



*The*

**MOBILE-PHONE**

and the

*Christian*

**HOME & CHURCH**

David W Cloud

*The Mobile Phone and the Christian Home and Church*

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The Mobile Phone and the Christian Home and Church  
*A Youth Discipleship Course*  
David W. Cloud

# Introduction

This course is called *The Mobile Phone and the Christian Home and Church*, but it is about all aspects of youth discipleship.

The youth are the next generation; they are the future of the churches, and we have a passion to help Christian homes and churches in “the battle for the youth.”

This course (*The Mobile Phone and the Christian Home and Church*) is intended to be used in conjunction with the Youth Discipleship Library which contains 20 hours of video courses plus books totaling 4,500 pages. Each of the books and courses in the library is designed to assist pastors, teachers, and parents in discipling young people. The courses include *Bible Times and Ancient Kingdoms: Treasures from Archaeology* (500 page book plus 19 PowerPoint presentations with 3,200 professional slides), *The Effectual Bible Student* (12 video presentations plus class notes), *Keeping the Kids: How to Keep the Children from Falling Prey to the World* (530 pages), *Music for Good or Evil* (10 video presentations), *Old Testament History and Geography* (450-page course with professional maps), *One-Year Discipleship Course*, (220 pages) *Proverbs* (300-page course), *Sowing and Reaping: A Course in Evangelism* (100 pages), and *An Unshakeable Faith: A Christian Apologetics Course* (425-page book plus 27 PowerPoint presentations featuring 3,500 professional slides).

*The Mobile Phone and Christian Home and Church* course is a collective effort. It is packed with practical information we have gleaned from interviews with godly pastors, youth workers, and parents, testimonies and feedback from readers, and from large numbers of articles and books.

Ask God to speak to you as you study the course. Write down the things that you plan to change.

If you are in an imperfect situation (e.g., single parent, unequal yoke with an unbeliever, sharing custody of a child with an unbeliever), don't despair. Do everything you possibly can from your side, and trust God with the rest! In fact, everyone is in an imperfect situation in this fallen world.

### **They Are Leaving**

The youth are leaving. Ken Ham, founder of Answers in Genesis, warns, "A mass exodus is underway. Most youth of today will not be coming to church tomorrow" (*Already Gone*, p. 22).

The latest research shows that a frightful percentage of Sunday School children drop out of church in adolescence.

After analyzing 25 different surveys, Barna Research found that 61% of young adults who were active in church as children and teens "spiritually disengage" by their twenties ("Teenagers Embrace Religion but Are Not Excited about Christianity," Jan. 10, 2000, [www.barna.org](http://www.barna.org)).

In 2005, Answers in Genesis contracted a survey of young adults between the age of 20 and 29 and found that two-thirds of teens who regularly attend "conservative" or "evangelical" churches are gone by college age.

Our own survey in 2005 found that 50% of youth are leaving the churches, and this is a survey of very conservative independent Baptist congregations.

The emerging church has targeted our children. In his book *Finding Our Way Again: The Return of the Ancient Practices* (Thomas Nelson, 2008), emerging church leader Brian McLaren describes the process whereby emergent doctrines will, in his estimation, infiltrate churches that are currently rejecting them. He says:

"But over time, what they reject [emerging church principles] will find or create safe space outside their borders [e.g., books, web sites, blogs] and become a resource **so that many if not most of the grandchildren of today's fundamentalists will learn**

**and grow and move on from the misguided battles of their forebears [Biblicist Christians]...” (p. 133).**

McLaren is saying that emerging teachers will infiltrate Biblicist churches through “resources” such as books, videos, blogs, and web sites.

This is exactly how New Evangelicalism has so deeply infiltrated fundamental Baptist churches over the past two decades and it is doubtless how the emerging doctrines will infiltrate in the coming years.

I believe McLaren is right, and that the “emerging church” will capture the majority of today’s fundamentalists. A large percentage of Independent Baptist churches are already on the path to emergent apostasy through their present compromises. They are adopting contemporary music and philosophy. They are rejecting separation. They want a “softer, gentler, less judgmental” Christianity.

### **The Age of the Smartphone**

A “smartphone” is a phone with many other capabilities, such as a built-in camera, GPS, and access to the Internet.

The smartphone was introduced in the late 1990s, but its use exploded with the introduction of the iPhone in 2007.

- In 2014, sales of smartphones were 1.2 billion, up 28% from 2013.

- In Israel, 83% of children aged 8-15 are in possession of a smartphone; 93% use their mobile devices for at least four hours every day; half say they are online within 15 minutes after waking, connecting with friends via social networks like Facebook, Whatsapp, Instagram, and Snapchat

- A typical teen exchanges 3,400 texts per month (116 texts per day) using phone service texting as well as messaging apps like Kik or WhatsApp or Twitter.

- 17.5% of all global Internet traffic comes through mobile devices. In Asia and Africa it is 25%. In February 2016, an

Indian company (Ringing Bells) announced a \$7 smartphone; their 4G phone is only \$40.

- Top social media sites for US teens in 2015 are the following: Facebook (61%), YouTube (55%), Instagram (51%), Snapchat (46%), Netflix (39%), Pandora (37%), Twitter (35%). (Social media refers “to web- and mobile-based technologies used to facilitate dialogue between individuals, organizations, and communities.”)

The smartphone is an instrument for good and for evil just like all of the inventions of the past 75 years:

- television (1940)
- tape recorder (1947)
- portable radio (1950)
- personal computer (1977)
- portable video camera (1982)
- Internet (1985)
- portable cell phone (1989)
- email (1990)
- texting or SMS short message servicing (1993)
- digital camera (1995)
- MP3 player (1998)
- social media (2003)

The smartphone is *all of these things in one device!* How you use its features (e.g., still camera, video camera, audio recorder, Internet browser, text messenger, personal calendar and scheduler, notebook, book reader) depends on your heart and character.

The smartphone and the Internet are simply tools. My web site has helped tens of thousands of people around the world, including teens, and about 50% of the visits to our web site today are on mobile devices. My wife and I use our smartphones continually for good in the service of the Lord.

## Great Danger for Young People (and Old)

Yet the danger is great. Consider some testimonies from pastors and parents:

“My wife and I are missionaries in Ireland; and, just as it is in the U.S., even very young children here are permitted to have cell phones, iPads, etc. I consider this to be the height of foolishness. It is opening up children to all manner of spiritual dangers. At the very least, it draws them into a world of their own where they are not learning how to carry on true conversation or to have real relationships with people.”

“I teach math to twelve- to fifteen-year-old children in public school in a heavily Protestant-churched community in North Carolina. The students are absolutely addicted to cell phones. Many walk around campus plugged into their devices. Music and games are the most addictive. Posting of ‘selfies’ on Snapchat is very popular. All the immorality that we had to work hard to find when we were young is available to children in a second. Few, if any, are strong enough to resist biting the apple. Teachers have to call parents because children are distracted by devices in the classroom.”

“In general, I am afraid that they are an anchor that drags the spiritual interest of youth away from the LORD. Peer pressure is a part of growing up, and cell phones increase the pressure to conform, be cool, and be a part of a worldly system. With a smartphone Internet plan, this device gives almost instant access not only to that which is good, but also to that which is evil.”

The danger is not only for youth; it is for all ages. Recently the “cheating” web site Ashley Madison was hacked and 32 million names were exposed. One was Josh Duggar, the oldest of the 19 children of the Duggar family whose television program on The Learning Channel made them

famous representatives of the Christian faith. After R.C. Sproul, Jr., son of the famous Reformed theologian and author, admitted that he visited Ashley Madison, he was placed under a one-year suspension from the ministry. He is a father and grandfather. Southern Baptist leader Ed Stetzer said as many as 400 pastors and church workers could resign because of the exposure (“400 Church Leaders,” *Relevant*, Aug. 27, 2015).

The elderly father of a pastor friend recently committed adultery with a younger member of his pastor son’s church. The two met when the father attended the church on a family visit, and they subsequently developed the relationship and planned their alliance on Facebook. The father was caught when the son borrowed his cell phone and found the illicit communication.

### **Victory Is Available**

God has given His people everything they need for victory.

“According as his divine power hath given unto us ALL THINGS that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue” (2 Peter 1:3).

There is no reason to despair. Though we are living in a wicked age, God has given His people everything they need. There is a way of victory in the darkest times! This means that we don’t have to look at the current situation in a negative light as some do. An example is in the attitude that is reflected in the following statement from an individual who responded to our announcement about the publication of a youth discipleship course that will deal with technology: “We truly do not believe there is a solution [to the problem of youth and mobile phones]. We are in this age and we can only warn. I wish I had a great idea but none at this point.”

I personally know hundreds of parents of my generation that raised disciples of Christ in the computer age. And I

know hundreds of cases in which the children of those parents are now raising disciples of Christ in the smartphone age.

The following testimony from a pastor friend could be multiplied by the thousands. I hear them wherever I travel.

“My teen grandchildren have a wonderful spirit of serving the Lord. They have regular family devotions, family outings, responsibilities around the house. They are home schooled, and they have NO CELL PHONES OR COMPUTERS. Their heart for spiritual matters is not a mystery. Their desire to read and communicate with adults is NO SECRET. It’s not rocket science. The children don’t need the technology until they have the maturity to handle it with Christian character.”

As the preacher says, “It is not rocket science.” It is simply a matter of obeying God’s Word.

### **Proverbs 22:6**

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

Is Proverbs 22:6 a promise?

I believe it is, but there is no doubt that to try to keep the kids is better than not trying, and trying passionately is better than trying half-heartedly. We are seeing victory in many places, including Nepal and the Philippines.

Victory in discipling youth is achieved by the church, the parents, and the youth working together. A weak church can undermine the efforts of a strong home, and a weak home can undermine the efforts of a strong family. And each young person must make his or her own choice.

# The Parents

There is great ignorance and carelessness on the part of many parents in regard to the technological dangers of this present age. Consider the following testimony:

“I’m a deacon who is over a bus route and children’s ministries and am a youth worker. One of the greatest dangers of cell phones from what I’ve witnessed is the ignorance of the parents. Older generations think of them as phones, when in reality they are portable computers with the ability to access the Internet nearly everywhere. Parents don’t seem to see the obvious dangers because of this mental disconnect. The same parents who wouldn’t dream of having a computer in their home without a filter don’t give a second thought to providing their teenage children with a cell phone without a filter. Those who place their computers in public areas of the home for accountability are providing their teenage boys with on-demand porn access everywhere they go. Those who would never let their kids have unchaperoned discussions with the opposite sex will give them the freedom with their phones to speak with or text (or send inappropriate pictures to) anybody without any safeguards, supervision, or accountability.”

## **Training Teens: What is Required?**

1. Training teens is a full-time job and requires total commitment by the father and mother.
2. Training teens begins in infancy.
3. Training teens requires gaining and keeping their hearts.
4. Training teens requires being a disciplinarian.
5. Training teens focuses on a biblical conversion experience.

6. Training teens requires the parents to spend a lot of time with them.

7. Training teens requires filling the home with God's Word.

8. Training teens means the parents must know what their children are doing.

9. Training teens requires consistent Christian living.

10. Training teens requires candor and "transparency."

11. Training teens requires much patience.

12. Training teens requires an effectual prayer life.

13. Training teens requires teaching them principles of spiritual protection.

14. Training teens requires a good church.

15. Training teens requires building a hedge of protection.

Protection # 1. Be in control.

Protection # 2. Have a basic phone that teens can use when necessary.

Protection # 3. Weigh every gift carefully.

Protection # 4. Know what is on the child's phone (tablet, laptop) at all times and have all the passwords.

Protection # 5. Use every type of protection available.

Protection # 6. Don't let young people have phones or any such device when they are alone and unsupervised.

Protection # 7. No unauthorized conversation with members of the opposite sex.

Protection # 8. Do not allow any worldly things.

Protection # 9. Understand the power of pornography and do everything possible to keep your children away from it.

Protection # 10. Beware of Facebook.

Protection # 11. Be careful about video games.

Protection # 12. Monitor the young person's attitude and character and be ready to do whatever is necessary to correct a problem.

**Ephesians 6:1-4** -- “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. And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.”

Parents must carefully oversee their children; they must be in control; they must establish wise rules. The first part of the Ephesians passage is addressed to children, but children cannot obey their parents unless the parents set rules and provide an authoritative environment.

### **1. Training teens is a full-time job and requires total commitment by the father and mother.**

God promises victory, and we have seen hundreds of families that have found victory, *but victory is for parents who are willing to make child training a major, major priority.*

When parents who know and walk with the Lord have this level of commitment to the task of discipling their children and they hold the Bible as their sole authority for faith and practice, they will find a way to do what is necessary each step of the journey.

One father said of his daughter:

“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.”

A missionary to Japan with five children testifies:

“Both sides of our families were broken. My parents got divorced after 25 years of marriage. My wife’s parents divorced after 25 years of marriage. Both sides have illegitimate children. Both of us have grandparents that were divorced or a mess. And we just covenanted when we first got married that we would break the cycle from

our generation forward. We had no background at all in godly parenting.”

This husband and wife made godly children a solemn covenant before the Lord.

A pastor testifies:

“We had not been saved very long and were in the first few months of Bible College. I was not impressed with the children that were being reared around me at college. Also, I was not impressed with many of the pastors’ children I saw. My wife and I sat down together and read every verse in the Bible that talked about rearing children, our responsibility in rearing our children, and any verse that was remotely connected. We prayed and meditated over the verses and asked that God would make them real in our lives. We started the plan when our oldest child was a baby and we made this a goal in our lives. God was gracious to show us many things we needed. We were not spiritually mature Christians when we started to look at these verses; we were just a young couple asking God to help us rear our children for Him. James 4:8 became very real in our lives, ‘Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you.’ God began to teach us and we applied what the Lord was showing us. I would go in to my elder daughter’s room every evening while she was asleep as a baby and get down beside the bed and pray for God to help us to be spiritual parents, to do exactly as He commanded, and to not let us fail in this matter” (Terry Coomer, adapted from *Rearing Spiritual Children*, p. 46).

Observe that this couple did not accept the status quo. They wanted something different for their home and their children than what they were seeing around them even at a fundamental Baptist Bible college. They made godly child training a high priority, studied God’s Word, sought to put it into practice, and trusted the Lord to lead them.

A missionary to Brazil who has seven children says:

“Right from the start my wife and I started having devotions together and it was a deep desire in our hearts to have a godly family and to raise godly children. And I think that’s where it needs to start. If the parents don’t have any desire to be holy and to serve God and to confess their sins and to keep their hearts right, then the kids aren’t. A couple needs to set their hearts on the Word of God. Psalm 127 states the fact that children are a heritage of the Lord and the fruit of the womb is His reward.”

A member of Madison Baptist Church in Huntsville, Alabama, who has four grown children serving the Lord, says:

*“My goal was for my children to grow up and serve in a local church. That is what I wanted them to do. That didn’t have to mean that they would be full-time servants, just that they would be saved and serve the Lord in a good local church.”*

In some ways, teens require even more time and oversight than younger children! They have adult bodies but they are not adults. They are part way between child and adult. They need the help and oversight of the older generation more than ever, but the pop culture strives to divide the generations.

It often happens that a young teen will do well, seemingly, making a profession of faith that appears real and starting to serve the Lord, then somewhere along the way to full adulthood, he or she shipwrecks spiritually. Usually this can be traced to lack of careful oversight by the parents and the resulting influence of the world entering that young person’s life.

