

- ... The family is the place where ethics, values, and personalities are forged.
- ... Within the family world views are shaped and tyrants or saints are nurtured.
- ... Life compasses are set in this very powerful environment.
- ... What occurs in families will continue to shape the world.

The family is a series of partnerships. These partnerships are the anvil upon which raw materials are forged into steel! Husband to wife, wife to husband, father to son, father to daughter, mother to son, mother to daughter, brother to sister, sister to brother, sister to sister, brother to brother, older to younger, and younger to older are just a few of the critical partnership relationships in a family of only four! Incorporate the extended family, a previous marriage, and other life circumstances, and it is no wonder that parenting can seem so complex! Let's view a few of these key partnerships and attempt to assess their power for good.

### **The Couple Partnership**

The strength of the family begins with the individuals and is reflected in the marriage. Our love for one another is what binds us or blinds us to the souls of our children. True compassion and caring are models that are far superior to self-centeredness and disinterest, yet both life-styles are incredibly powerful. To the degree that partners model the ability to function as a partnership, our children will understand their own role in society.

### **The Father and Son Partnership**

"Accept me, love me, believe in me. Instruct me and even discipline me if you must, but please let me please you! Let me know that I am worth something to you. Help me to develop a sense of order in the midst of chaos. Help me to discern principles that will help me make my way in life, and give me the freedom to try and to fail and to succeed and to still be your son!"

### **The Father and Daughter Partnership**

"Notice me, love me, believe in me. Let me know that I am special to you, that I don't repulse you, and that I am significant. Please keep loving me, please don't reject me. Please try to understand me and take me seriously. Please trust me and love me no matter what. Help me to discern principles that will help me make my way in life, and give me the freedom to try and to fail and to succeed and to still be your little girl!"

### **The Sibling Partnership**

"Stick with me. Stick up for me. Talk to me. Honor me. Care for me because I am family. Care for me because we have been companions for life. Care for me because you are older. Let's care for each other because we are each other's flesh and blood!"

**And these are just the basics!** There are partnerships with the child-most-like-you, the child-most-like-your-spouse, and the child you wonder from which planet he or she arrived! How these partnerships function, are tested, and succeed or fail; all form the foundations for life. This is where we learn what makes a team. This is where we should experience the ultimate refuge. This is the place where our world-view and significance is established. **The Family Partnership is perhaps the most important institution under all of creation!**

We must be careful to live our values as we attempt to teach those same values to our children. There are several parenting qualities that are helpful in giving us a framework for living out our beliefs in front of our children. For each positive value there is a negative counter-value. One will bring them up, one will shake them up and tear them down.

### ACCEPTANCE (rather than Ridicule)

Even though I don't always like what you do, this is distinctly separate from my feelings about you. You are special to me. We are in this for the long haul. You will succeed, and I will be there to correct you when you're wrong, comfort you when things are not well, and to applaud you when you overcome. But I will always take you seriously. *Ridicule is not a tool for training. It simply is ineffective at best, and destructive on all fronts.*

### HONESTY (rather than Situation Ethics)

It is of utmost importance in our family that we be truthful with one another. If the truth cannot be told within our family, it probably won't be communicated outside of our family. We must all admit when we are wrong and attempt never to lie to one another. *We must learn that the truth cannot be bent for our own purposes.* We can try to do so, but we will surely fail!

### INTIMACY (rather than Distance)

It is important that we be close. *We cannot afford to be isolated from each other.* We must have the freedom and the listening ear to share our deepest thoughts and to have them be respected and honored. We can do this without smothering each other or meddling.

### ACCOMPLISHMENT (rather than a Better Way)

I must allow my children to learn with guidance. Even at an early age they must learn to successfully complete and accomplish. It must be my high priority to see them succeed, level by level. I must rejoice in their success, even if they end up eclipsing my own. After all, this is one of the goals of good parenting! I need to avoid holding them to standards that I know deep within my heart I do not even keep myself. *Even though they may fall short on particulars, I am confident in their ultimate success!*

### FAILURE FREEDOM (rather than Performance)

Just as I have never done anything perfectly the first time, so my children have many years to perfect their skills. As they experiment and fail and succeed, it is my job to encourage the desire to continue to try. *Even though they may fail, they are not failures!* They can disappoint me without being a disappointment.

### SELF DISCIPLINE (rather than Control by Guilt)

It is my job to help my children to the place where they can rule themselves. All discipline moves toward this goal of independent responsibility. I am not my children's or my spouse's conscience. It is my job to help them to accept responsibility for their own beliefs and actions - and to press on!