



# The Need for Godly Parents in an Ungodly World

Kevin Maxey

Every generation desperately needs an army of godly parents to rise up and raise faithful children. Too many fathers and mothers are “missing in action,” “absent without leave” and have abandoned their post in order to fraternize with the enemy, leaving their defenseless children vulnerable to spiritual slaughter at the hands of a ruthless adversary.

Do not underestimate the desperate need for a study of godly parenting. Failure in this eternally consequential task has and will continue to bring about the ruin of many children, families, churches, and nations. While the problems of our world are unthinkably complicated, the solution is simple. We must begin in the home. Our rebellious world is made up of rebellious adults who once were rebellious children. The evils in our world today can be eradicated if parents would take seriously their responsibility to courageously and lovingly teach their children in the holy life-giving ways of the Lord.

## Godly Parents *Can* Be Faithful in an Unfaithful World

First, we must ask, is it even possible

to raise a godly family in an ungodly world? You don’t have to watch television very long to figure out that we live in pervasively evil times. When sin in entertainment, government, secular education and our cities is spiraling out of control, one can’t help but wonder, is it even possible to *be* faithful, let alone raise faithful children?

The corruption of our day is nothing new (Eccl. 1:9). Worldwide corruption dates as far back as Noah and the flood (Gen. 6-8). We read of one such dark time in Israelite history where a nation of parents failed miserably. “Another generation arose after them who did not know the Lord” (Judg. 2:10). God’s own chosen people forgot Him, engaged in immorality and fell into religious apostasy. This spiritual bondage led to political bondage as the Israelite nation was oppressed by the enemy nation of Philistia for forty years (Judg. 13:1). Imagine being a parent under such conditions! It is in this context that we are introduced to a married couple, Manoah and his wife, faced with the sobering challenge of raising a child to serve the  
*see “Godly Parents” on p. 632*

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## Be Who You Want Your Children to Be

Steve L. Locklair

The above title brings to mind the question: “Who do you want your children to be?” No matter how you respond, the answer to who they will be, is more than likely who you are. There is a proverb in the Bible that says “Like mother, like daughter” (Ezek. 16:44), and the same principle applies to fathers and sons. If we want our children to be good in secular endeavors, we will start them at a young age teaching them the fundamentals, having them practice, helping them to discipline themselves, and encouraging them to be the best they can be. Many parents in this world will spend much time, money, and effort to see their child succeed in areas where the rewards are only temporal and will perish one day. Parents, if you want your children to be a faithful Christian and help them go to heaven, you must set the right example and teach, instruct, discipline, and correct your child with the word of God (cf. 2 Tim. 3:16-17).

If we remember ninety percent of what we see, hear, say, and do (as the experts tell us), then we must realize that for our children to become who we want them to be, we must be that person ourselves. The Father in heaven set a perfect example for his Son, Jesus. Jesus heard what the Father said (John 5:30), spoke exactly what his Father told him to say (John 12:48) and learned obedience through the things which he suffered (Heb. 5:8-9). Before Jesus taught his disciples, he had God’s word in his heart in overcoming every temptation of the devil (cf. Matt. 4), and was sinless, setting forth the perfect example for us to follow (1 Pet. 2:21-22). Before we can teach our children God’s word, it must be in our heart first (Deut. 6:6; Jas. 1:21). The apostle Paul encouraged brethren to imitate him as he imitated Christ (cf. 1 Cor. 11:1). What are your children learning, receiving, hearing, and seeing in you (cf. Phil. 4:9)?

Sometimes we are blind to our own faults and may condemn our children’s behavior when we are practicing similar conduct ourselves. If you have failed to be the right role model for your child, “remove the beams” now so that you can properly judge your children. (Matt. 7:1-5). Many parents throughout the years have practiced the “do as I say, not as I do” philosophy of training their children. While they are telling them the right thing to do, in actuality, children can see through that lip service, and in time become the same hypocrites that the parents trained them to be. *Actions speak much louder than words.*

“Children” on p. 633

# Love Your Children By Loving Your Mate

Chris Reeves

Parenting begins with parents. Parents joined in marriage are to children what a foundation is to a house. If you want your children to grow up strong with the right values, then you as parents must provide them with the right foundation from the beginning. God provided for the home by first creating one man and one woman to be joined in marriage. From there, these two were to be fruitful and multiply (Gen. 1:26-28). The order is this: a godly marriage first, then children. So, how can parents love their children? They can love them by loving their mate. The Apostle Paul wrote that the older women were to teach the younger women “. . . to love their husbands, to love their children” (Tit. 2:4). Loving your children and loving your mate go hand in hand.

## Love Your Children By Maintaining a Godly Marriage

Marriages built upon God’s word will result in children being raised the right way. Do you have enough love for your children to begin and maintain a godly marriage? Marriage begins with one man and one woman for life (Gen. 2:18-25; Matt. 19:4-6). This is honorable among all (Heb. 13:4).

There are problems when children are brought into the world without a godly set of parents guiding them. The percentage of out-of-wedlock births increased 511 percent from 1960 to 1997.<sup>1</sup> And, the percentage of single-parent families more than tripled during this time.<sup>2</sup> Between 1960 and 1997 the marriage rate decreased 33 percent.<sup>3</sup> Children born out of wedlock and to single parents often end up as juvenile delinquents because they do not have the nurturing they need from a godly father and mother. Even if two parents are present in the life of a child, it is possible for these parents to neglect the child to the point of shame (Prov. 29:15). God wants two godly parents — one man and one woman living the way God directs — to be fruitful and multiply. Parents who are first directed by God’s word will be able to “train up a child in the way he should go” (Prov. 22:6). What if your marriage is not built upon the principles of God’s word? Fix it! Do you love your children enough to correct any wrongs in your marriage?

Maintaining a godly marriage also takes time together. Wise Solomon wrote, “And rejoice in the wife of thy youth” (Prov. 5:18), and again, “Live joyfully with the wife whom thou lovest all the days” (Eccl. 9:9). Peter wrote that a godly husband and wife are “heirs together of the grace of life” (1 Pet. 3:7). Marriage is a “one flesh” relationship (Gen. 2:24; Matt. 19:5-6; Eph.

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5:31). You may be married with children, but you must spend some time during the day together rejuvenating your relationship. Enjoy life together! Yes, raising children involves time, but parents must also put a priority on their own time together. Time spent together physically and spiritually will help parents to meet the challenges of raising children. Partnership come first, then parenthood.

### **Love Your Children By Setting the Right Example**

Children see what parents do, and hear what parents say. Parents, do you love your child enough to set the right example for them? All the passages of Scripture that apply to Christians setting the right example for the world would certainly apply also to parents setting the right example for their children (Matt. 5:12-13; Phil. 2:15-16; 1 Tim. 4:12; 1 Pet. 2:12). Parents, if you want to know how your children will turn out tomorrow, take a good look at yourself today. Like father like son . . . like mother like daughter (Ezek. 16:44). The best lesson you can teach your children outside the word of God is a godly example. Do you know that over ninety percent of a child's influence comes from the home? You cannot rely on society, schools, or even other Christians to set the right example for your children. You must do it!

Parents, your children will see the bad in your marriage. Your children will see and hear you when you fuss, fight, and insult one another. They will hear you when you lie, murmur, and complain, use profanity, or when you tear down church members. They will see you if you are lazy or dishonest. They will also watch you as you put drugs, alcohol, or tobacco into your body. They will see all your character flaws and imitate them (Rom. 1:24-32; 1 Cor. 6:9-10; Gal. 5:19-20; Eph. 4:25-5:5; Col. 3:5-9). Remember, deeds often speak louder than words.

Parents, your children will see the good in your marriage. This of course, is what God desires. Mothers, your daughters will see how you submit to your husband as the church submits to Christ, and they will grow up to do the same (Eph. 5:22-24; Col. 3:18; Tit. 2:5; 1 Pet. 3:1-5). Godly mothers will also exemplify respect for the father (Eph. 5:33; 1 Pet. 3:2). Your children will see how you help your husband (Gen. 2:18, 20). They will see your modest demeanor (1 Tim. 2:9-11; Tit. 2:5), and how you love them and your husband (Tit. 2:4). Fathers, your sons will see how you honor, cherish, and love your wife as Christ loved the church, and they will grow up to do the same (Prov. 12:4; 31:28-29; Eph. 5:25-33; Col. 3:19; 1 Pet. 3:7). Godly fathers will not provoke the child (Eph. 6:4) or show bitterness toward the mother (Col. 3:19). Godly fathers will also set the right example of a loving leader (head) in the home (Gen. 3:16; 1 Cor. 11:3; Eph. 5:23).

Setting the right example for your children begins with being a Christian yourself. Are you a Christian? Are you

a faithful Christian? Do you love your children enough to show them the importance of being a faithful Christian? Why would your children want to be saved if you are not? Why would they want to live right and go to heaven if you are not living right? Why would they want to attend worship services regularly if you do not? Why would they be motivated to pray and read the Bible regularly if you do not? Why would they want to put God's kingdom first if you do not? Why would they want to help others or share the gospel if they do not see you doing it? Parents, you need to follow the example of Paul who followed Christ and became a faithful Christian (Acts 26:29; 1 Cor. 11:1; Phil. 3:17; 4:9). Only then can you set the right example yourself for your children. If you are not a Christian, or if you marry a non-Christian, it will be difficult to raise your children in the right way. Parents, don't just *talk* your values, *walk* your values.

### **Love Your Children By Sharing the Responsibility**

Parenting takes two. God has given the responsibility of raising children to *both* the mother *and* the father. Yes, mothers are to "rule the household" (1 Tim. 5:14), and be "workers at home" (Tit. 2:5). But, fathers are given the primary responsibility of nurturing the children in "the chastening and admonition of the Lord" (Eph. 6:4). There are many times when a mother has to raise the children without the help of the father and vice versa. In some cases, the mother is too quick to avoid her duty of managing the home, or the father is too busy with his work and hobbies to help care for the children. This is not according to God's plan. Fathers and mothers, do not let the responsibility of raising your children fall solely on your mate. Help each other as much as you can. Take your part seriously, and fulfill it completely each day. "Children are a heritage of the Lord" (Ps. 127:3) for the mother *and* the father. *Both* have the responsibility to care for the children.

### **Love Your Children By Remaining Committed**

Forty percent of all first marriages in the United States end in divorce. The divorce rate has more than doubled since 1960. America has the highest divorce rate of Western nations. Almost one of every ten adults is divorced. The number of children involved in divorce in 1995 was 1.05 million. Sadly, about three of five divorcing couples have at least one child.<sup>4</sup> What a tragedy! Many suffer from divorce including the children. A man and woman should remain committed to each other after they vow to be married. They should do this because they love God's word, because they love each other, and because they love their children. Divorce for any reason (except fornication) is contrary to New Testament (Matt. 5:31-32; 19:3-9; Mark 10:1-12; Luke 16:18; Rom. 7:2-3; 1 Cor. 7:10-11) and results from selfishness and a lack of desire to work out problems.