Most shipwrecks can be traced to a failure to heed the following two warnings:

“Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners” (1 Corinthians 15:33).

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

Too many Christian parents follow the way of the world’s pop culture rather than God’s Word by letting the teens live in their own world. They give them televisions, mp3 players, computers, cell phones, even automobiles. They let them spend a lot of time in their own rooms without supervision. Both father and mother are working full time and cannot exercise the proper oversight and authority in the lives of their children.

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.

### ***The father must be the overseer of everything.***

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

The father doesn’t do everything, but he oversees everything. He must know what is going on and be involved with it and approve of it. He must work with the mother in training and discipline and in every decision pertaining to the children.

This requires time and effort. God’s Word warns that the father who doesn’t care for his family is worse than an infidel (1 Tim. 5:8). This is true both in physical matters and in spiritual matters. “Many dads would take out the first intruder that walked through the front door, but they ignore the subtle intruders that come in the back door” (“Protecting You and Yours Online”).

### ***The mother must be a keeper at home.***

“The aged women likewise, that they be in behaviour as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to

much wine, teachers of good things; 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 2:3-5).

This essential thing was lost in the 1950s after World War II, when mothers became accustomed to being in the work force and when the feminist philosophy began to dominate society.

Few things are more important than that the mother be a keeper at home. Many fathers of godly grown children have told me that one of the wisest decisions they made was to keep their wives at home to be with the children. I can say that myself. My grown children can say that. The mothers of all eight of our grandkids are keepers at home, and it is paying great dividends to those families. These young families could easily use the extra income from the mother working outside the home, but God has taken care of their every need, just as He has promised.

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. Their boys turned out to be drunkards with 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.” The only Sunday child that turned out “right” was their first child, a daughter that Nell raised herself before venturing out of the home.

Observe in Titus 2 that the mother must have godly character. Otherwise, she will be a negative influence in the children’s lives rather than a good one. Many wives of

shallow, worldly character have undermined the good things that fathers and churches have tried to do. (And many worldly fathers have done the same thing from their side.)

***Parents can accomplish these things by living by faith and serving God rather than mammon.***

“Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you” (Matthew 6:31-33).

If a father and mother make a commitment to put God first in their families and to obey God’s Word, God has promised to meet their needs. If they throw up their hands and say, “We can’t live on one income; some can do that, but we can’t,” there is no hope because that is the position of disobedience and unbelief rather than obedience and faith (Heb. 11:6).

It is far better to live on one salary and to have God’s best blessing than to live on two salaries without it. But such decisions must be made by faith in God’s Word rather than by looking at the financial bottom line.

If a father finds that his work is interfering with his spiritual life and responsibilities, he must make whatever adjustment is necessary, and he must do it by trusting God to provide in every situation.

Parents must be willing to do without some things, if necessary, for the sake of obeying God and raising God’s children. It is not necessary to have a late model automobile, a fancy house, beautiful furniture, and other expensive things. Such things are fine if you can afford them and they can be obtained in God’s will, but they have zero importance compared to the spiritual prosperity of one’s children.

Parents, we would urge you to take one another by the hand and get alone together with the Lord and commit yourself before Him anew and afresh to the task of training your children. Confess your faults to one another and pray for one another and beseech God's grace and help. Commit to reading together this study on *The Mobile Phone and the Christian Home and Church* and the book *Keeping the Kids*, discussing these things and making plans together for your family.

You will never regret it!

## **2. Training teens begins in infancy.**

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

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

The best time to train a teenager is when he or she is a toddler, and even before. The word “betimes” in Proverbs 13:24 means early. (Compare Genesis 26:31 and 2 Chronicles 36:15.) 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. If discipline doesn't begin early it can be too late and the child won't respond properly. The child must be disciplined “while there is hope” (Prov. 19:18), which means while there is hope of success, while there is hope of changing the child's character. A young tree can be easily bent, but an older tree can only be bent with the greatest effort, if at all.

When my wife has training classes for Christian mothers in Nepal who are newly converted to Christ, they are always amazed to hear that they should begin the training when the children are infants and toddlers. A few years ago she had our daughter-in-law bring her two-year-old and six-month-old children into the class to demonstrate how she disciplined them. The Nepali women were flabbergasted,

because they think that nothing can be done until the child is much older. In fact, they usually think that nothing can be done to discipline a child and that when the children of Americans are obedient it is simply because they are Americans! They don't know, of course, that most Americans' kids aren't well disciplined.

The late 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."

Pastor's Buffington's sermon "How to Lose Your Teenager before He Is Five" can be found in the book *Keeping the Kids*.

### **3. Training teens requires gaining and keeping their hearts (Eph. 6:4).**

"My son, give me thine heart..." (Prov. 23:26).

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

The wise parent says to his children, "give me thine heart..." 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).

This begins when they are small, but it must be maintained. The devil will try to steal their hearts, especially as they reach teenage years. Small children naturally want to be with their parents. One child pathetically typed the

following question into Yahoo: “How can I get my father to spend time with me?” But when the child gets older, he can quickly lose interest in his parents and keeping the heart can become more difficult.

Keeping the heart requires the following:

Keeping the heart involves loving the children and making sure that they know it.

Keeping the heart involves the father loving his wife. It has been said that one of the best things a father can do for his children is to love their mother.

Keeping the heart involves showing godly Christian character: kindness, patience, grace, mercy, forgiveness, understanding. If you are “hard-nosed” with your kids, strong but not compassionate, firm but not patient and merciful, all authority and no friend, you are probably going to live to regret it.

Keeping the heart involves being involved in the children’s lives, knowing what they are doing and thinking, knowing who their friends are, knowing what they are learning, what they are loving.

Keeping the heart involves consistent child training so they know the boundaries and know that you are treating them justly.

Keeping the heart involves fathers not provoking their children to wrath. This is done by such things as being unreasonable and inconsiderate, by being inconsistent in training and discipline, by being hypocritical, by not explaining the rules properly, by unrealistic expectations, by punishing more severely than the occasion deserves, by not listening and communicating with the children, by promising things but not doing them, by favoritism, by being harsh and cruel to the mother. Probably the most common way that a father loses his children’s hearts is by being mean and angry, severe, ungracious, and impatient. The father is to imitate the “nurture and admonition of the Lord” (Eph. 6:4), and the Lord is a kind and gracious and sweet-natured Father.

Keeping the heart involves filling the home and the family life with wholesome, positive, interesting, fun things. You can't just say no to kids and take away things. There has to be a rich, morally right world of things to fill their lives. I'm thankful for my wife who has always been the "fun spark plug" in our family, but the father has to oversee these things and help and encourage. I think of a home schooling family with seven children, and all of them are serving the Lord today and building happy, fruitful Christian homes. That home was the center for all sorts of educational, interesting, and fun things, like music, skits and performances, camping, sports, private reading, reading books out loud, memorizing the Bible together, and all sorts of games like ping pong and fuze-ball. The kids brought their friends home, and their friends loved to be there. The kids were close to the parents and wanted to be around them. In that type of environment, parents can be as strict as they need to be about separation from the world, because they have the children's hearts and life is not just a bunch of "don'ts."

#### **4. Training teens requires being a disciplinarian.**

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

The parent should be a friend but not a "buddy." A good "buddy" is not a disciplinarian, whereas a good parent is.

An example of this is a mother who took away her daughter's iPad which unleashed a rebellious spirit that lasted for days! The mother said, "We will be her parents first and foremost, even if it makes us unpopular!"

True parental love is a disciplinary, protecting love (Prov. 13:24). The example God gives is 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” (Gen. 18:19).

Modern psychology undermines parental authority and discipline.

But the Bible teaches us that training teens requires much love *and* much firmness, *not one or the other*, but both.

If parents don’t get some godly disciplinary backbone from the Lord, they will probably fail.

***Training teens requires teaching them obedience and respect for authority when they are small.***

“Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, and honour the face of the old man, and fear thy God: I *am* the LORD” (Leviticus 19:32).

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

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 the 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). ...

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).

***The discipline and training must be consistent.***

If the training 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 when the child refuses. I recall a father who was watching his son playing outside. When the child, who was about four years old, 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 he 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 might not be as easy as ignoring the rebellion, but it is godly child training and will bear good fruit in time if the parent is consistent. Ignoring disobedience, even some of the time, will also bear fruit, but it will not be good fruit.

### ***The use of the rod doesn't stop when children are small.***

I know many parents who have used the rod effectively on teenagers, and I know of young adults who have thanked them for it.

For older children, the rod can consist of whatever punishment is deemed necessary, including breaking a phone in half and smashing a video console, as I have known some godly parents to do! I am not recommending these things in particular. I am simply saying that “rod-type” discipline doesn’t end when a child becomes a teen.

Forget the argument that if you use strong discipline the youth will rebel and run away. The fact is that if you *don't* use firm and godly discipline you have *already* lost them and you have also lost God’s approval on your parenting.

There is much more on child discipline in the chapter on that subject in the book *Keeping the Kids*, which is available as a standalone book (both print and eBook) from Way of Life Literature. It is also included in eBook format (PDF) in the *Youth Discipleship Library*.

### **5. Training teens focuses on a biblical conversion experience.**

Unless young people are saved, they can’t be discipled. This is a frightful fact in light of the shallowness of evangelism in so many churches. The church I grew up in probably didn’t have even one saved young person, though we all made “professions of faith” and we all knew the right things to say.

### **How to deal with children about salvation**

a. Fill their minds with God’s Word (2 Tim. 3:15; Heb. 4:12; Psa. 19:7; 119:130).

Of one of his daughters, Pastor Kerry Allen says, “I began a program of memorizing salvation Scriptures with her, and rewarding her for her efforts. In less than one month, with

numbers of these same Scriptures at work in her heart, she fell under deep conviction of sin. ... Don't wait until they are teens, you will have lost them by then! ... start memorizing with them as soon as they are able to speak, surely not later than three to four years old. ... begin reading the verses to your child as soon as they are born. They will hear each verse dozens of times before you even begin memorizing, and that is a great way to begin the process from the very earliest days. Sow the Seed of the Word of God faithfully and consistently every day, and wondrous things will occur!" (Allen, *How Can I Except Some Man Guide Me?*).

Pastor Allen has published 150 salvation verses that can be used for a Scripture memorization program for children. See <http://www.foxriverbaptistchurch.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/03/How-Can-I-complete-book.pdf>

We deal more with filling the home with God's Word later.

b. Teach them the gospel.

The gospel is the power of God unto salvation (Rom. 1:16). The gospel is described in a nutshell in 1 Cor. 15:1-4. It must be explained (Acts 8:30-31). Many people grow up in Bible-believing homes and churches and cannot give a clear definition of the gospel.

Missionary Jeremy Johnson says of his children ages one to eight, "We talk with them about salvation when different topics come up. At the dinner table, in casual conversation, etc. We do not push them, but when the conversation arises, we talk about it: Where a person goes when he dies, why people don't go to heaven, what is sin, what did Jesus do for us, does everyone go to heaven, can I get saved by praying a prayer, etc. When they have false ideas or beliefs about salvation or where they would go, we do not overlook it or ignore it, we speak against it and correct it. We continually try to bring them to an understanding of the truth, yet not pushing them to a decision."

Practical teaching on the gospel can be found in the first few lessons of the *One Year Discipleship Course*.

c. Deal with repentance (Lk. 17:3; Acts 17:30; 20:21).

Though I made a profession of faith at age 10-11, the missing element in my life was repentance toward God, and this is what is missing in the lives and hearts of many young people. I “believed in Jesus,” but so do the devils (Jam. 2:19). In fact, the devils tremble, which is far more than the average “Christian” young person does! I knew about Jesus and believed in Him, but I did not surrender to God’s authority. That is the essence of repentance. The sinner has rebelled against God and broken His law, and he must repent of this. Repentance is not a change of life; it is a surrender to God and change of direction *in the heart*.

Repentance is not a complicated thing. It simply means to come to Jesus, but when you turn to Jesus you have your back to the old life. It is like a man and marriage. He receives one woman as his spouse, and he has his back to all other women. Jesus taught that it is impossible to have two masters (Mat. 6:24).

Two great biblical examples of repentance are the Prodigal Son (Lk. 15:17-19) and the idolators at Thessalonica (1 Th. 1:9).

We deal with how to teach repentance in the evangelistic course *Sowing and Reaping*, which is available from Way of Life Literature.

d. Don’t pressure them.

The parent/teacher must be careful not to pressure the children. Children are so easily manipulated, and pressure can happen even when the adult thinks he is avoiding it. One grandfather told me how he keeps a record of his grandchildren’s professions of faith in Christ in a notebook, and he shows it to the other grandchildren and asks, “When will I be able to add your name to my book?” This could be a

great pressure in a child's mind, because he or she wants to please granddad and wants to go to heaven.

Invitations given in Sunday Schools and youth meetings can put undue pressure on children. I responded to an invitation at a Vacation Bible School because other kids were responding. Unwise, manipulative invitations have caused a world of harm and confusion. At the very least, children should be asked to stay behind so they show that they are serious. One missionary says, "In dealing with children in an invitation, we often ask them to stay behind if they want to talk to someone. Children will easily raise a hand for many reasons. But a child who is willing to stay behind or make some kind of an effort to speak to someone is much more serious."

It is better for parents and teachers to leave this important matter in the Lord's capable hands as they pray earnestly for Him to perform the work of salvation in the children's hearts. The Lord can and will reveal himself to each child as He did to Samuel (1 Sam. 3).

e. Discipline them.

"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).

God's Word ties the proper discipline of a child directly together with the salvation of his or her soul. One reason for this is that proper discipline teaches the child a proper fear and respect of authority, which in turn leads to the fear of God. Pastor Allen asks, "If children don't respect parent's authority, who stand as God ordained police in the home, how will they ever respect the God whom the parents represent?" Also proper discipline teaches the child about law and sin and punishment, which are fundamental principles of the gospel. Further, the parent's love and mercy in the

midst of discipline instructs the child about God's love for sinners.

In this light, we can see more clearly why the Bible says that the parent who "spares the rod" and lets the child get away with disobedience and rebellion *hates* the child (Prov. 13:24).

f. Pray, pray, pray (Jam. 5:16).

Nothing is more important in the evangelism of our children and grandchildren than effectual prayer. My maternal grandmother was a prayer warrior, and her prayers were doubtless instrumental in my conversion. She taught me three "secrets" of answered prayer:

- *Persistence* (Lk. 18:1).

- *Fasting* (Mat. 17:21). There is a study on fasting in *One Year Discipleship Course*.

- *Prayer partners*. Paul taught the importance of this by his frequent, earnest requests for prayer (Rom. 15:30; Eph. 6:19; Col. 4:3; 1 Th. 5:25; 2 Th. 3:1). Your first prayer partner should be your husband or wife; pray together for each of your children from the time before they are born; don't keep problems to yourself; that is often an act of pride, because we don't want others to know of our imperfections; ask Christian friends to pray for you; be faithful to prayer meeting and ask the church to pray for your situation.

g. Look for the convicting, drawing work of the Holy Spirit (Jn. 12:32; 16:7-11).

Salvation is a supernatural work of God. There is no salvation apart from a convicting, enlightening, drawing work of God. The sinner must respond to the Spirit's wooing, but there is no salvation apart from the wooing. The soul winner's job is to look for the Spirit's work and help the sinner understand it and respond properly to it.

