



We Never Stop Being Parents

Rev. Dr. Fr. Stépanos Dingilian © 2011

Parents never stop parenting regardless of how old their offspring becomes. Although some may see this as too burdensome, yet those who are truly passionate about parenting see this as an opportunity to never become burdensome, but rather remain relevant, inspirational, and present in their offspring's heart, mind, and soul.

When the offspring is young, the need for the parents is very obvious. A child needs shelter, food, constant attention and protection to grow. The parents can feel blessed for having this opportunity and lovingly take care of their offspring. As the youngster grows up, especially when the offspring becomes a teenager, the parents' responsibilities are somewhat changed, but they remain essentially the same: Provide food, shelter, and love to the offspring. For some parents, when the offspring turns 18, they conclude that they have completed their parental responsibility and say that now it is the offspring's responsibility to make the best of life and they can step aside and let the offspring on his or her own. For other parents, this time of letting go of the offspring is at the age of 21 or 22 after completing college. Nevertheless, these parents see any involvement in their offspring's life after the age of 21 or 22, unless for extraordinary circumstances, as interfering with their lives. Unfortunately, the relationship between such parents and their offspring gradually becomes irrelevant, and is relegated to getting together for birthday's, Thanksgiving, and Christmas. No wonder the parents in such relationships eventually feel that they are becoming burdens in the life of their offspring and gradually lead solitary and irrelevant lives.

But parenting does not have to be so. In fact, those who are passionate about parenting know that parenting never ends, rather how it is lived is modified. Just as an offspring never stops being the offspring of a set of parents, the parents also never stop being their offspring's parents. However, in order for the parents to continue being relevant and inspirational in their offspring's life, they need to turn their attention from the daily physical immediate needs, to the long term spiritual needs that also encompass their offspring's future needs and aspirations. For instance, since the parents understand more about the depths of life than their offspring at any given moment, they can encourage and inspire their offspring to shape their future in a wise manner. This is no easy task because the parents need to visualize what their offspring's life and relationship could be like five, ten, or fifteen years into the future, especially after they are not present as parents. To accomplish this, the parents need to do a great deal of study, prayer, thinking, and searching. It is for this reason that very few parents actually accomplish this - because it is very difficult! Yet, it is this kind of compassion, research, and communication with their offspring that keeps parents always relevant, inspirational, and source of hope for their parents, whether they are here or not.

Parenting is a special blessing. It is up to us to make the best of it. If we treat it as a temporary responsibility until the youngster grows up, then we find ourselves in the coldness of loneliness and irrelevance as we grow older. If we treat it as a calling that requires gradual change and growth on our part to remain inspirational and relevant source of hope for our offspring, then we receive that when our offspring grow up. The key is this: *We will never stop being the parents of our offspring, but will we continuously enjoy that or not?*