

## **Five Typical Seasons of Parenting**

Taken from *The New Eve* by Robert Lewis

### **❖ Just Married, No Children**

The childless period may last less than a year. But many couples today are electing to start their families later in the marriage than previous generations, so the childless period may last five years or more. One of the great blessings of this season is that the couple has a chance to get to know each other before little ones "invade" the relationship.

### **❖ Preschool Age Children**

This is that beautiful season from the birth of a child to the beginning of formal schooling. Infancy. First steps. The acquisition of language. The sense of self. Endless questions. This is *the* crucial period in a child's development! Not only is much of his or her personality permanently established during this time, but an overall attitude toward life is fundamentally shaped.

### **❖ Grade School Through High School Age Children**

During this middle stage, the child socializes with the outside world and begins to acquire the skills needed to function in our society. The influence of teachers, coaches, and other mentors and authority figures comes into play. Values are formed. Relationships are built. The child begins to flex his or her independence in preparation for the next season - breaking away from home.

### **❖ Young Adult Children**

Our culture does not provide any formal rite of passage from childhood to adulthood. Consequently, this season often feels vague and undefined for both parents and child. The key element, though, is the need for the young adult to establish his or her own life, independent of the parents. This may happen through college, vocational school, military service, or a job.

### **❖ The Empty Nest**

This season arrives sooner than most couples realize. When their kids are in potty training, or later driving them crazy in adolescence, they long for the day when they can wave goodbye to Johnny or Susie. But when that day finally comes, the new "freedom" is not always as pleasant as the parents thought it would be. Now the husband and wife may need to be reintroduced to each other and prepare their relationship for their later years. By the way, adult children still need their parents during this season. And grandchildren will need good grandparenting.

Obviously there is some overlap in these seasons as children pass through the various stages. But any mother can see that children will demand more from her at some stages than at others; and therefore, outside employment is more appropriate during some seasons than others. The preschool years are especially demanding on a mother's time and energy. So are the teenage years, and particularly, emotionally. And good grandmothering takes a lot more time and energy than most women anticipate. The issue is not whether a woman should work during these seasons, but again, *how well she can fulfill her primary responsibilities.*