

# HELPING PARENTS SUCCEED

What's God got to do with .....bringing up children?

It's not easy bringing up children, is it? Based on what it says in the Bible and on personal experience from some of our Church Members, here are twelve Questions and Answers explaining why God is interested in bringing up children, why it's so important that our children learn about Him, and how He can help us succeed with this difficult task.

Q1 *Have the Parenting classes we've attended already helped us to be better parents?*

A1 The Parenting classes that have been run at our Church over the last few weeks have provided us with some useful strategies to help us look after ourselves and bring up our children, but there will be times when we need more help than that. As human beings, we're made up of the body, mind and spirit. We believe that this is where God comes in. He helps us deal with all three aspects of bringing up children.

## God and children

Q2 *What's the spiritual side of bringing up children, and what has God got to do with it?*

A2 Well, for a start, children will often ask spiritual questions and we need to be able to answer them. It's no wonder really, as children are a gift from God who loves us. If you've got a Bible, please have a look at verse 3 of Psalm 127. The same God who created the world also allowed us to be created and shaped within our Mum's body before we were born. Verses 13 to 16 of Psalm 139 explain this very clearly. Believe it or not, all the best parenting techniques can be found in the Bible - just like the best ways of managing people, property and money. God invented the best ways of handling our lives in the first place!

Q3 *But did God have children of his own? How did He cope?*

A3 As the Lord's prayer says, God is "Our Father". He's the Dad of anyone who truly loves Him. The Christmas story also tells us that He came to Earth, not as a powerful king, but as the baby Jesus. But God didn't stop there. He allowed His Son to suffer and die painfully on the Cross, all so we could believe in Jesus and become a Child of God. This is summed up in verse 16 of chapter 3 of John's Gospel. It must have been heart breaking for God to give up His only Son to pay the price for all the wrong things we've done and forgive us - but that's what God did - and all because He loves us so much and He wants to give us the gift of eternal life.

Q4 *Why didn't God make us to be His children in the first place?*

A4 Chapters 2 and 3 of Genesis tell us that God created Adam and Eve in His own image. He gave them everything they needed in the Garden of Eden, including a spiritual side to their lives, and He enjoyed a wonderful relationship with them. But God had created them with a free will. He wanted them to love Him because they wanted to, not because they were programmed to like robots. And, sadly, they rebelled and this had consequences for all people ever since that day. That's why God allowed Jesus to die - to put things right again.

Q5 *Am I expected to believe that?*

A5 It may be hard to see why God created us with a free will. But think for a moment - that's what it's like today. Family life copies what God did. We have children, we love them and we want the best for them. But they have free will to decide how to act and behave. We wish they didn't sometimes, but we try to direct and help them in their younger years. Later on they'll have to live life for themselves. It's like that with God and us. We can decide to love Him, to believe in Jesus, and become a Child of God.

## Jesus and children

Q6 *Did Jesus like children?*

A6 Big time! Jesus loved children coming to Him and in verses 13 to 16 of chapter 10 of Mark's Gospel, He explains why. Children are very open and trust those who love them. We don't have to be clever or old to believe in Jesus, we just have to realise how much He loves us first and can provide what's best for us. At another time, Jesus again explained why we have to be like a child to become a Christian. In verse 3 of chapter 3 of John's Gospel, Jesus said that we need to be "born again" by giving up our old life and letting Jesus take over and guide our new life as a Christian.

### **Helping children live**

Q7 *But how does all that help me to bring up my children now?*

A7 There are so many reasons why bringing up our children with God will help both our children and us too. But the number one reason is that, if we and our children accept Jesus into our lives, we'll be with each other forever. Until then, we'll have Jesus helping us to be the best parents we can, and that's bound to benefit our children.

Q8 *Can you be more specific please?*

A8 Ok. We've found that young children are like sponges - they take in all sorts of information fast and they are often ahead of us parents when it comes to using the latest technology. We've also learnt that it's important for children to take in the right information that doesn't harm them or cause them to behave badly. TV and the Internet can be valuable sources of information to help children learn, but we need to use them carefully to protect children from harmful material. If we love Jesus and behave in a way that copies Him, then we'll be giving our children a good example to follow. This will help us to lay solid foundations and prepare our children to become responsible and productive adults.

Q9 *What about the impact on later life?*

A9 Our children are not perfect, because we are their parents. However, we've found that teaching our children to respect God has helped them to respect us as parents, other family members, and authority within school and society in general. This is a hot news issue at the moment as the Government tries to get us to tackle the lack of respect that causes vandalism and other breakdowns in law and order. Teaching our children about God and to remember to say words like "please", "thank you", "sorry" and "what can I do?" has helped them to learn and exercise self-discipline, to think about the consequences of their actions, to be grateful and be a positive influence on their friends, to take responsibility for their successes and failures, and to seek advice when needed.

### **The Church's role**

Q10 *What can the Church do to help?*

A10 The Church has been a valuable source of support to us as parents. For example, we have been able to share and pray about problems with people in confidence. At Battle Baptist Church, we try to be as parent and child friendly as we can. We run various activities for parents and children of all ages including Caterpillar Mothers and Toddlers, Caterpillar Pre-School, crèches and Sunday Clubs during some of our Sunday meetings, Youth Clubs on a Friday evening, and holiday clubs during some half-term weeks.

Q11 *What safeguards are there in the Church for children?*

A11 All these activities are delivered under the Church's "Safe To Grow" Child Protection policy so we can provide a safe and healthy environment for children to enjoy and learn about God

until they can make up their own minds on whether or not they want to become a Christian. We do not pressurise children to become Christians - we respect that this is the child's own choice to make. We also have two Child Advocates who make sure parents and children have someone they can go to should they need to sensitively resolve any issues. More leaflets on our activities and Child Advocates can be obtained from the Church Foyer or Office.

### **The next step**

Q12 *So, what do you advise us to do?*

A12 We firmly believe that the best thing you can do as a parent is to know more about becoming a Christian. If you would like to know more, please take away one of our "Why Jesus?" booklets to read, or chat to one of our Church staff (with their name badges on blue bands). If you would like to go on one, we also run courses such as "Believe it or Not", which give a good overview of what the Christian faith is all about.

contact Pat, Andy or John on 01424 774825

*Bringing Life to the Heart of 1066 Country ~ and beyond.*