

2022-03-03 Parents Meeting

Topic: The Role of the MS Parent

Introduction

- We are here today because we all love our Middle Schoolers and all of the children and youth of our church, and we want to work together and support each other in their upbringing
- Purpose of Parents Meetings
 - To see how we can work together - servants and parents - in the lives of these children
 - To shed some light on some of the things that we, the servants, are seeing in the church that maybe you are not seeing at home
 - Many parents are regularly communicating with us one by one about their children - this is a great thing. In those conversations, sometimes we noticed common themes among all of the children so we wanted to address them here
- One of the common themes is regarding the role of the parent
 - Please don't take this the wrong way!
 - All of you are wonderful parents who have raised amazing children - these kids are extremely smart (sometimes too smart), and very kind - they love one another, they help each other, they make friends... God bless you and may they grow to be successful in every aspect of their life.
 - But the reason that we chose this topic is because sometimes there is a HESITANCY in the role of the parent
 - One might say "Well America is different from Egypt"
 - Another might say "Well the times are different from when I was young and my parents raised me"
 - And some might confuse or mix the role of the parent with the role of the Church
 - So we want to clarify today some of the most important roles of the parent in the upbringing of their children
- We all want to see our children successful and growing in every aspect of their life
 - to grow healthy, to grow mentally, to grow emotionally and socially, to grow spiritually
 - "And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men." (Luke 2:52)
- We have to keep in mind what St Paul described for the Corinthians:
"So then neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase." (1 Cor 3:7)

- So whatever we discuss today, it will be practical applications and exercises and examples, but in the back of all of it, we have our God who loves us and who is always working and bringing the increase, and we must depend on Him for the fruits. We can plant and water, but He will bring the fruit.
- But we still need to plant and water and do our part - both as parents and as servants

The Parent: The Spiritual Enabler

- Exercises
 - Read the Bible with your child
 - Stand in prayer with your child
 - Follow-up with their spiritual education - what are they learning in Sunday School? What are they learning in Bible Study?
 - Ask about their hymns class, and learn the hymn with them
 - Bring your child EARLY for the Liturgical Services and stay until the end (i.e. of the Praises)
 - Bring your child on the day of Confession and remind them with the sacrament of repentance and confession
 - Make vegan food at home during the fasts of the church including Wednesday and Friday
 - Give them an allowance to use for alms and tithing
- This is the very basic necessity in the job of the parent
 - The Middle Schooler cannot drive... that's on the parent
 - The Middle Schooler cannot cook... that's on the parent
 - The Middle Schooler cannot bring in income... that's on the parent!
- The Middle Schooler needs encouragement to read the Bible and to stand in prayer... at this point in their life, they may not yet be finding benefit in prayer and in Scripture, but this is the point in their life to build good habits
- Enable them in their good habits instead of in their bad habits
 - If the kid is addicted to his phone, and the parents are getting the latest upgrades and newer phones for him
 - If the kid is struggling to wake up for the liturgy, and the parents say "well I can't wake him up" - so what? Will we leave him to perish? Are you expecting someone else to come and wake him up? This is the time to build good habits!
 - If the kid doesn't want to fast... make vegan food! And make GOOD vegan food! A middle schooler will not survive on salt and water during Lent, they are not an ascetic! Build the habit of fasting and when they get older, they will find the ascetic part of it
 - If the kid has some friends that are negatively influencing him... why do you let them hang out with those friends? And we do sleepovers for them and go to the park or whatever and they miss liturgy or Vespers with their friend... why enable the bad habits?
- One of the major roles - and the easiest role - of the parent is to Enable Good Habits and Spiritual Habits

