

The background of the cover features a silhouette of a man and a child standing on a dark horizon, looking out at a sunset. The sky is filled with soft, colorful clouds in shades of purple, blue, and orange, with the sun low on the horizon. The man is on the left, and the child is on the right, holding the man's hand.

# Child Discipline

David W. Cloud

*Child Discipline*

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This edition September 2022

ISBN 978-1-58318-164-5



Published by Way of Life Literature  
PO Box 610368, Port Huron, MI 48061  
866-295-4143 (toll free) - fbns@wayoflife.org  
[www.wayoflife.org](http://www.wayoflife.org)

Canada: Bethel Baptist Church  
4212 Campbell St. N., London Ont. N6P 1A6 519-652-2619  
Printed in Canada by  
Bethel Baptist Print Ministry

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*“Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it” (Proverbs 22:6).*

# Keeping the Kids

Most of this book on child discipline is excerpted from *Keeping the Kids: How to Keep the Children From Falling Prey to the World*, which is available in print and eBook editions from Way of Life Literature. The book is a child-training manual, a marriage manual, a discipleship manual. It is a manual for parents, grandparents, pastors, and youth workers.

## ***Keeping the Kids* Chapter Titles**

- Can We Keep the Kids?
- The Necessity of Priority
- The Necessity of a Biblical Conversion
- The Home: *Consistent Christian Living*
- The Home: *The Husband-Wife Relationship*
- Child Discipline
- The Church
- Separation from the Pop Culture
- Discipleship
- The Grandparents
- What if the Kids Are Already Rebellious?
- Candor, God's Grace, and the Power of Prayer
- Ten Tips for Daily Bible Reading
- How to Lose Your Child Before He Is Five
- A Checklist for "Keeping the Kids"

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Effective child discipline is one of the most important aspects of "keeping the kids." Such discipline must be accomplished within a framework of a godly home environment, which is why we dealt with this (consistent Christian living, husband-wife relationship, etc.) separately in the previous chapters (of *Keeping the Kids*).

The Bible says, “Train up a child in the way he should go; and when he is old, he will not depart from it” (Proverbs 22:6).

We discussed this verse at the beginning of the book (*Keeping the Kids*) in the chapter “Can We Keep the Kids?” I believe it is God’s promise for godly child-training. It does not mean that the child will never struggle with submission to God and human authority, nor does it mean that the child will necessarily exhibit perfect sanctification and surrender. It simply means what it says. If the child is trained in the right way he will not depart from it when he is old, and that age varies from child to child.

Parents need to go to God’s Word for instruction in discipline, and not to the world or to Christian psychologists. The Bible is given by divine inspiration and is able to make God’s people “perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Timothy 3:16-17). This means that the Bible has everything we need for faith and practice. The word “perfect” does not mean sinless perfection; it means thoroughly furnished or equipped to do God’s will in this world. It has everything necessary for godly husband-wife relationships and for effective child training.

There are Bible-based books that can help parents in this all-important task of training their children. It doesn’t come naturally; it must be learned. Many Christian parents were not raised in a godly home themselves, so they have never seen these things lived out. Two books that I recommend are the following:

*Rearing Spiritual Children to Serve the Savior* by Terry Coomer. God has given Pastor Coomer some special wisdom about building a godly Christian life and family. In addition to publishing helpful materials on this subject, he conducts family conferences in local churches.

Pastor Coomer may be contacted at:  
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IN 46036, 765-552-1973.  
[www.fortheloveofthefamily.com](http://www.fortheloveofthefamily.com), [tlcoomer@juno.com](mailto:tlcoomer@juno.com).

*Training Your Children to Turn out Right*  
by David Sorenson (Northstar Ministries, 218-726-0209.  
[www.northstarministries.com](http://www.northstarministries.com), [dhs.northstar@charter.net](mailto:dhs.northstar@charter.net).

Materials are available, but they must be used. I would challenge parents to get these books and sit down together and go through them and discuss them. Analyze your family in light of God's Word and decide what changes need to be made.

Churches need to emphasize this matter and give more practical instruction than they usually do. It is the church's responsibility to teach God's Word, and it is God's Word that contains the instructions on how to train godly children. A message on the home and child training every year or so is not enough! This theme needs to be regularly woven into the preaching and teaching. (For more on this see the chapter on The Church under the section "A church that seeks to build strong families.")

The following are principles of child discipline that are emphasized in the Scripture.

## Your Enemy

“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour” (1 Peter 5:8).

“Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high *places*. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand” (Ephesians 6:11-13).

Mom and Dad, you have a fierce, unseen enemy. The devil wants to destroy your Christian home. He wants to ruin your marriage and steal your children. If he can't ruin, he wants to weaken. He wants to use your home to attack the church; he wants to use the church to attack the home!

He is persistent and will not give up. He is clever and will attack from various angles. He will attack your weakness, not your strength.

God has given you everything you need to have the victory over this enemy, but the victory doesn't come easily.

Victory requires being sober and vigilant (1 Pe. 5:8). “**Sober**” is *népho*, soberminded, watchful, circumspect. It is translated “watch” (2 Ti. 4:5; 1 Pe. 4:7). “**Vigilant**” is *gregoreúo*, “to arise, arouse, watch, refrain from sleep.” It is translated “watch” (Mt. 24:42; 26:41; Lu. 12:37; Ac. 20:31; 1 Co. 16:13; Col. 4:2; 1 Th. 5:6; Re. 3:2; 16:15) and “wake” (1 Th. 5:10). Sober and vigilant mean nearly the same thing, both words being used to give emphasis to the importance of this duty. Being sober and vigilant refers to “a mindfulness of threatening dangers which, with conscious

earnestness and an alert mind, keeps it from all drowsiness and all slackening in the energy” (*Complete Word Study Dictionary*). *Being sober and vigilant is intimately associated with prayer*: “watch and pray” (Mt. 26:41; Mr. 13:33; 14:38; Lu. 21:36; Eph. 6:19; Col. 4:2; 1 Pe. 4:7). *Being sober and vigilant is associated with a testing mindset, which is a major doctrine of God’s Word*. See Pr. 14:15; Acts 17:11; 2 Co. 10:5; Php. 3:17; 4:8; 1 Ti. 5:21-22; Heb. 5:14; 1 Jo. 4:1; Re. 2:2. A testing mindset requires a strong knowledge of Scripture. The husband and wife must be serious Bible students.

Victory in the spiritual warfare requires putting on the whole armor of God (Eph. 6:10-18). The battle is described by the aorist imperative verbs and participles. (“**put on ... take unto you ... stand ... stand ... having ... having on ... taking ... take**”). “The aorist imperative denotes a command ... it is often used ... for things that must be begun at that very moment” (*Complete Word Study Bible*). This denotes urgency, zeal, passion, energy. Half-hearted, lukewarm Christianity will not win the battle.

## God's Promises

It is a fundamental, necessary thing that Christians learn biblical child discipline. The succeeding generations are very important to the cause of Christ. Children belong to God, and they are given to parents to be fashioned as sharp arrows and sent out into the world to engage in spiritual warfare as pilgrims and ambassadors of Christ (Psa. 127:3-5). God intends parents to raise a godly seed. ("And wherefore one? That he might seek a godly seed," Mal. 2:15).

Both married and unmarried believers need to learn about child discipline and training. It is better to learn about it before marriage and enter into marriage informed and forearmed than it is to try to learn it after children have arrived.

God has encouraged Christian parents that they can train their children in such a way that they will continue in the right path.

**"Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it" (Pr. 22:6).**

I personally believe this is a promise, and I have seen large numbers of parents who have had the joy of seeing their children walk with Christ and raise future generations in godliness.

At the very least, this proverb is a divine exhortation to parents to give their very best effort to this business.

Following are other similar promises from God's Word:

**"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" (Pr. 23:13-14).**

This is an amazing promise. To think that parents can discipline their children in such a way that they will be saved and escape hell is a most incredible thought, and this is exactly what this Proverb promises.

Of course, we know that salvation is an individual matter and it is a supernatural thing. The new birth cannot be inherited or caught, but godly discipline prepares the way for salvation by teaching the child the holiness of God, the seriousness of God's Law, and the reality of his own sinful nature, thus emphasizing to his heart his lost condition and urgent need of a Saviour. This provides fertile soil on which the Holy Spirit can work.

God has a special concern for the family. It is the first human institution that He created at the dawn of man's history, and He has always had a special interest in it.

Consider the promise of Psalm 127:

**“Lo, children are an heritage of the LORD: and the fruit of the womb is his reward. As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man; so are children of the youth. Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them: they shall not be ashamed, but they shall speak with the enemies in the gate” (Psalms 127:3-5).**

This is a promise, but it becomes reality only when a father and mother are committed to God's Word, when the father is the priest of his home and the mother is his devoted help meet. Children do not become effective instruments (“arrows”) against the enemy just because they are born into a Christian home and are brought to church; they become that when they are raised properly by a father and mother that are “mighty” in the spiritual sense and are devoted to shaping and sharpening their children by the guidelines of God's Word.

# The Roles of the Father and the Mother

Effectual child discipline requires unity between the father and the mother. They have different roles in the home, but they must work in harmony.

What we see in Scripture is a father and a mother who are committed to obeying God in the home. They are focused on raising their children for the Lord. The father is focused on his part, and the mother is focused on her part, but they are in unity. They don't allow anything to hinder this. They are more concerned about the spiritual than the economic. They are willing to have less on the economic side in order to advance the spiritual side. They put the Lord first and trust Him to take care of them.

## **The father is the overseer.**

“And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord” (Eph. 6:4).

### 1. The father is to “*provoke not your children to wrath.*”

God's instruction to the fathers begins here. This command is repeated in Col. 3:21 by way of emphasis. Mothers can provoke their children to wrath, but this is especially something that fathers tend to do by a misuse of their authority. Fathers must be exceedingly careful in how they exercise authority over their families, because they represent Christ and will give account to Him. “It is the duty of children to obey a parent; but it is the duty of a parent to exhibit such a character, and to maintain such a government, that it would be proper for the child to obey; to command nothing that is unreasonable or improper, but to

train up his children in the ways of virtue and pure religion” (Barnes).

“Provoke not” is present tense, indicating continual action, and it is imperative mood, indicating a command.

This instruction was contrary to Rome’s law which gave fathers absolute authority over their children. Called *patria potestas* (“power of a father”), this law originally gave the father authority to punish even by death. It “embraced complete control over the limited personal and private rights and duties of all members of the family.” God’s Word corrects human culture. God’s people are to be pilgrims in a foreign world, following the laws and ways of their heavenly country.

Following are some of the ways that fathers can provoke their children to wrath:

- by being unkind, uncompassionate, inconsiderate, severe, harsh
- by being unreasonable, unfair
- by being heavy handed, punishing more severely than the occasion deserves, “using a sledgehammer to drive home a tack”
- by disciplining in haste or in anger
- by not explaining the rules properly
- by unannounced rules that are made known only after the child has broken them
- by being inconsistent in enforcing rules
- by having too many rules
- by not understanding the children and by having unrealistic expectations
- by being distant
- by unremitting criticism
- by hypocrisy
- by neglect
- by not listening and communicating properly

- by breaking one's promises
- by comparing the children with others or comparing one child with another
- by favoritism
- by insults
- by treating the children's mother unkindly. It has been said that one of the most important things that a man can do for his children is to love his wife. When a man loves his wife, the children see that marriage is a good thing, something to be desired. They respect their father. They see that obedience to God's Word is desirable.

Though children *can be* provoked to wrath by the abuse of parental authority, they don't *have to be* provoked to wrath even in the face of abuse. They can receive Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour, obtain new life in Him, and find their strength and help in Him in every situation. "Servants, *be* subject to *your* masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward. For this *is* thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. ... Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls *to him* in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator" (1 Pe. 2:18-19; 4:19). Children cannot use parental failure as an excuse to rebel against God. God does not fail; man fails. Each young person will give account to God, so he must put his eyes upon God rather than upon man. "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this *is* the whole *duty* of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether *it be* good, or whether *it be* evil" (Ec. 12:13-14). "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things *done* in *his* body, according to that he hath done, whether *it be* good or bad" (2 Co. 5:10).

2. The father is to “**bring them up.**”

“Bring them up” is *extrépho*, “to nourish, rear, feed, nurture, bring up to maturity” (*Complete Word Study Bible*). It is translated “nourish” in Eph. 5:29.

“Bring them up” is present tense, indicating continual action, and it is imperative mood, indicating a command.

This is the father’s divinely-assigned job. Typically, the mother will be more involved with training the children on a day-by-day basis, but the father must be the head of this business, the overseer, the superintendent. He is to be engaged, not absent. He must say with Joshua, “But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD” (Jos. 24:15).

The father must not leave the spiritual training of the children to someone else. He must be engaged, superintending. He must have a hands-on role in this important work, developing and maintaining a close relationship with his wife, spending time with the children to know them and to win their hearts, personally instructing them in the Scriptures, communicating closely with the wife about the children’s education, conducting family devotions, answering the children’s questions, and many other such things. He must not leave this entirely up to the wife or to the church or to a Christian school.

Neglect of this responsibility by fathers is a major reason why so many Christian families fail in raising godly children. The wife has an essential role, but she cannot take the place of the father. (When a father dies or leaves, the Lord can give grace to overcome this deficit.) It is not that the father is to do all of the teaching and disciplining of his children; it is that he is to oversee all of the teaching and training. He is not an absentee; he is actively involved.

Terry Coomer observes, “[In Ephesians 6:4] the father is addressed as the manager. In addressing the fathers, Paul is addressing the one in whom God has vested his authority for discipline. When Dad manages his household he does not always need to administer discipline directly. He must discipline the children largely through his wife. Yet in all, the father must remain in control and be aware of what happens. God holds him responsible” (*Rearing Spiritual Children*, p. 61).

3. The father is to “bring them up *in the nurture and admonition of the Lord*.”

Nurture and admonition encompass all aspects of child training: instruction, reproof, correction, chastening. “**Nurture**” is *paideía*, “instruction and training by act and discipline ... includes and implies chastening, correction” (*Complete Word Study Bible*). It is translated “instruction in righteousness” (2 Ti. 3:16) and “chastening” (Heb. 12:5, 7, 8, 11). “**Admonition**” is *nouthesía*, exhortation, reproof, warning. “*Nouthesia* is any word of encouragement or reproof which leads to correct behavior.”

The nurture and admonition is to be “*of the Lord*.” (1) **This means that the child training is to be in accordance with God’s Word.** The parents are not to follow their own thinking or the world’s thinking in training their children. The Bible has everything necessary for God’s people to be “thoroughly furnished unto all good works,” and the immediate context is child training (2 Ti. 3:15-17). Thus the father must know the Word of God, he must be skillful in handling the Scripture; he must be well-grounded in Scripture. He must be a serious Bible student. The better he knows the Scripture, the better he can train his children and lead his home. “The best text-book of all remains the Bible, especially the book of Proverbs. Wise parents know the Bible, study its case histories of parents, and ponder its

stories of boys and girls” (John Phillips). **(2) *That the child training is “of the Lord” means that it is to imitate the Lord’s ways.*** The father is to rule the home as Christ would rule it, to raise his children as Christ would raise them, with loving kindness, compassion, firmness, and wise discipline. The parents are the Lord’s representatives to raise the children for Him and in a manner that pleases Him. Children do not belong to parents; they belong to the Lord. God says, “Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine” (Eze. 18:4). “Lo, children *are* an heritage of the LORD” (Ps. 127:3). Malachi stated that the purpose for marriage is “That he [God] might seek a godly seed” (Mal. 2:15). **(3) *That the child training is “of the Lord” means that the child training is aimed to bring the children to the Lord in salvation and surrender.*** The children are to be taught the Scripture so that they can be made “wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus” (2 Ti. 3:15).

Both nurture and admonition are necessary. There must be teaching, exhorting, warning, reproving, correcting, and chastening. Modern psychology typically downplays the necessity of the “negative” aspects of child training, but this is because it is based on a humanistic concept of man’s nature and rejects God’s Word.

