

LONG-TERM COMMITMENT

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Raising a child is, among other things, a significant, long-term financial commitment. For example, in concert with the Department of Labor, the United States Department of Agriculture has produced research showing that a family with an income of between \$59,410 and \$102,870 per year will spend approximately \$234,000 raising one child up through age 17.¹ As parents, we lovingly assume such a “long-term commitment” confident in the Lord to provide (Genesis 22:14). Clearly, there is more than meets the eye when a child walks across the stage at the high school graduation and receives the diploma.

Diligent effort exerted over days, months, and years of steadfast service to our family is required in order to provide for their financial and material needs (and many “wants”). The spiritual responsibilities the Lord gave us when He blessed us with children also calls for diligent effort to fulfill (Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Ephesians 6:1-4). We’d never think we could raise all the money necessary to support our families over 18 years by devoting a only couple of days a year to the task; neither should we be deceived into thinking the sensitive spiritual development of our children can be accomplished by attending worship services on Christmas and Easter and an occasional appearance to validate our membership. Obviously, this is nothing like what the Lord had in mind when He inspired Paul to write, “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me” (Galatians 2:20).

If 4 hours a week represents spiritual growth and development gained from attending every service of the Lord’s church and 40 hours a week represents the time it takes to earn our living, then based on the above estimated USDA figure, we can establish a financial correlation between the value of the overall financial provision for a child and the corresponding value in dollars for the spiritual guidance of a child. 4 is 10% of 40 and 10% of \$234,000 is \$23,400. While this is a minimal investment in a child up through the age of 17 in comparison with the total estimated cost of raising the child, attending every service of the church through the child’s formative years is priceless.

In whatever way we choose to look at the subject, raising our children up in the “discipline and teaching of the Lord” involves a “long-term commitment” on our part in order for us to instill in our children a lasting desire for them to “be faithful unto death” (Revelation 2:10).

¹http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cost_of_raising_a_child. (Figures were updated by the USDA from the 2005-2006 survey in 2011).