



# Parents Are a Necessary Part

by Billie Davis, Education Consultant

**M**y mom told me to pay attention to her and not to teachers." A Sunday School teacher was shocked when a first grader said this in class. The teacher had asked the children to pay special attention to some words in a chorus. The child did not speak in rebellion but simply quoted her mother.

Why would a mother tell her child not to pay attention to teachers? The curious teacher followed up the question, and this is what she found. The mother had heard that a program on *diversity* was being introduced in the local school. She was afraid children might be told to accept any values, any lifestyles, and be led to question parental authority. She felt out of control over her child's education. Ironically, she did not realize the potency of a parent's influence. When she said "don't pay attention to teachers," the child took her words literally.

This incident illustrates one of the greatest problems in both public school and church education. We do not understand the power of parent involvement or

we do not know how to get parents involved. Evidence is overwhelming that parent involvement is the most significant factor in all educational questions. When parents care and show their interest with action, children are happier in school and get better grades. Attendance is better, dropouts decrease, violence is reduced. Ninety percent of teachers call lack of parent involvement a serious problem.

Then why do parents feel left out, intimidated, ignored? Why do they consider teachers a threat to family values? The answer is failure of parents and teacher to communicate honestly and warmly, on no other basis than mutual interest in the child.

Educators have professional and political agendas, sometimes hidden even from themselves. Too often they fail to receive parents as active partners in education. They want parents to support their programs, without offering to support parents. They do not ask parents to explain problems nor give opinions. In the true sense of the term, parents are not *involved*, meaning "to be included as a necessary part; to be fully incorporated, accepted, and com-

mitted to participation and contribution."

Too often Christian educators do no better than school people. When you think of all the children and young people in your Sunday School and other church activities, how many of their parents are involved in the true sense of the word? What energies do we put into getting all parents involved? A key value in people building is: *All parents are valued and are the focus of our ministry.* Focus requires intentional action.

## Focus on Parent's Needs

### Parents need biblical guidance.

Although the Bible gives direct advice and commands about child rearing, until recently the church did little in directed parent education. Now, with decreasing family stability, we know many parents are left without models and guidelines. They need help. Secular parenting classes are not the answer. The major need is for parents to model and teach Christian principles of love and living. Parents need Bible teaching applied to parenting.

### Parents need support for their values.

Christian parents need the reinforcement of having their children hear from others what the parents teach at home. Teachers who communicate and honestly involve parents help build healthy



families. Parents and teachers who unite in concern for young people give them strength to resist outside forces.

**Parents need group influence and interaction.**

Sunday School provides an ideal support group for parents. Three powerful elements of group membership contribute to its success. First, there is inspiration and encouragement as parents

discover biblical principles that apply in their specific situations. Second, parents exchange experiences and ideas. They learn from each other. Third, they develop emotional and spiritual strength and empathy as they pray together and work toward similar goals.

**Envelop Parents In Love**

*Involve*, in modern English,

means *to include as a relevant or necessary part*. In real life no one is more involved than parents. They are necessary to their children. If we care about children, we will understand that parents are an important part of our ministry. We will act on another term related to involvement. WE will *envelop* them. WE will wrap them up in our love.

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**Questions For Further Study—**

1. How well do your children's workers communicate with parents?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. How sensitive are your children's workers to the needs of parents? How can you become more aware of parents' needs?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. What can you do to encourage more parental participation in your children's ministry?