

Who is responsible for a child's education?

The answer is simple – parents. Education doesn't begin on the day a child starts school: it begins at the moment of birth. You are your child's first and best educator. The Bible tells us that children are a heritage from God. Your child is special; an entrusted gift and a unique person made in God's image. You are responsible for every aspect of your child's education, even though you will choose to work in partnership with others as you raise your child to know and love God, and to flourish as the person God created him or her to be.

'Children are a heritage from the LORD, offspring a reward from him.'

Your home

Creating a stable, loving and Christ-centred home in which the complementary roles of parents are worked out is a key part of your child's learning. The Department for Education document *Mental health and behaviour in schools* describes the vital role that the family plays in raising resilient children who are successful learners in life. This includes love and affection; a strong, supportive relationship with at least one parent; clear, consistent discipline, and the absence of severe or prolonged conflict. The family environment is vital to a child's development. As social reformer Frederick Douglass wrote: 'It is easier to build strong children than to repair broken men'.

Although in the modern world we usually relinquish the responsibility for academic education to trained professionals, the words of Deuteronomy still hold true for parents: 'These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up' (Deuteronomy 6:6-7). It is in your home that you will shape godly character, modelling the Christian virtues by which you want your children to live. It is in your home, by your example, that your children will set the benchmarks against which they measure all that they see and hear at school.

Your role

The word 'education' derives from the Latin *educere* which means 'to lead or draw out'. Its meaning is much broader and deeper than just that of academic learning. From the moment of birth, you are teaching your child about relationships: how to love and be loved; how to trust and be trusted; how to forgive and be forgiven. You're teaching them, too, about the created world and their place in it. You are your child's most avid encourager and supporter

and it's a role that will continue long after your child grows up and finds their own place in the world.

Your task

Your child's journey through life will contain happiness and sadness, success and failure, celebration and commiseration. Your task is to help your child navigate paths onto which all kinds of people and ideas will crowd, all clamouring for attention and competing to influence your child's thinking. As a Christian parent, it's important to offer a biblical

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perspective and help your child to evaluate the ideas which they encounter against biblical truth.

You can't just talk about faith; you have to live it, too. Research shows that when children experience a conflict between words and actions, they will always follow the actions. As you talk, show respect for

views other than your own – that includes giving your child space to take a different view from you. Learning to disagree with respect is a positive life skill and a Christian virtue which you can teach your child by example.

In his letter to the Corinthian church, Paul wrote that 'We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us' (2Corinthians 5:20). Be a bold and brave ambassador as you help your children navigate school and college life and as you teach them to walk with God, using the Bible as their authoritative guide against which to measure all that they hear, see and do.

For more information:

- If You Forget Everything Else – Remember This: parenting in the primary years. Katharine Hill: published by Muddy Pearl
- Care for the Family: Because family life matters
www.careforthefamily.org.uk
- Families First: a faith and family life magazine, published by Mothers' Union www.muenterprises.org/familiesfirst