Mom & Dad, What Shall I Be?

Remember Doris Day singing, "Que Sera, Sera"? What if your own little kid comes up to you and asks, "What shall I be?" What is the single most important thing you would impart to your child?

You do not need to drive into your child the necessity of earning a living. Society will do that for you. At every turn, newspapers, magazines, movies, television and radio glamorize the making of money. Almost everybody loves money and loves to talk about money—how to get it, what to do with it, or who has it.

You also do not need to push your child to study too hard. The very day your child steps into a classroom, he is already on a conveyor belt that goes at an ever increasing speed until he reaches the other end with a degree or until he drops out.

Strangely, many Christian parents, like other parents, stress the importance of a good career and a good education to excess. What does God want Christian parents to tell their children?

First we must understand this fact: children are a heritage from the Lord (Ps 127:3). Your child belongs to God. God makes you a guardian and places the child under your care. Your child is not yours for you to mold as you desire. Your child is not an extension of yourself to fulfill your dreams. Your child is God's heritage for you to bring up in the way of the Lord to achieve this supreme plan. From the beginning this was God's charge to Abraham as a parent:

*For I have known him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him, that they keep the way of the Lord, to do righteousness and justice, that the Lord may bring to Abraham what He has spoken to him.* (Gen 18:19)

Note that God did not charge Abraham to charge his children to get milk and honey. Abraham was to command his children to keep the way of the Lord, and they would be blessed with a land flowing with milk and honey as the Lord promised.

The same charge was laid upon the nation of Israel when Moses repeated the laws of God in the wilderness:

*And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up.* (Deut 6:6-7)

This same charge now applies to you as a parent. When you are with your kids, what do you talk about? Asaph the psalmist speaks of

*Telling the generation to come the praises of the Lord, and His strength, and His wonderful works that He has done... that they may set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments.* (Ps 78:4-7)

Emphasize the way of the Lord. Impress in the mind of your children the laws of God, so that they will set her hope in God. A person whose hope is in God will not be moved. Speak to them about the glorious deeds of the Lord and all the good things God has bestowed on your family. Let your children know that the Lord is good. Teach them to trust in God and warn against disobeying God. God is a God of love. God is also a God of justice. When a person disobeys God, God will punish. Your children must learn this.

If you accept that this is your duty as a parent, then the next time your child asks, "What shall I be?", you will say, "You are a child of God to be used by Him as He wills."

These are merely words, however, if your actions do not confirm that you really believe what you have said. Children learn so much from what you do and what you say. When you say that it is important to put God first in everything and yet tell them that they may stay at home to study instead of going to church for services or for religious education classes, you are confusing your
child by sending conflicting messages. Parents must realize that attending church services, including religious education classes, has never adversely affected a Christian youth's studies. I have been baptized for about 20 years and have worked with Christian youths for not less than 15 years but I have never known or heard of a Christian youth whose studies suffered because they attended church services. On the other hand, I have seen many active Christian youths who excel in their studies. Therefore when you teach your children the importance of worship, it is your duty to show them you mean what you say by actually bringing them to church or encouraging them to attend religious education classes on their own. In this way, you are giving a clear message that God is most important. The same applies to all other teachings you impart to your child. You must show by your example what you teach.