If the child shows a *persistent* desire to be saved (not a mere passing interest), explain how he can be saved and let

him call on the Lord in his own way. Missionary Jeremy Johnson describes his dealing with his oldest son: “Our oldest boy had a lot of questions about salvation just after he turned five. When we were back to the States on a furlough, he claimed to make a decision for salvation after a church service, but there was no real change in his life. He quickly changed his mind about having made that decision and actually verbalized his refusal to be saved because he did not want to get baptized. (He was not confusing it as part of salvation, but he did know that if he got saved the next step in obeying Christ is to identify in baptism. Since he knew that obeying in one would lead to the other, he refused and would verbalize it in passing conversations.) Almost a year later, shortly after turning six, he put up his hand during a Sunday morning invitation. I did not call him out, planning to talk with him later. He came to me after the service and wanted to talk, and I said we would talk at home. It was a busy Sunday with a meal and fellowship time after the service, a busy afternoon, an evening service, and then I had to transport people home. When I arrived home late that evening, my wife said our oldest son wanted to talk with me. I went to his room, and he was waiting to talk to me about salvation. He was anxious about wanting to be saved, his rebellion against baptism was gone, and he wanted it settled. I told him that if he understood and wanted to be saved, salvation was between him and God and not me and he needed to talk to God. Without hesitation, in the middle of our conversation, he dropped his head and began to pray, asking God to forgive him, to save him, and to help him do right. After he prayed, we talked a little more. I actually tried to shake his belief with some questions. Are you saved now? Why are you saved? What if I don’t think you are? The purpose was to see if he understood that salvation was not a decision of words (prayer) but a decision of heart. I explained that only he and God know whether he is saved, because God looks at his heart.”

Pastor Kerry Allen says of his fourth daughter after she memorized verses about salvation, “She approached me in tears, and after further questioning, she stated she was afraid of dying without Christ, and going to Hell. She then readily trusted the Lord Jesus Christ as her Saviour, and shows good evidence of it now” (Allen, *How Can I Except Some Man Guide Me?*). Note that she approached him. She showed evidence of conviction.

h. If a child does profess saving faith in Christ, encourage him or her to seek the Lord and His will (2 Tim. 2:19).

Receiving Christ as Lord and Saviour is not the end of salvation, it is the beginning! (We don’t mean to say that salvation is a process; we are simply saying that salvation is a life, not a mere ritual.) Salvation is a life of walking with and serving Jesus Christ. If a child gets saved, it is time for that child to grow and seek God’s will.

i. Look for scriptural evidence of salvation in the child’s life.

We would observe that tears are not necessarily an evidence of salvation. Tears can be a good thing, if the tears are evidence of godly sorrow and are shed over one’s sin against God, but tears alone, particularly in a young, tenderhearted girl, do not necessary stand as evidence of repentance and regeneration. Women weep at weddings and prisoners weep when they think of the trouble they have brought on themselves, but that in itself is not evidence of salvation.

***Biblical evidence of salvation includes the following:***

(1) A conversion experience that changes the life (John 3:3; Mat. 18:3; 2 Cor. 5:17).

In every single case, the salvations described in the Bible were life-changing conversion experiences. We think of the woman at the well (John 4), Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1-10), the

Jews on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:41-42), the Ethiopian Eunuch (Acts 8:26-39), Paul (Acts 9:1-20), Lydia (Acts 16:14-15), and the Philippian jailer (Acts 16:25-34).

(2) Personal knowledge of the Lord; the essence of salvation is a personal walk with God in Christ (Jn. 17:3; Mat. 11:28-30; Gal. 4:6). Salvation is not a reformation or a new religion. It is to know the Lord personally, to walk and talk with Him as Lord and Saviour, Father and Friend. It is to cry, “Abba, Father.”

When people express doubt about their salvation, I ask them if they know the Lord and when and how it was that they came to know Him.

Many young church people are like Samuel who knew about the Lord but did not know the Lord in a personal way (1 Sam. 3:7).

Jesus warned about those who profess Him as Lord, but He says to them, “I never *knew* you” (Mat. 7:21-23). He warned of the foolish virgins to whom the bridegroom says, “Verily I say unto you, I know you not” (Mat. 25:12).

(3) Love for and obedience to God’s Word (Jn. 8:47).

A person’s attitude toward the Bible is one of the clearest evidences of his spiritual condition. Jesus said that His sheep hear His voice and follow Him (Jn. 10:26-30).

After I professed faith in Christ at age 10-11, I had no more interest in the Bible than I had before. I never read it. I had no interest in preaching and teaching. I was at church because my parents took me, not because I had an interest in spiritual things. That is not the condition of a saved person.

(4) Love of righteousness (1 Jn. 2:3-4).

Consider the testimony of David Sorenson, a pastor’s son. He made a profession of faith at age five in an evangelistic meeting. He was coached to tell others that he was saved, and he did that for 15 years. But he says, “I had no interest in the things of God. I only went to church because my dad was the

pastor, and I had to go. I could not have cared less about the Bible.” At age 20 he was saved in Bible College and his life changed radically because he began to love the things he used to hate and to hate the things he used to love.

One thing that will always change is the individual’s attitude toward authority. If a child is saved, he will change in his attitude toward the authority of his parents and teachers and church leaders.

(5) Continuing in the gospel (Col. 1:21-23; 1 Cor. 15:1-2; Heb. 3:12-14).

Salvation is evident by continuing in the gospel. Those who profess the gospel and then renounce it are not saved and never were saved. I have seen many examples of this through the years.

I think of my own experience. I made a profession of faith in Christ as a boy, but I turned away from the gospel and accepted Hindu doctrines such as reincarnation.

I think of a young married couple in the first church I joined. They opened their home to me, introduced me to the Sword of the Lord pamphlets, and encouraged me in many ways. I went off to Bible School for a year, and when I returned home, I was told that they were divorced. I found the man at his work and talked to him and was shocked to hear that he no longer believed in Christ as Lord and Saviour.

I think of John and Charles Wesley, who were so zealous for Christ that they formed a “holy club” at Oxford University, were labeled “Methodists” for their methodical habits of prayer and Bible reading, were ordained as Anglican priests, and hazarded the dangerous voyage across the Atlantic Ocean to America in order to preach to the natives. But the Wesleys were trusting in their good works rather than the grace found in the gospel of Christ. They knew *about* the Lord, but they didn’t know Him personally. When a Moravian preacher asked John if he had a hope to be saved, he replied, “I do.” But when the preacher asked him the

reason of his hope, he said, “Because I have used my best endeavours to serve God.”

I think of a pastor’s brother who made a profession of faith in Christ, but he now believes there are many ways to God.

I think of a pastor’s son who was looked up to by the young people in his church, but today he professes to be an atheist.

I think of a Roman Catholic Church who prayed the “sinner’s prayer” but still believes that good works are a part of salvation and that “good people go to heaven.”

I think of Hindus who have attended our services and Bible studies in Nepal and professed to “believe in Jesus” but who turned back to Hinduism and idolatry.

#### (6) Divine chastisement (Heb. 12:6-8)

A child of God can and does sin, but there is an indwelling, loving Disciplinarian who chastens him. There is even a sin unto death (1 Jn. 5:16-17).

The saved person will have a sensitivity to sin and a conviction about sin. I think of a child who got saved and afterwards became concerned about sins she had committed and “gotten away with.” Before salvation, if her parents were not watching, she would do things behind their backs. For example, she took her father’s socks and stuffed them down a hole in the back hallway. The disappearance of the socks was a unsolved mystery in the home, but after she got saved she came weeping to her mother and confessed that sin, though no one had ever caught her. That is an evidence that something real was happening in her life. She stopped being “sneaky.” She starting being trustworthy to obey even if no one was watching. Those are simple, but profound, evidences of a spiritually-converted life in a child.

When looking for evidence, we aren’t looking for sinless perfection. We must be careful that we not think that the saved individual will suddenly become perfect. When “testing” others, the child of God must not forget how

imperfect *he* is! We are simply looking for a regenerated heart and a changed direction in life.

Children will be children, but there will always be a change in thinking and attitude if an individual is saved, whether he be young or old. We must believe the Bible when it says that *profession* is not *possession* (Titus 1:16).

So many children in Christian homes and churches make a profession of faith in Christ but they do not show a change in their lives, and they eventually depart to the world. In many cases, the parents and the church leaders still say they are saved.

Jerry was my best buddy growing up. We went through school together, graduated together, went to Vietnam in the Army about the same time, and came back to America and became drug-using “hippies” together. I came to Christ at age 23, but Jerry never did. He mocked my faith in Christ and refused to listen to me when I tried to talk to him from the Bible. Eventually he got involved in “Native America” spirituality, which is demonism. He died a few years ago at about age 61, and I visited his mother. His mother and father were faithful church goers, and the mom had been a Baptist Sunday School teacher. She told me that she had hope of Jerry’s salvation because he went to church when he was a boy, but there was zero evidence that he was saved.

j. Let God confirm to the children that they are saved (Rom. 8:15-16; Gal. 4:6).

Don’t tell them they are saved. Don’t give them a “spiritual birth certificate” like some churches do.

Don’t remind them of when they professed Christ when they were little. One grandfather told me how that he writes down the date of his grandchildren’s professions of faith and reminds them of it each year. He says, “Each year, I phone them on their salvation date to ask them if they know what important date this is, and then I ask them about their progress in their walk with the Lord since the last year.” It is

wonderful for a parent/grandparent to inquire about a child's walk with the Lord and to encourage the child in his spiritual life, but it is dangerous for a parent or grandparent to tell a child he is saved or "remind" him that he is saved. That is the Lord's work. Missionary Jeremy Johnson says: "I do not claim to know for certain that either of my older sons are saved. I believe that Scripture clearly teaches that children can be saved and that God wants them to be. We have seen changes in their lives, a desire and concern for others to be saved, and a brokenness over sin. We do not ever tell them they are saved. When asking them about salvation, we do not point to a time or place. We look for what they remember. Both of them, although they cannot remember the exact day (month/day/year), will immediately go to the circumstances and events happening on that day, reminding us of when and where they made that choice. We do not go over this often trying to get them to memorize it. Children are not saved because of their parents' memory or their parents' leading; they are saved when they make a choice in their hearts, and if they do they will remember it on their own. If they ever come to me with doubts, I will try to prayerfully help them examine why, but I will not tell them I know they are saved. Only God knows their hearts."

k. If the child later expresses doubt about salvation, encourage him to settle it. A great many young people who grow up in Christian homes make two professions of faith in Christ, one when they are young and another when they reach maturity.

## **6. Training teens requires that parents spend a lot of time with them.**

This is fundamental, because none of the other things we teach can be done if the parents don't carve out enough time with the children.

Proverbs is a child discipling book. It is a book of a father and a mother training their children. Twenty-three times we read the words “my son” (Prov. 1:8, 10, 15; 2:1; 3:1, 11, 21; 4:10, 20; 5:1, 20; 6:1, 3, 20; 7:1; 19:27; 23:15, 19, 26; 24:13, 21; 27:11; 31:2).

It takes a lot of time to teach the principles of the book of Proverbs alone, not to speak of the rest of the Bible. This can't be done by a half-hour family devotion. A daily family devotion is a good habit, but it is only a small part of providing the training and discipling that a child needs.

This has to be a daily, continuous process (Deut. 6:6-9). Without spending enough time, you will probably fail.

One parent warned, “I believe parents are too busy to keep up on their kids, and the kids are too smart and they hide things that parents cannot find.”

I advise preachers to take their children with them often, and not just for recreation. When I see a preacher who has his son or daughter with him on visitation, etc., and when I see children who love to be with their parents, I know that the parents have those children's hearts and will probably keep their hearts and that things will turn out right.

I know fathers who have dates with their daughters. I know preachers who do this, and they use the occasion to develop parental friendship and to keep their hearts. A pastor gives an example of this. “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" (*Rearing Spiritual Children*, p. 45).

If a parent is too busy to spend proper time with his children, he will probably lose their hearts to someone or something, and if he loses the children's hearts, his rules will not provide safety.

## **7. Training teens means the parents must fill the home with God's Word.**

"... from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures" (2 Timothy 3:15).

A home that produces disciples for Christ is a home that is filled with Scripture. Nothing is more important than this. 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, repentance.

Consider the following Scriptures: Joshua 1:8; Psalms 1:1-3; 119:9, 105; Acts 20:32; Romans 10:17; 2 Timothy 3:15-17; Hebrews 4:12; 1 Peter 2:2; 2 Peter 1:19.

Pastor David Sorenson writes:

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.

Apart from daily consumption of the Word of God, any believer will be carnal and more worldly than godly. ... 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 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").

A respondent to our *Keeping the Kids* questionnaire wrote,

"We are a Navy family so we have had the privilege to be members of several churches. At every church 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!"

### ***The parents must lead in this.***

If the parents are not serious students of God's Word, they cannot possibly impart a love for God's Word to their children.

Every Christian parent should learn how to study the Bible effectively. To assist in this we published *The Effectual Bible*

Student, a series of 10 video lessons plus a workbook, that teaches the child of God how to have a daily Bible study time, how to interpret the Bible for himself, and how to use Bible study tools to enrich his devotional time.

***Parents need to develop an effective family altar time.***

The daily family altar is very important. It is a time when the family can meet 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.”

***Following are some suggestions for the family altar:***

Find the best time. This will vary according to each family’s situation. The best time might be morning or afternoon or evening. It might be right after a meal. Be ready to change the time of the family altar if the family’s situation and schedule changes.

Read a passage from the Bible. Perhaps read through a book of the Bible, reading a few verses each day. Pastor David Sorenson says, “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” (*Training Your Children to Turn Out Right*). If the family is dealing with specific issues or problems, choose passages that deal with that issue.

If the children are old enough to read, perhaps let them take turns reading.

Perhaps let each family member try to explain the passage in his or her own words. You will never understand the Bible until you try to understand it.

The father or mother should explain the basic meaning of the passage to help the children understand better.

Let the children ask questions. If the parents don’t know the answer, they should make an effort to find it. This is why a family Christian library with some good commentaries is important.

Use the family altar to teach important biblical principles. Pastor Ken Shaver says, “As our children grew older, we would spend a few weeks on issues like modesty, biblical principles for entertainment, and other relevant things.”

Memorize verses together. 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.”

Sing a song together. Perhaps let the children choose and lead the song, by turns.

Pray together. Praying together as a family is powerful. The Lord made the family, and He wants His children to approach Him as families. He delights in hearing and answering His people’s prayers. My wife and youngest daughter choose a specific thing or two to pray for together, and we pray for those specific things until the Lord answers or He shows us that it isn’t His will. We have seen many wonderful answers to prayer in this way.

Train the children to sit still and listen and give respect to their parents and to God and His Word. Parents, if your

children will not sit still and listen to God's Word, you haven't disciplined them properly. It is not their fault; it is your fault.

Make the family altar time an interesting, happy time. While parents must teach the children to sit still and listen and be respectful, learning God's Word and worshiping Him should not be a boring, harsh time that the children learn to dread. Pastor Ken Shaver says, "We would work very hard at keeping it light, and upbeat."

There are many things beyond Bible study 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 Print Ministry, 4212 Campbell St. N., London, Ontario N6P 1A6, info@bethelbaptist.ca. Nothing, though, should take the place of studying the Bible itself.

***Parents must train their children to have a private daily Bible study time.***

"Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed *thereto* according to thy word" (Psalm 119:9).

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

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 about this.

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, after I was converted at age 23, much of the teaching came back to me and I had a good head start in my Christian life.

We have adapted the following practical tips from Pastor David Sorenson:

First, 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.

