

“What Is the Most Important Request a Parent Can Make?”

Judges 13:1-14

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Down through the years, I have made many requests as a parent. Some have even been reasonable. When Jackie and I started our family, I asked my church to be patient with me as I learned to juggle pastoring and parenting. I asked my parents to forgive me if we did not visit as often as we had in the past. I asked my brothers to indulge me as I talked about what these “brilliant” babies were learning and doing.

Of course, I made some unreasonable requests, too. I asked my children to use their fork and eat off a plate rather than eat with their fingers after chasing their food around the table. I asked them to pick up their dirty clothes and actually take them to the laundry room. I asked them to put toothpaste on the toothbrush when they brushed their teeth. I asked them not to pinch church members when they came up and hugged them. I could go on, but I think you get my point.

Parents make requests all the time. So, what is the most important request a parent can make? I believe you will find the answer in Judges 13. When Manoah’s wife told him that an angel came and told her she was going to have a baby, he prayed, **“O Lord, I beg you, let the man of God you sent to us come again and teach us how to bring up the boy who is to be born”** Judges 13:8.

What a powerful request. This one is more important than eating with a fork or using toothpaste. This one needs to be at the top of every parent’s list.

What does this request tell us? A lot.

First of all, it tells me that children are gifts from God. Manoah’s child certainly was. His wife was barren and childless. Outside of a miracle, they were not going to have children. God gave them this child.

In a way, all children are gifts from God. He is the source of life and makes birth possible. Babies are a part of His divine design for this world.

Secondly, with the gift of children comes heavy responsibility. Rearing a child is an enormous task. Evidently Manoah and his wife felt it. I know I did when Jackie and I started our family.

Thirdly, we need help in order to be responsible and effective parents. Look at Manoah’s request. “O Lord, I beg you, let the man of God you sent to us come again and **teach** us how to bring up the boy who is to be born.”

Parenting is a skill that needs to be learned. Where do you turn for help? We are fortunate, because there are many resources. Go to the church library and check out books on parenting or the bookstore and buy some. Enroll in classes offered at the church, such as, “Parenting by Grace.” Find a support group of family and friends that can help you along the way. Turn to the Bible. It is filled with sound, practical advice on parenting, especially the book of Proverbs.

Let’s return to the story in Judges 13. When Manoah’s request was answered and the angel returned, what advice did he give Manoah and his wife about parenting? It was very simple. **Be the best person you can be and give your child to God.**

The angel told Manoah that his wife was to abide by the Nazirite vow and rear her son, Samson, as a Nazirite. This was his way of saying that Samson’s parents were to live

the cleanest and best life that could be lived and prepare their son for special service to God.

This is sound advice for all parents. Want to know the secret to effective parenting? Be the best person you can be. The same characteristics that make you a good person will make you a good parent, honesty, integrity, compassion, kindness, respect and discipline.

Good people provide healthy, peaceful homes for children and become good role models. These are two of the most important things that children need in order to grow and mature into responsible and wise adults. Don't confuse your children by saying one thing and doing another or corrupt your home with ugly, sinful behavior. There is far too much at stake!

And when your child is born, offer him or her to God to be used by Him to make the world a better place to live. This will do two things. It will keep you from living your life again through them and give God, who knows them better than even you, the opportunity to guide and direct them. Sometimes we do our best parenting when we get out of God's way.

If you are a good person and offer your child to God, will it insure that your children will grow up to be Rhodes' Scholars and Nobel Prize winners? No, there are no guarantees. I'll tell you what it will insure, though. God will be pleased with you and grateful for the responsible way you reared His children. Remember, they are gifts from Him. They are really His children that He has entrusted to your care. He asks you to be faithful to Him. That's your task as a parent.

Parents and requests go together. Always have and always will. That's fine, just make sure that Manoh's request is on your list, preferably at the top.

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Resources recommended during the sermon for effective parenting:

Raising Kids to Love Jesus, Norman Wright and Gary Oliver

The Five Love Languages of Children, Gary Chapman and Ross Campbell

Boundaries with Kids, Henry Cloud and John Townsend

Parents and Teenagers, Edited by Jay Kesler

"Baby Think It Over," The award winning education program used for parenting education among children and young people. Go to www.btio.com.