Children are often hurt in divorce because they no longer have a permanent father or mother. Children of divorce

# Fathers, Take the Lead

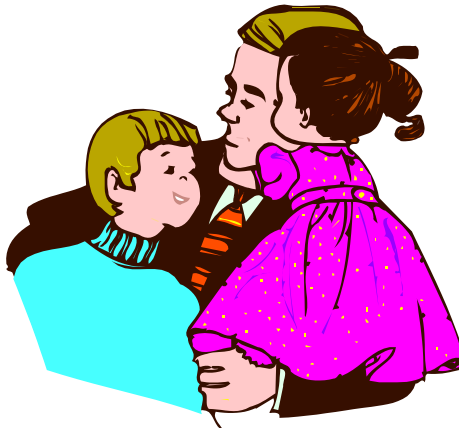
Andy Alexander

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Today, as in ages past, the home is under attack, and the father's headship in the home is a primary target for those wanting to destroy God's design. Sadly, many fathers have been affected by this relentless assault. In this lesson we want to discuss the need for fathers to fulfill their God-given roles by taking the lead in their homes. We want to examine some things that hinder the father's ability to lead, examples of godly fathers, and the need for fathers to step up, be men, and take the lead in their homes.

## Hindrances to the Father's Leadership

There are numerous ways in which Satan seeks to undermine the father's authority in the family. Satan is the master of deception and utilizes an arsenal of weapons to accomplish his purposes (John 8:44; Eph. 6:11, 16). Television and other media venues continually bombard us with the idea that the home is to be run as a democracy with every-



one having an equal say in the decisions. Children are often depicted as being more intelligent than their parents and usually the father is seen as the biggest dupe in the family. This is very subtle teaching, but it definitely has an effect on the thinking of viewers both young and old. Advertising also employs the dopey husband and foolish father as comedic themes to sell their products.

The feminist movement which has been underway in this country for a number of years has taken its toll on man's leadership in society and the home. Most women in the church do not subscribe to the philosophies set forth by the feminist agenda, but these philosophies can cause attitudes to change which create problems in the home. Feminists disdain the concept of marriage as set forth in the Scriptures, especially the teaching that the husband is the "head of the wife" (1 Cor. 11:3). The

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often exhibit conduct problems, psychological maladjustments, and lower academic achievement. They are more likely to drop out of school and engage in premarital sex during their teen years.<sup>5</sup> Children of divorce often slump into confusion, guilt, regression, separation anxiety, misbehavior, sadness and disillusionment, feeling deprived, anger, sexual tension, identity problems, false security, depression, fear, isolation, or grief.<sup>6</sup> Married couples with children seeking a divorce need to sit down and seriously contemplate the consequences of their actions. Married couples who truly love each other and their children will remain committed to each other for life (Prov. 2:17; 5:15ff). Jesus said, "What God hath joined together, let not man put asunder" (Matt. 19:6).

There are a number of ways you as a parent can show

your love for your children. You can love them by teaching and training them, and by providing for them. You can also love them by loving your mate. Maintain a godly marriage, set the right example for your children, share the responsibility of raising them, and remain committed to each other.

### Footnotes

<sup>1</sup> *The Index of Leading Cultural Indicators*, 47 (WaterBrook Press, 1999).

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* 57.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* 63.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* 68-72.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* 72.

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husband is charged with the responsibility to lead in the home and he must not be swayed by the liberal thinking of the day (Eph. 5:23).

Materialism is possibly the biggest culprit affecting leadership in the home (Luke 12:15). The drive to have more and more material goods has forced many wives to work and husbands to work overtime causing them to be out of the home for great periods of time. When the father is not in the home, he certainly cannot lead and the wife, by default, has to take the lead. When both husband and wife work, the children are led by the babysitter, the grandparents, school, television, or some other less interested party rather than a godly father who should be interested in both their spiritual and physical welfare. A father should weigh heavily the true cost of his wife, the mother of his children, working outside the home.

Extracurricular activities in the school can also devour much of our children's time robbing them of valuable time that could be spent with godly parents. This time cannot be reclaimed. Father's need to take the lead and see that their children not be so involved in school activities that it destroys their spiritual lives. This means fathers may have to tell their children "no" to some activities and events that the children may want to participate in. This is a hard choice, but one that may help save a soul for eternity.

The husband can just be lazy and abdicate his position of leadership or the wife may be overbearing and take control away from her husband. In either case the home is not being run as it should be. Sports, hobbies, or other recreational activities are also taking their toll on the father's leadership in the home. Time is required for these activities and often times the children end up paying the price. Are we saying not to participate in these activities? No, but parents must be aware of and take care of first and foremost their most valuable possessions, their children. These are a few of the hindrances or barriers to the man's role as leader in the home.

### Examples of Godly Leaders in the Home

God said of Abraham, "For I have known him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him, that they keep the way of the Lord, to do righteousness and justice, that the Lord may bring to Abraham what He has spoken to him" (Gen. 18:19). Notice that Abraham first kept the way of the Lord and then commanded his household and children to follow his lead. Fathers, we cannot expect our family to go where we ourselves are unwilling to go. In other words, if we expect our family members to faithfully attend the services, then we must faithfully attend the services. The question of whether or not the family is going to attend services should never arise. That should be "a given" in the household of a Christian. The same should be true of every Christian responsibility.

Joshua is an excellent example of good leadership in the family. He stated, after leading Israel in the conquest of the Promise Land, "And if it seems evil to you to serve the Lord, choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" (Josh. 24:15). Joshua had already made up his mind about the direction he and his family were going. This determination ought to be in the heart of every Christian.

Both of these men had a determined spirit to do God's will and see to it that their family followed in their steps. It is not the popular course to pursue in today's secular society, but it has been done in the past and can still be done today if we so desire. We must follow the advice given to Joshua if we wish to succeed, "Only be strong and very courageous, that you may observe to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may prosper wherever you go" (Josh. 1:7). Anytime we decide to do all of the Father's will, it will take strength and courage because we are fighting against the course of this world.

Christ is the supreme example of leadership. In every situation he conducted himself properly and showed the way that his followers should go. "For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps: Who committed no sin, Nor was deceit found in His mouth; who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously" (1 Pet. 2:21-23). When the apostle Paul taught husbands how to treat their wives, he used Christ as his example. "For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. . . . Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her" (Eph. 5:23-25). Christ was willing to give all for the salvation of those he loved. Should husbands and fathers do any less for their loved ones?

Husbands who follow the example of Christ will not say and do unkind things to their wives and children. They will not lose control and abuse the ones they love. Fathers who follow Christ may at times make decisions that are unpopular with other members of their family. Decisions concerning places to go on vacation, what to do while on vacation, what to wear, what school activities to participate in, whether or not the wife should work outside the home, where to live, and such like, are decisions which can cause friction in the home, and the father is the one appointed by God to make these choices. A good leader will take the advice of his wife and the desires of the children into account when making these decisions, but ultimately the

father must choose what he thinks is best for the spiritual welfare of those under his charge.

The father must also take the lead in teaching the family the right ways of the Lord (Eph. 6:1). God's ways must be taught and this teaching requires a continuous effort. Moses commanded the children of Israel, "And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates" (Deut. 6:6-9). The word of God is powerful in helping us not to commit sin. (Ps. 119:11). Our children need to be taught this word and shown an example that illustrates the word working in their father's life.

### Fathers: Guard the Home

As already stated, Satan is out to destroy our homes knowing that doing such will also destroy the souls of those in the home. Fathers, we must be willing to give our lives if need be to guard those precious souls under our charge. Satan will not use guns or other physical weapons, but he will use deceit, lies, friends, other family members, schools, television, our children's peers, liberal philosophies, and other things to attack them. We must exercise constant vigilance in our homes.

God has not left us defenseless. He has given us the most powerful weapon of all — the gospel (Rom. 1:16-17; Eph. 6:10-18). We must learn the gospel, then seek to instill that

same gospel in the hearts of our children. Fathers, do you know the word? Are you preparing your children for their journey into the world? Satan is not afraid of lawyers, Boy Scouts, doctors, the PTA, teachers in school, and Little League coaches, but he will cower before a godly father armed with the word of God protecting his loved ones. The greatest protection we can give them is a knowledge of the word of God. We may have to sacrifice in order to protect our family. This sacrifice might involve less time on the golf course, in the bowling alley, on the softball field, at the lake or hunting lodge in order to adequately equip ourselves and our families with the knowledge we need to fight the assaults of Satan, but any such sacrifice will be small in comparison to an eternity in heaven. Father's, we must take the lead in defending our families.

A godly father will set boundaries for the good of his children. He will be concerned with who their friends are, what kind of entertainment they are engaged in, how they dress and behave in a sin-darkened world, and will lovingly and consistently discipline their disobedience. He will lead his family and not be led by them. A godly father must be afraid of his children, but must raise them up in the way they should go (Prov. 22:6).

Fathers, we must not let valuable time slip by. We must not fall asleep on the job. Too many put off their responsibility, sleep on the job, and wake just in time to see their wife and children gone to the devil, because they did not govern, guide, and guard their family! Fathers, wake up! Take the lead — patiently, lovingly, and consistently guide your family in the way of the Lord.



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# Women, Keep the Home

Jennifer Maxey

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**Keeping the home means making a home that is a glory and a praise to God in all its aspects. To fulfill the lofty purpose that God has set before her, a woman must strive to make her home . . .**

**A Place of Praise**

**A Place of Hospitality**

**A Place of Teaching**

**A Place of Holiness**

In the last year, several mainstream magazines about family and the home have run articles about the trend among working mothers (non-Christians) to leave the workplace. They are choosing to downsize their home and budget, make “the sacrifice” of worldly goods, and stay home for their marriage and their children. If people of the world can see the wisdom of God’s plan, then surely those of us who are God’s children should be able to.

When you hear the words that a Christian woman should be a “keeper at home,” what images go through your mind? Sadly, many Christian women hear this and think of nothing more than a broom, a washing machine, and a hot stove. Though the practicalities of keeping the home are important and must be tended to on a daily, if not hourly, basis, God has something greater in mind for his children. God saw that it was not good that man should be alone, so he created woman to be a “helpmeet” to him (Gen. 2:18). This role of a helper, or “helpmeet,” involves more than being a maid. When God formed Eve, he gave her more than a body fit for housework. He gave her a mind and an ability to reason and converse. God endowed her with an emotional insight and nurturing spirit. God gave woman all the tools she needed to care, not only for the physical aspects of the home, but also for the spiritual and emotional needs of those she cares for.

The purpose in life for the woman of God is not to “find herself” or “search for her place in this world.” The Lord has not left his children to wander through life seeking definition. He has told us the way and has told us our purpose.

When God commanded that women should be “keepers at home,” he gave us a tremendous task; one that can only be done with much patience and prayer; one that must be done with diligence and perseverance. Keeping the home means making a home that is a glory and a praise to God in all its aspects. To fulfill the lofty purpose that God has set before her, a woman must strive to make her home . . .