God said of Abraham, “For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him and they shall keep the way of the Lord to do justice and judgment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him” (Ge. 18:9). Abraham was commended by God for giving commandments, not suggestions, to his children.

We see that in God’s plan the home is the primary educational institution of children. The church and the home are to work together in this important business. It is

not God's will for Christian parents to give their children over to be educated by unbelievers. A proper education can never be divorced from the spiritual and moral and doctrinal issues. These are not to be tagged onto a secular education as something different from it, and in addition to it; they are to be woven into the very warp and woof of the education.

Following is a description of how that Evangelist John R. Rice brought up his daughters in the nurture and admonition of the Lord: "Though Dr. Rice was away from home more than half the time on missions for the Lord,' Mrs. Rice said, 'he never left his child discipline to others. He set the rules when he left; checked up when he got back. If things had begun to slide a bit in his absence, he took things in hand and set them on the right road again. He was determined that in the home of one evangelist, he would see that the children turned out right; he was determined under God to turn them out right.' She continued, 'I could wish for every child a father like my children's father. While he was winning other children to the Lord, he did not neglect to win his own; he trained them for the Lord'" (Viola Walden, *John R. Rice: The Captain of our Team*).

### **The mother is the keeper of the home.**

"That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, To be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed" (Titus 2:4-5).

"**Keepers at home**" is the Greek *oikouros*, which is a combination of *oikos* (home) and *ouros* (a keeper). It means "one who guards the house, one who stays at home, domestically inclined." "One who looks after domestic affairs with prudence and care" (*Complete Word Study Bible*). 1 Timothy 5:14 says the wife/mother is to "guide the

house.” This is the Greek *oikodespoteo*, which is a combination of *oiko* (house) and *despotes* (ruler). It is a strong word, meaning master of the house, governor, manager. This was the role that Joseph had under Potiphar. “... he made him overseer over his house, and all that he had he put into his hand” (Ge. 39:4). The wife governs the household affairs under her husband’s authority and oversight. This is the exalted biblical role of a wife. She is the household governor. She orders it. She “looketh well to the ways of her household” (Pr. 31:27).

The modern versions read “working at home” (ASV, ESV, Vine, Wuest) from the critical Greek text (*oikourgos*, from *oikos* - home and *ergon* - work). This is a much weaker concept. The mother is not merely a worker at home; she is the guardian of the home under the husband’s authority and supervision!

What “keepers at home” means is that the chief responsibility of the Christian wife and mother is her home, and she must focus her attention on this and not do *anything* that would cause her to neglect it. No one can take the place of a wife and mother, and if she neglects her duty toward the husband or children, God is disobeyed and harm results.

The job of “keeper at home” is very large. The godly wife is not just a maid and cook. She does everything she can to make the home what God wants it to be. She concentrates her attention on developing a sober, discreet mind by a serious relationship with the Word of God and a testing mindset. She develops and pursues chastity and goodness. She studies how to love her husband and how to be obedient to him, how to help him, how to encourage him. She studies how to love her children, how to understand them, how to discipline them, how to educate them, how to disciple them, how to teach them to go in God’s will. She is a friend, a

lover, a nurse, a chef, an organizer, an educator, a disciplinarian, an evangelist, a discipler. She must be a Bible student and a student of life. She must understand nutrition, diet, and healthcare. She must know how to honor her husband and how to reach the hearts of her children. She must be the teacher of her children.

The home is a tremendously important institution. It is the first institution that God made when He brought Eve to Adam and performed the first marriage, as recorded in Genesis 2. The home is for the purpose of raising up a godly seed for God's glory. The prophet Malachi described this. "And did not he make one? ... And wherefore one? That he might seek a godly seed..." (Mal. 2:15). The context is marriage. The husband and wife are made one by God, and when He gives them children, he is seeking a godly seed. Children do not belong to parents. Both parents and children belong to God. He says, "Behold, all souls are mine..." (Eze. 18:4). And the parents are tasked with raising the children to know God and to walk in His will.

This does not mean that the woman can do nothing outside of the home. Comparing Scripture with Scripture, we know that the virtuous woman does many things such as seeking wool and flax (Pr. 31:13), bringing her food from afar (Pr. 31:14), buying a field and planting a vineyard (Pr. 31:16), and stretching out her hands to the poor (Pr. 31:20). But her work outside of the home is done in the context of fulfilling her duties as a godly wife and mother and contributing to the blessing of the household and does not cause her to neglect such duties. In the book *Woman and Her Service for God*, in the chapter "The Virtuous Woman," I describe my own wife's labor in privately buying and selling property in the 1990s. She did that in the context of being a keeper of the home, and it was a great blessing to our family.

I have heard many men say that a major reason why their children turned out right for the Lord was marrying the right woman and making the decision for her to be the keeper of the home, and I can say the same thing. My wife was a nurse before we were married, but she has not worked as a nurse since then (though she has used her medical training to great benefit). She has been free to devote herself full-time to being a godly and effective wife and mother, and it has paid unspeakably rich dividends to her husband and children. I am very happy that my daughter and daughters-in-law are keepers at home for their young families.

Recently I heard of a medical doctor who left a lucrative career to focus her attention more fully on her children. She had an extremely well-paying job, but her husband was the home keeper and she was the bread winner. After some time, they were convicted about this scenario and determined to follow God's Word rather than their previous plans. They relocated to a former church, which was a stronger church, and she took a large cut in pay, working only part time, so she could be a keeper at home. Now, the husband is the main bread winner.

For the wife to be the keeper at home requires the husband's commitment. A niece wrote to me recently and said, "Elias turned 1 on the 11th of last month and Ivan will be 3 on the 21st of this month. It is going by fast. We have such a short time with our children to teach them truth. I'm so glad I'm able to stay home with the boys and be fully present. **Brian [her husband] always wanted it that way.**" Here she pinpointed a fundamental key, which is the husband and wife being in unity and the husband being fully supportive. This young couple lives wisely and frugally on the income of a deputy sheriff, which is not very large, but they make all necessary sacrifices for God and for their children. They do not go into debt. They save their money to buy things like

vehicles and shop for the best value. And God has blessed them. They own their own home and a late model vehicle.

Evangelist Billy Sunday and his wife, Nell, provide a sharp warning on this subject. In 1908, they left their three boys (age 15, 7, and 1) in the care of nannies and traveled together on the evangelism trail. Nell was Billy's campaign and business manager. All of the Sunday boys turned out to be drunkards with nine marriages between them. They all died before age 40: George of suicide after being arrested for drunkenness and auto theft; Billy Jr. in a drunken car crash; Paul in an airplane crash. Yet Nell Sunday pushed for women working during World War I. She said, "... at last, the doors of the Doll House have been opened and women have been invited to come into the great world outside." But the only Sunday child that turned out "right" was their first child, a daughter that Nell raised herself before venturing out of the home.

Modern society does everything possible to get the mother out of the home and to encourage parents to turn the children over to babysitters and schools. *It is the product of feminism* which began to blossom at the end of the 19th century. Feminist philosophy is rebellion to God's Word. Feminism teaches that women should do whatever they please rather than submit to fathers and husbands. It teaches that women can do anything a man can do, downplaying, even denying, the fundamental differences between male and female. It teaches that being keepers at home is bondage, and women need to be liberated from such things. Women working outside the home began with the Industrial Revolution in England and America and increased during World War I (1920s) and World War II (1940s). *It is the product of covetousness, the advertising age*; you must have everything and you must have it now. This is not the Bible way, and the fruit has been terrible. It has been a major

contributor to the weakening of the home and the explosion of divorce. It has left the children without direct parental supervision.

Each family must make these decisions before the Lord. Pastors are the teachers and overseers of the assembly, but a pastor is not the head of the homes in the assembly. The husband and father is sole head of the home under Christ, and he must make these decisions in conjunction with his wife; they are one flesh (Eph. 5:31). The husband and wife do not have the authority to ignore or disobey the Word of God, but they have the authority to interpret the Word of God and to apply it to their family situation (1 Jo. 2:27). In some cases, for example, the children are in a church school and mothers work in the school and church. In that type of situation, the mothers are probably not neglecting their children.

There are extenuating circumstances that must be taken into account in regard to women being keepers at home. Sometimes the husband is unable to work, for example, and the wife is called upon to become the “chief bread winner.” We must exercise mercy and grace in such matters. There was room for this type of thing even under the strict law of Moses. For example, though the sabbath was not to be broken and no work was to be done under pain of death, God allowed a man to lift his ox out of the ditch on that day (Lu. 14:5).

We would note that there is an association between “chaste” and “keepers at home.” Countless homes have been broken when women have become romantically involved with men at work and left their husbands. “Dinah, when she went to see the daughters of the land, lost her chastity. ... Not but there are occasions, and will be, of going abroad; but a gadding temper for merriment and company sake, to the neglect of domestic affairs, or from uneasiness at being in

her place, is the opposite evil intended, which is commonly accompanied with, or draws after it, other evils” (Matthew Henry).

“I will therefore that the younger women marry, bear children, guide the house, give none occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully” (1 Timothy 5:14).

“**Guide the house**” is the Greek *oikodespotéo*, which is a combination of *oiko* (house) and *despótes* (ruler). It is a strong word, meaning master of the house, governor, manager. “One who looks after domestic affairs with prudence and care” (*Complete Word Study Bible*). This was the role that Joseph had under Potiphar. “... he made him overseer over his house, and all that he had he put into his hand” (Ge. 39:4).

The wife governs the household affairs under her husband’s authority and oversight. This is the exalted biblical role of a wife. She is the household governor. She orders it. She focuses her attention on it. The work of a wife and mother is very large and important.

We see this in the Proverbs 31 woman who “looketh well to the ways of her household” (Pr. 31:27).

## Conclusion

God’s plan for the home is simple and very beautiful. It requires that the husband and the wife make Christ the King of their home. He is not yet the King of this world in a practical sense, but He can be the King of our individual lives, our homes, and our churches.

God’s plan is that **the father** commit himself to be the spiritual head of the home under Christ. He must take this responsibility seriously. It must not be treated as a secondary occupation. He must focus his attention on it. He must study to perfect it. He must be a serious Bible student so he

can lead his family. He must set out to develop the Christian character, by God's Spirit, that is essential for him to be the husband and father that God wants him to be. He must not allow anything to hinder this occupation. He must not become so preoccupied with other things that he is not available to his wife and children. He must make his decisions (e.g., job, friends, hobbies, church) on the basis of his duty as the spiritual head of the home and the superintendent of his children's training.

God's plan requires that **the mother** commit herself to be the keeper of the home. She must set out to develop the Christian character described in Titus 2:4-5 (sober, love, discreet, chaste, good, obedient) by the indwelling Holy Spirit, so that she can be the wife and mother that God wants her to be. She must focus her attention on the business of the Christian home. She must not allow anything or anyone to sidetrack her from this occupation.

# Understanding the Child's Nature

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

A sound child training philosophy begins with right understanding of the child's nature.

Modern child psychology begins with the idea that human beings are basically good and seeks to develop that inherent goodness and build “self esteem.”

According to the Bible, he has inherited a sinful nature from Adam that is naturally bent toward foolishness rather than wisdom.

“Foolishness” is the Hebrew *iwwelet*, which refers to sin. “O God, thou knowest my foolishness; and my sins are not hid from thee” (Ps. 69:5). The child has a sinful nature that naturally disobeys authority and goes in the way of foolishness rather than wisdom. This refers to the fallen nature that we inherit from Adam. See also Ps. 58:3; Isa. 64:6; Jer. 17:9; Ro. 3:10-18, 23.

Note that foolishness is “bound in the heart.” It is not something that can be easily removed. It is not something that the child will grow out of on his own.

The Bible begins with the principle that human beings are fallen by nature and seeks to bring them to regeneration by the tools of conviction and repentance and faith through the instrumentality of the law of God and the gospel of Jesus Christ. “And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus” (2 Ti. 3:15).

# Obedience and Respect for Authority

The first objective of godly child discipline is to teach the child obedience and respect for authority so that he will submit to God. The child must be taught that God is a holy, law-giving God who must be obeyed and that disobedience brings punishment. This prepares the child to understand God's character and the reality of the moral universe and it instructs him in the foundational principles of salvation.

Since the child cannot see God, he must be taught to respect divine authority through learning to respect parental authority.

**The first test of effective child discipline is simple: Does the child obey?** Does he obey quickly, the first time he is told? Does he obey fully? Does he obey without threats? Does he obey without enticement (the offer of a reward)? Does he obey with a good attitude? If he is properly disciplined, he will obey like this. Every child can learn to obey like this. If he does not obey like this, he is not properly disciplined. Poor child discipline cannot be hidden. It is evident before everyone. Wherever your child goes, he demonstrates whether or not he has been biblically disciplined.

Bob Nichols, missionary to Brazil, says,

“The first thing you need to do is establish your authority in the lives of your children. If you never establish authority, they'll never respect you. Too often I've seen parents asking their children if they want to do this or that. But when they are young, you don't ask them, you tell them. They need to learn to obey authority. Too often parents don't establish their authority in the lives of their children, and that is very tragic. Once you establish that, then you have to be sure to give clear commands to your

children, that they understand what you are requiring, and if the command is given they need to carry it out. If not, that is direct disobedience.”

Pastor Gene Haymaker observes that the high percentage of young people who leave church is partly caused by parents “refusal to restrain.” He says,

“Proverbs teaches us that foolishness is to be driven from our children through correction, but this is something that I believe is missing in many homes. Boundaries, standards, and even consequences have been abandoned in a belief that children inherently want to do right. It is sad when parents prefer to be their children’s friends rather than embracing their God-given role of parenting, and when they leave their children to themselves even though the Scriptures teach that a child left to himself brings shame. The refusal to restrain our children is not love, but rather evidence that we do not love them as we ought. According to the Scripture, a father who loves his son chastens him (Heb. 12:6).”

Pastor David Sorenson gives the following counsel,

The first major, absolute rule that I would suggest for your family is to demand obedience. Few things in family life are more fundamental than teaching children to obey. We positively, absolutely, always expected our children to obey when they were given clear instructions (Ephesians 6:1). ...

If children are consistently disobedient, it means that the parents, at some point, have not trained them to be obedient. ... We positively demanded that our children obey us. If they did not obey, there were immediate and consistent consequences. Every time. Every single time! Obedience is critically important. Not only is obedience important to maintain order in a child’s life, but it also has a profound spiritual implication. ... when children become accustomed to disobeying their parents and

getting away with it, they are likely to adopt the same attitude toward doing God's will. ...

Parents, you will do your children a great spiritual favor by insisting on obedience. You are establishing a precedent in their lives for them to obey God as they mature and become independent. ...

Insisting on obedience is a basic way of training a child to subordinate his or her old nature to standards of right. ... In our home, when one of the children was directly and overtly disobedient, it was dealt with immediately. There were no ifs, ands, or buts. ... There was no debate. ... If one of the children was punished for having been disobedient, we always made very sure that she understood her punishment was because she disobeyed....

Our children need to learn that every single time they violate a household rule, there will be a predictable and unpleasant experience. Children seem to think that if they whittle away at their parents long enough, the parents will wear down and then give in. Consistently enforce your rules (*Training Your Children to Turn out Right*, pp. 62-64, 71).

**Parents must use every opportunity to teach their children obedience, and the training and discipline must be consistent.** If it is inconsistent, off and on, it will not work and, in fact, could do more harm than good.

For example, I have seen many parents tell their child to do something and then back down and do it themselves when the child refuses. I recall a father who was watching his son playing outside. When the child took some bean husks and threw them into a play sandbox, the father told him to get the husks and put them into a trash bag nearby. The son ignored him. The father told him again and again was ignored. The child looked at him but didn't move. Finally, the father got up and did it himself and let the child get

away with open disobedience. The child should have been spanked the very first time he refused to obey and spanked sufficiently so that he was forced to obey and was left with a bad taste for disobedience. That process is not as easy as getting up and doing the thing yourself, but it is godly child training and will bear good fruit in time. Ignoring disobedience, even some of the time, will also bear fruit in time, but it will not be good fruit.