Second, 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. 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. By the time they were in junior high school, we had our children reading four chapters a day. That is the basic amount to read the Bible through in a year. We planned their reading for them.

Third, provide incentives. When our girls were small, we prepared a chart and as they did their daily Bible reading, they received a star on the chart each day. When they had faithfully read the Bible each day for a month, we gave them a reward.

Fourth, 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, we still checked up on them throughout their adolescent years.

Fifth, teach them to do it because it is right. As the girls grew out the stage where they needed little incentives, we shifted to the philosophy of doing your Bible reading just because it pleases the Lord and it is the wise thing to do (slightly modified from *Training Your Children to Turn out Right*).

Pastor Mario Schiavone in Sydney, Australia, 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 taught their children to have their devotionals first thing after they wake up. Pastor Mario says, “It is quiet around the house first thing in the morning because everyone is having their devotionals.”

***Parents need to teach their children how to interpret and study the Bible.***

At an appropriate point in the children’s lives, the children 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 Effectual Bible Student*.

***Parents must make the Bible understandable and interesting to the children.***

If the parent just reads verses and doesn’t help the children understand the Bible and see how it applies to their lives, the children will not be impacted spiritually. It will be an empty ritual like spinning a Buddhist prayer wheel. Growing up, I thought the Bible was just a bunch of old stories that had nothing to do with my life. I was amazed when I met the man who led me to Christ and he showed me that the Bible is a very practical, fascinating Book, and I began to understand how to understand it!

This means that parents must be serious students of the Bible so they can teach the children and answer their questions.

This means that the parents must learn to teach the Bible at the age level of the children. Children do not think like adults (1 Cor. 13:11). Jesus invited children to come to Him, and you can be sure that He would not want children’s Bible teaching to be boring and too high for them.

***Parents should build a good Christian library for the home so they learn wholesome things and can find answers to questions.***

The books should include every type of profitable Bible study book, including carefully-chosen commentaries. Many of the books that we publish are like encyclopedias to provide answers to questions. These include the *Way of Life Encyclopedia*, the *Directory of Contemporary Worship Musicians*, *Things Hard to Be Understood: A Handbook of Biblical Difficulties; Questions Answered on the Bible Version Issue*, and *An Unshakeable Faith: An Apologetics Course*.

***Parents should guide the children in their reading.***

Parents must oversee their children's reading so that they read things that support the Bible's teaching rather than contradict it. This doesn't mean that they read only Christian books or books about the Bible, but it means that the parents must be careful that the children don't read things that will harm their spiritual and moral lives and put doubts in their minds about God and His Word.

***Parents should teach their children how to act in church and how to profit from church.***

As soon as the children are old enough (and that is much younger than we usually think), the parents should teach the children to listen to sermons and Bible lessons instead of playing games and daydreaming. They can learn how to take notes, how to listen for something helpful for their own lives, how to jot down questions and seek answers.

When they are old enough to read, the children should be taught to open the hymnbook and sing along with the congregation. It is dishonoring to God for older children to play around during the services. The parents should help them understand the words to the hymns and the meaning so they can sing with understanding (Psa. 47:7).

I find it very sad to see children (who are old enough to read) who are allowed to ignore the singing and sermons in church. This is a sin against the children, but many parents simply aren't tuned into doing this. In fact, a great many Christian parents don't know these things themselves!

We would again warn that the parent should not be overbearing and harsh in these things so the Bible and church and family altar, etc., become an unpleasant chore in the child's life. Serving the Lord should not be a burdensome thing, because Christ is wonderful and His burden is light. See Matthew 28:28-30. Parents must strive to teach the children that serving the Lord is a joyful, thrilling thing, and they do that first of all by what they model in their own lives.

### **8. Training teens means the parents must maintain close supervision of their children and know what they are doing (Prov. 29:15).**

Parents must lovingly and jealously oversee everything their children do; their education, their entertainment, their friends. They must know what is happening in their children's lives and hearts.

***Parents must be exceedingly careful about their children's friends.***

One pastor wisely said, "Parents need to be involved in the choosing of close friends. It is much better not to have close friends, than to have friends that influence them in the wrong way."

This type of wisdom and involvement is doubtless a major reason why this pastor has had the joy of seeing all of his grown children serve the Lord.

***Even relationships with relatives, such as with grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins, must be carefully guarded.***

If the parent sees that a particular relationship is becoming harmful spiritually, he must step in and deal with the matter in godly wisdom. Grandparents can be a godly influence or an ungodly, depending on their relationship with God and their level of spiritual wisdom and discernment.

***Parents must maintain this supervision until the child enters adulthood.***

We have seen so many young people lost to the world in their later teen years when they have gotten the wrong job (a job that kept them out of church, that had a worldly atmosphere, or otherwise harmed their spiritual lives) or pursued the wrong type of education at the wrong type of institution. Parents and church leaders must supervise these important decisions.

***Parents must help the young people make the right decisions about job and education.***

We have seen so many young people lost to the world in their later teen years when they have done the following two things:

- *They have gotten the wrong job.* An example of a wrong job is a job that keeps them out of church, a job that has a worldly atmosphere or otherwise harms their spiritual lives. Many pastors have shared the following type of testimonies with us:

“We lose about 20% of the young sometime after the seventh grade, and 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.”

- *They have pursued the wrong type of education.* An example of this is pursuing an education that is not God’s perfect will and pursuing an education that results in spiritual backsliding.

When I taught this course the first time, which was in South Africa, I was told that many of the promising girls in the churches are backsliding when they go to university. There is a Bible college available, but they want a secular education, and the worldly, humanistic environment harms their spiritual lives.

Parents and church leaders must supervise these important decisions. The *One Year Discipleship Course* has practical studies on “How to Make Wise Decisions” and “Knowing God’s Will.” This is available as a standalone print book or eBook and is also included in the *Youth Discipleship Library* DVD.

***Parents must know enough about technology to help and protect the children.***

Consider some testimonies about how clever young people are with electronic devices and how easy it is for them to find ways around rules if the parents aren't savvy and vigilant:

“They are amazingly capable of turning simple devices into tools of communication. My oldest daughter had a Nook reading device when she was 13. We didn't think it was capable of being used as a device to communicate. Teens, however, from all over the world began leaving comments on the ‘book review’ section of the web site it links to (Barnes & Noble, I believe), and those comments became give and take communication. They described themselves to each other, gave out addresses and phone numbers, discussed things that make me blush.”

“Children can turn simple game systems like a Nintendo Wii video console into an Internet communication device. Mine have. We even had one hack into our home wifi to allow Internet-based gaming on a personal computer though I had expressly disallowed that. These kids can figure that stuff out; no one should think they are protected if the child has access to a computer or game system; they WILL find a way to communicate with their friends.”

“Something as seemingly innocent as an app like *My Fitness Pal*, which has a lot of good uses, can be used for communication. People can become ‘friends’ with other people. It is a common thing from app users and manufacturers. People can send messages to each other through the app, and many young people use this to fool their parents.”

“Also, young people can use their phone for code to fool their parents. Recently a parent had their daughter get involved with a young boy and did not know about it for months. The girl ran off with the boy. The parents

found her, separated her from the boy, and limited her cell phone for use only with family members. The girl had set up a way for her sisters to give her boyfriend messages through her text messages to her sisters. They had a code for each one of the emotion signs, such as 'the smiley face means \_\_\_\_\_.' Again, the parents did not know; they just thought she was texting her sisters!"

It is possible to text messages via Twitter, Facebook, and many apps. Twitter allows users to set up multiple accounts with user-assigned names. Thus a teen can set up a Twitter account that does not have his name attached and can invite a list of friends to subscribe to his messages. He then sends out tweet messages to that list that are sent as text messages to their phones.

There are apps, such as Private Photo, that allow people to hide photos under seemingly innocent apps, such as a calculator. The calculator works as a calculator, but you can punch in a secret code to see a hidden photo collection. Attorney Pamela Casey of Alabama says, "Look at your child's phone. If you see Calculator%, you're going to want to talk to your child about what their secret code is. They have that code there to hide photos" ("District Attorney Warns Parents," Sept. 5, 2015, Petapixel.com). To find such apps, parents would need to make a list of all apps on their child's phone, then visit the app store to read the description for each one. In fact, any iPhone app can be hidden. Just Google "hide app on iPhone."

The key to making close parental oversight work is to maintain a close and loving relationship with the child, to keep his heart and not allow some foreign influence to enter in and steal it away.

## 9. Training teens requires consistent Christian living.

“In all things shewing thyself a pattern of good works: in doctrine *shewing* uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity” (Tit 2:7).

Through inconsistent Christian living and hypocrisy, a parent can destroy the good done by a church.

Parent, what is your example? What about *your* Bible study habits? What about *your* Christian attitude and demeanor? What about *your* devotion to Christ? What about *your* separation from the world? What about *your* use of the Internet? What about *your* use of Facebook? What about *your* music? What about *your* reading material? What about *your* use of time?

What is *your* passion in life that you are modeling before your children?

A parent wrote the following testimony about the leaders of his own church:

“Unfortunately, everything that I’ve mentioned about the youth also applies to some of our adults, including some in the ministry. I will never forget seeing ... our youth pastor playing games (I had a clear view of his screen) on his phone while supposedly ‘ministering’ to our teens at camp. (Ironically, the teens weren’t allowed to have their phones at this camp.) How can [this] man, in good conscience, tell our people to listen to the preaching and teaching of God’s Word? Those in authority cannot be hypocrites if we wish to be effective for Christ.”

This is true for church leaders, and it is true for parents. We cannot effectively tell young people to do right if we are not showing the right example before them.

All of us tend toward hypocrisy in some areas of our lives, because we still have the “old man,” but hypocrisy is dealt with by honest confession and spiritual revival. Whatever steps are necessary to remove hypocrisy will pay spiritual

dividends in the children's lives when they see the godly example of their parents and are not given cause to stumble.

## **10. Training teens requires candor.**

“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9).

“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).

Some sins are private and should be confessed to God privately, but some sins are public and should be confessed publicly. Parent, when you are wrong admit it. When you sin before the family, confess it and ask them to pray for you and seek God's help to change.

When a parent realizes that he has not taught the children properly or has not had the right rules or has acted unwisely in some way in regard to the family, he must admit it and change course. Forgiveness and cleansing come by proper confession.

## **11. Training teens requires much patience.**

“And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not” (Galatians 6:9).

“The LORD *is* good unto them that wait for him, to the soul *that* seeketh him. *It is* good that *a man* should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the LORD” (Lamentations 3:25-26).

Patience and persistence are two of the most important elements in the Christian life.

Christian parents must trust God and not give up. They must keep on doing the right things no matter what happens, no matter how dark things might look at the moment.

Many grow weary in well doing and give up, which is unbelief and disobedience.

The first reason we do right is to please God, regardless of what happens in this present world.

We must remember that salvation and consecration cannot be forced and that these things take time. Proverbs 22:6 says, "... when he is old he shall not depart from it." When he is old. How old is that? It can differ dramatically from child to child and family to family.

If you don't see good fruit from your efforts, examine your life and your home. Own up to any sins and failures and ask God to help you change. I have done this often. When I was doing research for the book *Keeping the Kids* and collecting testimonies from godly parents, I saw many things that I had done wrong, many failings on my part as a father. I repented of those things and asked God to use me to be a blessing and help to families today. Every grandfather and grandmother should do this so they can be a challenge to the next generation.

## **12. Training teens requires an effectual prayer life.**

"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).

Nothing is more important in child training than an effectual prayer life.

Pray and intercede daily and continually and earnestly for your children and grandchildren. This was Job's habit (Job 1:5).

The father and mother must pray separately and together.

God warns that the father can hinder answered prayer by not treating his wife properly (1 Pet. 3:7). It is so easy for a man to be bitter against his wife, that the Bible addresses this issue specifically (Col. 3:19). The victory over bitterness is love. Treat her kindly. Help her. Understand her. Have compassion on her situation. Love her, and you won't be bitter toward her.

My maternal grandmother was a prayer warrior, and her prayers were doubtless instrumental in my conversion. She saw many great answers to prayer, and she taught me three “secrets” of answered prayer:

*Persistence* (Lk. 18:1).

*Prayer with fasting* (Mat. 17:21). My wife and I have seen great answers to prayer and victory over demonic strongholds through fasting. There is a study on fasting in *One Year Discipleship Course*.

*Prayer partners*. Paul taught the importance of prayer partners by his constant requests for prayer (Rom. 15:30; Eph. 6:19; Col. 4:3; 1 Th. 5:25; 2 Th. 3:1). Your first prayer partner should be your husband or wife. Don't keep problems to yourself. That is often an act of pride, because we don't want others to know of our imperfections, but no healing or answered prayer comes by pride. Ask Christian friends to pray for you. Be faithful to prayer meeting and ask the church to pray for your situation.

### **13. Training teens requires teaching them *principles of spiritual protection*.**

It is not enough to establish and enforce rules. We must teach Bible principles that can be applied to every situation (e.g., changing dress styles, changing music styles, changing world of electronics). We must teach young people how to make their own Bible-based rules.

For example, if you establish a list of do's and don'ts about clothing, the list becomes obsolete when clothing styles change or if you move to a different country and culture. But biblical principles are applicable to every time and place.

This is what we do in the book *Keeping the Kids* and in the *One Year Discipleship Course*. These books contain such things as biblical principles for testing entertainment, principles of dress and fashion, principles for making wise decisions, principles for knowing God's will, and principles for television and movie viewing.

#### **14. Training teens requires a good church (1 Tim. 3:15).**

“But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth” (1 Timothy 3:15).

The Bible presents child discipleship as a package. It requires creating the proper spiritual environment. Ideally it requires a mother and father committed to the task and doing everything that is necessary, and it requires a good church that is committed to the task, and it requires families and churches working together.

It is the father’s responsibility to make sure that his family is raised in a Bible-believing, spiritually-healthy church. If there is not one within commuting distance, it is better to relocate. People move for all sorts of reasons, but they rarely move for the sake of a good church, yet the church is more important than all the other reasons why people move.

We deal with the church aspect in section on “The Church.”

#### **15. Training teens requires building a hedge of protection around them.**

“A prudent *man* foreseeth the evil, *and* hideth himself; *but* the simple pass on, *and* are punished” (Proverbs 27:12).

There is a great difference between today and the time when I was a kid.

When I was young, the hedge of protection consisted of such things as guarding the television, keeping kids from movie houses, keeping kids from befriending the wrong people, keeping girlie magazines out of their hands.

When we raised our kids (from 1977 to 2000), the situation was about the same, except there were video players and cassette players.

Today, the Internet and smartphone have changed things dramatically. A child doesn't have to try to find a girlie magazine.

## **Twelve Protections**

### **Protection # 1. Be in Control (Eph. 6:1-3).**

Parents have God-given responsibility to be in charge of whether, when, and how a teen uses a phone and everything else.

Parents must remember what the Bible says about children. Foolishness is bound in the heart (Prov. 22:15). In man's old flesh there is no good thing (Rom. 7:18). Children do not have native wisdom. It comes only through a process of growth and experience. A young teen is simply not mature enough to be given his own cell phone and to be expected to use it right without close and wise oversight.

A young person shouldn't "own" his own phone, but he can be allowed the use of one under parental control as the parent believes he needs to use one and is able to do so without spiritual harm.

Young people who fight against parental authority and rules are rebels against God and are already on the path to destruction. If that is the case, this is not a sign for parents to throw up their hands and quit; rather it should motivate them to double down in attention and oversight.