## **A Place of Praise**

The Christian home should be a place where the name of God is spoken often, and honored always. Rather than hearing their mother use the name of the Lord in vain, saying, “Oh, my God,” or even using euphemisms such as “Oh, my gosh,” or even worse, children will hear a godly mother open her mouth in praise to God. “Bless the Lord, O my soul! O Lord my God, You are very Great” (Ps. 104:1). Words such as these will define the attitude of the home toward God.

Children can be taught to revere and honor God for all his wonderful works if the mother who is with them will make use of the opportunities provided every day. Is there a beautiful sunrise outside? Praise the Lord out loud to your children for the beauty



he has shown us. Can you hear a bird sing? Praise the Lord for the song of the birds. Do you have a refrigerator full of food or a feast on the table? Ask your children who it is that has blessed you so abundantly. Reading the Psalms together as a family, whether things are going well or there are hard times, can help children find the words to praise God for all that he is and has done.

In teaching children to praise God, we would do well to heed the admonition of James 3:9-10: "With it (our tongue) we bless our God and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the likeness of God. Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be so." The mouth that praises God should not be heard to gossip and slander about the brethren or less-than-favorite extended family members. Nor should that mouth spend its time murmuring and complaining about "Woe is me and my lot in life." Instead we should praise the Lord and speak those things which are good for edification (Eph. 4:29). In so doing, we will do much to secure the hearts of our children in the Lord.

### A Place of Hospitality

Children can learn the important lesson of the need to serve others through the example of a hospitable mother (1 Pet. 4:9; Heb. 13:2). Being hospitable is an attitude of graciousness and love toward the brethren and strangers. We see this attitude in Sarah, when she and Abraham "entertained angels unawares" (Heb. 13:2). In Genesis 18, when Abraham ran to Sarah and told her to quickly prepare food for the strangers outside, she did so. We do not read of her complaining about what her husband had asked, nor did she refuse to prepare the food. Another example of hospitality is, of course, Lydia. Before the day that she was baptized, she had not met Paul and his companions. They were essentially strangers to her. Yet the

Scriptures tell us that she "compelled" them to stay with her (Acts 16:15). Do you have this attitude toward having people in your home?

Hospitality also involves preparation and planning. If a woman neglects the care of the home week after week, then it will never be possible to open her doors to the brethren or to




someone she has just met. Who would invite company into a home where the sink and surrounding countertop are piled high in dishes, the floors are sticky and only a narrow path through the clutter leads through the home. Neglect of the home is one barrier to practicing hospitality, but an equally strong deterrent to practicing a love of strangers is an obsessively clean home. If you are so orderly that children would never be welcome in your home (fear of greasy little handprints), and guests feel the need to sit only on the edge of their seats so as not to

disturb your cushions, then you are a "Martha." "You are worried and troubled about many things" (Luke 10:41), and have not chosen the better part. In the heart of her home, a woman can determine to be prepared and diligent in serving others. She can be open and loving and teach her children that relationships are more important than a waxed floor.

### A Place of Teaching

Though the father is the spiritual leader of the home, and is commanded to bring up his children in the "training and admonition of the Lord" (Eph. 6:4), the mother has a part in this as well. From the familiar example of Lois and Eunice (2 Tim. 1:5; 3:15), we learn that a grandmother or a mother with sincere faith will take it upon herself to teach her children the Holy Scriptures. How is it to be done? Firstly, it should be said that a mother will need *time* with her children in order to teach them. Thirty minutes with the children in the morning while everyone is eating and getting dressed to go to daycare, or school when they are older, plus about an hour together at night during homework, bathtime, and pure exhaustion is not enough. Especially in those precious formative years from birth to about five years of age, mothers should stay with the children as much as is possible. This may mean only one family vehicle or driving older cars to avoid having a large monthly payment. It may mean living in a slightly smaller home and eating a lot of potatoes. But the souls of our children are worth it! Will a daycare provider do a better job than you, a Christian mother, in teaching



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the principles of God's word to your children? We all know the answer.

If a mother is to make the home a place of teaching, she must herself be equipped to teach. This may seem to be a statement of the obvious, but the sad truth is that many women are hopelessly ignorant of the Scriptures. If, in her youth, a woman seeks fashion and beauty, or even trains herself merely in the appearance of subjection and meekness, she has wasted her time in vanity. Young women who are ignorant raise children who are ignorant, and then they become old women who are ignorant. If we truly love the Lord, let us set our goals and our minds higher than being merely "good moral people." "Charm is deceitful, and beauty is vain; but a woman who fears the Lord, she shall be praised" (Prov. 31:30).

### A Place of Holiness

The Christian home should be a place where children learn the meaning of righteous and holy living. A godly mother can be a tremendous influence in teaching her children what it means to serve the Lord in the "beauty of holiness" (Ps. 110:3). Do your children learn from you what it means to be modest — not only in dress, but also in spirit and attitude? Or do your children see a woman who likes to get attention and who tries to be "sexy" for anyone who will look? What about the ways in which you spend your time? A godly woman will not have leisure time to sit and absorb all the daily soap operas. Nor will she waste precious moments on the telephone exchanging all the local gossip and commenting on the shortcomings of a sister in Christ (1 Tim. 5:13). Instead, she will be busy about the Lord's business — keeping her home, teaching her children, loving her husband, serving others, etc. From a very early age, children can be a part of living a life of service to others. Even if they scribble on a card (right over your kind message), they are learning that other people are important and deserve our time and attention.

From her mother, a daughter will learn how to be a

woman (Ezek. 16:44). Whether what she learns is according to God's desire or otherwise is up to the mother. Does your daughter hear you honor your husband? Or do your words teach her that daddy is not worth respecting? Do your actions match up with your words? We cannot fool our children by saying one thing when they see us do another. God has commanded wives to respect their husbands (Eph. 5:33) and to be submissive to them (Eph. 5:22). Respect and submission do not involve nagging and putting down, yelling at, or demanding our way. A daughter is also learning what it means to be a keeper at home. If the attitude of the mother is bitter and derisive about all the horrible things she is forced to do all day, then the daughter will never see the value of what God has called Christian women to do.

### Conclusion

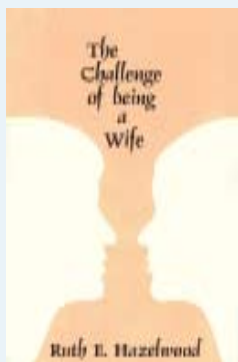
It is so easy to minimize the importance of a woman being there to "keep the home." And yet it is a job that God has designed us for and taught us how to do because he knows what is best for his people. A friend of mine gave me the following to consider just before the birth of my second child:

The greatest mission of woman is motherhood. In this eminent calling she glorifies the Creator and perpetuates His creation. It is a task that involves a thousand sacrifices, but womanhood with a song on the lips and a prayer in the heart rises triumphantly. At travail of body and anxiety of mind, she makes human life possible. And then, little by little, she gives her life to see this new life blossom into noble maturity. As she shapes the character of her children, she shapes the destiny of nations. Upon her role all future progress depends.

Your children will not be with you forever. The time a child spends at home is so precious and so fleeting. Rather than becoming overwhelmed with the tediousness of everyday life, let us strive to remember that our purpose

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# Challenges For Parents With Small Children During Worship Services

Jarrold Jacobs

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## Introduction

It is an exciting time when our children are infants and toddlers. Small children in this stage of life are learning new skills as well as new facts about their environment every day. If we recognize the importance of teaching our children the alphabet, the colors of the rainbow, how to read, etc., we ought to see how much more important it is that our children know their God! Sadly, many parents will neglect spiritual training during their children's formative years. I know of parents who are Christians themselves, yet they are forsaking the assembling of the saints (violating Heb. 10:25), and use their children as an excuse. They say they are concerned that their child will act up; therefore they often stay home instead of gathering with the saints. Something they need to consider, as do all of us, is this: If parents neglect bringing their small children to worship, what motivation will these children (and their parents) have for attending services and worshipping with the saints later on in life?

## Worshipping God Must Be Taught To Our Children

Parents, it is imperative that our children are taught the importance of assembling with the saints to worship God (John 4:24). When I see a young couple bring their new baby to services who is just weeks old, I know they are on the right track! Yes, infants and small children need to understand that "we" regularly and faithfully gather to worship God, and that this is important in "our" family. Yes, this can present difficulties when children are young and in need of diaper changes, or when they are fussy, tired, etc.; but if parents can just endure this for a short while, the children will learn and it *will* get better!

Small children need to know that this time of worship is a special time, and that we act a certain way when assembled. Yes, it can be disconcerting to a child who is used to running, playing, and talking aloud as he pleases during the week to sit still and be quiet for a while. But, the sooner he learns this lesson, the better it will be! Little children can be taught about God and what it means to be quiet while we worship God, and they will respond when they see how important it is to God and their parents! Re-

member, Jesus taught that our example is evident before others. Therefore, our example ought to be godly so that folks will glorify God (Matt. 5:16). Shouldn't our being mindful of our influence over others begin at home? When parents show their children the proper example, it will rub off! Solomon knew this and said, "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it" (Prov. 22:6). Parents, are we training our children like we ought?

## Discipline During the Worship Service Is Needed

As we study this point, let us understand one basic rule of life: Babies cry! In fact, I find it quite comforting in a way when I assemble with the saints and hear a few babies crying or cooing. This tells me that there are some conscientious parents who realize that assembling with the saints is where they (and the children) need to be. A crying baby *does not* always mean it is ill-mannered or uncontrollable. A baby cries because this is his only means of communication. The parents' responsibility is to learn what that little one is "saying"!

Having said this, parents must also be conscientious of others who are present, trying to worship God. Therefore, a baby or small child whose crying continues needs to be taken out of the auditorium for a *short* time while those needs are met (diaper change, to be calmed, fed, etc.). Then, the child can be brought back in, to learn to sit quietly once more. No, we're not encouraging unnecessary disruptions, but at times, it is good to take a child out.

As we think about discipline during services, let us be mindful of the fact that the word discipline means, "1. Training to act in accordance with rules; drill: 2. Instruction and exercise designed to train to proper conduct and action: 3. Punishment inflicted by way of correction and training" (Webster's). Therefore, there are two sides to discipline. Discipline includes an "instructive" aspect, i.e., having to do with teaching someone the rules. There is also a "corrective" aspect to discipline, i.e., punishment, or consequences for not following the rules. Therefore,

discipline is a necessity in teaching small children how to act during worship times (example: we are quiet, we listen, we sing songs together, we bow our heads for prayer, etc.). Yet, when children misbehave, parents cannot simply leave the children to their own devices! Rather, correction must take place. Solomon understood this, and declared how necessary it is that parents train and correct their children while they are young (Prov. 22:6; 13:24; 22:15; 29:15, 17; 19:18).

In some places, where a “cry room” is provided, let parents understand that this room serves a purpose as a quiet place suitable for changing diapers, calming children, or spanking a naughty child; but it is not a “play room.” Our children learn their “boundaries” quickly, so they need to understand that this room is a “temporary stop,” and they will soon return to the auditorium where they will be quiet. To make a “play room” out of a “cry room” just delays the inevitable when the day comes when he must sit with the rest of the group and show reverence toward God in worship (1 Pet. 2:17; John 4:24)!

