

Dependent Responsibility

My grandfather, Albert Zehr, was a farmer in central Illinois. I can remember my excitement as a small boy every time we visited my grandma and grandpa on the farm. The final leg of the journey from my home in Indiana to Hopedale, Illinois, we traveled down a dirt road to my grandpa's property. We left the dirt road to drive up a small lane, crossed a creek over a wooden bridge, and pulled up by the farmhouse. By the back door was a well. The water was *so* cold!

My grandpa would greet me at the door, and after a hug we would walk together to the barn. Parked inside was a green Ford pickup; hanging from the dash was a bag of candy. After eating a few pieces we walked together to the next barn, where the tractor was parked.

The tractor was a red International with one steel seat. My grandpa took me on his lap and we went for a ride out in his fields. What good memories!

In his timeless book *The Pursuit of Holiness*, Jerry Bridges writes,

A farmer plows his field, sows the seed, and fertilizes and cultivates—all the while knowing that in the final analysis he is utterly dependent on forces outside of himself. He knows he cannot cause the seed to germinate, nor can he produce the rain and sunshine for growing and harvesting the crop. For a successful harvest, he is dependent on these things from God.

Yet the farmer knows that unless he diligently pursues his responsibilities to plow, plant, fertilize, and cultivate, he cannot expect a harvest at the end of the season. In a sense, he is in a partnership with God, and he will reap its benefits only when he has fulfilled his own responsibilities. (2006, 10)

This partnership is a dependent responsibility. Bridges continues, “Farming is a joint venture between God and the farmer. The farmer cannot do what God must do, and God will not do what the farmer should do” (2006, 10).

The same can be said for raising children. God places certain means at the disposal of parents with the desire that all of His children will be taught in accordance with His truth.

As parents we should have both a 10-year view and a 10,000-year view for the children God has entrusted to our care. For the short term, our 10-year goal is for them to grow academically, spiritually, socially, and emotionally to become all God has purposed for them to be. Over the long haul, our desire is that they will glorify God and, along with us, enjoy Him forever!

One of the chief means God has given to parents for achieving these two goals is Christian school education. We integrate faith and learning in the Christian school with the hope and prayer that one day our children will integrate faith and life.

“So where does our own responsibility come into the picture?” ask Bridges and Bevington, “... we’re both responsible *and* dependent. This is true whether we are referring to our growth in character or our effectiveness in ministry” (2009, 95; emphasis in original). Said another way, like the farmer, we as parents are responsible to train up our children in the way they should go as we sow seeds of righteousness into their lives—all the while depending upon God and the power of His Holy Spirit for a harvest of righteousness and peace!



Brian S. Simmons, President ACSI

References

Bridges, Jerry. 2006. *The pursuit of holiness*. Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress.
Bridges, Jerry, and Bob Bevington. 2009. *The bookends of the Christian life*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books.



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