**Children must be taught to be respectful of authority figures other than parents**, whether grandparents, teachers, pastors, police, or even adults in general. If children do not learn to respect human authority, they certainly won't respect God's authority. The Lord has ordained a chain of authority in this world, and godly morality has a lot to do with submission to that authority. Respect to God demands respect to the authority that God has ordained (1 Corinthians 11:3). Submission to authority is greatly emphasized in the New Testament epistles.

“Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God” (Romans 13:1).

“Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God. Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord” (Ephesians 5:21-22).

“Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise;) That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth” (Ephesians 6:1-3).

“And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; And to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. And be at peace among yourselves” (1 Thessalonians 5:12-13).

“Rebuke not an elder, but intreat him as a father; and the younger men as brethren; The elder women as mothers; the younger as sisters, with all purity. (1 Timothy 5:1-2).

“Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine” (1 Timothy 5:17).

“Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work” (Titus 3:1).

“Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you” (Hebrews 13:17).

“Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; Or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well” (1 Peter 2:13-14).

“Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king” (1 Peter 2:17).

“Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives” (1 Peter 3:1).

**Children need to be taught to do things that exhibit respect for authority.**

They need to be taught to speak respectfully to adults. The “old-fashioned” custom of teaching children to learn to say “yes sir” and “no sir” to their elders was designed to educate them to respect authority. Missionary Bob Nichols says, “I’ve always insisted on my kids saying, ‘Yes sir’ and ‘no sir.’ I know that’s not real popular, but it shows respect and kids need to do that.” At the very least the children should be

taught to use respectful language with adults instead of slang.

Children need to be taught to answer adults when they are addressed. Many children are shy, it is true, but they also like to play silly games and they must be taught to come out of their comfort zone and show respect to authority and not be allowed to follow their natural tendencies. As I travel on preaching and research trips in many parts of the world and have preached in over 500 churches, I have often asked a child his name or some other question and the child has refused to answer. Many parents excuse this behavior instead of training the child properly.

Children need to be taught not to interrupt adults when they are talking.

They need to be taught to greet adults when they come into their presence, instead of ignoring them and continuing with their own business. The latter is an act of disrespect. This is especially true if the adult is an authority figure, such as a grandparent or a teacher.

Younger children even need to be taught to respect the older children. Missionary Bob Nichols says,

“We always taught the younger ones to obey the older ones. A lot of times the younger don’t want to listen to the older, but God put us in the order in which we are born into the families with a design and purpose. So they have to understand that.”

None of these things come “naturally.” Naturally, the child follows the way of his fallen heart, which is selfish, insubordinate, and disrespectful.

Teaching obedience and respect for authority is a major part of child discipline.

## Making Much of God's Word

It is the Word of God that has the power to sanctify us and build us up in Christ. It imparts conviction, enlightenment, spiritual strength, faith, wisdom, and repentance. It has converting power and sanctifying power. Consider the following Scriptures:

“And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates” (Deuteronomy 6:6-9).

“This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success” (Joshua 1:8).

“Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper” (Psalms 1:1-3).

“Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word” (Psalms 119:9).

“Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path” (Psalms 119:105).

“And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified” (Acts 20:32).

“So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Romans 10:17).

“And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Timothy 3:15-17).

“For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart” (Hebrews 4:12)

“As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby” (1 Peter 2:2).

“We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts” (2 Peter 1:19)

Wise Christian parents will fill their homes with the Scripture, teaching it to the children, memorizing it together, discussing it.

David Sorenson writes,

If there is a basic truth that is universal in training children to be godly, it is the necessity of building a foundation of the Word of God in their lives. This is true for any born-again Christian and that includes the children of God’s people. I fear that Christian parents

come to rely on Christian media, Sunday School teachers, church youth programs, and Christian schools to see their youth turn out right. All of these are potentially good and can be a great help; however, the foundation for godly living is often missing in the lives of the children and youth of God's people. That foundation is a daily absorption of the Word of God.

A young person from a Christian home can go to a Christian school or be home-schooled with a godly curriculum, be faithful to Sunday School and church programs, go to church camp, and be carnal, rebellious, and worldly. Or more frequently, they are just lukewarm and go with the flow, but there are not true spiritual convictions in their hearts. The reason is as simple as it is singular. They are not in the Word of God on a daily basis.

It makes little difference if one is a young person or a seasoned adult. Apart from daily consumption of the Word of God, any believer will be carnal and more worldly than godly. God said to Joshua, millennia ago, 'This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success' (Joshua 1:8). That premise and promise has never been abrogated. When a young person, or anyone for that matter, saturates his mind with the Word of God so that it soaks down into his heart, it will modify his behavior. It will impact his heart and mind.

That is why the Psalmist wrote long ago, 'Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee' (Psalm 119:11). The idea here is not so much rote memorization of Scripture as it is filling one's mind with God's Word to such a degree that it soaks down into the heart. When that has happened, we will not sin against God. The will has been changed.

As a pastor, I watch children from Christian homes who are in Christian schools or are home schooled. Their parents make sure they are at every service and youth function of the church. And yet, these same kids are rebellious, carnal, and have a worldly attitude. Why? Because they are not in the Word in a meaningful way. It's as simple as that (Sorenson, "Seven Principles in Training Godly Children").

Missionary Bob Nichols says,

"One of the things that we did was concentrate on teaching the children the Word of God and Bible memorization."

A respondent to our questionnaire wrote,

"We are a Navy family so we have had the privilege to be members of several churches. At every one, the children's teachers were shocked by my children's knowledge of the Bible. We home school and the Lord has inspired me to create a Bible curriculum to give regular daily instruction in the Scriptures. The kids love it!"

### **An Effective Family Altar**

The daily family altar is very important. It is a time when the family can meet regularly and consistently to worship God and study His Word. It is a time to read the Bible and discuss it. It is a time to memorize Scripture. It is a time to pray together.

Pastor Gene Haymaker says,

"The day of family altars is disappearing as quickly as our youth. Families have relegated the teaching of biblical truth to their church and to their Christian schools. It is my belief that the number of homes having a family altar, where the entire family is involved, would directly correspond to the percentage of young people leaving the

church. The primary agency for teaching children biblical truth is the home.”

Dave Sorenson gives this following advice for family altars,

Every family's schedule will be different, but we found doing so at the breakfast table to work well. Let us consider several pointers for establishing simple, but ongoing family devotions.

**HAVE A PURPOSE.** Over the years we focused on primarily two areas in our family devotions. One was to explain the matter of salvation to our children. They needed to understand the need for it, what Christ did for us on the cross, and the way to be saved. When our children were young and before they were saved, we often focused our daily devotions on this crucial topic. The other major matter we focused on was Christian and godly character. Because the practice of righteousness is at the heart of Christian character, all throughout their formative years, we repeatedly discussed the principle of righteousness, the practice thereof, and verses which illustrated these.

**HAVE A PLAN.** One route to success for a family devotion time is having a simple operational plan which does not require a great deal of preparation. One method we have used over the years, particularly in teaching godliness and righteousness, is to take one chapter of Proverbs a day according to the days of the month. For example, if the day of the month is the 29th, I would go to Proverbs 29. There I would seek out a verse or two which stood out and go over it very briefly. Once we had gone through Proverbs, we might then go to Psalms and look for an appropriate verse in a three chapter sequence. For example, if the day of the month was the 15th, I might peruse Psalm 45-47 for a verse to dwell upon. (There are 150 Psalms and seeking a good verse over three chapters was simple and always worked.) Of course, we might go elsewhere to deal with specific problems.

Having a well-marked Bible wherein verses which have blessed us or otherwise stood out were underlined made it very easy to conduct family devotions this way. That underlining was done during personal Bible reading times. We then had a season of prayer wherein various members of the family took turns praying.

KEEP IT SIMPLE. One of the great hindrances to family devotions is that most people do not have a long-term method of sustaining a day-after-day and year-after-year devotional plan. The plan mentioned above is simple and eminently Scriptural. It is virtually inexhaustible. Most parents are very busy with the affairs of life and don't have time to prepare extensive family devotions. Pre-planned devotional guides cost money and usually run out after a month or two. However you do it, have a simple plan of teaching your children the things of God. God has given that charge to the parents in general and to the father in particular (Sorenson, *Training Your Children to Turn Out Right*).

Pastor Ken Shaver describes his family's devotions as follows,

"In the Shaver family, devotions consist of a moment of Scripture memorization, a time of singing, a time of Bible reading (sometimes we also read a Christian biography or story like *Pilgrim's Progress*), and a short period of prayer. We always have tried to include all the family, maybe one reading, one picking out a song, one praying, and everyone quoting Scripture. We also do not try to make it an in depth Bible Study, although as our children grew older, we would spend a few weeks on issues like modesty, biblical principles for entertainment, and other relevant things. Additionally, we would work very hard at keeping it light, and upbeat. In our home, we just tried to take a few minutes to focus on the things of God and, as I mentioned earlier, draw closer together. There are many good family devotion books available, but most of the

time we would just take a different chapter of the Bible and take turns reading it.”

The Eric Taylor family -

The Lord placed a burden for more prayer in our family several years ago. Prayer has given us a Pilgrim mindset and helped us have a Biblical perspective in our daily lives. How thankful we are that our Lord desires to have such a personal relationship with us. My family has a nightly family prayer time. Each family member shares a personal prayer request for each day. Often, we share it through a family-wide texting group during the day, but we also sometimes wait to share it with the family at night. On Fridays we each provide a personal Praise....we call it Praise Friday. Our prayer time starts by coming together and one family member giving a devotional about what they are reading and studying from the Bible from their personal Bible reading time. Each family member has a specific night that they are responsible for, so they can be prepared. The same person picks a Psalter for us all to sing out of our Isaac Watts Psalter. We then, share each of our prayer requests. Often, we discuss some of them in more detail. Then we pray silently together for 16 minutes for each other's requests. Next, we pray silently for 5 minutes for a specific ongoing "family-related request" which changes as needs arise. During these 5 minutes we also pray for our country and Israel.

Our family also prays individually for a specific block of time during the day. We each do this a little differently. Our times range from 20 minutes to over 30 minutes. Several of us have specific prayer lists that are updated often but prayed over each day. We also pray for our children's future spouses and their ministries.

One of our sons has recently started fasting one day a week for a specific burden that the Lord has placed on his heart.

Through the years our times have increased, and we have added different ideas such as our Psalter singing. We have really seen our family grow spiritually and have made life-changing decisions through the leading of the Lord. Our family plans to continue this sharing of prayer requests and prayer time even after they each leave our house and start their own families.

We are very thankful for our prayer times. They are precious to us, and we desire to continue to grow in this commitment.

Pastor Bobby Mitchell, Jr. -

Our family devotions are usually at the dinner table following the eating. I start with the youngest and we each give thanks to the Lord for some thing. We work on the passage that our church is memorizing. I often teach through that passage over a period of several days or a few weeks. If not teaching through a passage we are memorizing, I am teaching through a book. I have taught Matthew through Colossians to them. I am currently teaching them through second Peter.

I like to read the verse or verses and ask what they think the Bible is saying there. It makes them think. It reveals a lot of their understanding or lack thereof.

We share prayer requests and I lead in prayer. Sometimes I have one or two others pray out loud too. I've found it best to not have a long meeting. Some men have what amounts to another church service for family devotions. I intentionally don't allow myself to say too much. We all have private devotions too, of course. The Lord seems to be blessing all of this. I'm thankful.

Pastor Chris Starr -

Thank you for your burden to write on the *Keeping the Kids*. Below are a few things that may be helpful. I by no means am an expert. Yet, I believe God led me on many fronts in those times we had.

On one occasion we dealt with how to handle a situation where a friend tries to swear you to secrecy and the next day it happened and two of my kids said, Dad, you won't believe what happened. We had to put into practice what you taught us last night. God reminded me of the great value of time with God as a family.

Our family devotions over the years has included

- Training focuses (over 100 of them)
- Reading and discussing a chapter of Proverbs
- Learning how to study the Bible in different ways
- Acting out Bible stories when they were younger
- Practicing good manners
- Reading books together when they were teens
- Teaching series like *What If they Say - Defending your beliefs and standards with others*
- Writing and praying for missionaries
- Memorizing chapter themes and portions of Scripture
- Singing
- Creating scenarios that they may face and how to react Biblically
- Times of tightening things up
- Addressing problems
- Dealing with sloppy speech
- Teaching when to use the church altar
- Times where we go around and let each one compliment another for something they appreciate about them
- Teaching and talking through how courtship works
- Developing your own guardrails and safeguards.
- Being responsible

Prayer times consisted of praying for church needs, missionaries, tender hearts for all of us, family needs, extended family members, lost neighbors.

We have seen three lost neighbors come to Christ, the most recent being a drunk who lives across the street. All of whom we prayed for!

These are just a few things we have implemented over the years.

Pastor Simeon Western -

1. Aim for something that is realistic and doable on a day to day basis timewise rather than aiming for something idealistic which may lead to discouragement and ultimately giving up when it is not attained. I have said for some time now that it is better to do a little each day and maintain it in the long term than to be hit and miss. Training children is a day after day, week after week and year after year exercise. Home schooling presents the opportunity for constant training and discipleship of our children so the devotions, while important, are only one facet of the overall picture. Even if the devotional times are brief but done consistently, over time there is a cumulative benefit. I am not at all suggesting we shouldn't aim to have quality devotions as families and give the time to it that it deserves. Some days the devotion time will be longer and other times it will need to be shorter, depending on the family schedule and what is happening. Flexibility is important but the critical thing is to MAINTAIN devotions each day as consistently as possible. Obviously on a Sunday devotions are not often possible due to being at church for morning and evening services but other than that, devotions can be done the other days of the week.

2. Try to be creative and use a variety of devotional resources. This helps to keep the children's interest. It also can help cater to the different ages of the children. For example:

- Read straight out of the Bible. We have read whole Books together this way. This should be the primary method. I have always tried to encourage the children to ask as many questions as they desire, even if some of the questions can be childish at times. This is because I don't want our children to just put their minds in neutral when

it comes time for Bible reading. I want them engaged and interested. We have often been surprised at the insightful and interesting questions children ask! Sometimes they require real thought on the part of the parent to answer. I will also often take the initiative to explain the meaning of a word or make brief comments as I read.

- Read Bible story books with visuals. This is great for the younger children and often helps them be more engaged. Our favourite Bible story book so far is called *101 Favourite Stories from the Bible* by Ura Miller. It is one of the rare Bible story books that has Jesus with short hair. Apart from a few places, we have found it is pretty accurate to the Scriptures. It also contains a verse for parents at the end and several review questions. The children love answering the questions and they listen carefully when they know questions will be asked at the end. We have even done small rewards (e.g., a small chocolate) at the end if they can answer the questions. I will often add questions of my own.

- Read other devotional books with short stories and Bible applications. We enjoyed the two volumes entitled *From Grandpa with Love* available from Bible Truth Publishers. They contain short stories from the farm with Gospel applications.

- *The Daily Light* (KJV). This contains a daily reading of Scripture under a certain theme. Sometimes we use this if we are pressed for time.

3. Aim for devotions both morning and evening.

- Morning Devotions: In our case, my wife usually does the morning devotion with the children before they start their schooling for the day. Also, I am usually gone for the day by then to the office for study so it works best for my wife to do it. A major emphasis of our morning devotions is Scripture memory with the children. Our children have learned multiple chapters of the Bible during these morning devotional times. One of the best

resources we came across as a family about 7-8 years ago was a DVD called *Scripture Talk*. In this DVD, they put hand actions to memory verses and teach the children whole passages of Scripture that way. Children love doing actions to things. This resource has had a huge impact on our family in the area of Scripture memorization. Not only did our children watch the DVD repeatedly and learn the passages of Scripture on the DVD, we took the idea and started learning our own chapters of the Bible, making up our own hand actions as we go. The children LOVE suggesting different hand actions for the verses which makes it a fun, creative and enjoyable exercise. My wife also has a prize box with small items in it and when they complete a certain number of verses and can recite them on their own, they get to choose something from the prize box. To us, there is no greater investment than having our children memorize the Word of God at a young age so we are more than happy to give them small rewards to encourage them along the way. We have been amazed how even the youngest members of the family (e.g., age 3-4 years) also learn the verses! The minds of young children are like sponges that soak in information and that period of their lives presents a unique opportunity to fill their hearts and minds with God's truth. [This DVD might be available through Amazon.]

