



## How can parents and children connect with each other?

The first thing to be stated is that there will be no connection between parents and children *without a restoration of heart religion in both parents and children*. There is a lot of talk today, as there has been throughout the centuries, about generation gaps, and conflicts between one generation and the next generation.

Many psychologists and sociologists try to pin point the dynamics and propose a solution to the problem. Ultimately, however, we need to recognize that there is no way to understand, much less to bridge, the generation gap *except* to understand that the heart of man is wicked from his youth (Gen 8:21). And this does *not* mean that young people are the problem, while their parents are not. No, both parents and children by nature are not bent the right way. Both are bent away from God and away from each other. And so it is not surprising that there are generational tensions as there are also societal tensions, cultural tensions, and all sorts of other problems in our world. Moreover, there will never be an ultimate solution to these tensions, unless the root of the matter is addressed, and that is the wickedness of man. To put it simply, both parents and children need new hearts from the Holy Spirit, and unless they experience the new birth, there will never be any true connection from either side. There must come a restoration of heart religion in both parents and children, and without it, everything else will simply be a changing of the veneer.

Secondly, *the preaching of repentance should serve to connect parents with children, when blessed by the Holy Spirit*. The Old Testament ends on a very sober note:

*“And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to the fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.”*

(Mal 4:6)

This text speaks about a departure, a wedge that has come between children and fathers. This text promises that God himself will raise up one to bring the heart of the fathers and the heart of the children together. We know from the New Testament that God used the instrument of John the Baptist. Luke 1:16-17 confirms this:

*“And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God. And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.”*

When we look at what John the Baptist did to bring the children and fathers together, he preached the doctrine of repentance and remission of sins. He made clear to the people that they could not lean on the presumption that Abraham was their father (Luke 3:8). They needed the essence of what Abraham himself had in their own hearts. They needed to repent and return, and that in very tangible ways. A father and son will meet when they both repent of their sins and acknowledge their sinfulness to each other and together before God.

Thirdly, *the institution of family worship should serve to connect parents with children with God’s blessing*. Family worship is an important biblical institution wherein a father leads his family as prophet, priest, and king, guiding them in the truths of God’s word, and bringing their needs before the Lord. A pattern of time spent every day in the Word and before the face of the Lord is not automatic assurance that parents and children will connect; however, it will be impossible for them to do it without regular, heart-felt family worship. During family worship, it is possible to study God’s

Word and God's precepts, and thus learn what God's will is for each situation. It is important during family worship to talk through truth and to apply it to the various questions and dilemmas a family might face. When John G. Paton was 11,000 miles away from his home in Scotland, in the island of Tanna, it was the vision of family prayer many years earlier which often strengthened him. The recollection of how God had met with them at that little altar in their little cottage near Dumfries (Scotland), that memory vitalized him and energized him many years later. And so it ought to be. John D. Legg tells us that of great influence upon him was, "*his father's godliness and habitual communion with God at his home family prayers.*" Besides family worship, Sabbath keeping, catechizing, and church attendance are very conducive to family unity.

Finally, *the spiritual demeanour that is a fruit of grace will serve to bring families together.* Harshness is not listed among the fruits of the Spirit, neither is sullenness, or provoking of children to wrath. All these things divide. On the other hand, what Scripture lists as true fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22-23), namely, kindness, meekness, love, gentleness, patience, and so on, will serve to sow bonds of love that connect parents with children when God is pleased to bless it.

Generations go, and generations shall come. True connection will come when we receive and in turn bestow to others the mercy of the Lord.

*"LORD, Thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations."*

Psalm 90:1

*"O satisfy us early with Thy mercy."*

Psalm 90:14

To that mercy we may take refuge while turning to God in uprightness. And then there shall also be a turning of the one generation to the next.

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