### Some “Do’s” and “Don’ts” For Parents During Worship Services

Having considered the above points, I would not consider this article complete unless we considered some practical applications for how a parent can work with a small child during the worship services. In considering these things, I realize that some of the suggestions below may seem too old for your child right now, but bear in mind that your child will grow out of infancy! For infants, there may be little a parent can do but try to soothe the child, feed him, and make sure the child is well-rested. However, as a child matures, and is more aware of his surroundings, please keep the following suggestions in mind.

#### Do:

**1. Show your children that worship is not only for the “adults,” but is something they can do as well.** Small children love to “help” and love to know that they are able to do something their parents are doing. Therefore, hold the songbook close to your child, or allow him to hold it, so he can see the words. Then, follow along with your finger. This helps your child see what we are doing. Encourage your child to sing. When a little one raises his voice, saying, “Ahhh,” and “Oohh” *during* the song, do not discourage this. This is a small child’s effort to sing and mimic what he thinks his parents are doing!

**2. In like manner, follow along during the Bible reading with your child.** Show him what passage is being read and then follow along together. This shows our children that these men are not just up there “talking,” but they have something to say, and it is coming from this precious book we call the Bible. In connection with this, you may wish to give your child an old Bible, or a small Bible that

is “theirs,” so they learn to take care of a Bible and learn that it is special.

**3. Parents, take notes during the preaching!** In so doing, give your children some paper and a pencil (not a pen) so they can take their own notes, too. Remember Matthew 5:16? How can our children learn what is most important if we ourselves do not show interest?

**4. When a prayer is about to be offered, it is entirely appropriate to whisper quietly in your child’s ear:** “We are going to pray now, bow your head and close your eyes.” Then, let your child see you do it! It will not take long for him to learn what is going on.

**5. Be patient and consistent in this training, for success will not occur overnight!**

#### Don’t:

**1. Bring a large bag of books, toys, dolls, etc. in the vain hope that this will keep a child quiet.** Often, the more “options” a child has, the quicker he goes through them and becomes bored. While it may be necessary for an infant to have a teething ring, a pacifier, or similar quiet things, this is not necessary for the toddler, or small child who is aware of his surroundings.

**2. Come to services with packages of food, candy, various snacks, etc., for your child.** Often, after the parents leave, the seat looks like a pig sty due to the numerous packages, crumbs, etc., left in the seat. I personally know of only one exception to this rule, where a little girl had a stomach problem, and needed something small every few hours to settle her stomach. Due to their long drive to worship services, these parents brought something for this girl to snack on between the Bible class and worship services. Yet, 99% of the time, such things are unnecessary. In fact, most infants can go two to three hours between feedings! I don’t think I have ever been in a worship service that lasted three hours in this country. Have you?

**3. Encourage naps during worship services.** It goes without saying that infants fall asleep frequently and nap many times in a day. This is not what we are talking about. Rather, when a child reaches around three-years old (and up!) he is quite capable of staying awake during worship times, and in fact, needs to stay awake during these times. Do not encourage children to nap. Start the training early, and encourage your child to pay attention.

**4. Allow your children to bring school work, comic books, etc., to the worship services.** They, like you, need to be there for the purpose of worshipping God. Allowing children to bring various books, homework, etc., to worship is to leave them with the impression that these things are more important than the Bible, worshipping God, and



learning his eternal truth (John 17:17).

**5. Give up if your children are older than toddlers.** Start today to make the corrections where needed.

#### Some Encouragement For Frustrated Parents

Small children will challenge their parents from time to time in various ways. When we are gathered with the saints, some parents feel this “pressure” even more, and are conscious of the need for all the people to concentrate and worship God. Unfortunately, young parents (especially mothers) can become frustrated as they do their duty in training and correcting children on a weekly basis during the worship services. Some may think: “What is the use?” Some may wonder what the point is in assembling when they do not get to hear a full sermon for weeks at a time due to a small child’s needs. Let me encourage parents as they do this and remind them of some very important points:

**1. The fact that you continue to come week after week shows your faithfulness to the Lord’s command (Heb. 10:25).**

**2. Your efforts during this time will not go unnoticed.** God knows what you are doing, and your children are being taught what is most important. You are not allowing various challenges to keep you from doing what you know is right.

**3. When you look into the eyes of your child, or watch him sleeping, is this not encouragement enough for making sure this little one’s soul is safe?** Continue bringing your children to worship services, and know that

a good harvest will come from the seed that is being sown today (Matt. 13:8, 23; 1 Cor. 3:6).

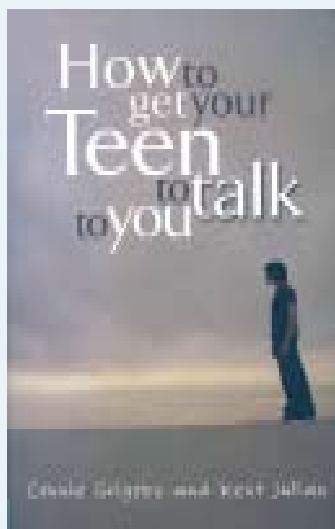
**4. Bear in mind that your regular, faithful attendance makes things better instead of worse.** When children are brought up with a “routine,” they will soon learn what is acceptable and unacceptable. When children are rarely or irregularly brought to services, they will not learn what is right.

#### Conclusion

I am quite aware of the “challenges” small children bring into a family, as well as the abundant blessings that parents experience as a result of having children (Ps. 127:3). Parents, please be patient and know that what you do now will produce great dividends later on! Being a parent is not for someone who wants “instant” gratification! Yet, the continual work, remembering who we are serving, and our effort in teaching our children the way that is right and cannot be wrong will bring about great blessings. “Ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord” (Eph. 6:4). Mothers, be that guiding light and example to your children so that one day they will “arise up, and call (you) blessed; (your) husband also, and he praiseth (you)” (Prov. 31:28). Parents, you have a responsibility to the spotless, sinless soul that has been given to you (Mark 10:14). What kind of soul will your child have when you are through teaching him?

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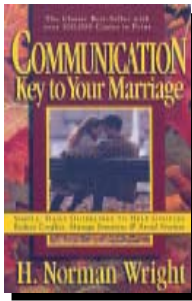
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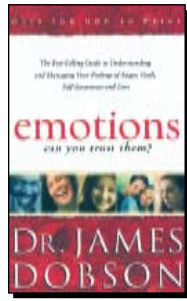


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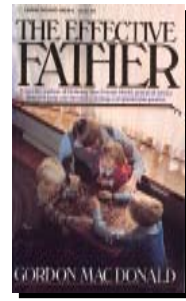
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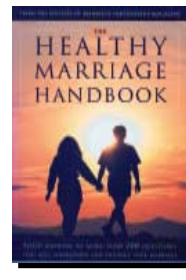


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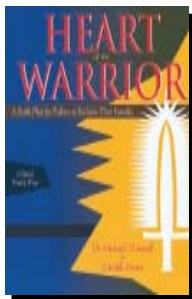
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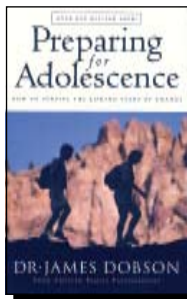


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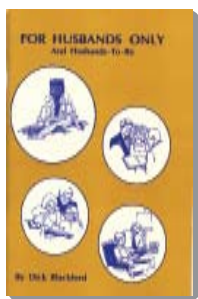
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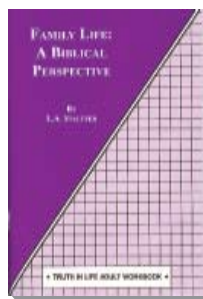


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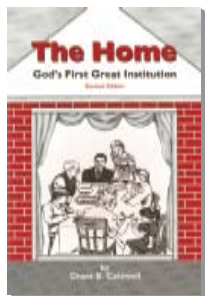


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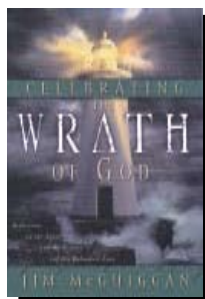


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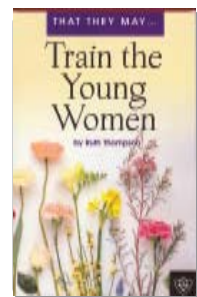
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# Discipline

Kyle Campbell

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## A Sign of the Times

“I hope American parents can outgrow the conviction . . . that physical punishment is necessary to bring up well-behaved children. There are parts of the world where it has never occurred to any adult to strike a child. I have known personally or professionally dozens of families in which the parents never lifted a hand — or otherwise punished or humiliated their children — and yet the children were ideally cooperative and polite. Children are eager to be ever more grown up and responsible.” This quote was made by Dr. Benjamin Spock. Dr. Spock is best known for his book *Baby and Child Care*, first published in 1946, which has gone through six editions, sold 50 million copies worldwide and has been translated into 42 languages. It was the first popular guide for parents that prescribed treatment of children based on affection and respect for them as human beings, and eschewed regimentation and physical punishment. In an interview in 1972 he paid tribute to Sigmund Freud and the philosopher John Dewey as the inspiration for his conception of a more “humane” approach to child rearing.

Dr. Spock has had tremendous influence over a generation of parents regarding discipline. But Dr. Spock himself admittedly attributed his influences of child care to humanistic psychologists and philosophers. By turning away from the advice in the Bible, Dr. Spock has changed the way parents discipline their children. A survey of parents in the United States shows a drop in the use of spanking as the main disciplinary method from 59% in 1962 to 19% in 1993. Parents now prefer using time-outs (38%) and lecturing (24%). Several governments actually forbid corporal punishment in the home: Austria, Croatia, Cyprus, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Iceland, Israel, Italy, Kenya,

Latvia, Norway, Sweden, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

In 1991, United States Advisory Board on Child Abuse and Neglect stated, “. . . the use of corporal punishment in schools is intrinsically related to child maltreatment. It contributes to a climate of violence, it implies that society approves of the physical violation of children, it establishes an unhealthy norm. . . . Its outright abolition throughout the nation must occur immediately.” Again, Dr. Spock said, “If we are ever to turn toward a kindlier society and a safer world, a revulsion against the physical punishment of children would be a good place to start.”

Critics of corporal punishment give several reasons for abstaining from spanking. They state that spanking is: ineffective, may trigger criminal, anti-social, violent, aggressive behavior later in life, has been linked to adult depression, can lead to abuse, can unintentionally cause serious physical damage, can train a child to use violence, can lower a child’s IQ, and can create fear in the child.

In fact, one critic even said that a type of force used on a child’s back side was a sexual violation

When confronted with the passages from Proverbs, which will be discussed later, most religious liberals feel that these passages merely reflect the child-raising customs of the age. They note that the verses were written in a pre-scientific age when child psychology had not developed as a field of study. Most accept that spanking is hazardous to the sexual and emotional health of children. In their own parenting style, they either reject corporal punishment entirely as a method of discipline, or adopt it only in very unusual circumstances. Some would interpret the passages

in Proverbs as accurately reflecting Solomon's parenting style, and the devastating consequences of corporal punishment on his son. They generally would not believe that these passages represent God's intent for parents. In 1891, Robert Ingersoll, commenting about King Solomon, wrote, "To me it has always been a matter of amazement why civilized people, living in the century of Darwin and Humboldt, should quote as authority the words of Solomon, a murderer, an ingrate, an idolater, and a polygamist — a man so steeped and sodden in ignorance that he really believed he could be happy with seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines."