- Evening devotions. I usually lead this one at the end of the day after the evening meal. This is usually when we do our readings as per the list above. Sometimes the children will recite their memory verses to me at this time also. It is important that the father, as head of the home, leads at least one of the devotions for the day.

#### More Tips for Fruitful Family Prayers

- As a minimum, the father needs to lead the family in prayer at the end of family devotions. Sometimes there will only be time for the father to pray, depending on how the day has worked out. This is especially true in a

pastor's home where ministry sometimes brings variations into the daily routine.

- Often we pray around the table and encourage even the youngest members of the family to pray. Even if they aren't saved yet, we want to cultivate prayer as a pattern and habit of life in their hearts and minds.

- One tool we have found that has really helped us with family prayers is a prayer box. The children love it! Basically it is comprised of a cardboard box with a square hole in the top. My wife made ours with the children, including decorating the outside with a nice paper. We then write prayer points/needs on small cards and put them in the box. Prayer needs include family members, church folk, missionaries as well as other specific needs. At family prayer time at the end of family devotions, one of the children takes the box around the table and each child draws out 2-3 cards (They love volunteering to be the box carrier!!!). We then pray around the table with each member of the family praying through his/her prayer cards. We have found this helps keep the family prayer time fresh. Otherwise children tend to end up praying for the same things each day (e.g., bless my teddy, mummy and daddy!). Again, variation and creativity are important and help maintain the children's interest. It also teaches the children that God answers prayers as cards with specific needs get supplied. For example, about 5 years ago we wrote a prayer card that God would provide us with our own home. We prayed about this as a family for some time and the Lord provided. We were able to rejoice as a family that God had answered that prayer card!

Pastor Nathan Searle -

I certainly see family devotions as a very crucial component to any spiritual success of our family. It is one of the key recommendations that I make to our church and school families who are desiring to honour the Lord

and train up godly children. I encourage our school students to be ever so thankful if the Lord has placed them in a family where there is a faithful family altar and to do all they can to encourage their parents in that endeavour.

Our devotions consist of time in the Word, family prayer and hymn singing. I either use a suitable book as our focus on the Word or we read through some Scripture. We are currently working through *The Teenage Years of Christ* by Pastor Jerry Ross which has been a great challenge. I ask the Lord to help me make our family devotion time alive, helpful, reverent and honouring to the Lord. Our time together commences as we briefly ask the Lord to speak to our hearts and prepare us for what He has for us to learn from Him. We begin our time in the Word by briefly reviewing where we have been in the section that we are studying which I find also helps us all to remember what the Lord has been speaking to us about over the previous days. I seek to engage the children and ask questions as we go along to help them remain engaged and also remember what they have learned. Our devotion times become quite extended sometimes when they start asking further questions around the theme of whatever we are studying. These are times that I really cherish as we are able to discuss issues and questions that are on their heart giving me opportunity to point them to the Scriptures for the answers. Our prayer time consists of discussing points of prayer to petition, thank and praise the Lord. We have a copy of our midweek church meeting prayer points which we also refer to. Each child prays and I finish off at the end. Our devotion time concludes with the singing of three hymns which are chosen by anyone in the family. Although there are a few of us that play piano, we sing acapella, as it enables all of us to sing and the children sing harmony. Our devotion time usually goes for about 45min.

I asked my children if they would like to write something about how they view our family devotion time together, and they have replied as follows:

Maryanne (7)

I look forward to devotions because I want to learn about the Lord. I love what we do in our devotions. I love how we sing together.

Simeon (12)

Family devotions, it's a time that we as a family spend each night in the Word and with each other (excluding Sundays and Tuesdays because we have church or prayer meeting on those days). I think family devotions is a great blessing to our family and a real reminder to us of how good, mighty, loving, and real our God is. Family devotions for me is a great encouragement and a tool that God can use if I (and any of the rest of the family) am downhearted, scared, or tempted. I am thankful that my dad takes time off his busy schedule and reads us the Bible, prays, and sings with us each night.

Isaiah (15)

Every night I look forward to our family devotions. I really value being able to spend time with my family in praying, singing, and reading the Bible. I enjoy hearing my dad expand on God's Word which is very helpful as he brings the scripture to life and makes it more relatable to everyday life. I have learned in devotions how important it is to have integrity and always tell the truth. This study has helped me to overcome many temptations in my life and live a more successful life.

Jadyn (17)

We have devotions most nights of the week and I believe that it is one of the most important parts of the day, second only to our own personal devotion time. Having a regular family devotion time is the secret to a godly family in my opinion. I believe that one of the most

important aspects of family devotions is that it is interactive – questions asked, feedback given, and regular discussion time. I find that it is easy for devotions to just become mundane and repetitive and if that is the case it loses its purpose. I also really enjoy singing together as a family every night. Not only does it glorify God and bring praise to his name, but it is also very good for improving your singing ability and keeping your vocal cords active. Overall, family devotions time is one of the best times of the day and is imperative in the creating and nurturing of a Godly family.

Missionary Bob Nichols says “I try to lead my family to memorize 14 verses a month. We’ll go over the verses as a family, and what a tremendous help that’s been.”

There are many things beyond Bible study and memorization that can be done during family devotions when time permits. The family can read biographies together and discuss them. They can read material pertaining to creation science. The book *A Closer Look at the Evidence* by Richard and Tina Kleiss contains 365 interesting brief studies on fascinating facts of life that support creation. It is available in a KJV edition from Bethel Baptist Bookstore at <https://bethelbaptist.ca/bookstore/>

Nothing, of course, should take the place of studying the Bible itself.

### **Training children to have a private daily devotional**

“... from a child thou hast known the holy Scriptures” (2 Timothy 3:15).

One of the most important things that parents can do for their children is to help them develop a habit of daily Bible study. Though I grew up in church, I do not remember any instruction or challenge whatsoever about this.

It is by the Word of God that the young person can cleanse his way in this wicked world (Psalm 119:9). It must get down into the heart and soul and thus permeate the individual's life, and this will not happen unless reading, study, memorization, and meditation become a daily practice.

We know that reading the Bible alone will not produce salvation and sanctification; it must be received and obeyed. But we also know that salvation and sanctification *will not* happen apart from the Word of God, because "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Romans 10:17).

It is never vain to put the Word of God into the child's heart. Even though I wasn't saved when I was young and didn't take the Bible seriously, the teaching and preaching had a deep effect on me and after I was converted at age 23, much of it came back to me and I had a good head start in my Christian life.

Again we quote from Pastor David Sorenson,

The foundation for godly living is often missing in the lives of the children and youth of God's people. That foundation is a daily absorption of the Word of God. A young person from a Christian home can go to a Christian school or be home-schooled with a godly curriculum, be faithful to Sunday School and church programs, go to church camp, and be carnal, rebellious, and worldly. Or more frequently, they are just lukewarm and go with the flow, but there is not true spiritual conviction in their hearts. The reason is as simple as it is singular. They are not in the Word of God on a daily basis. Following are some suggestions on how to correct this:

1. Start early. When our children were small, we had them read from the Bible as soon as they could barely

read. It was short, but they started late in their kindergarten year.

2. Plan their reading. The Bible is a complex book, even for adults. When our children were small, we had them read in I John because of its simple vocabulary and syntax. At first, we had them read just a verse or two a day. As they progressed through grade school, the daily reading assignment grew to a chapter a day and by the time they were in junior high school, we had our girls reading four chapters a day. That is the basic amount to read the Bible through in a year. But the greater point is that we planned their reading for them.

3. Provide positive incentives. When our girls were small, we prepared a chart which was on the refrigerator and as they did their requisite daily Bible reading, they received a star on their chart each day. When they had faithfully filled their chart for several weeks or a month, we planned a special reward for them.

4. Enforce the policy. We made sure that our girls did their daily Bible reading as assigned. A refrain oft heard at the breakfast table was 'Did you do your Bible reading this morning?' Though they eventually grew out of the charts and stars on the refrigerator, we still checked up on them throughout their adolescent years.

5. Just do it because it is right. As the girls grew out of the stage where they needed little incentives, we shifted to the philosophy of doing your Bible reading just because it was right. As we developed the principle of righteousness in the meantime, it was easy to mesh the practice of daily Bible reading with the principle of righteousness. Indeed it is right to be in God's Word each day (Training Your Children to Turn out Right).

Pastor Mario Schiavoni says that he and his wife started their kids out by having them spend time meditating on a Bible picture book even before they could read. They have taught their children to have their devotionals first thing

after they wake up. He says, "It is quiet around the house first thing in the morning because everyone is having their devotionals."

Way of Life Literature publishes many Bible courses that can be used in the family, particularly those with teenage children. These include *The Effectual Bible Student*, *Bird's Eye View of the Bible*, *Introduction to Bible Geography*, *Knowing God's Will*, *Bible Prophecy as Light on the 21st Century*, *Highlights in Church History* (scheduled for late 2022), *Mastering the English Bible: Genesis to the Silent Years* (scheduled for late 2022), *One Year Discipleship Course*, *Effectual Prayer in Perilous Times*, *Seeker's Bible Study*, *Spiritual Safety in the Facebook Age*, *The Satanic Attack on Sacred Music*, *Woman and Her Service to God*, and *Unshakeable Faith*.

See <https://www.wayoflife.org/publications/courses/>

### **How to Interpret and Study the Bible**

I would add that at an appropriate point the young people need to be taught how to use basic Bible study tools (e.g., concordance, Bible dictionary, Bible atlas, commentaries) and how to rightly interpret the Bible so that their study time will become increasingly profitable and exciting. Otherwise, it can become just an empty ritual.

We deal with this in the chapter on discipleship. (For a more extensive look at this see *The Effectual Bible Student*, which is available from Way of Life Literature.)

## Discipline Must Begin Early

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

The child must be disciplined “while there is hope,” meaning when he is still young enough to learn the lessons.

There comes a time when no hope. It is too late.

The discipline must begin as soon as the child can understand what the parent is communicating, and that is usually within the first few months. As soon as the child understands a command and disobeys that command, that is when discipline begins. Parents know what the child is understanding.

When my wife has training classes for Christian mothers in South Asia who are newly converted to Christ, they are always amazed to hear that they should begin training and disciplining when the children are infants. Some years ago, she had our daughter-in-law bring her two-year-old and six-month-old daughters into the class to demonstrate how she disciplines them. They were flabbergasted, because they typically think that nothing can be done until the child is about five years old!

The best time to train a teenager is when he or she is a toddler. Pastor J.B. Buffington, said, “I’ve heard people say, ‘Everything went along alright until my children became teenagers and then something happened.’ But I beg your pardon, that’s not the case. Most of it happened before five years old. That’s why I exhort mothers, ‘Don’t let anybody be a baby sitter of your children except you and other godly people.’ In those first five years, attitudes, security, goals, and many other things are already developed, and they will come into full blossom in teenage years. A child is like a

computer. What you put in comes out. You can put something into a computer and pray that something else will come out, but it won't happen. I urge you not to waste time, to start early" (*How to Lose Your Teenager before He is Five Years Old*).

# Discipline Must Be Done Diligently

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

“Betimes” is the Hebrew *sahar*, which means to do something diligently, quickly. It is translated “seek unto God quickly” (Job 8:5), “rising quickly” (Job 24:5), “diligently to seek thy face” (Pr. 7:15), “diligently seeketh good” (Pr. 11:27).

The training and discipline must be done zealously. It cannot be an on again/off again thing. It cannot be a half-hearted thing. The parents must study biblical discipline and put it into practice diligently. This must be a major focus of their lives. This is when child training becomes effectual.

The parents must have the dedication expressed in the following testimony: “Turning our daughter out right for the Lord is the highest priority we have. It’s EXTREMELY important to us. It’s like life and death to us. So, it gets a lot of our thought, prayers, and attention.”

## Effective Use of the Rod

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

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

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

“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” (Proverbs 23:13-14).

The rod is mentioned four times in Proverbs in association with child discipline. This is the proper biblical instrument of discipline. A rod is not a fist; it's not a club; it's not a slap or a kick; it's not yelling; it's not threatening. Webster's 1828 dictionary defined a rod as “the shoot or long twig of any woody plant; a branch, or the stem of a shrub; as a rod of hazel, of birch, of oak or hickory.” See Genesis 30:37 and Jeremiah 1:11. Previous generations called the spanking rod a “switch.” My maternal grandmother used switches from the trees that grew around her house in central Florida, and they were so effective that all of her many children professed faith in Christ as adults and had successful marriages and no divorces.

### **The rod must be used instead of man-made alternatives**

The Bible emphasizes the use of the rod for correction, but mankind has devised many alternatives. Humanistic psychology thinks that it knows more than God about human nature and proposes a wide variety of manipulative

rewards and punishments that avoid the use of the rod. Even many Christian parents in Bible-believing churches draw back from using the rod. Substitutes to the rod include shouting, endless reasoning, ridicule, sitting the child in a corner, locking him in a room, promises (“I’ll give you a cookie if you do that”), threatenings, withholding benefits, and lies (“a monster will eat you”).

Missionary Bob Nichols says,

“My dad didn’t get saved until he was 37, and my mom and dad didn’t go to an Independent Baptist church until a few years after that. Consequently, my mom set me in a corner quite a bit. She put me there and told me to think about what I’d done. Of course, I didn’t think about that. I was thinking about my friends out playing ball or something like that. I thank the Lord for my parents. My dad was a man of tremendous character, and he taught us to work and to be honest and not to lie. But sending kids to their rooms or putting them in a corner breeds rebellion. It doesn’t get the job done.”

### **The rod must be used when the child is rebellious**

A biblical rod is “a rod of correction” (Pr. 22:15; 23:13). It is to correct bad behavior. It is to correct a child that refuses to obey verbal commands and instruction. It is not used when the child doesn’t understand or is confused or is otherwise acting out something rather than disobedience to authority. The rod of correction is a compassionate thing. The goal is to correct the child’s natural waywardness and teach him the ways of God.

Dave Sorenson describes how that one of his girls had to be corrected for her stubborn rebellion,

When one of our girls was small, she decided one evening that she did not want to stay in her bed. She had been put to bed, but she decided she wanted to get up.

She climbed out of her bed and came out into the living room. She was lectured about the fact that it was her bed time and that if she got out of bed again she would be spanked. She was placed back in her bed. A few minutes later, she came out again. As promised, she was paddled and placed back into her bed. ... A few minutes later, she came out again. She again was paddled and placed back into her bed amidst rather rebellious crying. She was throwing a tantrum. After a while she proceeded to get out of bed and come out again into the living room. As far as we could tell, there was no legitimate reason for her to get up. She just did not want to stay in bed. Again she was spanked. This went on for about a half an hour, but she finally got the message; if she openly defied Mom and Dad, she would be spanked. It was consistent. It happened every single time. ...

That night a major battle was won. Her rebellious little will was broken. She had tried her hardest to challenge parental authority, and she had lost. ...

Did we as parents enjoy spanking our little girl? We hated every moment of it. She was our pride and joy. Nothing would have pleased us more than for her to have cuddled up to us out in the living room, but we knew how she needed to have discipline developed in her life (Sorenson, *Training Your Children to Turn out Right*, pp. 71, 72).

### **The rod must not be spared (Pr. 13:24)**

This means to draw back from using it, to fail to use it.

