



Reflections

Parenting the parents

GEORGE Bernard Shaw once said 'Parentage is a very important profession but no test of fitness for it is ever imposed in the interest of the children'.

Although I have not personally been a biological parent, I was thrust into a parenting role when I was just 25 years old as I had to care for my nieces and nephews due to an alcoholic brother and the sudden death of my brother-in-law. I found parenting the hardest thing in the world, whereas by comparison academic achievement seemed

easy. Aiming for perfection in the process of parenting was the most stupid thing I ever did. Looking back, I realise that I learned a lot in my attempt to teach.

Children are great imitators and need role models. The proximity of parents and family members means they are automatic models to children. Being a role model is a huge ask. I call good parents of today 'modern-day martyrs', because, if the children of today are to be raised well, then parenting will have to be built on a virtuous life,

with more sacrifice and less selfishness; more 'unlearning the old ways' and less over-expectation.

Parenting today involves getting the balance right in a world of complex and confusing information about child rearing.

There are plenty of parenting manuals out there but unfortunately one size does not fit all. I have heard children suffering from too much of mother and too little of father, or the reverse. Either they have too much 'Yes you can' or too much 'No you can't'.

One of the main responsibilities of good parenting is reflective learning while teaching and living with children.

Children of today live in a more complex and challenging world than in the past.

Our rapidly changing social and family lives, food habits and technological advances mean that most of our children today grow up so quickly that they can miss a happy and sufficiently lengthy childhood. And so, however demanding and challenging it might be, appro-

priate parenting must match the requirements of today.

Amidst these huge challenges, there is one thing that every parent is duty bound to do for their children, which is summed up in the words of Billy Graham: 'The greatest legacy one can pass on to one's children and grandchildren is not money or other material things accumulated in one's life, but rather a legacy of character and faith.'

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