



Encouraging Words with DARLENE SALA

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Whose Children Are They?

Debbi Smoot tells about a conversation she had with her neighbor Fran, the mother of six children. Fran's children all had a natural self-confidence. They were achievers but weren't obnoxious about it. When Debbi complimented her on the children, Fran spoke quietly: "Oh, Debbi, these are not really my children. They are God's. They're just on loan to me. I see each of them as...some influential person in embryo."

Yes, a child is not a possession but the loan of a life. That God would entrust us with the life of a tiny human being is awesome. Your child looks to you for food and protection and nurture. But beyond that, your little one is influenced for good or bad by *your* values and attitudes. When you think about it, it's almost scary, isn't it. Probably nothing sends us any faster to our knees to ask for God's help than the realization that parenting is crucial.

When Jesus was about to leave this world and go back to His Father in heaven, He gave a commandment to the disciples to "go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you" (Matt. 28:19-20).

It came to me the other day that what Jesus commanded the disciples is also what we need to do as parents. The goal of Christian parenting is also to "make disciples." We want to lead our children to Christ, including the public commitment of baptism, and we need to teach them to obey Jesus' commands,

That's a big job. But the comforting part is the promise of Jesus that follows the command: "Surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age" (verse 20). The Lord is always with us in this important endeavor of parenting.

You see, they're not really your children. They're God's. They're just on loan to you.