The Word of God says the parent who spares the rod, hates his son. That is contrary to the world's thinking.

The reason behind this is that the child needs the rod to teach him God's ways. He must learn that God is a Judge who punishes sin so that he will understand that he needs a Saviour. The rod, rightly used, prepares the child to understand the gospel.

***The rod can be spared by withholding it altogether.*** Many parents commit this sin. They refuse to follow the Bible's teaching in this matter.

***The rod can also be spared by withholding it from time to time when it should be used.*** Some parents start out using the rod properly, but they then slack off. Others use the rod from time to time, but they do not use it consistently.

There are many things that will tempt a parent to spare the rod, such as a child's cries (Pr. 19:18), the child's lies (e.g., insincerely saying "I'm sorry" as soon as he realizes that he is going to get a spanking), physical weariness, impatience with the slow process of discipline, interference by well-meaning but misguided friends and relatives, and mental frustration. But if the rod is spared when it should be used the child will not be properly disciplined.

Consistency in discipline is essential, because inconsistency actually trains the child to disobey.

"If a child is told not to run in church, and the parent sees the child run and does nothing about it, that is inconsistent discipline. Parents, the child needs to know the rules and that if they break the rules they will be disciplined" (Terry Coomer, *Rearing Spiritual Children*, p. 62).

As David Sorenson says,

"We positively demanded that our children obey us. If they did not obey, there were immediate and consistent consequences. Every time. Every single time!"

***The rod can also be spared by withholding it from some of the children.*** It is not uncommon for parents to be stricter with a firstborn child, for example, than with those that come later. It is especially common for older parents who have a child out of season to spare the rod.

**The rod must be used with sufficient force  
to correct the child (Pr. 23:13-14)**

The foolishness that is bound in a child's heart must be "driven" away (Pr. 22:15). The rod must hurt enough to get the point across and to bring real heart-level submission. To drive foolishness away from the child takes proper force, firm resolve, and perseverance.

Hebrews 12:11 says the chastening that produces the peaceable fruit of righteousness must be "grievous."

If the rod is used but the child still persists in disobedience, it has not been used with sufficient vigor or consistence or persistence (or it is used with a wrong attitude and spirit).

Parents often fail at this point. They use the rod a little but not enough to bring the desired results, and they then become convinced that it doesn't work. Or they use it inconsistently. The problem in such cases is not with the rod; the problem is with its insufficient, inconsistent misuse.

I recall some Christian friends who had a two-year-old boy who was extra large and extra stubborn. The mother would "spank" him by giving him a couple of swats on his thick diaper with her hand and he would literally laugh it off and persist with his mischief and rebellion. Not surprisingly, by the time the child approached his teenage years he was uncontrollable. The biblical use of the rod would have stopped that fearful rebellion in its tracks and would have saved the family a lot of heartache and the child a lot of sorrow.

The foolishness that is bound in a child's heart must be "driven" away (Pr. 22:15).

## **The rod must be used without multiple commands and threats**

Many parents fall into the trap of telling their child “no” repeatedly and warning and threatening instead of calmly, swiftly, and consistently using the rod to train the child to obey at their first command. If he doesn’t obey after ONE command, he should be spanked with the rod until he does obey. If he is given multiple commands before he is spanked with the rod he is actually being taught NOT to obey and he is training his parents more than they are training him. He learns that his parents don’t really mean it when they give him a command or even when they warn him, because they let him get away with multiple acts of disobedience.

Pastor Sorenson says,

As a pastor, I have visited in thousands of homes. I have witnessed the following scenario played out numerous times. ... Mom (or, sometimes Dad) would say to Junior. ‘It’s time to go to bed’ (or some other parental directive). Junior ignored his mother and continued to watch TV. ... After a few moments, she would say, ‘Junior, I told you to go and get ready for bed.’ He replied, ‘Awe, I don’t want to.’ Mom let that go by. A few moments later, Mom became a little hot about the matter. She raised the volume of her voice and said, ‘I TOLD YOU TO GET READY FOR BED.’ Junior replied, ‘But Mom, I want to watch my program.’ Mom tolerated that counter for a few more moments. She then announced, ‘THIS IS THE LAST TIME I AM GOING TO TELL YOU. GO AND GET READY FOR BED!’ Junior, by now himself getting exasperated at being shouted at, shouts back, ‘I TOLD YOU, I DON’T WANT TO!’ Finally, Mom shouts, ‘I’M WARNING YOU. MARCH RIGHT NOW, OR I AM GOING TO WHIP YOU.’

Variations of that scene go on by the thousands every single day. The real culprit was not Junior. He knew from

considerable experience that Mom could be ignored. Mom was too lazy to get up and deal with the situation. She, in fact, was in her own way contributing to the delinquency of Junior. ...

One might say, 'If I handled the situation described above as recommended, there would be a pitched battle.' Well, you had better get on with the battle and win the war while it can still be won. The day is coming when you will not be able to win the battle or the war (*Training Your Children to Turn out Right*, pp. 69, 70).

### **The rod must be used wisely and in the context of communication with the child**

Following are some wise rules about how to spank a child, from the book *Raising Children in an Ungodly World*:

1. Make sure that the children understand the rules.
2. When discipline is necessary, take the child aside privately and tell him that what he has done wrong and how he will be disciplined.
3. Carry out the discipline with self-control, explaining first to the child what will happen.
4. Hug the child and tell him that you love him.
5. Explain why the discipline had to happen and why their actions were wrong; talk with them about how they can correct this in the future and suggest alternative actions.
6. Always emphasize that obedience is required by God, and that it is not just our own program.

"Every time this has happened in our home, step 4 has never been evaded by either child or parents. In fact, step 4 in the discipline process has often been some of the more special times in our relationship with our children. It says that we love you unconditionally and that our children know that sincerely. When a child can tell you

that they love you after they have received a spanking from you, it means they can sense your sincerity and self-control. I am not saying that as parents we have done this faultlessly every time. I certainly have made mistakes along the way (e.g., not admonishing in private and even allowing anger to rule instead of Christ) but even with a few sinful mistakes here and there, God has been gracious to us in the discipline of our much-loved children" (Ken Ham, *Raising Godly Children in an Ungodly World*, p. 197).

"I always appreciated that Dad would always tell us not only what we did wrong, but why it was wrong. When we would get caught doing something, and we already knew why it was wrong, he would still tell us again anyway, just to reinforce the reason. We were never confused about discipline. Dad's explanations made it clear" (Ham, p. 204).

Missionary Bob Nichols says,

"The children realized that when we spanked them, it wasn't against them or their person but it was against their actions. We wanted to correct their attitude or actions. We would take them aside and correct them and then spend time in prayer with them and then hug them. They knew that the correction didn't come because we were angry or we were embarrassed for the Nichols' name or something like that, but that they were acting against God and God's Word."

Nichols adds the following wise suggestion,

"You need to maintain eye contact with your children. I have noticed in many cases that the children's eyes wander when they are being corrected, but they need to look right into the parent's eyes. This is a form of rebellion, too. They're saying, 'I'm here but I'm not at home.' They need to be accountable for what they've done."

Unwise and hasty and angry use of the rod can provoke the children to wrath and drive them away from the parent.

Communicating with the child is essential. Otherwise he or she can be confused and frustrated and might consider the parent unreasonable.

The parent needs to be ready to apologize when he or she makes a mistake in discipline.

## No Sassing or Resisting

Effective child discipline requires that the parents not allow the child to talk back or to resist the discipline.

David Sorenson says,

[Another] basic rule in our house was that disrespect, defiance, sassing, or any other form of overt rebellion toward us as parents absolutely was not tolerated. Nothing would bring judgment more swiftly than for me to hear our children sassing their mother. They were taught ahead of time that defiance or disrespect was not allowed, period! ... 1 Samuel 15:23 says, 'For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft...' It is Satanic in its origins. And rebellion begins with a smart mouth. ... Children are born with a rebellious, sassy spirit, and the sooner it is nipped in the bud the better. ...

One of our children would, at times, fight the spanking. She was informed that if she fought and resisted, whatever the original punishment was, it would be doubled. Now, that may seem harsh. However, it did not take too long for it to soak in that rebellion, even during punishment, would not be allowed. ...

As a result of dealing with it as soon as it raised its ugly head, it had pretty well been purged by the time the girls were of school age. ...

Do not believe the foolishness that if you deal directly with rebellion, you will only cause a child to be more rebellious. Rebellion and defiance will grow like an ugly, malignant cancer. The earlier it is dealt with, the better. ...

One might think that our home was a rigid, authoritarian, Spartan environment. To the contrary, it was a warm, fun, loving place; and one of the things that made it such a sweet place was that there was so little

conflict (*Training Your Children to Turn out Right*, pp. 66-68).

This is a very important point. The Bible says foolishness is bound in the heart of a child, and that becomes evident in a multitude of ways. Children do not act reasonably! They act foolishly. They have many ways to act out rebellion, and if one doesn't work they try another. For example, they will whine and whimper or throw a fit or cry effusively and refuse to quiet down. Those are acts of a foolish heart and statements of rebellion, and the child must be taught that he is not allowed to do such things. He must obey. Period. He must not be allowed to spoil the atmosphere of the home (whether his parent's or someone else's), or a social get together, with his sinful foolishness.

A wise parent can tell when the child is crying because he is genuinely hurt and when he is putting on a selfish act of rebellion.

# Discipline for Actions and for Attitude

Many parents fail in child training by disciplining only for actions rather than both for actions and attitude. They allow the child to get away with having a bad attitude as long as they are outwardly obedient, but this encourages bad character. It reminds us of the little boy who was told by his father to sit down. Knowing that his father would spank him if he disobeyed, the little boy complied, but as he sat down he said, "I'm still standing in my heart!"

Children have a multitude of ways to get the same point across. They make funny little sounds; they make faces; they are sullen. This is not the type of obedience that is acceptable to the Lord, and wise parents will not allow it.

God's command is that children "honour thy father and thy mother" (Ex. 20:12). The obedience must be accompanied by honor, which is a right attitude of respect toward the authority.

Terry Coomer writes,

"Something that is very important is that we should discipline for attitude. When a child says 'no' to you or makes a face, proper discipline is in order. In this battle of the wills you may have to spank more than once" (*Rearing Spiritual Children*, p. 58).

This was emphasized to me in an interview with Missionary Bob Nichols,

"Another thing I have noticed in parents is that they don't watch for attitudes. Attitude is all important. You can do something with the wrong attitude and it doesn't turn out right. If you tell them to wash the dishes or take out the garbage, or whatever, if their attitude isn't right they aren't going to get a

reward for it. They are still in disobedience, and it needs to be corrected.

“A lot of people correct for misconduct, but they don’t go into attitudes. We disciplined for attitude problems. We didn’t allow moodiness. You can wake up with a smile just as easily as you can wake up with a frown. Parents shouldn’t allow moodiness in the lives of their children. We corrected moodiness instantly. If they had a bad attitude, there was immediate correction. We didn’t allow it.”

Nichols also makes the important point that the children must be taught to get along with one another. The parents must not allow them to bicker and act selfishly.

“We never let our children fight. We never let them cut down or ridicule each other. We didn’t allow it. If you were around my family, you would realize that they have a deep respect for people’s children and they enjoy being around kids of all ages.”

Pastor Mario Schiavoni also emphasizes this point,

As far as sibling rivalry (bickering, snatching things, making one another cry) I’ve seen it in some of the church families and I try to gently say to the fathers not to tolerate that. I’m guessing that maybe they do tolerate it to a point, until it gets totally out of control. We’ve always had zero tolerance of that type of thing with our children. Basically it was one strike you’re out. I think children sometimes act out what they have seen on television, but my children haven’t been influenced by that. We taught the children to be best friends.

We’ve tried to discipline everything from the overtly outright snatching to the attitude or the words spoken out of tone.

I can’t help but think that the key is the role model. If the child sees the parents bickering with one another over silly things, I can’t help but think that this influences the child. Our boys are six and nine and they share a bedroom, and it’s not an issue. They’re mates [friends],

and I think they are good mates with their older sister, too. We've had them at home right through, home schooling and all, and they get along well. They learned to get along when they were little.

Along this line, the younger children should be taught to respect and obey the older ones, as we have already noted. Missionary Bob Nichols says,

“We always taught the younger ones to obey the older ones. A lot of times the younger don't want to listen to the older, but God put us in the order in which we are born into the families with a design and purpose. So they have to understand that.”

## Discipline in Love

“My son, despise not the chastening of the LORD; neither be weary of his correction: For whom the LORD loveth he correcteth; even as a father the son in whom he delighteth” (Proverbs 3:11-12).

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

If the parent doesn't have the right attitude when using the rod, it won't work and it might produce the exact opposite of godly submission.

We respond to love. The Bible says that we love God because He first loved us (1 John 4:19). When parents love their children and demonstrate it clearly and consistently, the children respond in kind and their hearts are kept close to the parents and they remain open to parental instruction.

One respondent to our questionnaire wrote,

“The most important thing is to love them with a sincere, godly love. Not the liberal ‘do as you want, be who you are, non-judgmental’ love. This doesn't keep the kids, because it draws them to the charismatic and liberal churches. The world and Satan are the ones that ultimately get our children in this kind of liberality.”

Pastor Dave Sorenson emphasizes the necessity of love in child training,

Another concept endemic to godliness is the matter of love. ... [It] is important that our homes be an aquarium of love. In all your teaching, discipling, and admonishing of your children, always season it liberally with love.

See that your children have no doubt whatsoever that you love them. Tell them you love them. Show physical affection in an appropriate fashion such as hugs and

discreet kisses. Always be there when they need you. Never be too busy for their school functions or programs. Love them even more than you love yourself.

Not only is it right to love your children, it will enable you to most effectively teach and train them. When they unquestionably know you love them, they know that you have their best interests at heart (*Training Your Children to Turn out Right*, p. 136).

Terry Coomer warns about parents who yell at their children,

Parents who yell and scream all the time are only building a rebel. The child will hear you yell and scream and ignore you and when he grows up he will never listen to a thing you tell him. I have talked to many parents who have disciplined in this manner and they firmly believe they are disciplinarians. 'You know, Pastor, my kids got it when they back-talked me. I hit them right in the mouth. I yelled and they listened.' Sure they did, right up until the day they got out of your house. Now they live the way they want, which does not include living for God. You did not train them, you browbeat them! They longed to get away from you.

Listen carefully; proper discipline of the child requires not disciplining in anger. When our children disobeyed, we calmly went into the bedroom and talked with them about their disobedience and spanked them on the area God has provided. We always told our children that we were displeased with their behavior and God was displeased. We then told them we loved them and wanted them to grow up to have good character and to be obedient to the Lord. We also told them that Jesus loves them and wants them to have good character. We always hugged them and made sure they knew we loved them and the discipline was for their own good. Quite frankly, we really never had to spank either child after the fourth grade (*Rearing Spiritual Children*, p. 58).

John G. Paton, the famous missionary to the New Hebrides islands who suffered much for Christ and won many headhunters to the Saviour, in his biography described the training and discipline he received as a child. He grew up in a happy but very religious and sober home and the discipline was effective in the lives of each of the eleven children. After describing the way the family spent their Sundays and how the children were carefully catechized in Bible doctrine throughout the week and how his father used the rod of correction when necessary, he observed:

“Of course, if the parents are not devout, sincere, **and affectionate**,--if the whole affair on both sides is taskwork, or worse, hypocritical and false,--results must be very different indeed! God help the homes where these things are done by mere force and not by love!”  
*(John G. Paton: Missionary to the New Hebrides, 1891).*

# Consistency and Persistency

One of the most important things that the parents can do is be consistent and persistent with their discipline and training. This is true for punishing disobedience, family devotions, teaching responsibility, and every other aspect. Stopping and starting will render the discipline ineffective. The parents must establish some solid biblical principles and just keep on keeping on. We have mentioned this, but we want to emphasize it further.

