

# Sick Children

Tonight, I am missing the evening service. There are sick children at our house. My wife could have stayed home with them and I could have gone; but she stayed home this morning while I went to church.

Sick children are not fun. The flu bugs make their presence known in different ways and none of them really enjoyable. The care given to sick children is usually far less pleasant than the care given to "well" children. Sick children do fewer cute and endearing things. In fact, most times they don't do any at all. Sick children cry more and laugh less.

All this can wear the parent down. No, they don't always get the sickness of the child, but they can catch the disposition of the child. It is a temptation to get shorter tempered with the shorter tempered child. The crying and whining can weasel its way into the soul of the parent and bring out the weasel in them.

Actually, one of the sick children appears to be acting well enough right now that I really wonder if they shouldn't have gone along. This can have a subtle effect on me as a parent. Why did I have miss the outdoor song service for someone who appears to be just fine?

Children have a way of bringing out the true colors (the character) of the parents. Sickness is just one of the ways that this happens. A wise parent will take note of this. In a story book, the parents would always react to a child's sickness with compassion and tender loving care. But, since we don't live in story books, our stories don't always read this way.

Sick children are inconvenient. They get sick when travel is planned, when friends whom we haven't seen for several years are getting together, and when the beans need to be picked. All this adds up to the simple picture of broken plans, missed gatherings, and waiting beans. If a parent is selfish, they will note the interruption and feel frustration. What can really add to the frustration is the back of the mind knowledge that tomorrow or yesterday would have been a much more convenient window to have the 24-hour flu. But today is the day of sickness and .it can't be changed.

Sick children can be expensive. While wise parents don't trot to the doctor for every sniffle, some of the sickness requires more than home remedy. This in itself can lead to frustration. Most homes don't have a coffer that is stuffed for doctor visits. Therefore, when a doctor visit is made, some other budget is infringed upon. What if the bill is so large that the "kitty" for a new kitchen is skimmed?

Sick children can be embarrassing. What if our children are under the weather more than yours? What if mine appear to mend slower? In our fallen state, we are too prone to fall for these silly comparisons.

So what is the Christ-like response to sick children? Have you ever wished you could be like Jesus and just heal them? Just lay on the hands and the fever leaves? It must be our compassion that yearns for such things. It is probably silly to wish for that which is beyond our ability. One of the things a Godly parent can do is lay on his hands and pray. There is no absolute, miraculous power to be had in such times yet it is quite honorable to cast these burdens upon the Lord. And it is not beyond His Superintending Hands to grant this request.

Sick children are part of the fallen world that we live in. Sorrow, sickness, and death are all a result of Adam and Eve's failure and the distinct changes which came upon man and his generations.

But let us not waste our child's sickness. This is a time to exercise the love of God which is in our hearts. May it come forth with hands of gentleness, voices of tenderness, and a total body language of patience.

The sickness of our children may reveal a need in our life. It may show a raised-up idol in our experience. The desires for comfort (I need my sleep), the desire for freedom (I want to go, see and do), and other desires can lie hidden deep in the heart. It is these interruptions which display my true colors. Times like this reveal some of the hidden agendas of a partially sanctified heart.

When our children's sickness wears us down and some surprising carnality shows itself, then what? First, let us be thankful that we are no longer deceived. It is a part of continuing deception for us to conclude that our negative reaction is a result of tiredness, high pressure, or exception. We may be tempted to think (and say) that what we just displayed was an exception and "you would have done the same thing if you had faced the same thing". While this statement may be accurate, it is not redemptive. Let us be honest with the exposures of these true colors. With this honesty, redemption and sanctification can take place.

This honesty will move us to a visible repentance. Can we see the value of repenting from this selfish outburst, the short words, or the hot, loud command? If we are sensitive and sensible in this area, we may take the courage to clear this thing before God and child. Parents who make these choices will become better and more effective parents.

Actually, this is part of the whole picture of parenting. In this sense, parenting is one generation helping another while they both grow up. May God give grace to be His helpers when we have sick children.

~Duane Witmer