### **The Rod and Reproof**

There are five passages in Proverbs which discuss discipline.

He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes (13:24).

Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying (19:18).

Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him (22:15).

Withhold not correction from the child: for if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die. Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell (23:13-14).

The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame (29:15).

All these passages clearly establish biblical precedent for corporal punishment. But always remember that the purpose of discipline is not a release of anger, but a desire to show love in the correction of your child (Prov. 3:12).

The Old Testament furnishes some examples of poor discipline and its results. Eli was a priest who had two sons, Hophni and Phinehas (1 Sam. 1:3, 9). Eli was a holy man and dedicated to serving God. He had no control over his two sons (1 Sam. 2:12-17). They did not know God or the customs of the priests. Eli's household was brought to ruin because he failed to restrain his sons (1 Sam. 2:30-34; 3:13-14). Samuel's untaught sons, Joel and Abijah, were not much better (1 Sam. 8:1-3). David set a miserable example as a father. A failure to discipline his sons resulted in one becoming a rapist (Amnon), another led a rebellion against his father (Absalom), and when Solomon ascended to the throne another tried to revolt against him (Adonijah). Solomon was well acquainted with the trouble a parent brings upon his children and himself when discipline is not properly exercised. Most of us are acquainted with those who are setting themselves up for a life of misery and their children for failure by not restraining them and setting boundaries. Why set ourselves up for a lifetime of sadness?

In 1979, Sweden adopted a ban on corporal punishment. However, this experiment to reduce child abuse by banning spanking seems to be failing. In 1980, one year after this ban was adopted, the rate of child beatings was twice that of the United States. According to a 1995 report from the government organization Statistics Sweden, police reports of child abuse by family members rose four-fold from 1984 to 1994, while reports of teen violence increased nearly six-fold.

Parents must never be afraid to discipline their children because they are afraid that their children will hate them. When parents do this, they will end up with teenagers who rule the house, not the parents. Discipline is required by God (Prov. 13:24) and it produces great benefits (Prov. 22:15; Heb. 12:11), regardless of the world's research. In fact, an informal survey of research articles online reveal that 80-90% of research directs parents away from corporal punishment of any kind.

Child abuse is a reality, and stories of child abuse are horrifying. But while loving and effective discipline is definitely not harsh and abusive, neither is it weak and ineffectual. According to a recent Voter/Consumer Research poll commissioned by the Family Research Council, 76 percent of the more than 1,000 Americans surveyed said that spanking was an effective form of discipline in their home when they were children. These results are made all the more impressive by the fact that nearly half of those who answered otherwise grew up in homes in which they were never spanked. Taken together, more than four out of five Americans who were actually spanked by their parents as children say that it was an effective form of discipline. In addition, Americans perceive lack of discipline to be the biggest problem in public education today, according to a recent Gallup poll. Several studies show strong public support for corporal punishment by parents.

As noted previously, critics claim that spanking a child is abusive and contributes to adult dysfunction. These allegations arise from studies that fail to distinguish appropriate spanking from other forms of punishment. Abusive forms of physical punishment such as kicking, punching, and beating are commonly grouped with mild spanking. Furthermore, the studies usually include, and even emphasize, corporal punishment of adolescents, rather than focusing on preschool children, where spanking is more effective. This blurring of distinctions between spanking and physical abuse, and between children of different ages, gives critics the illusion of having data condemning all disciplinary spanking. There are several arguments commonly leveled against disciplinary spanking. Interestingly, most of these arguments can be used against other forms of discipline. Any form of discipline (time-out, restriction, etc.), when used inappropriately and in anger, can result in distorting



a child's perception of justice and harm his emotional development.

### Guidelines For Discipline

For what it will be worth to you, I would like to suggest some instructions for the "power struggles" you will encounter with your children.

You must clearly communicate instructions to your child, including the consequences of disobedience. Children cannot read your mind; you must tell them what you expect.

When the child challenges the parent's authority and shows disrespect, then the parent must confront the child. A "power struggle" is now confirmed. Spanking should be used selectively for clear, deliberate misbehavior, particularly that which arises from a child's persistent defiance of a parent's instruction. It should be used only when the child receives at least as much encouragement and praise for good behavior as correction for problem behavior. Milder forms of discipline, such as verbal correction, time-out, and logical consequences, should be used initially, followed by spanking when noncompliance persists. Spanking has shown to be an effective method of enforcing time-out with the child who refuses to comply.

Send the child to a "punishment room" (e.g., bathroom or bedroom). Don't embarrass the child in front of others. There is a twofold purpose for this step. First, it will give you time to calm down and compose yourself. It is never good to discipline your child in anger. Spanking should always be a planned action, not a reaction, by the parent and should follow a deliberate procedure. Second, it will give you time to think of what you want to say to the child. You want the child to remember this moment, but not just because of the physical punishment.

You need to stress that the child is responsible for what happens to him. Stress that by his disobedience, he asked for the spanking. Stress to the child that disobedience cannot be tolerated. Remember, the issue is always the love you have for them (Prov. 3:12).

Spank the child. Never jerk a child's arms, pull hair, or shake a child. When you heed Solomon's advice and use a "rod" (i.e., paddle, wooden spoon, belt, etc.), you disassociate yourself from the mode of punishment. The "rod" will dole out the discipline and the mother's or father's arms and hands can embrace and console. As difficult as it may be, the discipline must have a degree of pain if it is to teach the lesson you desire.

Tell the child you love him. If you discipline your child and do not tell him you love him, you have made a grave mistake.

Forget the episode and return to normal. Take every

advantage of opportunities to compliment obedience. Get the children on your side; don't let all your interaction with your children be sorrowful.

Ephesians 6:4 and Colossians 3:21 give additional instruction as to how we handle our children. Both passages are addressed to fathers and the passage in Ephesians says, "Provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" while the passage in Colossians says, "Provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged."

Parents want to make sure that they do not provoke or discourage their children. They can do this by two extremes. First, parents can have a lack of standards. When parents fail to discipline, or discipline inconsistently, children are left on their own. Most young people want their parents to be strict. They want parents who are consistent and fair in doling out discipline. Children need the security of specific boundaries, and they need to know there are consequences for going over the line. When a child comments that "Mom and Dad don't care what I do," they are not saying that out of respect. Parents who do not discipline their children and provide family leadership demonstrate a failure to love. That discipline must begin while they are young and continue through the teen years. Second, parents can discipline excessively. Parents who abuse their children either verbally, emotionally, or physically will greatly discourage them. Parents often make statements to their children that they would never make to anyone else. Parents who react in rage, losing their temper, show themselves to be just as troubled as their children. Why would a child listen and heed counsel from someone like this?

Our children deserve to see the example of people whose lives have been transformed and molded by Jesus Christ (Rom. 12:1-2), thus possessing the essential qualities of meekness and gentleness. When trouble arises our children can see these qualities put to the test and come to better appreciate them and us. During troubled times, young people need parents who will remain calm to help them still the turbulent waters. This is not an excuse from discipline, but a manner in which discipline must be applied. Rather than demonstrating a life filled with anger and hot tempers, we need to show a life of self-control and power (1 Cor. 9:27). Paul made use of all possible means to subdue his sinful desires. Paul gained mastery over these actions and feelings, and so must we. Can you think of a situation your child may face where the self-control he learned from his parent can be a benefit to him?

### A Final Word

It is not always easy to accept or provide discipline. But a failure to discipline is far more bitter, troublesome, shameful and heart-breaking. Parents, we need to listen to God and our children and provide them with loving,



# Raising Teenagers

Donnie V. Rader

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The teenage years have blessings and challenges of their own. When our children were small (at the time I write they are eighteen and fourteen) many parents painted a picture of the teen years with horror. Yet, Joan and I have enjoyed these years as much or more than any period of raising our children. There are some challenges to be sure, which we will address.

However, we must note the many blessings of having teenagers. These are the very years they will likely obey the gospel. What a joy to see your children walking in truth (3 John 4). During this period we watch them develop their independence. We witness their stand against the pressures that teens face. This is the time they begin to prove that they really do fear God. It just may be that these are the years that they fall in love and find the one they will marry.

## General Principles About Rearing Children

Let's consider some basic biblical principles about raising children. The rest of our study will be application of these concepts.

### 1. Train a child in the way he should go (Prov. 22:6).

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consistent and fair discipline. If you catch your kids lying, cheating, stealing, swearing, or drinking, then discipline them. Let them know why what they did was wrong. And when they need punishment, dish it out. But also let them know that you love them, even when they let you down. Discipline must be tempered and administered with love. When our children disappoint us the most, we need to love them the most. When our children misbehave, we have an opportunity to teach them by example an important quality of God. He loved us and extended his hand of mercy while we were yet sinners (Rom. 5:8). His love did not lead him to overlook our sin or easily dismiss it. But it did lead him to provide a way of escape from sin (John 3:16; Acts 2:38; 3:19; 22:16). Being tough and loving are not mutually exclusive, but are great complements of one another.

Several things are implied in this verse. We should not only teach our children good behavior, but teach them the way they should go (the way of God). This training starts when they are young. It has an impact upon them even when they are old. Parents ought to think about what they want their children to be when they are adults, and work in that direction.

**2. Bring children up in the training and admonition of the Lord (Eph. 6:1-4).** Matthew Henry comments on this verse:

Bring them up well, in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, in the discipline of proper and of compassionate correction, and in the knowledge of that duty which God requires of them and by which they may become better acquainted with him. Give them a good education. It is the great duty of parents to be careful in the education of their children: Not only bring them up, as the brutes do, taking care to provide for them; but bring them up in nurture and admonition, in such a manner as is suitable to their reasonable natures. Nay, not only bring them up as

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Parents need to pray for wisdom (Jas. 1:5-7). The wise parents will know just how far to go in calling their child's bluff. A mother of three boys told me the story of one of her sons threatening to run away from home. She asked him the reasons and then decided to join him. Needless to say he stayed at home and never used that threat again. Parents need to remember who is the boss and not be intimidated by their children, but love and discipline them. Endeavor to bring to the minds of your children the laws of the Lord. Instill in them the love for God that produces obedience and the fear of sinning that produces righteousness.

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men, in nurture and admonition, but as Christians, in the admonition of the Lord. Let them have a religious education. Instruct them to fear sinning; and inform them of, and excite them to, the whole of their duty towards God (*Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: New Modern Edition, Electronic Database*. Copyright (c) 1991 by Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.).