Missionary Bob Nichols says,

We have to be consistent. My oldest boy remarked the other day that what he appreciates is we always came back to things, such as daily family devotions. From time to time we had events in our lives that got us off schedule, so we would miss a couple of days, but we came back. You have to be consistent. Your life will have interruptions and problems and difficulties and you might have to readjust or lay something aside temporarily, but you always come back to it.

You have to be not weary in well doing. I think that many parents quit too early. Discipline of a child is like a diaper. A young baby doesn't have internal controls, so you put external control on him. Then as he begins to develop internal control, you can remove the external. So you'll spend a lot more time disciplining your children when they are younger. As they begin to develop the internal ability to withstand the wiles of the devil and to stand on their own, then you don't have as much correction as you do in the beginning.

When it comes to correction, sometimes it looks like it just isn't working. Pastor Mario Schiavoni comments on this as follows,

“Discipline is a key, and we must try to be consistent. I know that there were times with our firstborn when it seemed like the discipline wasn’t working. She was very strong willed. You discipline and discipline, but then one day something happens, something clicks. It is something that we have tried to encourage our church family about. It might not seem like it is working, but it is. It takes time to get through, but the penny will drop. We saw that with our own. You have to just keep disciplining. With our oldest we had more issues when she was about six and seven. That’s when it became a real battle.”

My oldest grandson went through a dictionary definition of the “terrible twos.” His parents spanked him and spanked him and spanked him, but it didn’t seem to have much effect. Suddenly, though, when he turned three, he calmed down and responded to the discipline.

Parent, if the discipline doesn’t seem to be working, go back to the drawing board (the Word of God) and make sure that you are exercising the discipline properly.

- Are you using the rod with sufficient force?
- Are you using the rod consistently, ever time it is needed?
- Are you using the rod in love?
- Are you training the child to obey quickly, as opposed to giving multiple commands and threats?
- Are you communicating with the child, making sure that he understands what you expect?
- Are you refusing to allow the child to sass or resist the discipline or have a bad attitude?

If the answer is no, then make whatever adjustments are necessary. If the answer is yes, then just keep on keeping on and trust the Lord to give the fruit.

“Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the

peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby” (Hebrews 12:11).

# Involvement and Communication

Parents need to know exactly what is happening in their children's lives and exercise godly oversight and control. They need to know where the child is and what he is doing, who his friends are, what music he listens to, what games he plays, what books he reads, what internet sites he visits. This is a parent's responsibility. The children need to know that they can talk to the parents about anything that is on their heart.

Pastor Tony Evans says,

“Communication has been one of our big things. When you have a lot of children they get lost in the group, so we have made a point of individual days and times. I might take one of the children out to breakfast before school or for a coffee and chat, and that is that child's time. I think we have kept communication going that way. We feel that communication between the parent and child is tantamount to being able to mould their lives for the Lord. Many times when children reach teenage years they don't want to have anything to do with their parents, but I think a lot of time the problem is that communication links weren't set up early in life. So even when they were four and five years old, we were taking them on dates, one on one, so that we could be connected and involved. That's been one of my venues for discipleship. We've sat at McDonalds and done Bible studies.”

Even at church, parents are responsible for their children and must not give this responsibility to someone else. The parent needs to know what is going on in every situation. It seems to be rare for parents to discuss with their children what goes on at church. Too many parents just assume that the children are O.K. In fact, though, parents need to communicate closely with their children about every aspect

of church life, from the Sunday School class (if the church has them) to the content of the preaching.

This is a great discipleship opportunity. It is an occasion to answer biblical questions, to find out what the children are thinking and whether they are having doubts, to teach them how to make wise decisions (about friends, etc.), to model godly submission to authority by supporting the disciplinary decisions of teachers and church leaders, to instruct them in how to handle problems, and many other things.

One man told me that through talking with his 12-year-old son about what goes on at church, he learned that most of his son's peers aren't serious about the things of God. He has used this as an opportunity to stay close to his son by showing that he is interested and sympathetic and to teach him spiritual lessons, such as the importance of not following the crowd but making his own decisions before the Lord and choosing the way of wisdom rather than folly.

Another man wrote of the benefit of discussing the preaching with the children.

“Children should have opportunity to worship alongside of their parents so they can learn the culture and attitudes of the Sanctuary. The questions that followed the preaching gave us the opportunity to discuss and at times be amazed at the things that mattered to our children and even the things they misunderstood.”

If the parent believes that there is danger to the child in a certain setting, he should act to protect the child. The following testimony is from a mother who is taking this job seriously.

It is the parent's responsibility to train their children at home and in church. I am sorry to see a lack of leadership from the pastor in some ways. All pastors need our prayers and encouragement. I try to encourage

my pastor by praying for him and sending a note of thanks from time to time. Pointing to the strong points can build up their spirits. Too often they receive critical criticism. Constructive criticism, on the other hand, is good to receive when shared in the spirit of love and concern. I am a mother trying to teach my daughter purity, modesty, servant-hood, thoughtfulness, and other Christian virtues. I want her to be selfless rather than selfish. I cannot change others, but I can show by my example to my daughter what Christ is like by how I choose to live. I am thankful I live out in the country away from the influences of town life. To make a difference, we must be Christ-like in all we say and do. Parents need to be involved with their kids and KNOW what they are being taught and WHO their friends are.

My daughter did not attend the Wednesday night children's program last year because I felt that the children were too 'out of control,' meaning they are in control more than the adults running the program. Too many adults lack the courage to make children mind and listen, and sadly that means there is disruption going on. The children that want to listen and learn are frustrated by the kids that don't behave, which then can cause them to not hear and learn the message being delivered. Being afraid to hold kids accountable is not being Christ-like in my opinion. So my daughter was the only child last year listening to the pastor's Wednesday evening messages. I have shared my concerns, but I can only control what goes into my child's heart and mind.

I am responsible for her training. I do home school. I am raising her to KNOW Jesus as LORD and Saviour of her life. I don't want her to just 'know about' Jesus. My daughter is exposed to godly teaching off internet radio. I have DVD's by David Cloud to help teach us. I love my daughter. I want her to grow in God's Truth and his righteousness. Without God's help, I could not. With God, I can. I'm asking the LORD to deal with my heart in

areas I lack insight and wisdom as well. God is so good and faithful. Let God be praised in every way.

I would be very surprised if this woman's daughter turns out to be anything less than a disciple of Jesus Christ. The mother is more concerned about her daughter's spiritual well-being than she is about fitting in at church or even about pleasing the leadership. That is healthy and wise and right. This mother is properly respectful toward the church leaders and has compassion toward them, but she knows that she is responsible before God to make the right decisions for her children. This mother is 100% committed to doing her part to train up her daughter in the way she should go and is trusting the Lord for the results. This is exactly what it takes to "keep the kids."

One of the most important things parents can do is to maintain close communication with their children. When struggles arise, as they will, the parents need to know what is going on in the child's heart so they can intervene in a godly manner.

Parents should talk with teachers and others who deal with their children to find out how they are doing. One Sunday School teacher told me that most of the boys in his class do not appear to care anything about the lesson. He feels that they are only in class because they are made to attend by their parents. It makes you wonder about these parents. Do they not know this or is it that they do they not care? I asked this Sunday School teacher if he had approached the parents, and he replied that he hasn't been on the job very long and was hesitant to do that at this point. I believe that he should talk to the parents and let them know what he sees, but it is also the responsibility of the parents to approach him.

Parents must make the home a place of enjoyment. Pastor J.B. Buffington, in his 1970s sermon “How to Lose Your Teenager before He is Five Years Old,” said,

Now, I don't believe that the children should break things and I believe they should learn how to clean up their messes, but there is something more important than the furniture and the carpet and the piano, and that is the people who live there. I like to live at home. That is where I can kick off my shoes in the living room. That's where I can relax and enjoy myself; and Mom and Dad, you need to make sure that your children feel that way. There have been very few nights that my children have asked to stay away from home. If the home is a place of joy, they will bring their friends there. Before a child is five years old, he knows if the home is a place of happiness and a place where he can enjoy himself.

Now, I don't believe in a dirty house. There is a difference between a dirty house and a house that is comfortable and a bit 'messed up.' A house that is dirty hasn't been cleaned, but a house that is messed up is lived in.

When your children become teenagers, what will they think about the place called home? Laughter? Joy? Home ought to be the place where you can bring your friends and have fun. The most important thing for parents to do is assure their children that they are more important than anything in that home. Sure, you teach them how to take care of things, but they must understand that they are the really important things to you.

# Father and Mother in Harmony

“My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother” (Proverbs 1:8).

Twelve times the book of Proverbs mentions both the father and mother in the context of child training (Pr. 1:8; 4:3; 6:20; 10:1; 15:20; 19:26; 20:20; 23:22, 25; 28:24; 30:11, 17).

Pastor J.B. Buffington warns,

“The child quickly learns to manipulate the situation when he sees that the mother and father are not in agreement about his discipline. He or she will even risk getting into trouble just to see mom and dad have a fight. When you discipline, the parents must be in harmony and must show the child that they are in harmony. The mom must say, ‘If daddy said it, that’s right.’ The dad must say, ‘If mommy said it, that’s right.’ They must support one another and work out any differences in opinion in private.”

The father and mother must study the matter of child training together and learn together so they will be in unity. They must discuss these things together. The father needs to take the lead in this, as he is the spiritual head of the home.

## Keeping the Child's Heart

No amount of training and discipline will work if the parents do not capture and keep the children's hearts. If their hearts become estranged from the parents, the children will experience spiritual shipwreck.

The heart is the center of the individual's life. It is mentioned 833 times in Scripture!

“Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life” (Proverbs 4:23).

The wise parent says, “My son, give me thine heart...” (Pr. 23:26). When children are young, they naturally give their hearts to their parents, and a parent can keep that child's heart if he deals with him or her in love and godly wisdom.

Pastor Terry Coomer observes,

“Let me ask you a most serious and sobering question. Do you have your child's heart? You as a parent have to get the child's heart. Not only must you get the heart of the child, you must keep the heart of the child. ... I can hear someone say, ‘Pastor, I knew a Christian family where there were three children and two of the kids grew up to serve the Lord and one was a horrible rebel.’ The answer is here; the parent did not have the heart of the rebel or he did not keep the heart of the rebel. ... You have to get the child's heart! The problem in every spiritual problem is the heart! Parents, rebellion begins in the heart. Children's lives wander because their heart wanders. ... The one who has the child's heart will eventually have his life and his loyalty” (*Rearing Spiritual Children*, pp. 70, 72).

Following are some of the ways that a child's heart is stolen from the parent:

### **1. The heart can be stolen by parental hypocrisy.**

When parents are hypocritical and do not walk sincerely with the Lord in the home, the children become discouraged and frustrated and they are easy targets for the devil. We have dealt with this in the chapter on “The Home: *Consistent Christian Living*.”

### **2. The heart can be stolen by an unwholesome husband-wife relationship.**

As we have said, one of the most important things a father can do for his children is to love his wife, and one of the most important things a mother can do for her children is to love her husband. One respondent observed,

“Having a loving relationship that is ongoing with your wife helps keep the children’s hearts. When the children see that, they know they have a place of security. Giving your spouse love and affection in front of the children is a positive as well.”

### **3. The heart can be stolen when a father provokes his children to wrath (Eph. 6:4).**

When this happens, the father loses the hearts of his children and they are easy prey for the world. We deal with this extensively in a later section of this chapter on Child Discipline.

### **4. The heart can be stolen by parental neglect and letting the children live largely in their own worlds.**

One missionary who has visited many churches and has observed how that a great many of the young people turn out to be rebels observed,

“I think the most important thing would be to keep close relationships with the children. Lots of parents are too busy with other things instead of being spiritually close

to the family. Children grow up in their own world with the video games, movies, music, headphones, internet, etc., which causes great rebellion. Once they are old enough to choose for themselves, they will go their own way and not listen to their parents.”

### **5. The heart can be stolen by lack of patience and love, by carnal criticism.**

Parents must be very patient and kind with their children. They are delicate. We must have rules and the rules must be enforced and there must be discipline, but we must never forget that they are children and that learning godly character habits and spiritual growth does not happen overnight. It is a long process. The parents must not forget the long and probably arduous process it took them to get where they are.

Many of the respondents mentioned the necessity of showing genuine love to the children. Following are a few examples:

“Give lots of hugs and tell your children frequently that you love them. Even if this gets a bit syrupy do it anyway. Children want this even if they pretend not to. And really mean it.”

“It is important as a parent to show your love and acceptance of them consistently from the beginning. Saying ‘I love you,’ hugs, and actions that support these words are constantly needed to reassure them.”

“Young people don’t need good teachers as much as they need ministers with a pastor’s heart. They need to know that they are cared for before anything else.”

### **6. The heart can be stolen by a lack of close communication and involvement.**

Many respondents to our questionnaire mentioned the importance of this. Consider these examples,

“Listen to your kids. Really listen and try to understand what they are going through. Take an interest in the things that concern them, even if they seem very trivial to you.”

“When they come to you and want to talk, it is important that you listen and don’t jump all over them or belittle their concerns. Then they feel safe to confide in you or bring their questions to you, and you have opportunities to teach and instruct their open hearts.”

“I’d like to share a piece of advice that someone gave me when we adopted our twin daughters in 1990, and that is, ‘You can’t spend too much time with your kids.’ That’s it. Spend time with them every chance you get, even if you are just in the room, doing something else; be there. Be a presence in their lives. And talk at every opportunity. Always welcome their point of view in family decisions. If they know they are being listened to, they ride along. Be genuine about this. When big blow-ups arise, get everybody to sit around the table and work something out.”

“Winning children’s hearts is something that needs to be done when they are young, by spending time with them, teaching them, and developing interests together with them. Do not put them aside for work, or for your hobbies that do not allow them to be around. Do not think that you will be able to win their hearts after you have allowed someone else to win them.”

“I believe that parents can reach the hearts of their children by having a relationship with them. That is, after all, how God reaches us and gets our hearts for Him. Parents in today’s society have too little time for their children. Even when kids are homeschooled, my experience is that the majority of the homeschooled kids are teaching themselves. My nine-year-old son is always coming up to me and asking to do something with me. Now, I can’t always, but if I never took the time to say,

‘Ok, let’s sit down and play a game,’ then he would want nothing to do with me because he would see that I want nothing to do with him. We must make time to put down what we are doing and sit down with the kids. We parents have to take the time to raise our children. That means spending time with them in God’s Word and out of God’s Word.”

“We believe that one thing that has worked for us has been just staying very, very involved in the child’s life, showing an interest in her, talking to her, making sure she knows that she is the most important earthly thing we have, loving her. We have always wanted her to feel that we are open and can discuss anything with her. As a result, she feels completely comfortable talking to us about just about anything, or, for really embarrassing stuff, to her mother.”

## **7. The heart can be stolen by lack of involvement by the father.**

We have already mentioned the necessity of involvement by the parents, but here we want to emphasize the importance of the father’s role. One of the most important ways to keep the children’s hearts is for the father to be involved in their lives and to be fulfilling his responsibility to be the spiritual head of the house. Malachi 4:6 says that Elijah will “*turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.*” Thus, we see that when the father’s heart is turned to the children, their hearts are turned to him. If a father has been unengaged with his children, he must repent of this sin and confess it to his family and set out to make things right.

The following was sent to us when we were gathering testimonies in preparation to write *Keeping the Kids*:

“We reach and keep the hearts of the children because of our relationship with them. It is their love for us, just as it

is our love for our Lord and Savior, which will cause them to continue to respect us and listen to us. I think back to my own experiences growing up. My earliest memories are of my dad reading me the Bible when I was very young. He cared about our neighbors. I'll never forget him sending my brothers and me out to rake our 90-year-old neighbor's yard. Alongside my dad, we would also shovel his walkway in the winter. Dad made sure we never accepted money for helping out the neighbors. He always had us looking for ways to help those around us. Dad always took the time to sit and talk to me about everything and anything. He was my best friend when I was a teenager. I always felt I could go to him and talk to him about anything. He was very clear about what was sin, and as a result of his teaching, I also knew very clearly what was displeasing or pleasing to God. Because of my love and respect for my dad as well as for God, I didn't stray into sinful practices which were prevalent in the seventies. I didn't want to disappoint either my dad or my Heavenly Father. Even while at a secular college (Brown University), I devoted myself to my studies, not participating in the darker side of campus life."