The Parent: The Spiritual Model

- But to enable and to do it with them is not enough - the parent must also be a spiritual MODEL
 - "And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates." (Deuteronomy 6:6-9)
- If you tell your son/daughter to pray, or to read the Bible, they won't listen. But if they see you doing it, then it's a different story... if you're telling them to pray but you are not praying, then it is not authentic. If you, yourself, don't believe in the power of prayer, then how will you convince your child to believe in it?
 - This is exactly what happened in Luke 11
 - "Now it came to pass, as He was praying in a certain place, when He ceased, that one of His disciples said to Him, 'Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples.' So He said to them, 'When you pray, say: Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name...' (Luke 11:1-4)
 - The disciples saw Him praying first... and then they asked: "Lord, teach us to pray"
- Exercises:
 - Let them see you pray
 - Let them see you read the Scripture
 - Let them see you sit down for confession
 - Let them see you attending the liturgy from the beginning - not dropping them off and going home
 - Let them see you fasting! It's not enough to make vegan food for them, and you are eating something else... actually this will have the opposite effect
- On the other hand, our children sometimes see and hear things from their parents that they shouldn't
 - They hear you on the phone with your friend or your sister or your mom - are you gossiping? Criticizing?
 - They hear the kind of music you listen to in your car and in the house
 - They see the kind of TV Shows and Movies you are watching
 - One of the things we are seeing in the Middle School boys and girls now is they are "shipping" each other - "shipping" comes from "relationship" - "Oh flan and flanna look good with each other" - and they start to develop inappropriate relationships with each other... and when we tried to address it with them they said "no no our moms agree! My mom was telling the other moms" - Excuse me?
- Our children - especially in the Middle School age - are following the MODEL that is being set for them
- We expect that when we give a lesson in the class, the parent will model it in the home
 - We give the lesson about Repentance and Confession, but it's not enough - we need Abouna to make time to accept their confession, we need the parent to bring them for their confession date, and we need the parent to be a model for them

- We give a lesson about alcohol or about dancing in parties... but then if the parent takes their child to a wedding reception and exposes them to all of those things, and more than that the parent is doing those things - then the lesson was useless... actually the lesson had the opposite effect now.

The Parent: A Guard and Protector

- Monitor their phone and their social media
 - This is very important
 - Read their messages between their friends - what kind of language are they using, and what kind of language are their friends using?
 - See what is coming up on their social media and their Instagram - what kind of pictures and videos are they being exposed to?
 - See what apps are on their phone, and what apps they are using the most
- Learn
 - Learn how to use these apps
 - Learn how to use these phones
 - Learn the language that your kids are speaking
 - If there's something you don't understand - ask them!
 - Following them on these apps is not enough!
- Get to know their friends
 - Invite their friends to your house
 - Listen to the kinds of conversations they are having
 - What kind of language are they using?
 - When you bring them to your house and under your watch, you are controlling the environment
- Know what is going on at school and at church
 - Who are their teachers?
 - What values do their teachers have?
 - What is being taught at school?
 - What agenda does the school or the teachers have?
 - What kind of friends and classmates do they have?
 - **They know more than think**
 - **Don't think you are exposing them to worldly things**
 - **Don't be surprised with what they know**
 - **Let them come to you with their questions**
 - **Don't tell them they're too young, etc or else they will go elsewhere with their questions that is not a parent or servant.**
- Protect them from evil at night
 - The devil's domain is in darkness - when the rest of the house is sleeping, and one is awake in the house, the devil would love to attack
 - Encourage an early bed time
 - No phones in the bedroom
- Teach your child to stand up for themselves and to stand up for the TRUTH
- Teach your child about boundaries

- What boundaries need to be between boys and girls, and what boundaries between their friends of the same gender
 - Boys will want to play rough with each other - and that's okay
 - Girls will want to hug each other and walk arm in arm - and that's okay
 - It's NOT okay for a boy to play rough with a girl
 - It's NOT okay for a boy to lay his hands on a girl - either in a violent way or in an endearing way
 - It's NOT okay for a girl to walk arm in arm with a boy
 - It's NOT okay for a boy to take a picture of another boy - especially a compromising picture - and show it his friends or to the girls
 - There are some conversations between boys and girls that are NOT appropriate
- We are starting to see some of these boundaries being crossed between our boys and girls - and it is happening on Wednesday nights after the Bible Study when the parents are late to take their children. This is why we are stressing the pickup times - we do not have servants to be with the kids at that time, because we have other services that day. We have a time for playing and hanging out in the church which is Friday for almost 1.5hr. So we need the parent to do their part in guarding and protecting their children from these things, as well as teaching them about boundaries.
- Don't be afraid of "losing the trust" or "losing the friendship" with your child
 - If they like you, but they perish, then what have you gained?
 - It is good for them to trust you, for them to feel comfortable talking to you, for them to enjoy spending time with you - but not at the expense of protecting them from evil

