

Wednesday, March 2, 2011 - Abuse and Neglect of the Lord's Heritage

"Children are a heritage of the Lord. The fruit of the womb is a reward" (Psalms 127:3).

As brief as it is, that is a comprehensive expression of God's view of children.

I stood in line waiting to pick up the pizza that my family ordered for dinner. In front of me was a woman in her mid-30's with a son, about 12 years old, and a daughter about 7. They all three had small plastic cups which they were going to use for the water they would drink with their dinner. The young boy began playing with his cup and before you knew it, he had crushed it and it was not useable.

It was not a big deal and I actually caught myself laughing quietly at his playfulness. However, when he returned to his mother and told her what had occurred, he was treated to the following: "You are an idiot! How can you be that stupid! I will get you one more cup but if you mess this one up, you'll just have to go without a drink. You are so irresponsible!"

The young man walked off with his head lowered due to the humiliation he had just suffered in front of a room full of people. His mother continued her tirade about her son to anyone that would listen, which at this point consisted of only herself.

My first instinct was to walk over to the young man and tell him that he was none of those things that his "charming" mother berated him with. I also wanted to discuss with the mother her parenting tactics. However, my judgment told me I could possibly make things worse for the child so I stayed out of it.

The children of this country suffer great physical and emotional abuse on a daily basis and it is having alarming repercussions. Consider the following facts:

Child Abuse in America

Children are suffering from a hidden epidemic of child abuse and neglect. Over 3 million reports of child abuse are made every year in the United States; however, those reports can include multiple children. In 2007, approximately 5.8 million children were involved in an estimated 3.2 million child abuse reports and allegations.

General Statistics

- A report of child abuse is made every ten seconds.
- Almost five children die every day as a result of child abuse. More than three out of four are under the age of 4.

- It is estimated that between 60-85% of child fatalities due to maltreatment are not recorded as such on death certificates.
- 90% of child sexual abuse victims know the perpetrator in some way; 68% are abused by family members.
- Child abuse occurs at every socioeconomic level, across ethnic and cultural lines, within all religions and at all levels of education.
- 31% percent of women in prison in the United States were abused as children.
- Over 60% of people in drug rehabilitation centers report being abused or neglected as a child.
- About 30% of abused and neglected children will later abuse their own children, continuing the horrible cycle of abuse.
- About 80% of 21 year old that were abused as children met criteria for at least one psychological disorder.
- The estimated annual cost of child abuse and neglect in the United States for 2007 is \$104 billion.
- Abused children are 25% more likely to experience teen pregnancy.
- Abused teens are 3 times less likely to practice safe sex, putting them at greater risk for STDs.

Child Abuse & Criminal Behavior

- 14% of all men in prison in the USA were abused as children
- 36% of all women in prison were abused as children
- Children who experience child abuse & neglect are 59% more likely to be arrested as a juvenile, 28% more likely to be arrested as an adult, and 30% more likely to commit violent crime.

Child Abuse Consequences

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Child Abuse & Substance Abuse

- Children who have been sexually abused are 2.5 times more likely to abuse alcohol
- Children who have been sexually abused are 3.8 times more likely develop drug addictions
- Nearly two-thirds of the people in treatment for drug abuse reported being abused as children

Child abuse and neglect don't just come in a physical form. As you can tell from the story at the beginning of this article, many children are abused mentally. Emotional child abuse is

maltreatment which results in impaired psychological growth and development. It involves words, actions, and indifference. Abusers constantly reject, ignore, belittle, dominate, and criticize the victims. This form of abuse may occur with or without physical abuse, but there is often an overlap.

Examples of emotional child abuse are verbal abuse; excessive demands on a child's performance; penalizing a child for positive, normal behavior (smiling, mobility, exploration, vocalization, manipulation of objects); discouraging caregiver and infant attachment; penalizing a child for demonstrating signs of positive self-esteem; and penalizing a child for using interpersonal skills needed for adequate performance in school and peer groups. In addition, frequently exposing children to family violence and unwillingness or inability to provide affection or stimulation for the child in the course of daily care may also result in emotional abuse.

How is it identified?

Although emotional abuse can hurt as much as physical abuse, it can be harder to identify because the marks are left on the inside instead of the outside.⁴ Not surprising, there exist few well-validated measures of childhood emotional abuse. Clinicians can use a revised version of the Child Abuse and Trauma Scale (CATS) which targets measures for emotional abuse. Caregivers can also closely observe children's behaviors and personalities. Children suffering from emotional abuse are often extremely loyal to the parent, afraid of being punished if they report abuse, or think that this type of abuse is a normal way of life. Behavioral indicators of an emotionally abused child include inappropriate behavior that is immature or more mature for the child's age, dramatic behavioral changes (disruption of activities, clinging or compulsively seeking affection and attention), aggressiveness, uncooperativeness, bedwetting or loss of bowel control (after a child has been trained), and destructive or antisocial behavior (being constantly withdrawn and sad). Furthermore, poor relationships with peers, lack of self-confidence, unusual fears for the child's age (fear of going home, being left alone, specific objects), or inability to react with emotion or develop an emotional bond with others are also indicators. Realistically, any of the above behaviors may also be seen in normal children, but a change in pattern of these behaviors is a strong indicator of emotional abuse.

Who are the perpetrators?

Almost any adult involved in a relationship with a child is a potential perpetrator. Parents, teachers, ministers, social workers, neighbors, lawyers, or judges may all be capable of emotional maltreatment. Common characteristics of the abusing adult include blaming or belittling the child in public, describing the child negatively, always assuming the child is at fault, having unrealistic expectations of the child, openly admitting to disliking or hating the child, threatening the child with severe punishment, withdrawing comfort as a means of

discipline, being emotionally cold and un-supportive, suffering from alcohol and drug abuse, and possessing a violent nature.