Adam Clark summarizes the instructions of this text:

Literally, Nourish them in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. The mind is to be nourished with wholesome discipline and instruction, as the body is with proper food. *Paideia* (NT:3809), discipline, may refer to all that knowledge which is proper for children, including elementary principles and rules for behaviour, etc. *Nouthesia* (NT:3559), instruction, may imply whatever is necessary to form the mind; to touch, regulate, and purify the passions; and necessarily includes the whole of religion. Both these should be administered in the Lord — according to his will and word, and in reference to his eternal glory. All the important lessons and doctrines being derived from his revelation, therefore they are called the discipline and instruction of the Lord (*Adam Clarke's Commentary, Electronic Database*. Copyright (c) 1996 by BibleSoft).

**3. Diligently teach the children (Deut. 6:6-9).** On the verge of entering the promise land, Moses instructed the people to diligently teach their children the words of the law. To do so they must saturate themselves and their children with the word.

**4. Teach children to fear God (Deut. 4:10).** The fear of God includes the dread of displeasing God (1 Sam. 7:11; Heb. 10:31; 12:29) and standing in awe of his greatness, power and might (Luke 7:16; Jonah 1:9). If our children fear God, it will be because we *taught* them to fear God.

**5. Children need restraint (1 Sam. 2:12; 3:21-13).** Eli's sons were corrupt and did not know the Lord for he did not restrain them. Here, a basic principle is established: children who are not given restraint will become corrupt.

### Preparing For the Teen Years

Obviously parents cannot wait until their children are teenagers to start thinking about what they want their teenagers to be. Preparation for the teen years begins many years before.

**1. Get behavior under control early.** Molding the behavior of a child must begin in the early years. The Proverb writer said, "Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying" (Prov. 19:18). If a parent does not have control of the child by the teenage years, turbulent times are ahead.

**2. Teach them to respect others.** Part of bringing a child up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord is teaching

them to respect others. This begins by teaching them to respect their parents and siblings. Training children to say "mam" and "sir" to their parents goes a long way toward this goal.

**3. Don't teach or allow things that you must correct or change later.** This is part of training a child in the way he should go (Prov. 22:6). What might be "cute" at five may be a problem at fifteen. It may be hard to overcome what the children perceive as "inconsistent."

**4. Remember that little children grow up.** Some times when children reach the teen years parents are not willing to admit their children are growing up. It is easy to think of the fifteen or sixteen year old as if he is still ten or twelve. When that is the case, the parent tolerates more than he should. For example, when a mother still thinks of her sixteen-year-old daughter as just a little girl, she will let her dress immodestly. However, the boys who see her don't think of her as a little girl!

**5. Be an example to your children.** Children often turn out to be just like their parents (Ezek. 16:44). They learn as much or more by what they see as by what they are told. Parents should be an example of that they want their children to be (1 Tim. 4:12).

**6. Develop communication.** Parents cannot fulfill their obligations found in Ephesians 6:1-4 without communicating with their children. Developing communication must start at an early age so that when we have teens we can keep it going. Communication involves both listening and talking.

**7. Commend and encourage.** We should not provoke children to wrath, but rather train them in the way of the Lord (Eph. 6:1-4). Part of doing that would involve commending children when they do well and encouraging them in the right things. All too often parents are quick to let their children know when they have done wrong, but say little or nothing when they do well. How sad for children to grow up not having heard either of their parents commend them.

### Challenges of the Teen Years

There are many challenges that both the parents and the teenagers face. Let's consider just a few.

**1. Obeying the gospel.** Every Christian wants his or her children to obey the gospel. However, we want them to obey from the heart (Rom. 6:17) and not merely go through the motion. It may be necessary to help guide the child in determining whether he has reached the point of accountability. It is important that we encourage the child to obey without *pushing* him to do so.

**2. Peer pressure/friends.** Many teens are led astray because they got in the wrong crowd. Pressure increases when one is outnumbered (Exod. 23:2, 33). Wise parents not only carefully watch who their children associate with but also teach their children about choosing friends wisely. Consider the warnings of the Proverbs (1:10-19; 12:26; 22:24-25).

**3. Dress.** In the years when boys and girls begin to take note of one another it is particularly important they young people dress modestly, showing a sense of shame and good judgment (1 Tim. 2:9-10). When everyone around them (including some Christians) dress according to the standards of the world, proper dress becomes a challenge.

**4. Dating.** From an early age children should be taught the importance of dating and marrying a faithful Christian. Teenagers must understand that dating often leads to falling in love and that leads to marriage. Continuing to date a person you would not want to marry is dangerous. The challenge of maintaining moral purity is met when dating begins. Abstinence as the only “safe sex” should be indoctrinated in the children long before dating (1 Thess. 4:3; 1 Cor. 6:18).

**5. Entertainment.** Many of the things that entertain young people (TV, music, movies, and the Internet) pose dangers for our teens. Careful parents are well aware that such can corrupt the good morals of their children (1 Cor. 15:33). It is possible to see and hear so much that we become desensitized to sin (Ps. 1:1-3).

**6. Dancing/prom.** Early teaching about dancing and the prom may prevent teens from asking if they can go to the prom in the high school years. Parents have decisions to make about whether they will let their sons and daughters go. A careful study of “lasciviousness” (Gal. 5:19-21) will help in making that decision. Thayer defines it as “unchaste handling of males and females.”

**7. College.** When the time comes to decide where the child will attend college, several questions should be asked: “What will they be taught?” “Is there a strong church in that community?” “Will this school or the church they must attend there weaken their faith?”

### Examples of Faithful Young People

The numerous examples of young people who faithfully served God in their youth should encourage both the parents and the teenagers.

**1. Jesus (Luke 12:51-52).** At the age of twelve he was about his Father’s business.

**2. Daniel.** He was taken into Babylonian captivity as a young man (18-20 years old). Even in the face of danger, he refused to eat of the King’s portions (1:8). He contin-

ued to pray to God as seen when he became an older man (6:10).

**3. David (1 Sam. 17:33ff).** While still in his youth David was determined to fight for what was right with the help of God.

**4. Timothy.** From his childhood he knew the holy Scriptures (2 Tim. 3:15) because his mother and grandmother had well taught him (2 Tim. 1:5). Timothy’s faithfulness was such that Paul mentioned him as an exception to the rule that most are not interested in spiritual things (Phil. 2:19-22).

### Questions Parents Should Ask Themselves

Parents who are serious about raising their children should constantly ask themselves questions that might detect problems for the future.

1. Are we creating a problem for the teen years?
2. Have we given spiritual matters top priority?
3. What has my example said to my teen?
4. Are we being watchful and careful about little things that can lead to bigger problems?
5. What did successful parents (those who have done well in raising their children) do?
6. Are we aware of our teen’s life (who they are with, where they are, what they are doing)?
7. Are we working to keep good communication between us and our teen?

May God help us to make these years enjoyable and rewarding and not burden.

## TEEN PROOFING

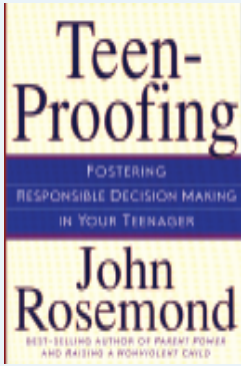
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# Lessons From the Dinner Table

Harold Callaway

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Sadly, families are so busy today that few find time anymore to spend around the dinner table. “There is so much competition for our time that finding time to cook and eat with our kids gets squeezed out,” said Sue Butkus, a nutrition specialist at Washington State University’s Puyallup Research and Extension Center. “Between work schedules, soccer and band practices for the kids, video games and the Internet, people increasingly don’t schedule time for meals together.” One high school student did a survey among her peers and “found that 22% never or rarely eat dinner with their family, 30% eat dinner one to three nights a week with their family, 32% eat together four to six nights a week, and 16% eat dinner with their family every night.” The coffee table has taken the place of the dinner table, the television room has replaced the dining room, the restaurant has supplanted the kitchen, and take-out has done away with the home-cooked meal.

“There is solid research that shows that not sharing family meals can have a significant impact on kids,” said Cindy Reishus, chair of the Nutrition Education Network. “There are numerous studies and surveys that all point in the same direction. When families don’t get together regularly over the dinner table the kids are more prone to depression and drug use, don’t eat as well and don’t do as well in school.”

God’s word teaches that the blessed family is one that recognizes the importance of gathering frequently around the dinner table. “*Blessed* is every one who fears the Lord, who walks in His ways. When you eat the labor of your hands, you shall be happy, and it shall be well with you. Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine in the very heart of your house, your children like olive plants all around your table. Behold, thus shall the man be *blessed* who fears the Lord. The Lord *bless* you out of Zion, and may you see the good of Jerusalem all the days of your life. Yes, may you see your children’s children” (Ps. 128:1-6).

## The Dinner Table Says a Great Deal About a Family

My job as an auctioneer has taken me into many homes and I’ve seen a lot of dinner tables. I’ve learned that a dinner table says a great deal about a family. For some families their supper table is anything but a place to eat dinner — it has become just a workbench or desk used to collect laundry, mail, coats, and books. What does your dinner table say about you? Is your dinner table a place for the gathering of children or the gathering of dust?



## The Dinner Table Is a Place of Cherished Memories

Some of the best memories in my life were made around the dinner table. This should be no surprise because the Scriptures associate a variety of special occasions with eating. When visitors arrived at Abraham’s door, what did he do? He and Sarah immediately slaughtered a calf, prepared cakes and served them a meal (Gen. 18:1-8). When the prodigal son came home, what did his father do? He killed the fatted calf and they ate (Luke 15:23). When a couple wed, what did they do? They ate a feast (Luke 14:8). Dinner time is a special time for families as well (Ps. 128:2-3). And, what are we *not* to do with unfaithful Christians? “Not even to eat with such a person” (1 Cor. 5:11). The Bible teaches that eating together represents a special relationship. Therefore, if your family does not eat together often, what does that say about the quality of your family’s relationship?

## The Dinner Table Brings Families Together

I know a family that never eats together. I asked the wife why she never cooked dinner and she answered, “Why should I? My husband is never home to eat dinner.” So I then asked the husband why he never went home for dinner and he replied, “Why should I? My wife never cooks dinner.” So the husband never goes home because the



wife never cooks dinner and the wife never cooks dinner because the husband never comes home. What a destructive cycle! Both the husband and wife need to be recommitted to the dinner table, because that is what brings families together.

I've heard some women unapologetically say, "I have never liked cooking and I don't plan to start." I told one such a woman, "If you ever want to have a good family you need to cook for your family." Her mocking reply was, "Harold, do you think there is magic in the corn?" "No," I said, "The magic is in the talking. The food will get you to the table, but the real magic is in the communication."

People are a lot like cattle. My cows are accustomed to being fed at the same time every evening. When it is 6:00 p.m., I don't have to wonder where they are. They will come out of the pasture and up to the feed trough when it is supper time. They know because they are fed at the same time every day. Now, if I didn't feed my cattle but once in a blue moon, I could never get them to follow my call. Whenever I need to move my cattle, I just get my feed bucket, tap it a few times and here they come. Families are not much different. If you want your family to come together and stay together, be committed to a regular supper time together around the dinner table.