The Parent: In Correction and Reproof

- Make sure they understand how the punishment fits the crime
 - If they are using their phone inappropriately - take their phone for a set time
 - If they are using bad language on XBOX - take the XBOX for a set time
 - If they get a bad grade at school - what's the reason? Find the reason first before going to the discipline part, or else the punishment may not fit the crime
- Discipline in a way that is befitting of you (as a Christian) and of them (as your beloved son/daughter)
 - Sometimes we forget that we are Christians when it comes time to discipline
 - Sometimes we forget that we love our son and daughter when it comes time to discipline
- Correction by encouragement as much as possible
 - "the carrot not the stick"
 - "Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good" (Romans 12:21)
- What is the result of your disciplinary action?
 - Anger, Fighting, Tears?
 - Joy, Peace, Growth, Connection, Understanding?
- It is more important for your child to know that what they did is wrong, or the path they are walking leads to death, or that they have made a mistake - than to fear what happens if they make another mistake

- Set an example in the way that you correct and reproof and discipline

The Role of the Church

- What is the role of the Sunday School Servant?
 - Spiritual Teaching
 - To give the clear teaching of the Church to our children
 - We are teaching them the Sound Doctrine, the Interpretation of Scripture, the Church History, the Saints, the Rituals, the Hymns.
 - We are teaching them about what to be careful of and how to deal with certain situations at school
 - We are teaching them how to identify with themselves and understand their identity
 - We are teaching them how to grow in virtue and how to reject vice
 - We are teaching them to obey their parents after they obey the commandment of the Lord
 - As we read in Deuteronomy 6, spiritual teaching is really the role of the parent, but by God's grace, we are helping
- Koinonia (Fellowship)
 - To pray as a group
 - To deal with each other in a group setting
 - To deal with spiritual brothers and sisters
 - To play together in a Christian Environment
 - To help resolve disputes among our children
- Supporting the Parents
 - We have a symbiotic relationship - we have to work together
 - It is very nice when we see parents who are so concerned for their children and they are meeting with the servants and following up with them and taking advice and asking about their child, etc. but more importantly than that - taking ACTIONS after those conversations
 - We are here to support you in the upbringing of your children

Conclusion

- We all gathered today because we all share a common interest - your children. Abouna loves your children, we love your children, and of course, you love your children.
- Our children are living in a world that is moving in the wrong direction, and that has many problems, and we want them to grow mentally, physically, spiritually and socially
- We want them to find success in every aspect of their life
- We want them to be a light of the world that shines before all men
- We are working together - the parents, the servants, Abouna - remembering that **"neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase."** (1 Cor 3:7)
- Let us depend on the Lord for the upbringing of our children, all the while doing our part and supporting each other in our roles

Technology Tutorial

- We will talk a little bit about how to check and monitor some of these apps
- As a parent, you are responsible for knowing how to use these apps and for monitoring what your child is looking at, who they are talking to, what they are talking about

Not Recommended	Needs Monitoring
TikTok Snapchat Reddit Discord	Instagram iMessage WhatsApp Signal

- What to look for
 - What are the group names?
 - Who is in the group?
 - What kind of pictures are shared in this group?
 - What kind of language is being used in this group?
 - One on One Conversations - especially between opposite genders
 - Who are they following on Instagram?
- How to Monitor
 - Instagram following
 - Instagram DMs
 - iMessage, WhatsApp, Signal
 - Photos
 - Hidden Photos
 - "Recently Deleted"
 - Web Browser History

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