One pastor told me that no matter what he is doing with his son, even watching a DVD movie, they discuss what is going on. The father points out things that he sees that are spiritually dangerous, and he encourages his son to state his opinions freely. He is teaching his son how to exercise moral and spiritual discernment. The Bible says that spiritual growth comes when the senses are "exercised to discern both good and evil" (Heb. 5:14). This pastor and his wife are working to maintain the type of relationship with their children that will encourage them to discuss their struggles and temptations freely. This father encourages his children to share their hearts during family devotions. The kids have grown up from a young age conversing with their parents about their inmost concerns. It has become a natural thing, and this has carried over as they have gotten older.

Some fathers take their children on regular “dates.”

One man told me that few things thrill his young daughters more than their “dates” with Dad. He observes that this has helped him keep their hearts. The same man has a close relationship with his son and plans activities that they can do together that will allow them to talk one on one. He testifies that his son’s heart is always tender toward his authority when he makes the effort to stay close to him and to communicate with him.

I think of a pastor who has three daughters. When I preach Bible conferences at his church, he takes me out to lunch every day, and most days he takes one of his daughters, turn by turn.

Pastor Tony Evans says, “Communication has been one of our big things. When you have a lot of children, they get lost in the group, so we have made a point of individual days and times. I might take one of the children out to breakfast before school or for a coffee and chat, and that is that child’s time. I think we have kept communication going that way. We feel that communication between the parent and child is tantamount to being able to mould their lives for the Lord. Many times when children reach teenage years they don’t want to have anything to do with their parents, but I think a lot of time the problem is that communication links weren’t set up early in life. So even when they were four and five years old, we were taking them on dates, one on one, so that we could be connected and involved. That’s been one of my venues for discipleship. We’ve sat at McDonalds and done Bible studies.”

Pastor Terry Coomer writes, “When [my oldest daughter] was sixteen, the Lord laid on my heart to spend more time with her. For the next two years, every Sunday after church we would go get a Coke and take a drive. Sometimes we

would drive for hours and just talk about the Lord. She would ask spiritual questions and we would talk about them. No subject was out of bounds. We talked about developing our relationship with the Lord. We talked about how to really pray and what she was learning from her Bible. What was God speaking to her about? We would talk about what she was looking for in a young man for a godly husband. I made sure she understood that she needed a young man who would not be led by his emotions, but one who would be led by the Word of God. I explained that a young man who is led by his emotions would eventually lead her into sin. We prayed together and became closer as a father and a daughter. I made sure she understood what her mother and I expected from her when she left our home. The key here was it took time. I had to make the time. To this day she still talks about her drives with Dad. This time spent with our daughter on the Lord's day helped her at a time when she was preparing to leave our home to understand the importance we and the Lord placed on our spiritual lives. Parents, spiritual communication is the first key to rearing godly children" (Terry Coomer, *Rearing Spiritual Children*, p. 45).

If this communication is jealously guarded and maintained, when the children reach adolescence they will still share their hearts with the parents and the worldly "generation gap" will be bridged. The parents will be able to guide their teenage youth through the great pitfalls that characterize this particular time of life.

#### **8. The heart can be stolen when there is a lack of candor and confession and humility on the part of the parents.**

"Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much" (James 5:16).

“Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God”  
(Ephesians 5:21).

**9. The heart can be stolen when there are rules without a clear biblical basis and the children are not taught the reason for the rules.**

Some of the respondents emphasized this as follows:

“Don’t just have rules, have biblically-based convictions. When a child questions them, thank him for asking and give the scriptural reasons. Reassure the children that it is always good to come to the parent with questions, no matter how tough.”

“Always be willing to listen to them. Give honest answers to their questions. Show them respect; respect their opinions. If there is a standard they need to follow because it’s biblical, explain why. Teach them to have a love for the Lord that is separate from yours, to cultivate a relationship with the Lord of their own. Don’t always hammer at them about right and wrong but also explain to them WHY some things are right and WHY some things are wrong, how that God wants to protect us from the consequences of bad choices if we will be wise enough to choose the right way.”

**10. The heart can be stolen when the children are not saved and grounded in God’s Word and when they do not know how to apply God’s Word to their daily lives.**

Children that do not have a real personal relationship with Christ and are not grounded in God’s Word are prime candidates to have their hearts stolen by the world, the flesh, and the devil. We have dealt with this in the chapter on “Discipleship.”

**11. The heart can be stolen when there is a lack of prayer.**

Fervent, effectual prayer is one of the most important ways that the hearts of children are kept for the Lord and

protected from being stolen by the enemy. We recommend the Sunday School course “Fundamentals of Biblical Prayer.”

**12. The heart can be stolen by a worldly friend, relative, or teacher.**

Parents must jealously and lovingly guard against unwholesome relationships that draw the children’s hearts away from them and toward evil.

**13. The heart can be stolen by the world’s pop music and its self-centered, rebellious philosophy.**

I have repeated this often in this book (*Keeping the Kids*), because it bears repeating. Few things have the power to steal a child’s heart to the world more than pop music.

**14. The heart can be stolen by a worldly school environment, whether Christian or secular.**

**15. The heart can be stolen by an evil influence that comes through literature or video games.**

**16. The heart can be stolen by a carnal affection for sports, which becomes a bridge to the world.**

There are a few of the ways that the hearts of children can be stolen from the way of righteousness and truth.

Consider the Bible example of how David lost the heart of his son Absalom. We read this sad story in 2 Samuel 11-15. First, David sinned grievously in the matter of Bathsheba and lost his testimony before his family (2 Sa. 11-12). Second, David fell for Amnon’s lie and sent Tamar, Absalom’s sister, to her room. After Amnon raped Tamar, David was angry but he did not apologize to Absalom or exercise discipline or deal with the problem in any practical way, as far as we know from Scripture (2 Sa. 13:1-7, 21). Third, after Absalom murdered Amnon and fled away,

David longed for him but he did not send for him and deal personally with him (2 Sa. 13:37-39). Fourth, even when David let Absalom return, he refused to talk with him (2 Sa. 14:21-24). Fifth, after Absalom burned Joab's barley field, Joab convinced David to see Absalom, but it was too late; by that point Absalom's heart was totally estranged from his father and filled with hatred and he had determined to steal his throne (2 Sa. 14:28 - 15:6).

How did David lose his son's heart? He lost it through at least six of the ways listed previously: through hypocrisy, neglect, poor husband-wife relationship (it is doubtful that David's polygamy would have provided the climate for a quality husband-wife relationship), lack of confession and humility, lack of communication, and lack of discipline.

# Discipleship

“And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up” (Deuteronomy 6:7).

Biblical child discipline is not merely negative. It involves far more than punishment of sin. It is an overall program of discipling the child for Christ.

## **Discipling children requires teaching them God’s Word naturally, as a way of life.**

Deuteronomy instructs parents to teach the Word of God “diligently unto thy children,” but this does not refer only to conducting family devotions and taking the children to church. These are very important things, but the parents are instructed to talk of the Word of God “when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.”

Talking with the children about the things of God and discussing the Bible and applying it to life’s situations should be as natural as talking about the weather, and it should be a daily, continual process.

Two of the respondents to our questionnaire said,

“We parents must specifically, deliberately, teach the values and principles of God’s Word to our children. We cannot expect children to automatically absorb what we believe. God’s Word commands us to ‘train up’ the children in God’s ways, which means to ‘initiate’ the learning and to ‘discipline’ with loving authority the lessons to be learned. When we abdicate our authority and position as the ‘trainers’ to others such as school teachers or daycare workers, we are doing a grave

injustice to these children by building within them a void of understanding of God and His Ways which will be filled with the lies of Satan and the flesh.”

“You should build your relationship with your child at every opportunity, teaching, mentoring on every bit of life. Doing the laundry, making supper (for girls) chopping wood with dad for boys, whatever. Just use every moment as time to do things together and to learn about the Lord and life skills.”

One man who wrote to share his experiences and thoughts on “keeping the kids” is divorced and faces the heavy trial of trying to raise a step-child for the Lord when the child lives part time with an unsaved parent (who is very belligerent to the fundamentalist Christian faith). As a result of the custody issue, the girl is in public school (against the will of her mother and step-father), which, of course, compounds the problems she faces because of the evil associations. In spite of these handicaps, this man and his likeminded Christian wife are winning this battle by fervent prayer, building a godly home environment, and maintaining a close relationship with the girl. Their testimony is a good example.

We believe that one thing that has worked for us has been just staying very, very involved in the child’s life, showing an interest in her, talking to her when we have her, making sure she knows that she is the most important earthly thing we have, loving her. Regular discipline.

Talking to her and explaining things that some might think are above her age level, but we have talked candidly with her about death, sex, relationships, etc., just as soon as we thought she was able to understand the issues. Of course, if she brings something up then that’s a good chance to meet it head on and talk to her about it. We have always wanted her to feel that we are open and can discuss anything with her. As a result, she feels

completely comfortable talking to us about just about anything, or, for really embarrassing stuff, to her mother.

I think talking at an adult level to her (within reason, of course) has been a very important aspect of our relationship with her.

Other important things are never missing church, making sure she knows that salvation and the Lord are real to us, holding up missionaries and preachers as examples, praising young people who are making good choices and pointing out others who are making bad choices, and warning her of the dangers. We constantly stress the importance of choosing the right friends.

As far as life-coaching, when she was about six we started emphasizing the importance of choosing the right husband. We harp on that constantly. We look for ways to bring up the issue. We tell her over and over, it is the second most important decision you will make in life, after getting saved. If you make a bad choice there, you will regret it the rest of your life.

When she was three, we started teaching her seriously about creation and evolution, giving her specifics. Today, she is pretty well grounded on that very important topic because young people need to get that early to be able to withstand the forces promoting evolution.

Not watching television. Involving her in whatever ministries we could. She helps stuff envelopes for missionaries, etc.

The main thing is this. Turning her out right is the highest priority we have. It's EXTREMELY important to us. It's like life and death to us. So, it gets a lot of our thought, prayers, and attention.

On learning the Bible, our daughter loves to be involved in the learning experience, so we have really tried to make learning the Bible interesting to her. When she was 3-6, we would read a Bible story and then act it out. That

makes an impression on a little kid. She couldn't wait to get to the acting out part.

Then at about six years old, we started giving her quizzes about what we were learning. She loves to take a quiz. Now, she's 12, but a lot of times on the road we'll give her a quiz, like: 'Give me a verse that says we can know that we are saved?' 'What king was guilty of murder?' 'What happens after we die?' etc.

Her Sunday School teacher says she is one of the sharpest students he's ever had, that she really knows her Bible.

We have a Bible Trivial Pursuit type game, with two levels of questions -- kid questions and adult questions. Some of the kid questions are pretty hard, and she stands just as good a chance of winning as her mother or I do because she's been taught, not by rote but by involvement. That's why they take tests in school. Too much Bible teaching is done by having someone telling it to you, without you having to give it back. Why don't we have tests in Sunday School?

The mother and father that put the Word of God in this central place in the life of their family will see godly fruit that will last for eternity. Too many parents talk about everything but the Word of God. The fathers talk with their sons about sports, fishing, hunting, shooting, and politics; the mothers talk with their daughters about cooking, fashion, makeup, romance novels, boys and other girls, but they do not talk about God's Word. This is a recipe for spiritual disaster.

Of course, before parents can talk effectively with their children about God's Word, they must first learn it themselves. They must establish their own private study time and show themselves approved unto God by being workmen in His Word.

**Discipling children requires teaching them how to serve the Lord and necessitates that the parents serve the Lord with the children.**

If we want to fulfill God's will, we must realize that it is not enough to have a godly, joyful home. We must gear the home toward the fulfillment of God's will on this earth in this present age, and that is encapsulated in what is called the Great Commission. Parents need to teach their children that this is Christ's program for this age and show them how to do it.

Some of those who wrote to us on this subject emphasized this matter,

“When you examine the life of the apostle Paul, and also that of the earthly life of the Lord Jesus, you find them giving their lives to two missions: preaching to the lost and encouraging the believers. Devote your family energies to those two missions and you won't waste your lives. Show the children that the church is not merely an audience in the pews that watches the 'show' every week. Make sure that you and your children actively encourage other church members and expect those members to reciprocate. Take your children with you when you do personal evangelism. Let them see and hear the differences between lost people and saved people. Teach them how to share the Gospel and let them contend with the objections of the atheist, the cultist, the New Ager, the religious lost. Equip them with the answers regarding evolution, Bible versions, Christian history, denominations, etc.”

“A pastor who is a great friend of mine was led to Christ by one of his Air Force commanders and present was the officer's seven-year-old boy. After they spoke together, my pastor friend said, 'Your son is so quiet and well behaved.' It turned out that the officer's son had participated with his father as a prayer partner in witnessing. This little boy

had been praying for the entire time his father was sharing the truth with my friend. That boy now is a pastor himself with children that share in the joys of what his father allowed him to do as a boy and share in the fruits of witnessing.”

Missionary Bob Nichols says,

“Our children are always in the work with us. Wherever I go I take them. They play musical instruments and know music. They go when we preach and when we go soul winning. They’re involved in AWANAs and discipleship. We try to get them involved in everything. I have had all my boys go through our Bible institute in Brazil, and they’ve had to go through a discipleship program where they learn to win souls. After they win a soul they are responsible to disciple that person and help them grow in the Lord. All my boys have led music in church. As a matter of fact, our church is set up where on Sunday morning we have a 15 minute time during which the young men can sign up to preach or give a devotion from the Bible. It helps them develop their preaching skills and learn to stand before others. Then we have another young man who leads the congregational music each week. The front row in our church is where we have the young people come and play the guitar. We always have some who are learning to play music, both guitar and piano. Then as the boys got older we gave them more responsibilities. We take missions trips up in the mountains and they are responsible to preach and do door-to-door visitation up there. Then to each of my preacher boys I give a responsibility on a rotating basis each year to organize a camp during carnival season. I give the young men the responsibility to organize the camp, so that helps develop their skills. They get an appreciation of the planning and all that is involved. They have to program the events of each day, the Bible times, the speakers, the games. They have to order the food and

everything. Giving my boys responsibilities like this has helped prepare them for life.”

Tony Evans, missionary to Japan, echoes this sentiment,

We’ve always tried as a family to do everything possible together. We’ve always tried to pray together, to study the Scriptures together, to serve together. Even coming back on deputation, we travel together as family. We’re a team and we work together. It’s not convenient traveling with five kids and doing Japanese homeschooling in the bus as we go, but we do that.

We don’t consider the ministry as something that belongs only to my wife and me, but something that belongs to the whole family. As the children have become old enough to serve in some way, they’ve all had their own ministries in the church. Benjamin, who is 20, started out with printing things such as the church programs, and slowly that ministry has been handed over to the others. That’s the face of the church, so I see that as an important job. They don’t only get the back seat jobs. As we see character and growth in their lives, we give them different things. Benjamin heads up a lot of music programs in the church now. He’s been doing research and teaching on godly music for two or three years. He leads the woodwind ensemble. They practice every week and they have half an hour of study on the nature of music, where the CCM thing is going, and that sort of thing. Now, as a result of the work he has done, just the last couple of weeks before we left to go on deputation, he taught a series of two-hour seminars to the entire church on that. The week before we left, he and I shared a lecture to about a hundred kids on the same subject. That’s something that he personally has developed a vision for over the years, so I can see that the Lord’s going to open that up because the Japanese lack training in that area. Ruth has been very involved in the Sunday School. She has a wonderful ability to reach into the hearts of little kids and draw them out and come alongside them. She’s

musical as well, so there are lots of things she does with Sunday School and the choir. She is good at building relationships with the teen girls in the church, and I think some of her ability to do that links back with her having been in school with the Japanese girls. She's been there with the secular girls and seen what they go through. Even the secular girls come to her at school for counsel. As a result of that she's been able to lead one your girl to the Lord. She's got the ability to listen and open them up. She's just given her life to go back to the Japanese. Susanna is in the wind ensemble. She's got a burden to go back and start teaching in Sunday School.

