

will of God for their lives. I emphasize this gift today, because, in my experience, parents have much more difficulty giving children wings than roots. We are much more likely to give them strings than wings.

This shows up frequently as a contributing factor to marital problems. For that reason, in wedding ceremonies now, whenever a couple permits me, I ask not, "who gives this woman to be married to this man?" Instead, both sets of parents are asked if they relinquish their child to a higher loyalty, and if henceforth, they will recognize their primary relationship not to one child or the other, but to both of them together, as a new family unit, joined by God.

Two lasting gifts then we can give our children. One we have come to expect--roots--that is, security and stability, a durable context for healthy growth. But the other gift is just as important--wings-- the setting free of responsible human beings to follow the word of God as they perceive it.

Both gifts depend greatly upon the kind of homes we have. Both are based on wise love, not neurotic love, on self-giving, not self-seeking, on trust and care that enable children truly to grow "in wisdom and stature, in favor with God and man," so that they can fly, to find and follow the will of God for their lives.

Sometimes persons outside conventional Christianity stand closer to the teaching of Jesus than traditional Christian dogma. Such is the case in this instance with the writing of Kahlil Gibran. Regarding children, he says in his book, The Prophet:

You may give them your love but not your thoughts,
For they have their own thoughts,
You may house their bodies but not their souls,
For their souls dwell in the house of tomorrow,
which you cannot visit, not even in your dreams.
You may strive to be like them, but seek not to make them like you.
For life goes not backward nor tarries with yesterday.
You are the bows from which your children as living arrows are
sent forth... .

Wise are the parents who from the beginning see themselves bequeathing both roots and wings. For Jesus said, "Blessed are those who hear the word of God and keep it."

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PRAYER-OF DEDICATION FOR FAMILIES

Our parently God, in whose image abides both male and female in the oneness of your majesty, we thank thee that every family on earth and in heaven is named after thee. We pray that thou wilt strengthen us as families with the power of your Spirit within the private conversations we have with each other at home, on the telephone, and in our letters to each other. We ask that we may be teachable by thy Spirit as thou dost reveal thyself to us in what our husbands, wives, sons and daughters, brothers and sisters say to us. Save us from hardheadedness and hard-heartedness unto a tender and teachable heart toward each other.

Grant us the grace and courage to let each other grow, to be warm