God will hold the parents accountable. If you don't set rules, you are disobeying God and have already lost the battle.

One parent says, "Let the youth know that as a parent you have a responsibility to know what and who they communicate with. The cell phone is not a private diary, and as a parent, don't treat it as such."

## **Protection # 2. Have a basic phone that teens can use when necessary.**

There should be no access to the Internet and online stores without permission and close supervision (Rom. 13:14). A good way to do this is to purchase a basic phone that the teens can use.

“They do not have cell phones, but we do have a Tracphone that we give them if they are walking down to the store or going to do a mowing job. They cannot access the Internet on it and we can easily check the minutes used.”

“We have three phones. My wife and I each have an iPhone, and then we have a ‘home phone’ that is a basic cell phone that stays home or goes with our 15-year-old son when he is mowing lawns or evangelizing with other men in our church, etc.”

“We bought a pre-paid cell phone that we use as a home/extra phone. This is a basic flip phone with no Internet. When my boys walk the dog or run over to the store for Mom, I make them take it in case of an emergency, or if we need to relay something additional to them. This phone displays the exact minutes on the screen so that I know if it was used. I am not against the use of cell phones by my kids; I’m just against the OWNERSHIP of one and especially the ownership of any device with open access to the Internet. My children do use the Internet under the supervision of either my wife or myself, but only when deemed necessary by us.”

“I think it is unnecessary and downright spiritually and even physically dangerous to put an Internet ready device in the hands of a child that God himself characterizes as having foolishness bound in his or her heart. God calls all of His children to be non-conformists, and I have purposed to not conform to the world’s view on what my child should or should not have. If there is a legitimate reason to use the Internet,

allow them access only while you are watching them, and only after you have checked the site yourself.”

### **Protection # 3. Weigh every gift carefully.**

Parents and grandparents naturally want to give things to their children. We like our kids to have nice clothes and fun things. We like to see them have friends and be popular. But wise parents and grandparents don't follow every natural instinct. They weigh every gift carefully in light of God's Word and the child's maturity. We don't follow the way of the pop culture. Grandparents joke about spoiling their grandkids, but wise grandparents will not do anything to harm them. I have often been tempted to give my grandkids things that upon further reflection I did not purchase when I realized that it could be a hindrance to their moral and spiritual lives.

Don't nurture pride with your gifts. The pride of life is a chief characteristic of the world (1 John 2:16).

Don't nurture an appetite for the things of the world. Be careful even about toys. Most of the toys today are directly identified with foolish pop television programs and movies and pop singers. Even many of the dolls are not innocent. Disney is not innocent!

Don't nurture covetousness; nurture contentment. Don't give them too much. The evidence of success in this is when you can take your kids or grandkids into a store and they don't beg for things.

Don't nurture selfishness; nurture concern for others.

Be careful about toys. Many toys are not innocent and wholesome, but rather encourage love for the foolish pop culture.

Be careful about clothes. The best way to teach teenagers how to dress modestly is to start when they are children. Don't dress your toddlers and children in anything you would not want them to wear when they are teens.

Be careful about electronic devices. They can be a blessing or a curse, depending on the spiritual condition of the child and the home and school environment.

**Protection # 4. Know what is on the child's phone (tablet, laptop) at all times and have all the passwords.**

One parent observed, "They must know that this device is not their personal diary."

A pastor said, "The Internet or store cannot be accessed without a password (which only I have)."

**Protection # 5. Use every type of protection available.**

Use the parental controls built into every smartphone.

[www.mymobilewatchdog.com](http://www.mymobilewatchdog.com) deals with Android

iPhone also has these controls.

Use accountability software. Covenant Eyes can be purchased for the whole family.

Use filters, such as CleanInternet.

Check every app before it is approved; check if it has any type of communication that can be used for texting.

For the iPad, there is a feature called Guided Access that allows parents to make things off limits to children. It is located under Settings>>General>>Accessibility. "You'll need to set a passcode for this function before you get started so you can confirm the changes you've made to the Guided Access settings. Next, open up an app you want to let the little one use, and then triple-press the home button. Doing so will bring up the Guided Access tool. Now you can draw boxes around the areas you don't want the kids to access or tap. For example, you can box off the ad section, messaging section, or anything you think they might get into. Once you've marked off everything you need to, tap 'Start' and the Guided Access tools will disappear. Your child can use the app, but nothing else or those areas you blocked off. You can also use this function to set time limits on iPad use. Once a

time limit is reached, the iPad will turn off and it can only be turned back on with the Guided Access passcode you created earlier” (“Keep Your iPad Safe for Children,” Komando.com, Sep. 2, 2015).

**Protection # 6. Don’t let young people have phones or any such device when they are alone unsupervised.**

Cell phones or tablets or laptops should be used only when the parents allow and only when they are supervising their use. At other times, they should be in the possession of the parents.

Many young people have gotten into trouble by having unsupervised use of these devices, and this is not a new thing.

Pastor Dave Sorenson testified of how that he got pulled into the world when his father (a pastor) let him have a portable radio and keep it in his room at night when he was a teenager.

I have a pastor friend whose teenage son had an MP3 player that he used to access the Internet in his room at night, and he began reading the writings of atheists and is now confused and uncertain about his own faith in God.

**Protection # 7. Do not allow unauthorized conversation with members of the opposite sex.**

“Abstain from all appearance of evil. (1 Thessalonians 5:22).

“There be three *things which* are too wonderful for me, yea, four which I know not: The way of an eagle in the air; the way of a serpent upon a rock; the way of a ship in the midst of the sea; and the way of a man with a maid” (Proverbs 30:18-19).

“And Dinah the daughter of Leah, which she bare unto Jacob, went out to see the daughters of the land. And when Shechem the son of Hamor the Hivite, prince of

the country, saw her, he took her, and lay with her, and defiled her” (Genesis 34:1-2).

The exception is one’s own brother or sister and other close relatives.

One parent observed, “Girls need to know that boys should not be any part of their lives until they are old enough to marry. Fathers need to keep their daughters’ hearts until they love Christ with all of it.”

Many of the people who wrote to us on this subject shared horror stories of girls who have been enticed away from their families by men they met either by phone or texting or Facebook.

This happened to a girl in our church about three years ago. A young man started calling her on her cell phone, and at first she said that she didn’t want to hear from him. Her parents and church leaders warned her against talking with him, but she refused to listen. Eventually they ran away together out of wedlock.

A Nepali girl recently told my wife her sad story. A man started calling her and wooing her. He told her that he had graduated from high school, had a good job, and didn’t drink. Finally she ran away with him and quickly learned that he was lying about everything. He eventually left her for another woman. With a broken heart she said to my wife, “I shamed my parents; they don’t want me back; I ruined my life.”

A pastor friend told me about a girl who got a SIM card from another person. An unknown male called that number and started talking to her. She unwisely continued conversing with him on the phone. When she resisted, the guy threatened to commit suicide if she didn’t marry him, and eventually she eloped with him.

## Protection # 8. Do not allow any worldly things

There is great pressure today to lighten up, to tone it down, to not be so “strict.”

Let’s see what God’s Word says:

“Neither shalt thou bring an abomination into thine house, lest thou be a cursed thing like it: *but* thou shalt utterly detest it, and thou shalt utterly abhor it; for it *is* a cursed thing” (Deut. 7:26).

“I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes: I hate the work of them that turn aside; *it* shall not cleave to me” (Psalm 101:3).

“Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil *men*. Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away” (Prov. 4:14-15).

“Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners” (1 Cor. 15:33).

“And have NO FELLOWSHIP with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove *them*” (Eph. 5:11).

“Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God” (James 4:4).

“Love not the world, neither the things *that are* in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that *is* in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever” (1 John 2:15-17).

It is impossible to conceive of a higher standard of separation from the world than that which is presented in these Scriptures.

These essential biblical principles must be applied to all content: books, television, music, video, Internet.

Parents must do everything possible to keep their children unplugged from the pop culture because it will stir up worldliness and rebellion.

The pop culture, with its sensual music, immodest fashion, self-centered philosophy, and focus on entertainment, is a powerful magnet for our fallen flesh, and countless young people in Christian homes have been drawn away by its siren song.

Pastor David Sorenson: “The closer the Christian family gets to the world, the greater the chances are of the world getting your children. You are playing with fire, and the worst losers will be your children. You see, the world is the devil’s system. It may be defined as the society and culture of the ungodly. ... Many Christian parents may claim to distance themselves from the world, but they still like to flirt with the things that are in the world. The things in the world are the bait that Satan uses to catch your children. Beware!” (*Training Your Children to Turn out Right*, p. 91).

Pastor Bobby Mitchell: “Many times the parents get their children wrapped up in the things of this world. The parents are concerned about their children loving the Lord, but they are just as concerned with their kids playing organized sports, becoming popular, being fashionable, seeing the latest movies, making a lot of money, having the newest video game systems, acquiring every type of technology without proper accountability, etc. Through it all the dad and mom are sowing thorns that choke the seed of the Word of God. This is especially true when the sports, fun, and such come before any of the aspect of New Testament ministry.”

***Parents must unplug their children from the public school.***

“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” (Psalm 1:1).

“Cease, my son, to hear the instruction *that causeth* to err from the words of knowledge” (Prov. 19:27).

“Thus saith the LORD, Learn not the way of the heathen, and be not dismayed at the signs of heaven; for the heathen are dismayed at them” (Jer. 10:2).

“Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in *them*; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean *thing*; and I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty” (2 Cor. 6:14-18).

One of the most negative spiritual and moral influences in my youth was the public school system, and that was in a day wherein the schools in America were not nearly as morally polluted as they are today. I entered grammar school in 1955 and graduated from high school in 1967. As I recall, we weren't taught evolution or communism or multiculturalism or feminism or transsexualism. In fact, during the earlier years, we still had prayer before meals and some Bible reading. But even then the secularized environment and the rock & roll pop culture and the godless friends was devastating to my Christian profession. My parents took me to church every time the doors were open, but how can five

or so hours in church a week overcome 30 and more hours of immersion in the world, especially when the church is weak and one's parents are not seriously discipling their kids?

Pastor David Sorenson makes the following wise comment:

“I know of no greater passage of Scripture dealing with the matter of Christian education than Psalm 1. There probably is no institution in this country that more embodies the counsel of the ungodly, the way of sinners, and the seat of the scornful than the national public education establishment. With its systemic teaching of evolution which mocks creation, it certainly occupies the seat of the scornful. With its institutionalized sex education (that is little more than sex encouragement), it certainly is in the way of sinners. As it tacitly ignores the things of God under the guise of separation of church and state, it certainly is the counsel of the ungodly. The objective of Psalm 1:1 is to get our families out of the world and to get the world out of our families” (Training Your Children to Turn out Right, pp. 92, 93).

Pastor Kerry Allen comments on 1 Samuel 13:19-20:

“Children are arrows to be sharpened and shot at our enemy, the devil. Are we foolish enough to believe that if we give our arrows to the enemy, he is going to sharpen them for us? No, rather he will see to it that they are dull and useless against him. Wise warriors will never allow the enemy to tamper with their weapons of warfare” (*How Can I Except Some Man Guide Me?*)

I realize there are situations in which a child must attend public school for reasons that might be out of the parent's control. For example, there are divorced Christians that have to share custody with an unsaved parent. And in some situations, missionaries have chosen to send their children to a public school in a foreign country after weighing all of their options before the Lord. I know of two cases like this that

have turned out right, and all of the children are serving the Lord. But I must hasten to add that I personally know of only two!

If children must attend public school, the key to having them turn out right for the Lord is intimate godly involvement by the parents and a committed relationship with a strong church.

The same thing can be said about secular university. Pastor Mike Sullivant has the following observation:

“Very few that go off to secular university go on to serve the Lord. I’ve got one guy that is in engineering, but he lives with a Christian family off campus and comes home every weekend. His family is active in the church and during the summer he comes home to work and is faithful to church and goes to the activities. Pastor Bob Kelly said that the only way that a saved person could go to a secular school and turn out right is that if he not be just an ATTENDER of a good church but that be ACTIVELY INVOLVED in the church. I’ve seen some of our young people leave here and go to the university in Winnipeg and attend a church but they are not active in a church, and it seems that it is no better for them than if they weren’t going to church at all. I’ve never seen a non-active one make it without being scorched big time.”

I also want to sound a warning about Christian schools. They should not be trusted blindly as if they are the major key in discipling youth. In fact, there has been a lot of bad fruit from Christian schools in general. Many of them have witnessed very few young people become true disciples of Christ. It has a lot to do with how the school is operated and on what principles.

Following are two warnings I received from those who completed the “keeping the kids” questionnaire:

“Christian schools are a major reason, I believe, why so many young people leave. Inconsistent lives by teachers.

Enforcing rules they do not believe in. Living one way at school, another in their homes. Teens see the hypocrisy and become angry and bitter.”

“I believe that the Christian school has had an influence in the wrong direction. This is when doctrine is not taught in the home, the church and pastor are subjects of gossip in front of the children, and the kids meet teens from other churches that are contemporary and they are strongly influenced. They talk to them and before long they are pressuring their parents to allow them to go to the other church. One will often hear, ‘They go on mission trips.’ What the parents do not know is that too often those are only glorified vacations in which the kids spend an hour or so each day at a ‘mission’ and not doing soul winning work. All of a sudden the fundamentalist youth pastor with standards is, ‘unloving and boring; he is the reason my child is not excited about religious things, while this contemporary church is so good.’ Although the Christian school has good standards and doctrine, the influence of children not part of the local church is magnified because the parents of your church children aren’t teaching them in the home.”

These warnings are primarily about Christian schools that aren’t operated wisely. In the first case, the teachers do not live what they preach, and in the second case, the school accepts students from contemporary churches. Both of these cases are recipes for spiritual disaster.

I believe that an example of a Christian school that is operated wisely is the academy at Madison Baptist Church in Huntsville, Alabama. It is an integral ministry of the church, and the goal is “to train Christian youth of every ability in the higher principles of Christian leadership, self-discipline, individual responsibility, personal integrity and good citizenship.” The school is only for church members in good standing (and in some cases members of likeminded churches in the area) who agree to follow the school’s

standards, and these include extremely careful use of television and Internet.

Again, though, the key to discipling the kids when they are in a Christian school comes back to the home and the relationship that the parents have with the kids.

We would also mention Bible colleges. They can be a blessing and help in preparing young people for the Lord's service, but they must be chosen carefully in God's perfect will. Bible colleges are like homes and churches, in that some are turning out disciples of Christ while others are not.

### ***Parents must unplug the children from pop music.***

Over the past 50 years, nothing has caused the spiritual downfall of young people who have grown up in church more than pop music. Rock and roll is of the world, the flesh, and the devil. In fact, 1 John 2:15-16 is a perfect description of modern pop music. Rock music has been at war against God and His moral absolutes since its inception. Consider the theme of the some of the most popular songs:

"I'm free to do what I want any old time" (Rolling Stones, 1965).

"It's my life and I'll do what I want/ It's my mind, and I'll think what I want" (The Animals, 1965).

"You got to go where you want to go/ do what you want to do" (Mamas and Papas, 1966).

"It's your thing/ do what you want to do" (Isley Brothers, 1969).

"We don't need no thought control" (Pink Floyd, "Another Brick in the Wall," 1979).

"I'm gonna do it my way. ... I want to make my own decision ... I want to be the one in control..." (Janet Jackson, "Control," 1986).