Why does this happen?

Most emotional abuse occurs for many of the same reasons that physical abuse occurs. Parents are vulnerable to becoming involved in maltreatment if stresses in their lives build up or if they are unable to manage these stresses. They may also have diminished capacity for understanding and dealing with children (mental retardation, psychopathology, alcoholism, drug abuse), false ideas about children's needs, or sadistic psychosis. Also, the abuser's goal may be to control.

Nevertheless, a single factor may not lead to abuse, but in combination they can create the social and emotional pressures that lead to emotional abuse. Specific types of problems that can contribute to emotional abuse are social problems that can contribute to family stress (unemployment, poverty, isolation from relatives and friends, divorce, death, immature parents), health crises (illness of a family member, disability of a family member, drug and alcohol abuse within the family), and mental health problems (mental disability, depression).

What are the effects?

The consequences of emotional child abuse can be serious and long-term. Many research studies conclude that psychopathologic symptoms are more likely to develop in emotionally abused children. These children may experience a lifelong pattern of depression, estrangement, anxiety, low self-esteem, inappropriate or troubled relationships, or a lack of empathy. During their childhood, victims may fail to thrive or their developmental progress may be halted. Some may also become poorly adjusted emotionally and psychologically. As teenagers, they find it difficult to trust, participate in and achieve happiness in interpersonal relationships, and resolve the complex feelings left over from their childhoods. As adults, they may have trouble recognizing and appreciating the needs and feelings of their own children and emotionally abuse them as well.

None of these statistics reflect the abortion cases seen each year. In spite of scientific consensus reached in 1981 that life begins with conception, since 1973, an average of 1.5 million abortions has occurred each year in the United States. These are just the reported cases. And still, the U.S. Supreme Court will not overturn *Roe v. Wade*. They have even gone so far as to uphold partial birth abortions, the murder of obviously developed children in the womb.

Now stories are coming forth that abortion has become a business. Baby parts are SOLD for research. Consider this gruesome congressional testimony from Dean Alberty, former tissue procurement technician:

“Infant twins were aborted alive and brought to him in a pan for dissection. He stated that the twins, who were between 26 and 30 weeks old, were cuddling each other and gasping for breath.”

This is where humanist values have taken our society.

During 1999, the Planned Parenthood Federation of America reported profits of \$125.8 million on gross income of \$660 million. Of that income, \$211 million came from clinic operations. Of the clinic operations earnings - \$58.8 million – more than 1 of every 4 dollars earned came from killing an unborn child. That’s because the sheer number of unborn children killed in PPFA’s 850 clinics continues to rise, from 139,000 in 1995 to nearly 168,000 last year. Our government assists with the funding of PPFA.

What is Jesus’ attitude toward children?

Children are a wonderful blessing. When children are in the home, the parents should learn to give of themselves; they should learn to put others before themselves; they should learn tenderness; they should learn the great depths of love; and they are richly rewarded by the love and adoration which they receive in return from those children – children who are flesh of their flesh, bone of their bone, and blood of their blood. Children are a wonderful comfort for parents in their declining years. Parents will do well to reflect on their attitude relative to their children. When and how often have they offered thanks to God for their children? Or have they merely taken those children for granted?

Matthew 18:2-6 - Then Jesus called a little child to Him, set him in the midst of them, and said, "Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Whoever receives one little child like this in My name receives Me. But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the sea."

Matthew 19:13-14 - Then little children were brought to Him that He might put His hands on them and pray, but the disciples rebuked them. But Jesus said, "Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of heaven."

Unfortunately, never before have so many parents turned from their rightful responsibility to children. They fail to understand that the blessing that they hold in their arms is a blessing from God (**Gen. 2:7**). These parents should ask themselves, “Do I really love my child?” Paul described some people as being “without natural affection” (**Romans 1:31**) – that is, they did not have, for example, the affection (love) which parents should naturally have for their children. The news reports of today are filled with accounts of parents mistreating their own children.

How do we stop this vicious cycle? Parents have a mandate to supply the inner spiritual forces, which are sorely needed in family life. There is no substitute for the presence of love, faith, and respect, which are so fully illustrated in Christ and taught in the scriptures. These values are what will end abuse and abortions in this country.

1. Children have a right to be loved and wanted.
 - 1.1. In order to have the capacity to love, one must first be loved (**1 John 4:19-21**).
 - 1.2. This provides the child with a sense of being wanted, while conflict, quarrelling’s, and broken homes cause a child to feel insecure and unwanted. These feelings can and do lead to serious antisocial attitudes and negligence. Parents must express their love in both word and deed.
2. Children have a right to Divine Truth.
 - 2.1. The basic orientation of each child rests upon his understanding about God, about Christ, and about the word of God.
 - 2.2. Morality and good citizenship are born out of the understanding we are to live for GOD, not man. We are to live by God’s values, not mans.

The world can only be changed when parents understand the great responsibility they have to raise the God given blessing of children in the way God commands.

Let me leave you with this poem...

If A Child Lives

With criticism, they learn to condemn.

With hostility, they learn to fight.

With fear, they learn to be apprehensive.

With pity, they learn to feel sorry for themselves.

With jealousy, they learn to feel guilty.

With encouragement, they learn to be confident.

With tolerance, they learn to be patient.

With praise, they learn to be appreciative.

With acceptance, they learn to love.

With approval, they learn to like themselves.

With recognition, they learn to have a goal.

With fairness, they learn what justice is.

With honesty, they learn what truth is.

With security, they learn to have faith in themselves.

With love, they know God.

<http://www.childhelp.org/pages/statistics>

http://member.preventchildabuse.org/site/DocServer/emotional_child_abuse.pdf?docID=12