#### **The Dinner Table Provides a Time to Weed**

My father loved gardening. He even was recognized in the newspaper several times as having the best local garden of the year. This accomplishment did not happen by accident. Every morning he would get up early to weed his garden before going to work. If you don't remove the weeds diligently and frequently, your garden will be overrun with thorns that will choke your harvest. Our families are the same way. Satan is trying his best to sow tares in your family. Godly families do not happen by accident. Every day you must weed your family's garden. If you don't, then "the worry of the world and the deceitfulness of wealth" will choke the word out of your family, making them barren (Matt. 13:22). Use your time every night at the dinner table as an opportunity to diligently pull the weeds of the world out of your family. If you don't get to the table, you may never learn what your children are going through, and as a result you will be ill prepared to help them fight off the wiles of the devil.

#### **The Dinner Table Provides a Time to Teach**

Dinner time is not just a time to feed the physical body, it is a time to feed the spiritual body. A steady diet of spiritual food will teach your children to hunger and thirst for righteousness (Matt. 5:6). The dinner table is a time for little boys to learn how to be godly men. Growing up around our dinner table taught me that my father was the head of the home (Eph. 5:23). My father also taught me to pray at the dinner table. He taught me to respect and honor

my mother. I learned to honor my mother so much that I even got into a fight in grade school with another boy over whose mom was the best cook. Dinner time is also a time for little girls to learn how to be godly women. In a society that honors immodest, carnal, and immoral women as role models, little girls will learn the vital role of a godly mother who is committed to keeping the home (Tit. 2:5). When my oldest daughter was still living at home she would call me at work and ask me what I wanted for dinner. Such things made me look forward to coming home to be with my family for dinner. She learned that from her mother.

Dinner is a time to teach your children about the importance of daily prayer (Luke 18:1; 1 Thess. 5:17). What a wonderful time for you to establish the daily need for your family to pray together. Prayer enables you to express your faith, give thanks to your Creator, ask God to be with members of your family, and entreat God concerning specific family needs.

The dinner table is also a tool you can use to teach your children about the need to practice hospitality. Will you open your dinner table to others as God instructs (1 Pet. 4:9; Heb. 13:2)? Get your children involved with the lives of the brethren by having others into your home on a regular basis. Teach your children it is more important to serve others than to be served (Matt. 20:28). Demonstrate the true spirit of Christ that is ready and willing to serve.

#### **The Dinner Table Provides a Time of Refreshment in a Barren World**

When visited by traveling strangers, Abraham offered them food so that they may "refresh" their hearts (Gen. 18:5). The dinner table provides needed refreshment at the end of a long hard day. What comfort does Solomon offer to the soul living in a world filled with sorrow, injustice, and vanity? He repeatedly says, "There is nothing better for a man than to eat and drink, and that his soul should enjoy good in his labor" (Eccl. 2:24; 3:12-13; 5:16-18; 9:7-9). This busy king says that one key to life is to stop and take time to eat and drink with your family. When was the last time you truly enjoyed a meal with your family? You are denying yourself and your family the refreshment God knows that you need. What will help you and your

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Throughout the ages no nation has ever had a better friend than the mother who taught her children to



## “Godly Parents” continued from front page

Lord. God could have given up on Israel altogether, but he didn't. He believed that even under dire spiritual and political circumstances that godly parents could raise a child to do noble deeds in his service. Their son, Samson, grew up to be a deliverer of God's people. Today God calls you, in spite of the spiritual decay of the world that you live in, to be a godly parent in an ungodly world. It is not only possible (Phil. 4:13), it is absolutely essential for you to do so! You can and you must save your children. What will it profit a man if he gains the whole world but loses the souls of his family in the process (Matt. 16:26)? Yes, even two obscure and humble parents can make a difference and raise a child who will do great things for the Lord's kingdom. You, as a parent, can make a difference if you follow the example of Manoah and his wife.

### Godly Parents Listen to God in a Spiritually Deaf World

**1. Manoah prayed.** “The Angel of the Lord appeared to the woman and said to her, ‘Indeed now, you are barren and have borne no children, but you shall conceive and bear a son’ (Judg. 13:3). Upon hearing this life-changing news, Manoah immediately sought God's instruction on parenting through prayer, “Then Manoah prayed to the Lord” (Judg. 13:8). While the rest of his generation had forgotten the Lord, Manoah humbly asked God to help him. The child has not even been born yet and here we find Manoah entreating the Lord. When people hear the news of a coming child, some murder their child, others panic, some rush to the bookstore to stock up on the latest wisdom from the secular world, some spare no expense building a baby room, and others do absolutely nothing. Learn from Manoah that the first thing you must do and continue to do is pray. Pray for wisdom (Jas. 1:5), pray for the health of the child (2 Sam. 12:16), pray for God to bless the child (Gen. 48-49), and pray for your child's obedience (1 Chron. 29:19).

**2. Manoah asked for help.** “Teach us what we shall do for the child” (Judg. 13:8). Manoah began his parental preparations *before* the child was born. Manoah didn't wait until Samson was sixteen to start asking God for help, he started looking for instruction before Samson was born. Don't wait until your children are rebellious teenagers to seek God's guidance, begin now! And, go to God for this instruction, not the world. “Unless the Lord builds the house they labor in vain who build it” (Ps. 127:1f). Turn to the Scriptures which will equip you for the work of parenting (2 Tim. 3:16-17). And, don't forget to seek out instruction from older godly parents around you (Tit. 2:2-5).

**3. Manoah submitted to God's will without question.** “Let your words come to pass!” (Judg. 13:12). Manoah did not doubt, question, make excuses or change God's words. Godly parents believe the Lord's instruction for the family and will say, “Your will be done.” When God charges,

“Fathers do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord” (Eph. 6:4), will you answer, “Your will be done!”? When the Lord commands, “Correct your son and he will give you rest” (Prov. 29:17), will you reply, “Let your words come to pass!”? When God says about his commandments, “You shall teach them diligently to your children” (Deut. 6:7), will you confidently affirm, “Your will be done!”? Or, will you make excuses for your neglect, twist God's word, and fail your children? Follow Manoah's example and determine to pray, “Lord teach me to be a good parent and may your will be done!”

### Godly Parents Plan for the Eternal in a Temporal World

**1. Manoah planned for his child's rule of life.** He asked an interesting question that reflects true foresight and wisdom, “What will be the boy's rule of life?” (Judg. 13:12). All parents would do well to ask this question. What “rules” your child's life? Is it sports, MTV, Hollywood, the opposite sex, and worldly companions, or, will God be the rule of your child's life? Be like Abraham who subjected his children to the blessed rule of God. “I have known him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him that they keep the way of the Lord, to do righteousness and justice” (Gen. 18:19). May your child one day be able to say the following words about you, “When I was my father's son, tender and the only one in the sight of my mother, he also taught me, and said to me . . . ‘Get wisdom! Get understanding! . . . Hear my son, and receive my sayings, and the years of your life will be many. I have taught you in the way of wisdom; I have led you in right paths. When you walk, your steps will not be hindered, and when you run, you will not stumble. Take a firm hold of instruction, do not let go; keep her, for *she is your life*’” (Prov. 4:1-13f). Will you let this temporal world that is hurling itself toward destruction rule your child's life (1 John 2:15-17), or will you teach your children God's rule of life?

**2. Manoah planned for his child's work.** He asked, “What will be the boy's . . . work?” (v.12). Children need to be taught the value of honest work. God put Adam in the garden and gave him work (Gen. 2:15). Parents need to drive laziness, slothfulness, and foolishness out of the hearts of their children (Prov. 22:15; 29:15, 17) and prepare them to work diligently (Eccl. 9:10). While preparing your children for secular work, do not forget that you must to equip them for an even more important spiritual work. Teach them to be like Jesus who even at the young age of twelve was busy about his “Father's business,” increasing “in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men” (Luke 2:49, 52). Mold your children to be faithful workers in the Lord's kingdom.

### Godly Parents Are Obedient

## in a Disobedient World

**1. Manoah and his wife had to be careful.** The angel warned, “Of all that I said to the woman let her *be careful*” (Judg. 13:13). Parenting is a task that requires great care and utmost attention! Too many parents neglect the desperate needs of their children and leave them to raise themselves. “A child left to himself brings shame to his mother” (Prov. 29:15). Be careful follow God’s instruction for you as a parent.

**2. Manoah and his wife had to be obedient.** The angel continues his parental instruction by saying, “All that I have commanded her let her observe” (Judg. 13:14). Samson was to be separated as a Nazarite for God’s work. This required Manoah and his wife to follow strict detailed instructions (Judg. 13:4, 7, 14; Num. 6:1-21). All parents want their children to “fit in” but Manoah had to have the courage and diligence to raise his son as one different from all the rest. While parents today are not required to raise their children according to Nazarite law, in a similar sense however God does call us to separate our children from the world for his work. This means our children will not dress, talk, look, or act the same as other children in the world. Worldly parents, desperate for peer approval, cowardly compromise God’s moral standards, while faithful parents, intent on God’s approval, courageously raise their children separate from the world (2 Cor. 6:17f; 1 Pet. 2:11; Rom. 12:1-2; 1 Cor. 15:33; Gal. 1:10).

## Godly Parents Are Grateful in an Ungrateful World

**1. Manoah was thankful to be a parent.** Following this divine instruction Manoah and his wife immediately responded with actions of gratitude. They first try to prepare food for the angel, then they offer a sacrifice to the Lord and fall with their faces to the ground in humble reverence to the one who would give them a son (Judg. 13:15-20). I see so many parents who treat their children like horrible burdens who sap them of money, time, joy, and independence. Are you genuinely thankful for your children? Do you, like Manoah, realize they are gifts from God? “Children are a heritage from the Lord, the fruit of the womb is His reward. Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, so are the children of one’s youth. Happy is the man who has his quiver full of them” (Ps. 127:3-5). Let us not abuse this gift!

**2. Manoah’s faithfulness brought God’s blessing to his child.** Manoah and his wife followed God’s instruction, “So the woman bore a son and called his name Samson; and the child grew, and the Lord blessed him” (Judg. 13:24). Children who are trained by their parents will be blessed (Prov. 1:8; 4:1-9).

## What Kind of Parent Will You Be?

Though we live in a terribly sinful society, don’t despair. Godly parents can and must raise godly children. Determine right now to, as Manoah, go to God in prayer, submit to his will, carefully observe his instruction, and ever be thankful

## “Children” continued from page 2

### Be Who You Want Your Children to be in Time and Financial Management

You only have your children for a short time to train them (eighteen years in comparison to eternity). You should early and wisely make the best use of your time and money to help them remember their Creator in the days of their youth, before the devil can entice them to do his will (cf. Eph. 5:15; cf. Eccl. 12:1; cf. 2 Tim. 2:26). They must see you prioritize so that you put God’s will first (cf. Matt. 6:33) in all things above your other responsibilities and desires. The days are swiftly passing away towards eternity (cf. Ps. 90:10).

If you want your children to manage their time properly, they must see you doing so. Your children must see in you punctuality (at worship services, job, or scheduled appointments). They must see you diligently completing your tasks (Bible study, housework, errands, job projects and/or helping others). If they don’t see these in you, but rather see tardiness and procrastination (because of TV, sports, hobbies, computer, or anything else that uses up your time), they will learn in their lives that these responsibilities aren’t important. If they learn this, do not be surprised if your children are lazy and untimely in their responsibilities (getting ready, school assignments, chores, etc.)