"... the only rules you should live by [are] rules made up by you" (Pennywise, "Rules," 1991).

“So what we get drunk/ So what we smoke weed ...  
Living young and wild and free” (“Young, Wild and  
Free,” Snoop Dog and Wiz Khalifa, 2011).

Show me a church that does not preach against rock music and does not inform the young people why they need to stay away from it, and I will show you a church that is losing kids to the world in a big way. The same thing can be said about individual homes.

Pastor David Sorenson warns:

“Multitudes of Christian young people have been enticed into the world simply through listening to the world’s music. It is attractive to the ear. It can be fun to listen to. It is habit forming, and it absolutely will influence your spirituality. You show me the music you allow in your home and I will tell you how your children will turn out spiritually. It is that critical. ... The world’s music will hook your children into the world just as surely as drugs or booze. ... You show me Christian young people who, despite determined efforts by their parents to the contrary, wind up in the world. If I were a betting man, I would lay money on the fact that those teenagers had been into the world’s music for a long time. ... 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. ... 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” (*Training Your Children to Turn out Right*, pp. 101-104).

As for Contemporary Christian Music, it is no better. It is simply rock & roll with a thin veneer of Christianity. It is the devil’s chum to entice God’s people into the world.

### ***Parents must unplug the family from television.***

In looking back on my childhood growing up in a Baptist church, attending services at least three times a week, the three major influences that stole my heart for the world were public school friendships, rock music, and television, and the three were intimately associated. We got a television when I was about nine years old (1958), and though the programs were innocent compared to today, they certainly did not encourage me spiritually. We got our television a couple of years after Elvis appeared on the *Ed Sullivan Show*. By the time I reached junior high school, I did everything I could to stay home on Sunday nights, because that was when the most exciting programs of the week were on, such as the *Disney Hour* and *Ed Sullivan*. I don't remember if I was home that Sunday night in 1964 when the Beatles appeared on Ed Sullivan, but I could have been. I was in high school and about that time my parents were having a lot of problems and had pretty much given up on trying to keep me in church. I had started drinking and carousing with my public school buddies every weekend. There is no doubt that television and movies fed my carnal imagination and, together with rock & roll, inflamed me with a passion for the things of the world.

One of my sisters gives the following testimony:

“As a little girl, I can remember the television being on constantly. It was my ‘friend’ and a means of escape from the troubles and insecurities in my life. As I would watch a certain program, I would think, ‘If I just had her personality or looks, I would be happy.’ Later, when I was older and programming became increasingly wicked, I would stay up late and watch hours of mindless, foolish, empty sitcoms, totally oblivious to the damage it was doing to me. Like a drug, it was altering my mind.”

Following are a few of the testimonies that were sent to me by Christian parents who have gotten rid of the television.

“Sick of the nasty language, barely dressed women and/or men, sexual content, drugs, drinking, murder, the commercials, the list goes on, we have not had cable/antenna hook up for about six years in our home and we LOVE IT! The result has been wonderful! We are no longer couch potatoes. We enjoy the quietness in the home. We enjoy each other’s company. We enjoy more time spent with Father God. We spend more time in prayer, reading God’s Word and being with the each other. We do more out of doors activities--walking trails, driving to the mountains, etc.”

“My dad was a deacon in an independent fundamental Baptist church that was a strong church. I am a strong preacher of personal responsibility, and am fully responsible for my wayward years, but sitting and watching ‘Cheers’ with my deacon dad and laughing as Sam and Norm and Cliff sat around the bar talking and drinking and chasing Diane surely didn’t help convince me that it was bad. Being a deacon, our family would go over to other deacons’ houses, and what happened at my house was the norm in that IFB circle. They’d all watch the ‘good’ Hollywood movies like ‘Superman’ with Christopher Reeve, despite the fact that it contained a few times of using the Lord’s name in vain, and couple minor swears, and of course Superman kissing very affectionately a woman who was not his wife or even his girlfriend. The adults watch it innocently and chuckle, but the kids see right through the charade and are able to discern that ‘this is directly against the things they show me in the Bible on Sundays.’ The deacons and their wives are not able to discern this same thing, so the kid can only conclude, ‘I must be wrong, this can’t be that bad.’”

“We have had television for about one year in the past 27. Besides not being fit to watch, it was a big waste of time. We feel that our family unit was much stronger because of the lack of television in the home. Our children got better grades when they were in Christian

School. The teacher actually guessed that we did not have television. It is also a blessing to see our grown children and their families serving the Lord without having a television to hold them back.”

“I was engaged to be married in 2007 with the man who is now my husband. We had met in a liberal church before switching over to a Bible-believing church. He had a big screen TV and I told him that I would not move in with him after we got married if he put the TV in our house. ... After about six months of marriage he thanked me for being so adamant. ... My daughter is different than other girls from families that have cable or satellite. She is not fashion or boy crazy. She does not try to fit in with the in crowd. She is a kid the way kids are supposed to be, innocent to the wicked world around her, and for that I give praise to God. ... I’m sure my husband would say that he doesn’t have to take time away from Bible reading to watch the hockey game or have the temptation to use the TV to ‘unwind’ instead of going to God for his comfort and solace, not to mention the incredible temptation to lust in pretty much every commercial and TV program. I believe that TV is Satan’s tool to steal our hearts and time away so we will not be of any use to God.”

“Having eliminated television, we have noticed a marked improvement in the children’s homeschooling and in their attitudes. Their conversations have also changed from what they watched to what they have done. We have a family devotion and Bible reading time, and the children read more. As far as movies, we first look up to see the content and mostly watch Christian movies. We also view videos about prophecy and Biblical subjects. We do not permit anything that has cursing or using the Lord’s name in vain.”

“We were compulsive TV watchers. Enslaved is actually the word, so I had to eliminate it. Now we have a lot of time for the family. We do Bible study after dinner

every day and play games with the kids. My wife and I have more personal time.”

There is a lengthy section on this in the book *Keeping the Kids* in the chapter on “Separation” under the section “Unplug Them from Hollywood.” This can also be found in the report “Television and the Christian Home” at the Way of Life web site.

***Parents must unplug the family from every unwholesome thing on the Internet, video games, etc..***

We deal with this extensively in the section on “The Youth.”

***Parents must unplug the family from ANYTHING that hinders the spiritual and moral life.***

Wise Christian parents will be constantly on guard to keep the world out of the home. One pastor said:

“I’ve got six boys, and every time when one would get to that place where I would need to explain to them the facts of life, I would take them fishing. I can remember when two of my sons were in the boat. I said, ‘Guys, is there anything that we have in the house that causes you to struggle?’ And they chose an old John Wayne movie. I said, ‘When we get home, you get that for me.’ Sometimes I think that we parents because of our marriage and callousness, it doesn’t bother us or we have hardened ourselves to things, but we need to think about the young impressionable minds. Since that time I have asked all my children if there is anything that we have in the house that we need to get rid of. Whatever they say, we follow through on it. I also exhort the parents in my church to ask themselves if there is anything in the home that they need to get rid of. I guarantee you that if you pray that prayer, if you haven’t done it in awhile, God will show you something.”

We deal more with separation from the world under the section on “The Youth.”

**Protection # 9. Understand the power of pornography and do everything possible to keep your children away from it.**

We deal with pornography in the section on “The Youth.” See point # 7: Pursue Vigilance.

**Protection # 10. Beware of Facebook.**

We don’t believe in making a blanket rule against the use of Facebook by every believer. Many use it to good and right advantage. But at the very least, believers need to be exceedingly careful in the use of Facebook. And a blanket rule against Facebook can be a wise thing in some lives.

Facebook is filled with worldly things, with lying, and with self-promotion, though you aren’t forced to participate and you can control your own Facebook page.

Facebook and other social media tend to encourage vanity and narcissism. Even the world understands this. I recently read the “20 most annoying things friends do on Facebook” on *Business Insider* and one of those pertains to “Vanity.” The report stated, “MySpace may have popularized the ‘selfie,’ but we’re pretty sure Facebook is keeping it alive and well.”

Following are samples of testimonies that we have received about Facebook.

“In my experience the pressures I received using Facebook in the past are not something I will subject my children to. I believe social media is a plague and I know this because the world fights so hard for it and for you and your children to have it. The world browbeats the parent into thinking their child will be socially inept if they don’t have a Facebook or Twitter account.”

“I had a Facebook account, and it became a spiritual problem for me. So, I permanently deleted my account two years ago, and God has blessed that decision. Of

course, there has been pressure from friends and family to get back on Facebook because ‘that's how people keep up with each other nowadays.’ But that is a small price to pay for living a biblically separated life that honors the Lord.”

“Cell phones, emailing, and Facebook enabled our daughter to become engaged to someone she never met and move half a country away to be with him. That was three years ago. She may be married to him by now.”

One of the young people in our churches in Nepal said that in her village *many* young people have run away after meeting someone on Facebook. She is from a village in the world's 16th poorest country, yet the Internet and the cell phone are having a powerful and negative influence on young people there.

A pastor recently told me about how that his father committed adultery with a woman in his church. His father met the woman, who is many years his junior, on a trip to visit his children and grandkids. The two developed a relationship on Facebook and planned an adulterous alliance, which they followed through with. They were caught when the pastor's son borrowed his father's phone and found the illicit communication.

### **Protection # 11. Be careful about video games.**

“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: So shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth, and thy want as an armed man” (Prov. 6:9-11).

“See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, Redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord *is*” (Eph. 5:15-17).

Video games are very addictive and they are great time wasters. Also many of them have very wicked content.

If young people are allowed to play video games, they must be carefully chosen and the play time must be strictly limited by the parents.

We deal with this in “How to Use Mobile Phones Wisely - The Youth.”

**Protection # 12. Monitor the young person’s attitude and character and be ready to do whatever is necessary to correct the problem.**

This comes back to the importance of parents spending enough time with the young people so they know them and can discern what is happening in their lives.

Following are testimonies from parents that show how this works in regard to the use of cell phones and Internet:

**Testimony # 1**

“Our two oldest children are both saved now, and are usually very thoughtful of others. They will engage in conversation with old and young alike; and they are keen to serve and help people. However, when they started to play innocent games on the iPad, they would quickly become selfish and would become so glued into the iPad that they stopped noticing the needs of others around them. We eventually forbade them to play on it at all.”

**Testimony # 2**

“I have two teenagers--ages 15 and almost 16. We held out on them having a cell phone for their own personal use, but something always seems to happen to weaken that resolve. ‘I got a new iPhone so why not pass our old ones down; after all, they need one when they start driving.’ Or, ‘We can get rid of our home phone and they can share the iPhone.’ So many justifications. Our

son had the first problem with Google. There are no protections or filters available that I know of. He wanted to see pictures of pretty girls. Then my daughter went to camp and came home to reveal to me she was having a problem with music because she could Google any song. That was the start.

“Now, our son has no phone and no iPod. He is more content and can focus on what is important. He secretly became involved in Instagram and SnapChat, neither of which were pure and innocent. Social Media is so very dangerous to young people. Some might have the maturity to handle it, but we choose to make sure they have a right relationship with God before we allow any phones or iPods back into our son’s hands.

“I was amazed at how deceitful our children could be, no matter how much we taught or how watchful we were. The lure is just too much for some. My daughter does have her phone back. She has a real desire to do right, but we hold her accountable and she puts it in our room every night before bedtime. She has no social media and isn’t allowed to take it in her room. So far so good, but I really believe it has to do with her desire to do right and her relationship with God. If our young people want to please God, they will guard their hearts and minds, but it is our job as parents to guide them in this matter.”

### **Testimony # 3**

“We have a teen daughter whom we briefly allowed to have a smartphone and iPad. We took every precaution to shield and prevent her from accessing things that would be an ungodly influence in her life. We placed parental controls on both devices, performed regular and unannounced checks on each device to ensure nothing was going on behind our backs that should not have been. Most of the time, she would play games and watch YouTube tutorials and shows we approved. ...

“In the year we allowed her access to these devices, we had no ‘real’ problems except for the occasional disobedience of getting on the device when she was not allowed to be on it (e.g. during school hours, because we homeschool). *Nevertheless, the one main, consistent, and overriding problem we encountered time and time again was the spirit these devices seemed to place over her. She went from having a sweet spirit in all her ways and relationships, to being lazy, selfish, sneaky, delayed in obedience (disobedience), disrespectful, and having a bad attitude.* NOW TO ANYONE ELSE, THEY WOULD NOT BE ABLE TO SEE THE CHANGE AS IT WAS VERY SUBTLE. Someone would really have to know her to even recognize there was a change occurring. Thankfully, because we have homeschooled her throughout her life, I have the unique advantage of REALLY KNOWING WHO MY CHILDREN ARE and therefore can recognize the change quickly.

“For about a year, we went back and forth with her privilege to be on the phone and iPad. When finally I started to see a pattern emerge. When she was on the devices, she had an ugly spirit and character problems. When she was grounded from it, her sweet spirit returned and the character problems disappeared. So we decided that she was not ready for such devices because it was doing more harm than good. It’s hard enough to raise godly children, and we don’t need to add things that will make it that much more harder; it’s foolishness! So we kept her off all these devices, and put a password on every electronic in the house for a year. If she needed Internet access, we logged into the computer for her and she did what needed to be done and logged off.

“After a year off electronics, we recently decided we would allow her access to her iPad (again) especially since it is now summertime. However, that did not last very long. After only a few weeks, we were starting to have very familiar character problems once again! I

warned her; she'd shape up for a few days, and then back to warning, shaping up, and so forth. Last week, I had my last straw and said we were back to no electronics. Boy, did this unleash a rebellious spirit in her that lasted for days! I faced her rebellion head on and refused to overlook any of it. If it meant losing my sanity to fix the problem, then so be it. She is worth it! Finally, she got over her rebellion of losing the iPad, and now we're back to seeing a sweet spirit once again. I just informed her that we would not be introducing anymore personal electronics if that's the spirit we encounter when it gets taken away. Obviously, she is not mature enough to handle such a privilege. If personal electronics become a god in your life, then it's foolishness for us to allow you to have it. Sometimes there are things in life that, on the surface, seem to add quality and convenience to our lives, but in reality it only brings a multitude of heartache! I'm sure she did not like to hear this, but that's of no concern. We will be her parents first and foremost, even if it makes us unpopular!"

## **Conclusion**

There is no shortcut to spiritual victory and successful child training. We have dealt with 15 principles of training teens and 11 ways to protect them, and all of these are interrelated and important.

1. Training teens is a full-time job and requires total commitment by the father and mother.
2. Training teens begins in infancy.
3. Training teens requires gaining and keeping their hearts.
4. Training teens requires being a disciplinarian.
5. Training teens focuses on a biblical conversion experience.
6. Training teens requires the parents to spend a lot of time with them.

7. Training teens requires filling the home with God's Word.

8. Training teens means the parents must know what their children are doing.

9. Training teens requires consistent Christian living.

10. Training teens requires candor and "transparency."

11. Training teens requires much patience.

12. Training teens requires an effectual prayer life.

13. Training teens requires teaching them principles of spiritual protection.

14. Training teens requires a good church.

15. Training teens requires building a hedge of protection.

Twelve "*protections*"

1. Be in control.

2. Have a basic phone that teens can use when necessary.

3. Weigh every gift carefully.

4. Know what is on the child's phone (tablet, laptop) at all times and have all the passwords.

5. Use every type of protection available.

6. Don't let young people have phones or any such device when they are alone and unsupervised.

7. No unauthorized conversation with members of the opposite sex.

8. Do not allow any worldly things.

Understand the power of pornography and do everything possible to keep your children away from it.