We deal with discipleship more extensively in the book *Keeping the Kids*.

# Teaching Responsibility and a Work Ethic

The book of Proverbs, which is God's premier book on child training, speaks much about a strong work ethic and responsibility. It warns often about the "sluggard" way of life, which is the way of laziness and undependability.

"Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise: Which having no guide, overseer, or ruler, Provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest. How long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard? when wilt thou arise out of thy sleep? Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep" (Proverbs 6:6-10).

"As vinegar to the teeth, and as smoke to the eyes, so is the sluggard to them that send him" (Proverbs 10:26).

"The soul of the sluggard desireth, and hath nothing: but the soul of the diligent shall be made fat" (Proverbs 13:4).

"The sluggard will not plow by reason of the cold; therefore shall he beg in harvest, and have nothing" (Proverbs 20:4).

Children must be taught the importance of these truths by hands-on experience. Missionary Bob Nichols says,

"Another thing that we have done with our children is that we've never lived in a city. We've always lived on a farm, so the children have always had animals and always had responsibilities. They were taught to work, taught to take care of animals. They've had household duties, cleaning their rooms, the dishes, and such. Unfortunately too many children today don't have responsibilities, and they sit around with nothing to do, and the devil takes advantage of that. They go into their rooms and hide in

their computers and televisions. Children need responsibilities. They need some work to do.”

Children don't have to live in the country to learn how to work. Even if they live in the city, parents can give their children responsibilities.

This needs to start when they are very small. They must be taught to clean up after themselves. If they make a mess with their games and toys or projects, they must be required to clean it up. Every time. This instills good habits that will benefit them throughout their lives.

The kids need to learn to help around the house and church in all sorts of ways and not just be served.

They need to be taught to look for opportunities to help and to volunteer to help instead of waiting to be asked.

They need to be taught not to sit or stand around and watch others work. They should volunteer to help with the project, and they should make sure that it is understood that they really do want to help.

## Continuing Through Adolescence

Many Christian parents slack off on oversight when the children reach “teenage” years, but teenagers need more attention and supervision, not less!

I have witnessed many parents that have actually followed their adolescent children into the world! One respondent warned against this strange phenomenon as follows:

“Parents must be completely transparent in being an example to their children. Many young people will go through their own time of weighing what they have learned against what they perceive to be real. When all is said and done, if they see their parents as real; that will win out! Also parents must remain steadfast in spite of what their children do. I have seen many parents rebel along with their kids. Seems they have been ‘faithful’ in order for God to help them raise good kids. When this tactic seems to have failed, then the parents abandon the fundamentalist church, usually for a less ‘legalistic’ option. The child then has nowhere to return, should they ‘come to themselves’ as the prodigal did. When the prodigal came home, the father was right where he was when the son left.”

Another respondent to our questionnaire made the following important observation,

“It seems to be a trend here that many parents think they need to let their kids make their own choices when they are in their early teens. In my estimation, the kids are not ready to make their own choices about many things at that age, and God still holds the parents responsible for guiding them. If they make wrong choices and follow the wrong friends, they need to be stopped. Parents are afraid to lay down the law today. They are afraid to discipline or spank. They fear this will drive their kids away. I’ve

learned that consistent and scriptural discipline has drawn my step-kids closer to me. The fears of most parents are unfounded.”

The average teen in North America has his own television, smart phone, computer, internet connection, and video game console. Many have their own automobiles. My dad gave me a car when I was 17 years old, and it was disastrous because I was not mature and had not demonstrated that I could be trusted to make wise decisions.

If children have been raised right and have matured in Christ and the parents have kept their hearts, they can be trusted in some ways as teenagers, but even then they must be carefully supervised and closely communicated with, because they lack experience and are prime targets of the devil. We must be vigilant against his wiles at all times (1 Peter 5:8).

Earlier we gave the example of how that Pastor Terry Coomer spent every Sunday afternoon talking with his daughter when she was 16 and 17 years old. That is a wise example.

Pastor Mario Schiavoni says,

“We are seeing that parental involvement is very, very important. We have many parents in our church whose children are just turning the corner from the high school years, and we are seeing that the parents are backing off. They are stepping back and allowing the teens more say than they should have. They are allowing little infatuations to brew. Of course, the older children are becoming little adults; they do have more to offer, but the parents must remain active in guiding, especially when it comes to relationships and possible relationships. Parents need to be more heavily involved during that time.”

Missionary Bob Nichols says,

“You don’t stop when they are teenagers. With one of my sons, his last spanking was when he was 21 years old. I wore him out. He is bigger than me and could have grabbed me and thrown me out the door. Of course, he didn’t try, and I don’t let him know that he could. As a matter of fact, my oldest daughter was 19 when she went to her mother and said, ‘Mom, I need for you to give me a good spanking. I’ve got this bad attitude and I can’t get over it. Every time that you corrected me, I was able to get victory over it.’ That was amazing. She really wanted victory in that matter.”

Many of the respondents to our questionnaire observed that youth begin to drift away when they get their first job. Parents need to oversee such decisions very, very carefully and wisely. If the young people have a weak or questionable testimony of salvation and have not been properly disciplined, they will easily be attracted to the lifestyle of their unbelieving co-workers. It is extremely important that parents not allow their children to take jobs that keep them away from church or from having their daily devotions or that otherwise hinder their walk with Christ.

Consider the following testimonies,

“There needs to be more parental involvement in the spiritual growth of their child and a stronger family unit. Drifting and departure often begin with a driver’s license and getting a job and no guidelines (parental) on when they can work and where. It is at this point that most begin to depart from the church. If they stay consistent through this period, (16-19), they will most likely remain. The second most critical period is immediately following, if they leave to attend a four-year secular university. The influences and atmosphere are not conducive to spiritual growth or faithfulness. I know, as I spent four years in one myself. In the absence of parental or pastoral influence, this group often drifts from the faith and has difficulty reconnecting.”

“The biggest reason some have stopped coming to church is the lack of discipline by the parents. One young man got a job his sophomore year of high school and began working every Sunday night. This can be prevented by the parents taking the authority and approaching the owner of the store to let them know that their child cannot work on Sundays or Wednesday nights. One other young man just doesn’t get up and come to church, and when the parents are approached about it they say, ‘Well I just didn’t get him up in time, so it is my fault he isn’t at church.’ Yet the boy can get up early in the morning to go to work.”

“We lose about 20% of the young people sometime in high school. Generally we lose them because they get jobs that make them work on Sundays. Once they get those jobs, it becomes easy for them to justify staying out of services and they generally do.”

“We have noticed that many who leave get the idea that if God gives them a job that requires them to work during services, then it is O.K. to miss services. If God gives them a job that requires wearing immodest clothes then it must be O.K. to wear immodest clothes. If God gives them a job that plays rock-n-roll music on the PA then that is O.K. They think they are strong enough to take that and keep coming to church unaffected. Usually though, within six months of getting the job they are missing 50% or more of the services and within a year, they are out of the services completely. As the Singles Director, I have stressed the fact the God has His perfect job for us and Satan has his perfect job for us. However, most of the kids won’t wait upon God to provide that perfect job.”

As the last testimony states, the young people must be taught to live by faith rather than sight. God has a perfect will, but we must seek it and wait for it. Young people must be taught to live out such verses as Proverbs 3:5-6, Matthew

6:33, and Hebrews 11:24-27. God has promised to lead us and take care of us, but we must put Him first and obey Him and trust Him. If the believer makes his own plans according to his own thinking and perceived needs and then asks God to bless it, it won't work! That person is acting the part of his own god. God is not a puppet on a string, just waiting to do our bidding when we beckon! Almighty God doesn't bless us when we walk according to our will; He doesn't bless us when we walk in the darkness of self-service; He blesses us when we walk in the light and according to His will.

When I got saved at age 23 and started reading the Bible and seeking God's will and saw in Scripture how important the church is (e.g., Acts 2:42; 1 Timothy 3:15; Hebrews 10:25), I determined that I would not take a job that kept me out of the services. God blessed that and faithfully provided jobs that supplied my needs but did not hinder my spiritual growth and my preparation for His service.

When children reach adolescence, it is especially important to guard them against developing an appetite for the world's music. This is one of the devil's most effective hooks. Worldly music is the main instrument that the devil used to capture me when I was a teenager.

Pastor David Sorenson says,

“Perhaps more than anything else, the devil uses the power of music to get his hooks into young people. We do not have the space to elaborate at length about the perils of music. But suffice it to say that the world's music is a primary device of the devil in getting a hold of young people and that certainly includes children in Christian homes. In the years our children were growing up, they simply were not allowed to listen to rock music or any other form of the world's music. We did not allow them to have a radio, stereo, or other type of playback device in

their rooms. Technology has changed over the years, but the principle is the same. We currently have a foster daughter in our home, and she is not allowed to play any music on her iPod which is not approved. More Christian young people have been drawn into the world by way of the world's music than probably any other one means. It is powerful. One of the best things you as a parent can do is control the music to which your children listen. You will never regret that decision."

We conclude this section on discipline in adolescence by saying that **parents must be ready to go into emergency intervention mode if they see any sign of a child slipping toward rebellion and worldliness.** It must not be ignored. It will not go away on its own accord.

One missionary wrote,

"Unfortunately, as more kids came and there were more responsibilities in the ministry, I didn't spend as much time with the three youngest as I did with the first three. The Lord woke me in 2007 to the fact that I wasn't spending the time, and I've had to spend more time with my younger children. I didn't lose them, and I thank God for that, but I began to see some rebellion coming in that I didn't like, and attitudes that shouldn't have been there. I was so involved in the ministry and trying to help my preacher boys get established in the works that I wasn't spending sufficient time with my family. That's a precaution that especially preachers and missionaries must take in their lives, and it's not just 'quality' time; it's day by day time. If we live right every day, it will be quality time. It must be a day by day process."

This father saw that there was a problem and he determined to do whatever he could from his side to solve it. He went into "emergency mode" for the sake of keeping the kids.

# How to Spoil the Child Training

It is possible for parents to practice good child training only to have the effect spoiled by outside influences. Parents must jealously guard their children so this does not happen.

1 Corinthians 15:33 - "Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners."

"**Evil communications**" refer to any kind of associations, relationships, communion, conversation, and fellowship that is evil, bad, wrong, or harmful by the standard of God's Word. "**Evil**" is the Greek *kakós*, the common New Testament word for evil. It is also translated "wicked" (Mt. 21:41), "harm" (Ac. 16:28), and "ill" (Ro. 13:10). Evil is anything that is contrary to God's standard of righteousness and holiness. Evil communications can be defined by the rest of the verse as anything that would bring harm to one's Christian life and anything that would corrupt good manners. "**Communications**" is *homilía*, which refers to any form of association, accompanying together, companionship, conversation. It is from *homiléó*, meaning "a multitude, a crowd, a company." It is translated "talked together" (Lu. 24:14) and "communed together" (Lu. 24:15). "**Corrupt**" is *phtheíro*, "to waste, destroy, bring to a worse state, spoil, subvert" (*Complete Word Study Bible*). It is translated "defile" and "destroy" (1 Co. 3:17). It is used for the corruption of the mind by false doctrine (2 Co. 11:3). "**Good manners**" is *chrestos* (profitable, fit, good for any use) and *ethos* (custom, habit, morals, character). It refers to the right or biblical way of living and thinking.

This is a command to separate from all evil communications. It describes a very strict way of Christian living. It is a warning that any association or company or

companionship or communion with any form of evil spoils the biblical way of Christian living and thinking.

1 Corinthians 15:33 tells us that we live in a world of danger. We are in a war. We have enemies.

1 Corinthians 15:33 is a command to have a testing mindset. It is a command to judge everything by the standard of whether or not it is an evil communication and to avoid everything that fits that standard. This is contrary to the “judge not, be tolerant, lighten up, don’t be so strict” thinking that is predominant within 21st century Christianity.

Obedying 1 Corinthians 15:33 requires that God’s people be serious Bible students. It is impossible to know what is “evil” without a strong and growing knowledge of God’s Word.

1 Corinthians 15:33 applies to every area of life: friendships, education, entertainment, literature, social media, television, movies, YouTube videos, video games, music, etc. It applies to children, youth, parents, preachers, and grandparents. Evil communications will corrupt the good manners of any person of any age.

1 Corinthians 15:33 is an important teaching for child training. Parents must guard their children so they don’t engage in evil communications.

1 Corinthians 15:33 is an important warning in the internet era in which evil communications are only a mouse click or a screen tap away. The word *homilia* (communion, companionship, company) is an exact definition for social media!

1 Corinthians 15:33 warns that it is easy to be deceived in this matter. Paul says, “**Be not deceived.**” You are not an exception. If you associate with, commune with, company

with, converse with evil, you will most definitely be injured by it. If your children associate with, commune with, company with, converse with evil, they will most definitely be injured by it. Multitudes have been deceived in this matter.

Following are some examples of how outside influences can spoil the child training:

### **The influence of friends and relatives**

Friends and relatives who are not likeminded in spiritual things can have a negative influence on our children.

They can undermine the discipline by letting the children do things that the parents do not allow. They often try to introduce worldly things into the children's lives. They try to lead the children away from strong Biblical thinking and introduce wishy-washy ecumenical thinking and the New Evangelical emphasis on "liberty and fun." They try to teach unscriptural doctrines such as Pentecostalism, theistic evolution, and Reformed theology, and unscriptural practices such as Christian rock music and immodest dress. They try to introduce the young people to unsound authors.

They can influence the children and young people through social media.

It is essential that parents be on guard and that they care more about the spiritual welfare of their children than the feelings of friends and relatives.

A mother recently shared with me how that it is difficult to spend time with their relatives because the relatives, though professing Christians, don't share their biblical worldview in general and biblical standards for the home in particular. I replied that there are no easy answers to such an issue, but I would counsel her and her husband to err on the side of protecting their own family and children rather than to err

on the side of being close with the relatives, even if this results in misunderstanding and hurt feelings.

### **The influence of child sitters**

There is the same danger with child sitters as with friends and relatives. Parents must be very wise and cautious about choosing child sitters.

One problem with almost any child sitter is that they won't exercise proper discipline. This undermines the parents' disciplinary efforts, especially with very small children.

If a parent sees that the child is being negatively influenced in any way, it is wise to find another child sitter or to do without.

### **The influence of schools**

God has given the responsibility of the education of children to the parents (De. 6:4-9; Eph. 6:4; 2 Ti. 3:15-17). They are to oversee all of the teaching to make sure that it is done according to God's will.

Over the past 50 years, the government-run school system in America has been transformed into a humanistic propagandizing machine that is an aggressive enemy of biblical Christianity. It promotes evolution, cultural Marxism, socialistic economics, anti-Americanism, moral relativism, feminism, transsexualism, the myth of global warming, etc.

A great many Christian schools, whether independent or church operated, are dangerous because of false doctrine (e.g., charismaticism, New Evangelicalism, Reformed theology) and/or because of the worldliness of the student body in general.

### **The influence of weak, compromising, worldly churches**

For optimum results, the church and the home must work together in harmony to raise a godly seed for Christ. The church and the home are divinely-designed institutions, and it is not God's will that they operate independently or at odds.

The church is to build up the homes (home instruction is written to the churches), and the homes are to raise a godly seed for the work of Christ in this needy world.

A weak church can undermine the efforts of zealous parents, and a weak home can undermine the efforts of a strong church

The church is the house of God, the pillar and ground of the truth. Nothing can take the place of a Biblically and spiritually strong church.

The church is so important that we would urge parents to relocate for the sake of a sound church.