If you want your children to manage their money wisely, they must see that you are thrifty in financial matters. They must see in you good stewardship by saving money where you can (such as discounts, coupons, garage sales, or eating meals at home). They must see you sharing with those who have need (cf. Eph. 4:28) and investing or saving money to pay for future expenses. They must see you living within your means — not charging material things which you cannot afford or participating in “get-rich-quick” schemes. If, instead, they see impulse shopping, overspending, gambling, unpaid bills, late fees, or repossessions, how will they learn to have self-control in their own finances? This irresponsibility might lead to the father having to work overtime, take on a second or even third job or the mother having to work outside the home, keeping them from their responsibilities to each other and the family. It can also lead to paying exorbitant interest rates and even bankruptcy. How are you managing the time and resources God has given you to train your children?

### Be Who You Want Your Children to be in Worship to God

Since the Father seeks those who will worship him in spirit and in truth (John 4:23), they must see in you the same enthusiasm for praising God, as David did (cf. Ps. 122:1). If you want your children to worship with the saints regularly (Heb. 10:25), you will be faithful to be at every Bible class, worship service, and gospel meeting you possibly can. But some parents will say, “I cannot make it to

all the services.” Some excuses are, “I have to work as you know God says I have to provide for my family”; “My family came into town, and I had to feed them”; “It’s my only day off to have family time with the children”; “When we went on vacation, we couldn’t find a faithful congregation, we were too busy, or we went to a denomination where our family attends.” If your children hear these excuses from you as to why you cannot make it to every service, do not be surprised if they beg you to miss for a ball game, homework, studying for a test, or getting a job. They may argue that “this is important for me to get a good grade” or “the team is depending on me and if I don’t go I will have to sit the bench” or “I must go to work on Sunday or Wednesday to pay for my car and insurance.” While some are making a conscientious effort to work during services only in emergency circumstances, far too many aren’t even attempting to tell their employers that they desire to have Sundays and Wednesday nights off.

While attendance is important, so is active participation. They must see you giving cheerfully and bountifully, paying attention to the sermon and prayer, reverently partaking the Lord’s supper, joyfully singing, teaching classes, and leading prayers, etc. If, instead, they see you obviously bored, sleeping, or participating but complaining all the way home about the length of the sermon, the members, or what the church is doing, they will also find reason to complain and be disinterested in worship themselves. If that happens, you should not be surprised if your children leave your home and quit attending services or go only occasionally. They can see your sincerity or your lack of sincerity. Are you being who you want your children to be in worship to God?

### **Be Who You Want Your Children to Be in Service to God**

Because of God’s mercies toward us, it is reasonable for us to offer our bodies as a living and holy sacrifice to him (Rom. 12:1). Do your children see that you are dedicated in your daily service to God? If you want your children to read, study, and obey God’s word, they must first see your delight in meditating on the Scriptures on a daily basis (Ps. 1:2). If you want your children to pray, they must see you consistently praying in good times and bad times (1 Thess. 5:17). If you want them to teach others so that the lost will be saved (2 Tim. 2:24), they must see you seeking opportunities to give tracts, bulletins, and/or setting up Bible studies. If you want them to be compassionate and show mercy to others, they must see you helping those who are in need as the opportunities arise (cf. 1 Tim. 5:4; 1 John 3:17; Jas. 1:27). If you want them to be hospitable, they must see you being kind and welcoming guests (Rom. 12:13). God expects you to be a “doer” of his word — he and your children know if you are (Jas. 1:22-25). Are you being who you want your children to be in service to God?

### **Be Who You Want Your Children to Be in Godly Behavior (Modesty, Purity, and Speech)**

We want our children to be pure in preparation for marriage, but there are many stumbling blocks. Many parents dress immodestly or allow their children to do so. They wear shorts and dresses that expose the nakedness of their thighs, show cleavage, wear tight pants or see through clothing, or go mixed swimming in bathing suits or bikinis. Seldom can you turn on the TV without seeing images of scantily clad men and women, often doing things that are shameful. Not only that, but pornography is rampant on the Internet and has enticed and enslaved many. Parents often let their children go to the dances and the prom. Yet with all this, they expect them to flee lustful thoughts (cf. Matt. 5:28-29). Immodest dress and dancing are fuels that fan the flames of committing sexual immorality (cf. Prov. 6:27-28). Shockingly, many parents have committed adultery or have unlawfully divorced and remarried thus destroying the credibility and possibility in their children’s minds they can even make a commitment to be married for life as God desires (cf. Matt. 19:6). If you want your children to be modest and pure, they must see those characteristics in you. Are you helping your children to be pure?

If you want your children’s speech to be proper, they must hear it from you. They must not hear you using euphemisms, slang expressions, or constant criticism. Many parents demand that their children refrain from profanity, yet invite it into their homes by renting R and PG-13 rated movies or watching similar shows on television. How will that help your children think about things that are pure, lovely, honorable, excellent, etc. (cf. Phil. 4:8) and use graceful, instead of ungodly speech (cf. Eph. 4:29)? Are you helping them to use edifying words?

How could we allow ourselves to be so deceived by the world? Jesus warned that it would be better to be drowned in the depth of the sea with a millstone than to cause one of these little ones to stumble (Matt. 18:6-7). The consequences of practicing ungodly behavior could lead to even greater sins: abortion, unprepared marriage leading to unlawful divorce and remarriage, STD’s, AIDS, DWI or even vehicular manslaughter. David’s sins against Bathsheba and Uriah resulted in several of his sons rebelling against his authority and ultimately against God (cf. 2 Sam. 12:10-11). Those who practice impurity, sensuality, and sexual immorality will not go to heaven (cf. Gal. 5:19-21; Eph. 5:3-5). But if we seek God and treasure his word with all of our hearts (cf. Ps. 119:9-11), we will be modest, pure, sober, and not sin, and then we can help our children to flee from youthful lusts so that they can pursue righteousness (cf. 2 Tim. 2:22). Are you being what you want your children to be in godly behavior?

### **Be Who You Want Your Children to Be in Gratitude**

We live in a country that has been blessed so bountifully (freedom to worship, speak, and live in houses we



can own, abundance of food and clothing, and many other conveniences that make life pleasant). So why are we so ungrateful as a nation? Because some have not taught their children to be thankful for what they have; rather they have taught them to demand their rights and expect preferential treatment. We can fall into that same syndrome. God's will is that we be thankful in all things (1 Thess. 5:18). Do your children see that you are thankful or do they see you complaining on a consistent basis? Notice that God gives people over to sin when they fail to give thanks and honor him (cf. Rom. 1:21, 24-32). Your children can learn to show gratitude from the time that they are toddlers by your reminders to say "thank you" and write thank-you notes, but they will truly learn gratitude as they see your constant attitude of contentment and thankfulness. Are you being what you want your children to be in gratitude?

### Be What You Want Your Children to Be in Honesty and Respect

If you want your children to be honest, they must see it always in you. They must see you telling the truth to all, giving an "honest day's work for an honest day's pay," attempting to find the rightful owner of things found, etc. They must not see you telling lies (even "little white ones") to cover up sin or avoid its consequences, exaggerating your abilities or experience on your resume to get ahead in your career, cheating the IRS, etc. If they do see these things, do not be surprised if they cheat at school, make up stories, or lie to get out of trouble.

We, as parents, should realize that we do sin and make mistakes (cf. 1 John 1:8, 10), even though we may try to do our best. But when we make wrong or hypocritical judgments on our children, we should have the conviction and humility to confess our sins to them and to the Lord (cf. Jas. 5:16; 1 John 1:9). Do you want your children to tell you the truth at all times and confess their faults to you? Then set the example! Some will say that will weaken your authority in their eyes. No, that happens when you conceal your transgressions instead of forsaking them (cf. Prov. 28:13) because of pride. They will lose respect for you if you compromise the truth, justify yourself, make excuses or shift the blame. Instead of trying to cover up your sins, you should honestly tell your children that you are not perfect and that God's word is the standard. Sin is the transgression of God's law (1 John 3:4). But God's love, mercy, and forgiveness is available in Jesus Christ as we are obedient to him (Heb. 5:9). Are you being what you want your children to be in honesty?

If you want your children to be respectful, you must show honor for those who are in authority. We should teach them at a young age to say "please," "thank you," "yes and no, ma'am" and "yes and no, sir." They should see us showing courtesy to others (holding doors open, helping with bags, and letting cars in ahead of us in traffic). They

should not hear us speaking of others in derogatory ways, making fun of others, or interrupting conversations.

If you want your children to have respect for God's word in marriage, show respect for your own. Do you, as a husband, sacrifice for your wife (cf. Eph. 5:25), instead of looking to your own interests? Do you, as a wife, submit to his decisions (cf. Eph. 5:22), or do you complain about them? If you don't teach your children respect in the home, how will they ever have respect for their teachers, policemen, the elderly, government officials, and spiritual leaders in the church? Are you being what you want your children to be in respect for others?

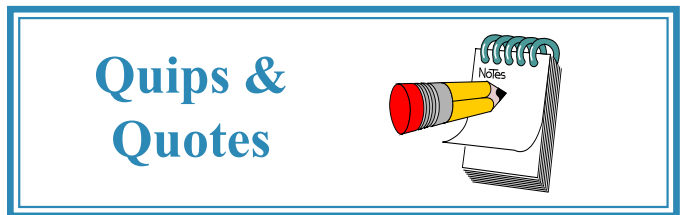
### Conclusion

Their first impressions of who God is will come from their experience in your home and will likely impact them for all of eternity. Before you put God's word into your children's hearts, it must be in yours first (Deut. 6:6). You must live it before you can teach it. You can't expect your children to be something you are not. Your children are watching. They see and hear almost everything. How many times have you heard children repeat things that embarrass their parents? There is no greater detriment to parenting than hypocrisy. Be what you want your children to be! This will help them become who you want them to be, you to enjoy a lifelong relationship with them, and each of you go to heaven. We only live our lives once, and there is no turning back the clock. Begin today to repent and remove the stumbling blocks so that you can be what you want your children to be.

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*(Note: There are four more articles in this series. They will be in the next issue of Truth Magazine.)*

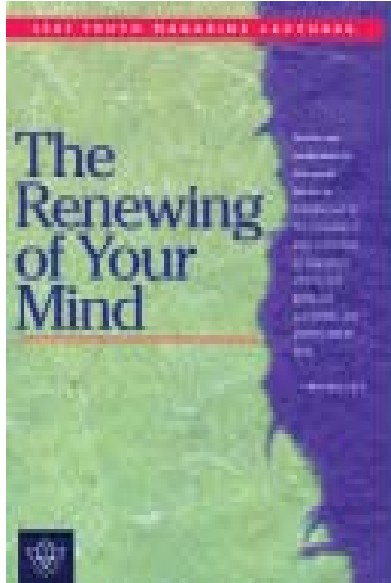


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