

## Column

I have known, and perhaps you have as well, people who spend their entire life complaining, blaming their parents for all their psychological maladjustments, real or imagined. I don't want for a moment to dismiss anyone's pain. No doubt, there are those who bear scars on their psyche from their earlier years whose voices need to be heard and for whom help needs to be provided.

Even so, I should like to offer a modest proposal which might help some and would hurt no one. It is this: make a list of things your parents did right. Such a list might be both eye-opening and therapeutic. Mine would include:

First, they were attentive to my spiritual development. They did not just send me to church; they went themselves. More than that, they taught me the importance of giving systematically for the support of the church. Each Sunday morning my father would put a dime in an envelope for me to take to church.

My mother also did her part. Before I started to school, she would read to me from Bible storybooks and later from the Bible itself as we waited for Papa to come home from work in the afternoons.

Secondly, my parents saw to it that I was trained academically. They were careful to send me to schools where they thought I would get the best education (and spent a lot of money doing so).

They also did their part at home by imposing on me (many times against my will!) good study habits. They also saw to it that our home had books, including several sets of encyclopaedias. Use of bad grammar was dealt with as severely as breaking one of the Ten Commandments.

Thirdly, my parents taught me early about duty and responsibility. In the third grade, they gave me the task of shucking and shelling corn for the chickens. Often, in the dark and dank corncrib, I would daydream and feel sorry for myself. Instead of getting on with my work, I would sing or draw on the walls with chalk. Eventually, however, I learned the way to get out of that corn crib was by getting on with the job, by working briskly and purposefully.

Fourthly, my parents taught me basic social skills. One was introducing friends I brought home from school. Others included thanking the hostess at the

end of a party, walking on the curb side when accompanying a girl or woman and writing thank you notes.

Fifthly, my parents taught me to enjoy a variety of foods. It was the rule in our house that I had to try all new dishes. After that, if the dish did not appeal to me, well and good, but don't be "picky." At other people's houses, the rule was to take a little of every dish and to say nothing about the ones you did not like.

Sixthly and finally, they taught me not to fret over things I could not change. One year I was given a row of my own in the field in which I planted watermelons. Once the plants began to bear fruit, however, I notice that some boys from over the way were getting into my patch and eating my watermelons. When I went to my father "all hot and bothered", he said: "Next year just plant a few more, enough for you and them."

No doubt in some areas my parents could have done better (we all can), but I will not dwell on these. Rather I will give thanks to God for what they did.

*ALMIGHTY God, our heavenly Father, who settest the solitary in families; We commend to thy continual care the homes in which thy people dwell. Put far from them, we beseech thee, every root of bitterness, the desire of vain-glory, and the pride of life. Fill them with faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness. Knit together in constant affection those who, in holy wedlock, have been made one flesh; turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to the fathers; and so enkindle fervent charity among us all, that we be evermore kindly affectioned with brotherly love; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (Book of Common Prayer)*

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