



Family and Church: Who's Bringing Up the Kids?¹

Ted Ward

Christian education today as never before needs a clear image of what the family is, and in Christian perspective, should be. When the church, or the church's educational program perform family roles, they may suppress the family's responsibilities.

One of the things that accounts for weakness in the field of religious education is the willingness of religious education to pick up where the family failed, and to put such emphasis on children that we don't do enough to help the parents develop. As I see it, the field of religious education has a primary responsibility for parent development, and a secondary responsibility to help the family with their children.

Our stated concern was "Who's bringing up our kids?" What do we usually do when we get together and start talking about that sort of thing? We talk about our concerns and quite often, especially in Southern Baptist circles, we propose a program. We jump from the early discussion of a problem to a program to solve the problem.

Spend more time trying to get a clear fix on some of the bigger issues we face and get serious about how to define those problems and talk about them, before launching programs intended to change the problem.

Further, we don't always build good programs on the basis of trouble-shooting. There is a lot to be said for finding our strengths and building our programs around our strengths rather than simply trying to trouble-shoot around our weaknesses. Where are the things that are going on that are going well so that they may be encouraged? The issue is how to nurture a whole, happy community. Let's get serious about what we can do within our community of Christian fellowship to encourage, and then as needed, to provide the help to families that will help them effectively bring up their children. *The church can never bring up the children for the parents.*

Rather than starting with generalizations, begin with specifics. Rather than asking for the horror stories and then fixing your attention on the horror story, start by fixing your attention on children and people.

¹ Ted Ward. Family and Church: Who's Bringing Up the Kids? Excerpt from an address at Golden Gate Theological Seminary, November 1982