10. Beware of Facebook.

Be careful about video games.

12. Monitor the young person's attitude and character and be ready to do whatever is necessary to correct a problem.

# The Church

Let me say at the outset that I want to challenge churches rather than discourage them. I realize that there is no perfect church. As someone said, “If you find a perfect church, please don’t join it or you will mess it up!”

Every Bible-believing church is composed of mere sinners saved by grace (at best) and has strengths and weaknesses. But we should want to grow and improve and advance. We should be pressing on to higher ground rather than being content with the *status quo*.

God’s people need to help the Bible-believing church rather than tear it down. It is right to discern errors and problems, but we must do more than that. It is good to ask oneself, “If the whole church were like me (in prayer, witnessing, Bible study, Christian character and zeal, proper submission to authority, etc.), what would the church be?”

At the same time, it is very important that parents raise their children in a godly, spiritually-healthy church.

“Parents who stay in the wrong church are courting disaster with their children. The greatest need in their lives is for a good fundamentalist, Bible-preaching church. You are compromising to stay in a church that doesn’t obey the Word of God, and when your children grow up, they will leave church altogether” (Paul Freeman, *Christian Parents Are Losing Their Children*).

The home and the church are divinely-ordained institutions with different programs, and they should work together in discipling the youth. Discipling youth requires all three: the church, the parents, and the youth themselves.

The home was founded at the dawn of man’s history in Genesis 2 and continues to be an essential and foundational part of church and society. It is tasked by God with bearing

fruit for the glory of God (Psa. 127:3-4; Deut. 6:4-9; Eph. 6:4). We see the example of Abraham (Gen. 18:19).

The church is “the house of God ... the pillar and ground of the truth” (1 Timothy 3:15). The church is the headquarters of the Lord’s Great Commission (Acts 13-14). The Commission was given to the apostles to teach to the churches (Matthew 28:16-20).

The church should support the home’s program of raising children for the Lord, and the home should support the church’s program of the Great Commission.

A good church can rarely overcome the influence of worldly homes, and a good home can rarely overcome the influence of a worldly church.

A good test of whether a church is sound enough to disciple youth is to look at the church’s fruit. Look at the young people. What are their goals in life? What are they putting first? What is their passion? There are many churches that have never produced a pastor, preacher, or missionary.

It is better to relocate than to lose your children to the world or to the emerging church. My wife and I have seen many parents stay in churches when they should have left, and the fruit has invariably been discouraging.

Many parents have testified to me that being in the right church was a major reason why their grown children are serving the Lord today. I met a grandfather in Chesterton, Indiana, who told me that his children and now his grandchildren are serving the Lord. He said that he moved to that area many years ago when his children were young and he had bought a house. Afterwards he found Fairhaven Baptist Church and knew this was where the Lord wanted him to raise his family, but it was more than an hour’s drive from his house. He put the house on the market and commuted to church every service. He thought his house would sell quickly, but it took more than two years, if I remember correctly, yet he continued to commute to a good church rather than settle for a mediocre one. The sweet fruit

of this wise decision has already continued to the second generation.

Bible-believing churches are changing quickly.

We have warned about this in *Why Most Independent Baptist Churches Will Be Emerging within 20 Years*.

They are adopting a positive, non-judgmental philosophy; there is little “negative” preaching, little hell fire and brimstone, little warning, no plain identification of false teachers and compromisers.

They are lowering the standard of separation from the world in dress, entertainment, etc. The forthright preaching against the world has been toned down. The worldly things that the churches preach against are fewer and fewer. I think of Bethlehem Baptist Church of Fairfax, Virginia. At one time, it was an “old-fashioned” Baptist church that believed in biblical separation and was committed to the King James Bible, but for many years it has moved ever more gradually in a contemporary direction. By 2002, when the Baptist Bible Fellowship International conference was held there, the fruit of the new direction was plain for all to see. Pastor David Stokes said, “With regard to dress and modesty issues, we enforce NO RULE on our folks. ... apparel issues are really of NO CONCERN to us” (emphasis added). A newspaper described the church’s Skate Night as an occasion when “Christian rock throbs inside the gymnasium.” The church’s new youth director for 2002 wore an earring and a P.O.D. T-shirt for his photo for the church’s paper. P.O.D. is a hard rock band, whose members smoke, are covered with tattoos, curse in interviews, and criticize church kids “who want to segregate themselves from the world.”

They are lowering the standard of music to please more people, including visitors and young people.

The youth emphasis is on fun and games rather than serious discipleship. Typically it is 20% spirituality and 80% fun.

## **A Church That Produces Youth Disciples**

1. A church with qualified leaders and officers
2. A church that appoints the right teachers and workers
3. A church that is careful about salvation
4. A church that is uncompromising about separation
5. A church that trains the parents to build godly homes
6. A church that is more “integrated” than “segregated”
7. A compassionate church
8. A church that exercises discipline
9. A praying church
10. A church that is not boring
11. A church that is not weird and cultic
12. A church that pursues serious training of youth
13. A church that gives young people ministries while maintaining high standards
14. A missionary church

### **1. A church with qualified leaders and officers**

The importance of this is seen in the fact that there are two chapters of Scripture on this subject (1 Timothy 3; Titus 1).

If a church’s leaders are not right, the church will not be right and the children will be deeply affected.

Some ways that the pastor must be right in his life and ministry:

***The pastor must be right in his spiritual and moral testimony.***

This is the emphasis of 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1. The pastor must be blameless and of good behavior in his testimony. If he is a hypocrite, this will hinder the power of his preaching and teaching.

“In a past church, many young people were hurt due to the fall of the pastor into sin and rebellion. They idolized the pastor as mentor and friend. We are not to look to the man, but many young people have no

defense against this especially in a Christian school situation. At least four of the girls became pregnant soon after the incident. Two are in church today with their children. Three never married; the one that did is now divorced. One has had three children out of wedlock. Some of the boys became alcoholic and rebellious; some have returned to the Lord and overcome.”

“It is generally a sad situation regarding the lack of spiritual and administrative leadership in most churches. Some of the prevalent issues are hypocrisy, lack of integrity, lack of in depth preparation of sermons, little real feeding of the flock, lack of serious prayer, no personal private prayer closet time! Business practices and church constitutions are ignored. I could go on and on. I wonder at times if some of these pastors have really been called by God. Over the years you have written some good articles about Biblical Spiritual Leadership. I wonder if pastors are reading and heeding the counsel that you have provided in that documentation. Unless these fundamental issues are first addressed it is no use to figure out why the young people are leaving.”

***The pastor must be right in his family life.***

This is another thing that is emphasized in Scripture (1 Tim. 3:4-5; Titus 1:6).

***The pastor must be right in his devotional life.***

“Many of the pastors I counsel are in serious trouble because of weakness in their devotional life. ... Many times the pastors I counsel with have not been reading their Bibles except to get a message. ... [Pastor, you] must deal with the sin in your life every day and let God speak to you to refresh your life and make His presence real in your lives” (“How to Have a Daily Time with God,” For Love of the Family Ministries).

***The pastor must be right in his study life.***

A major part of the pastor's work is to feed and protect the flock (1 Pet. 5:1-2).

The pastor is right in his study life **by being properly trained** ("as he hath been taught," Titus 1:9). The ignorance of so many independent Baptist pastors is a *major* problem and a major reason why so many of the churches are very weak. A Bible institute education is the bare minimum of training that a pastor should have, and that is only sufficient to gain some basic tools so that he can pursue a serious Bible education throughout his ministry. This does not mean that he must be trained in a Bible college. It means that he must get the proper training some way or the other, either from his own church or from a Bible School or from a self-study curriculum. We publish a curriculum called *The Advanced Bible Studies Series*, plus many other courses that can be used for self study.

The pastor is right in his study life **by knowing how to deal with heretics and compromisers** (Titus 1:10-11). The pastor must not only know sound Bible doctrine, he must know about every error that might endanger his people. He must be prepared to deal with it and protect his people from it. Today this includes the contemporary music issue, wrong views on prophecy, Calvinism, Neo-orthodoxy, New Evangelicalism, emerging church, charismaticism, seeker sensitive philosophy, cultural liberalism, theistic evolution, contemplative prayer, ecumenism, Oneness theology, evangelical Catholicism, and the judge not philosophy. The primary reason we publish materials on so many subjects is to help pastors.

A young man wrote recently to say,

"Your warnings in your other writings such as the Fundamental Baptist Information Service emails and *O Timothy* magazine help me as a busy pastor to be more familiarized with various names of dangerous preachers and teachers. I have often wondered where I would ever find the time to be informed enough to be a workman

who needeth not be ashamed if I could not use your material as a fast track to the information I so often need to guard the flock in these times. Thank you for your ministry!”

The pastor is right in his study life **by being a serious student** (2 Tim. 2:15). He is to be *nourished up in* good doctrine (1 Tim. 4:6). He is to *give attendance to* reading and doctrine (1 Tim. 4:13). A pastor’s formal Bible education is only a bare start. He must be a man who is a serious student. This must be a passion in his life. First and foremost he must be a serious student of God’s Word. After that he should be a serious student of life in general, because what he learns about any part of life enriches his ministry.

A pastor friend who has been in the ministry for many decades wrote the following to me in 2014, which describes the pathetic lack of studiousness among independent Baptist preachers:

“I asked a missionary what books he had read lately that were a blessing, and he replied that all he reads is a magazine on running. I fear that independent Baptists may be the *illiterati* of the 20th and 21st centuries. And the present addiction to iPhones and social media only makes it worse. John Nordman, who worked with Hyles years ago at Hyles Anderson, led the Bible college in Brisbane for some years until the pastor’s son did a Schaap on some kids there and the wheels fell off. He sent me their college prospectus one year hoping to get some of our kids, and I wrote him back and asked him why there was not a course on theology. I later found out that Hyles Anderson never allowed theology to be taught because Hyles thought it would turn their students into Calvinists. Some years ago I started asking preachers questions when we sat around talking or when we drove down the road. Questions on what doctrine was especially precious to them at that moment, or what book of the Bible they love the most this week, or what good book they are reading, or which

one has helped them grow the most, or what authors are the most challenging to them spiritually, or what they think about this or that verse (and I pick the hardest ones to ask about). If they are driving, I take my Bible and read to them some passage I am meditating on and ask them to explain them to me. Most of them are out of their depth within ten seconds. Some stare at me with open mouth and shake their head. The Presbyterian pastors I know are the most adept at discussing solid Bible doctrine. Most of the IB pastors have never read anything deeper than John Rice or Curtis Hutson. We had a missionary here this weekend who tells great stories, but doesn't know ANY solid Bible doctrine.”

The pastor is right in his study life **by preaching the whole counsel of God** (Acts 20:26-31). This requires teaching every part of the Bible. It requires that every church be a serious Bible school. A survey of the Bible is fundamental. The people should be taught the Pentateuch, the historical books, the poetic books, the prophetic books, the Gospels, Acts, Paul's Epistles, the General Epistles, and Revelation. This requires a preaching/teaching plan and a *lot* of preparation. This requires *exegesis* of Bible books.

The pastor is right in his study life **by teaching the people to observe all things** that Christ has taught (Mat. 28:19-20). The teaching must be practical. It must be applied. It must get down into the daily lives of the people. It must produce disciples.

In many Independent Baptist churches, people can attend faithfully for years without learning the Bible well. The Sunday School lessons and preaching are biblically shallow, and the people are not taught to study the Bible for themselves.

Visiting speakers tell great motivational stories but the biblical content of the preaching is weak.

People don't grow strong in God's Word under such a ministry. The Bible is to be preached with reproof and exhortation, but also "with doctrine" (2 Timothy 4:2).

No wonder so many churches change direction so easily when the pastor changes. They aren't properly grounded in Scripture. They are dependent on a man rather than the Spirit of God and the Word of God. They are man-centered rather than Christ-centered.

And the problem begins with the pastors.

The **deacons**, too, must have a good moral and spiritual testimony (1 Tim. 3:8, 12).

The **wives of pastors and deacons** must also have a good testimony (1 Tim. 3:11).

## **2. A church that appoints the right teachers and workers**

Churches must appoint qualified people in every area of service. The testimony of church workers, who are representatives of the church, has a dramatic influence on the congregation's spiritual climate.

Some of the respondents to our questionnaire in 2005 mentioned this:

"Require that church workers be faithful to God and God's Word. This seems obvious, but is not enforced at many churches today."

"The church must ensure that those who are greeting, teaching, singing, and preaching are walking in the Spirit and that this is evidenced in their heart for and service for people."

I recall the pastors and deacons and workers of the church in which I grew up. One of the deacons allowed his teenage children to build a collection of rock & roll records in the 1960s and this is one of the avenues whereby I became addicted to this sensual music and influenced by its licentious philosophy. My parents wouldn't let me have rock & roll records at home, but that was no problem because I just

visited my buddy, the deacon's son. One of my Sunday School teachers told us off-color jokes. My teachers did not guide the conversation to the things of Christ. They did not challenge us to turn away from our worldliness, and had they attempted to do so, we would not have listened because their lives did not back up such a message.

When appointing leaders and teachers, churches need to care about the people that will be influenced by them. It is one thing to recognize that "no one is perfect," but it is another thing to ignore godly biblical standards and appoint people to positions who are going to undermine the ministry through their carnal thinking and the spiritually careless way in which they live.

I recall a Sunday School teacher in a fundamental Baptist church that was training pre-teen girls. She wore her hair short like a man's, wore pants contrary to the church's position, was stubborn and carnally opinionated, and habitually neglected the mid-week assembly for other activities. What a poor example she was to her class! She was teaching the holy things of the Bible, but her life undermined what she was teaching. Some of the other teachers in this church were just as worldly, and it is no wonder that a large percentage of the young people loved the world more than Christ.

I think of another church in which the wife and children of one of the teachers forsook church services for sporting activities. That man should not have been allowed to teach. It was a bad example for the church and had the potential to ruin young lives who might have been influenced by his family's compromise and poor example.

There is great pressure on pastors today to lower the standards, and most are bending to the pressure. Some of the arguments against maintaining high standards are as follows:

*"We must reach the heart and not focus on externals."*

This is true, but proper biblical standards *do* focus on the spiritual qualifications, as we will see. Further, externals

are important, because that is what man sees. The Bible says that the Lord looks on the heart, but the same verse says that man looks on the outward appearance (1 Sam. 16:7). One's heart condition is reflected in "externals." When we talk about "standards," we are not talking about a mere external rule. We are not talking about Phariseeism that produces whited sepulchers. We are talking about a true and close walk with Christ that *produces and evidences in* obedience (John 8:47; 10:27-28; 14:23; 1 John 2:3-4) and separation from error and evil (Psa. 119:128; Ephesians 5:11; 1 John 2:15-17).

*"We cannot force obedience."* This is true, but we can and must reprove, rebuke, and exhort (2 Tim. 4:2), even though this often comes across like "force" to the rebellious. Further, we are to chasten and discipline, both in regard to children and to church members. God chastens every son that He receives (Heb. 12:6-7). It could be said that chastening and discipline is type of "force," but whatever it is called, it is Scriptural! Further, maintaining standards for workers is not forcing obedience, because no one is forced to serve in the church's ministries. It is a privilege to serve, not a right or a something one can demand. It's like a driver's license. I must meet the qualifications.

