “good life?” The Bible pinpoints excess desire for the material as a cause of poverty: “*You should not covet.*” Greed, avarice, acquisition - they are a curse of our era. But poverty may also be measured in terms of how your child is raised.

Another “reason” for leaving your child in a nursery is career. Career becomes “the most important job,” and your personal care for your child is secondary. A sense of guilt is often reported as a mother deposits her child at the nursery - especially the worry if there are possible signs of impending sickness. It’s very much “you can’t serve two masters.” Which, to you, is most important?

The most important, indeed the best, career of all is that of personally training your own flesh and blood to become a civilized, well-adjusted teen and a civilized adult. That takes time and patience and self-education. It takes intense focused effort. It takes, for most, personal sacrifice.

Although it will at times be exhausting, caring for a young child need not be a banal mind-numbing passing of time at home. With proper forethought it can be a rewarding, even exciting, joyful experience - with some tears.

It’s the most important career on earth for most parents, and the key to our future.

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