



## **Exploring the Theme of Stewardship in the Poem “On Children” by Khalil Gibran**

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### **ABSTRACT**

In the poem "On Children, the poet expresses his ideas about the concept of stewardship, which is defined as someone who looks after something even though it does not belong to them. It is a critique of the typical assumptions that parents make about their kids. This poem, which is taken from Khalil Gibran's well-known collection of poetry, "The Prophet," offers advice to parents on the importance of parenting with love in contrast to the usual expectations. This poem raises important questions regarding how parents should raise their kids, emphasizing that they should not view them as property but rather as a vital element of humanity. The real purpose of parenting is shown in this poem. The title, "Your Children Are Not Your Children," sets the tone for a thought-provoking reflection on the nature of parenthood. The poem goes beyond the conventional understanding of parental roles, challenging readers to reconsider their perceptions of what it means to be a parent and how they should nurture and guide their children.

Key words: stewardship, parenthood, children's autonomy, self-centered love

The Prophet, one of the best-selling books of all time, is the most well-known work of Kahlil Gibran. He was a part of the Mahjar literary and symbolic movement in Arabic. It's a prose-poem story. It has sixteen prosaic lines and deviates from the structure of traditional poetry. While some of the qualities of poetry are present in the entire text, not all of them are. The lines are noticeably longer and don't follow any particular rhyme scheme. Therefore, it is free verse. The prophet's viewpoint is used to write this poetry. While the opening paragraphs are written from an omniscient perspective, within the passage, there are two speakers. A woman or someone asking a question is the first speaker, and the person who already knows the answer is the second. The latter is emphasized frequently because he is the focus of the story.

In Khalil Gibran's poem "On Children," the concept of stewardship is not expressed directly, but it is implied by the poem's more overarching ideas and meanings. The poet places special emphasis on the notion that parents are guardians or stewards of their children's lives. The poem exhorts parents to teach, love, and support their kids while also acknowledging that kids are ultimately their own people with unique paths to take.

The poem emphasizes how parents have a dual responsibility to nurture and protect their children. It acknowledges each child's uniqueness and destiny while encouraging parents to share their knowledge and counsel. This can be viewed as a form of stewardship, where parents are charged with the duty of developing their children's potential and guiding them on their own paths.

Despite the poem's lack of explicit use of the word "stewardship," its underlying ideas are consistent with the idea of appropriately directing and fostering the growth of the younger generation. It examines the intricate ties between parents and their kids as well as the complexity of parenting. The poem emphasizes the idea that children are individuals with their own distinct pathways and destinies, challenging conventional perceptions of ownership and control that parents may feel over their children.

The poem opens with a mother asking the prophet for help raising children while holding her child close to her chest.

“And a woman who held a babe against her bosom said, Speak to us of Children.

And he said: Your children are not your children” (Line 1-3)

The opening line immediately establishes the central theme of the poem. Gibran is stating that children are not owned or controlled by their parents. They are independent beings with their own purposes in life.

“They are the sons and daughters of Life's longing for itself

They come through you but not from you,

And though they are with you yet they belong not to you” (Line 4-6)

Gibran makes the implication that children are a byproduct of life's natural cycle and a manifestation of life's wish to continue existing. Instead of being the exclusive product of their parents' intentions, they are born from the greater power of creation. While parents are the actual means by which a child is born, the essence and uniqueness of the child are not completely inherited from their parents. Beyond their ancestry, children have their own special talents and potential. This highlights the idea of kids having autonomy. Despite the fact that parents nurture and care for their kids, the kids do not ultimately belong to the parents. They are responsible for managing their own lives, making their own decisions, and choosing their own routes.

“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 soul's dwell in the house of tomorrow, which you cannot visit, not even in your dreams” (Line 7-10)

The distinction between selfless love and self-centered love is discussed in the first line. Parents can give their kids all the love in the world, but they can't force their ideas on them because kids have their own minds and ideas. The body of a child is protected by a parent, but not their spirits. The prophet claims that every soul has the same home, a symbol for the omnipresent spirit. This location is known as "the house of tomorrow. It makes a suggestion for the location where the soul merges after death. Each soul has a certain place to fill in this mansion, so it cannot be visited. The heavenly spirit has designated locations for the souls of parents. A human can barely imagine the location. It is only made known after physical death.

The poem encourages parents to let go of their need to control their children's lives. The lines "You may strive to be like them, but seek not to make them like you" advise parents not to impose their own desires and expectations on their children but to allow them to become their authentic selves. This line reinforces the idea that life is constantly moving forward and that each individual's path is unique. Parents should not attempt to recreate their own experiences or life choices for their children.

The theme of stewardship in this poem underscores the responsibility of parents to guide their children's development while respecting their individuality and unique life paths. It encourages parents to support their children's growth rather than impose their own expectations on them. He suggests that true love involves giving children space to discover themselves and encouraging them to follow their own dreams, even if those dreams differ from what the parents envision.

In conclusion, "Your Children Are Not Your Children" is a profound exploration of parenthood, individuality, and the complex dynamics between parents and children. The powerful words of Kahlil Gibran provide a fresh viewpoint on how to care for, mentor, and uplift the younger generation, making it a classic work of literature with enduring value. The poem presents a fresh viewpoint on parents' functions as mentors and facilitators rather than controllers. Gibran suggests that parents should nurture their children, offer guidance and knowledge, but finally let go and let them pursue their own paths in life. This poem challenges readers to reevaluate their roles as parents and encourages a more compassionate, respectful, and nurturing approach to raising children. Its eloquent language and universal themes have made it a timeless piece that continues to inspire reflection and introspection in readers worldwide.

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