*"We don't have enough workers."* One preacher said, "'It is the old dilemma, do we have a youth program led by men who are less than we want them to be in order to reach the children from our large families, or do we shut it down because there are no mature men to lead them?'" There are almost never enough workers in a church to do all that should be done, but that is no excuse to lower the standards of God's Word. Far better to have one qualified musician or SS teacher than a dozen unqualified ones. We can't have God's power and blessing if we don't obey His Word. We must build a solid biblical and spiritual foundation rather than building on sand.

*“We want to help people to grow by being in a ministry.”*  
But God’s principle is that they first be proven faithful, then use an office (1 Tim. 3:10).

**The reasons for maintaining standards are as follows:**

a. God requires it. The Word of God says that “it is REQUIRED in a steward that a man be found faithful” (1 Cor. 4:2). That is God’s requirement, not man’s, and the church leader who does not require that which God requires is a rebel. To be found faithful would encompass faithfulness to church services and functions and fellowship (Acts 2:42; Heb. 10:25; 1 Tim. 3:15), faithfulness in doctrinal purity (Acts 2:42; 1 Tim. 1:3; Jude 3), faithfulness in modesty (1 Tim. 2:9), faithfulness in right relationship to the leaders (1 The. 5:12-13; Heb. 13:17), faithfulness in separation from the world (Eph. 5:11), etc.

b. The workers represent the church and affect its testimony. The community knows who the church workers are, and if they don’t live as they should, they will bring reproach upon Christ. Visitors judge the entire church on the basis of its workers and ministers. This is the theme of Titus 2. Here God instructs every age group in the church: old men, old women, young women, young men. And the focus is on how that their lives affect the testimony of the Lord (Titus 2:5, 8, 10).

c. Having standards for church workers is an important part of raising the level of standards for the entire church. It is not possible for a church to have worker-type standards for every member, but it is possible to require specific standards for those who serve in a ministry. A person doesn’t have to teach Sunday School or participate in the music ministry, etc., but if he does, it is not unreasonable for the church to require him to meet specific standards. One of the way that new members learn how to live for Christ is by observing the church leaders and workers, and if they do not live right the entire church is affected. If the Sunday School teachers, for example, are

not required to maintain high standards, the students will learn from their poor example, but if Sunday School teachers are required to maintain standards the students will follow their example and will grow in Christ.

d. Having standards for church workers is a challenge to the believers. They understand that if they want to serve the Lord in any capacity beyond merely attending, they must live a godly, faithful Christian life. I recall how I was challenged when I was a new believer. I wanted God to use my life, and I wanted to prepare for His service. The Bible school I wanted to attend had high standards, and this was one of the many motivations for me to cut my hair, quit smoking, give up rock, and do other things in preparation for the Lord's service. The standards challenged me. They were biblical standards of Christian living, and I am thankful that they were maintained.

Following are the fundamental qualifications that our church requires of every teacher and worker (those who do any type of ministry in the church, including usher, taking the offering, musician, singer, giving announcements, public Bible reading, operating the bookstore, working with the sound system):

a. The individual must have a *clear testimony of salvation and Christian living* (Phil. 2:15-16). This includes an *honest* reputation (paying debts, not stealing, not lying). This includes separation from the world (in music, television, movies, Internet, video games, etc.).

b. The individual must *agree with the church's doctrinal position* (1 Cor. 1:10; Acts 2:42; 1 Tim. 1:3).

c. The individual must be in submission to and have a good attitude toward authority God-ordained authority: church leaders (1 Th. 5:12-13; Heb. 13:17), husbands (Eph. 5:22), parents (Eph. 6:1-3), and government (Rom. 13:1). God has established authority. "The powers that be are ordained of God" and those who resist God-ordained authorities are fighting God and will be judged by God

(Rom. 13:1-2). Disobedience to and disrespect toward God-ordained authority is lawlessness and anarchy, and it has no place in the house of God and the kingdom of Christ (Col. 1:13; 1 Tim. 3:15). A stubborn spirit toward authority is a lawless spirit. God’s Word says, “stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry” (1 Samuel 15:23). Before a woman can serve in a ministry, we want to see that she is in submission with a godly attitude toward her husband. Likewise, a teen toward his or her parents.

d. The individual must be *faithful* (Prov. 29:15; 1 Cor. 4:2; Heb. 10:25). We look for a good level of faithfulness and dependability in those who serve in ministry. God requires it, and practicality requires it. “Confidence in an unfaithful man in time of trouble *is like* a broken tooth, and a foot out of joint” (Prov. 25:19).

e. The individual must *dress modestly* according to the church’s standards (1 Tim. 2:9).

f. The individual must have the *ability and gifting to do the assigned task* (Rom. 12:3). Having a love for the Lord and a good testimony is not enough for specific positions of service. One must have the ability and gifting for that task. Not everyone is gifted in music, teaching, working with children, finances, etc. When it comes to church business, I have often wondered why it is so common for the wrong person to be put into a certain position. God’s people should strive for excellence. --- Old Testament music

## **How standards are implemented and enforced**

### ***Education***

Education is the fundamental tool for setting up and maintaining biblical standards in a congregation.

*Education through the church covenant.* When we started a church in 2003, the first thing I did was write out the standards for workers, the reasons for the standards, etc., to

use as a teaching tool. As the Lord has given us converts, they are required to read the church covenant and agree with it before we receive them as members. As a consequence, every member understands from the very beginning that we have these standards and is instructed as to their biblical foundation and purpose.

*Education through the preaching/teaching ministry.* We frequently emphasize the biblical principles of God's requirements for those who exercise public ministry. This theme is woven throughout the church's teaching ministry. I emphasize this in our men's weekly discipleship meeting. My wife emphasizes it in her Titus 2 ministry to the women (Tit. 2:3-5).

### ***Starting where you are***

If you have only one person qualified to lead singing, play a musical instrument, teach Sunday School, work as a deacon, etc., then that is where you start.

I am convinced, and I have experienced in our ministry, that if we hold the Lord's standards and use only those people who are qualified for a particular position (and the qualifications are not the same for all positions of service), that this produces more qualified workers.

It is the slow path, and that can be frustrating, but it is the solid path. Every time I have gotten in a hurry and have ignored the principle of 1 Timothy 3:10 ("let these first be proven"), I have regretted it.

Christ has plainly instructed us about what happens to a house constructed on sand, and we are seeing the fruit of that everywhere among independent Baptist churches today. They are collapsing because of a weak foundation.

### ***Enforcement***

A law that is not enforced is no law. Having rules without enforcement is anarchy.

We cannot enforce God's laws in the world today, but we can enforce them in His house and spiritual kingdom (1 Tim. 3:15; Col. 1:15).

We urge preachers not to back down! Don't let the people rule the leaders. Don't let the sheep rule the shepherd.

### **Are standards for workers contrary to compassion?**

I wrote to a pastor friend recently about this issue, and he responded as follows:

“Thanks for your insights. ... When I remember where [our youth man] has come from and how far he has come, I am encouraged that he is moving in the right direction. Needless to say, he has some semi-neo friends and family who want to see him compromise, so it is a battle. In our area we face overwhelming odds in that we suffer from a scarcity of separatist workers and when we do find one he goes off to Bible college and we never see him again. It is the old dilemma: do we have a youth program led by men who are less than we want them to be in order to reach the children from our large families, or do we shut it down because there are no mature men to lead them? ... I note that he took on board your criticisms and appears to be willing to move in a biblical direction. I will speak to him about the issue of dress at the youth activity. I was shocked to see how his wife dressed. ... there is certainly more work to be done with them. Pray for me to be strong, truthful with them, and loving at the same time. It is so easy for me to crush some of these rosebuds trying to get them to open up to the Lord.”

I replied as follows:

Thanks for the feedback. I truly understand your dilemma. We never have enough workers and never will.

But I believe that we sometimes use this as an excuse for not upholding the clear standards of God's Word. The Lord is the one who *requires* faithfulness. “Moreover it is required in

stewards, that a man be found faithful” (1 Corinthians 4:2). That’s God’s requirement, and who am I to require less? To be “found faithful” is a general principle, and the term is full of biblical meaning.

To be found faithful would encompass faithfulness to church services and functions and fellowship (Acts 2:42; Heb. 10:25; 1 Tim. 3:15), faithfulness in doctrinal purity (Acts 2:42; 1 Tim. 1:3; Jude 3), faithfulness in modesty (1 Tim. 2:9), faithfulness in right relationship to the leaders (1 Thess. 5:12-13; Heb. 13:17), faithfulness in separation from the world (Eph. 5:11), etc.

Holding high biblical standards for workers isn't a matter of crushing rosebuds. We don't want to crush rosebuds; we passionately want to develop them and see them blossom for the Lord, and that is what we are doing. I love the Messianic prophecy, “A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench: he shall bring forth judgment unto truth” (Isaiah 42:3). Christ is so gracious and kind and patient. It is our passion not to quench the smoking flax or crush the little bud.

But loving the smoking flax and the little bud is a different thing from maintaining standards for church workers. I want to wait for the flax to flame up and the bud to flower sufficiently (according to God’s standards, not mine) before it is put into the ministry. **SERVING IN MINISTRY IS NOT A RIGHT; IT IS A PRIVILEGE RESERVED FOR THOSE WHO ARE FIT IN THEIR CHRISTIAN LIVES.**

I was glad to meet your youth man. He is on the right path and moving in the right direction, and you are having a good ministry into his life. I will repeat, though, that as for me and my house, we would never let him lead our young people at this stage in his life. My compassionate, Christlike wife would have been even more discouraged than I was if she had seen that youth outreach. A man whose wife doesn’t know how to dress modestly and who would allow her to dress immodestly at a youth activity isn’t ready to work with youth. As we

know, the fundamental principle of modesty pertains to the heart. Modest dress is merely a reflection of a modest heart; and this young couple hasn't settled those heart matters solidly enough so that it affects their external behavior.

It is better to have no workers and teachers than the wrong ones, better to have one qualified helper than ten unqualified or questionable, borderline ones.

Youth workers who are still holding on to the world in many ways, who are still biblically weak, who haven't yet gotten a lot of fundamental issues nailed down, will produce the same poor fruit in the congregation's children, youth, and families.

Christlikeness is compassion and gentleness and patience, but it is also firmness, even toughness, in regard to God's holy laws. The Lord said, "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent" (Revelation 3:19).

Consider how forceful Christ can be in reproof to His own people (not to speak of His millennial rod of iron and the issue of eternal judgment for the unbeliever):

"But when he had turned about and looked on his disciples, he rebuked Peter, saying, **GET THEE BEHIND ME, SATAN:** for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men" (Mark 8:33).

"Afterward he appeared unto the eleven as they sat at meat, and **UPBRAIDED THEM** with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen him" (Mark 16:14).

"But he turned, and **REBUKED THEM**, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of" (Luke 9:55).

"Then he said unto them, **O FOOLS** and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken" (Luke 24:25).

"Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else **I WILL COME UNTO THEE QUICKLY, AND WILL REMOVE THY CANDLESTICK** out of his place, except thou repent" (Revelation 2:5).

“But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitans, **WHICH I ALSO HATE**” (Revelation 2:6).

“So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate. Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and **WILL FIGHT AGAINST THEM WITH THE SWORD OF MY MOUTH**” (Revelation 2:15-16).

“Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds. And **I WILL KILL HER CHILDREN WITH DEATH**; and all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works” (Revelation 2:22-23).

“Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, **I WILL COME ON THEE AS A THIEF**, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee” (Revelation 3:3).

“I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, **I WILL SPUE THEE OUT OF MY MOUTH**” (Revelation 3:15-16).

Five times in the Gospels, Christ expressed disappointment and reproof by saying that the disciples were of little faith (Mat. 6:30; 8:26; 14:31; 16:8; Lk. 12:28).

Christ also “looked round about on them with anger” (Mark 3:5); called Israel a “generation of vipers” (Ma. 12:34) and a “faithless and perverse generation (Mat. 17:17); called the Jewish leaders “hypocrites ... blind guides ... fools and blind ... serpents” (Mat. 23:13-33); sharply, fearfully upbraided the cities in which He did mighty works (Mat. 11:20-24). He called Herod a fox (Lk. 13:32). He twice made a whip and drove the moneychangers and sellers out of the temple (Jn. 2:15-17; Mk. 11:15-17). He commanded that holy things not be given to dogs and pigs (Mat. 7:6). He will smite the nations (Rev. 19:15).

Paul exemplifies the right “balance” in ministry. He said, “Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample” (Phil. 3:17). See also 1 Corinthians 4:16; 11:1. On the one hand he was as gentle as a nurse with the believers (1 Thess. 2:7). On the other hand, he was firm and unyielding about discipline (1 Cor. 5; 2 The. 3:6-14). He was a strong reprover (e.g., 1 Cor. 6:5; 15:33-36; Gal. 3:1), and he taught the preachers under his watchcare to be the same (2 Tim. 4:2; Titus 1:13; 2:15).

Paul’s ministry of reproof to the carnal church at Corinth worked repentance and change (2 Cor. 7:8-11). A sound ministry of reproof and discipline has the same power today.

### **Foundation building**

A fundamental issue is foundation building. We must build the right foundation, regardless of how long it takes. When we started a new church plant in 2003, I thought things would go faster than they have. We had quite a bit of help from the beginning and we had some experience and we had more freedom than ever from the government and society, but it turned out that it has taken 13 years to get the right foundation so we can start more aggressively planting other churches from this base as we have envisioned from the beginning. How long does this take? It takes as long as it takes. The work is the Lord’s, and we can’t go faster than He goes.

Some preachers talk about being out “in the bush” or “in the boonies,” but no one is really farther out in the boonies than we are. We don’t naturally have any more good workers to choose from than anyone else. We almost never get anyone from other churches, properly trained or otherwise. In the 25 years of our church planting work here, I can count on my fingers the numbers of members we have received from other churches. By God’s grace, we have been able to build our own workers from the material God has given us out of darkest paganism. And holding high standards for workers is one of the methods we use.

## **An issue of faith**

I see this as an issue of faith like everything else. We teach people to put God first and be faithful to services, and God will take care of them. But they have to take the step of faith. We teach couples to put God first and live on one salary so that the wife and mother can be a keeper at home as God's Word instructs, and He will take care of them. That is a principle that runs throughout the Christian life, and it is based on Matthew 6:33.

Likewise, I believe that as a preacher I must honor the Lord's standards for baptism, church membership, and workers and wait on Him to provide what is needed. I constantly cast this business onto the Lord on the basis of one of my favorite prayer promises (1 Pet. 5:7). It is His harvest, His Word, and His standards. I have often prayed, "Lord, you *must* raise up workers. You see what we are working with. You see our lack. We want to move ahead and get more done in your great harvest fields according to your command, but you *must* give us qualified workers if you want that to happen. We can't create that type of heart. Only you can. We are waiting on you, Lord. You told us to do this work, but we can't move if you don't move." When we started church planting again in 2003, that is what I told the Lord. "I am ready to do it, Lord, but we *must* have help. I am just one weak man. We *can't* do this alone." I know you can't boss the Lord, but Abraham, Moses, and other men of God have taught us that you can get a lot from the Lord if you are pressing and persistent in things clearly pertaining to His will. I learn from Scripture that this is the prayer of faith and that God is pleased with it. In my ministry He has always answered this cry, beginning when we started the first church in the early 1980s.

### **3. A church that is careful about salvation**

The church must be very careful when dealing with children and youth; they can be saved, and Jesus taught His

disciples “forbid them not to come unto me” (Mat. 19:14), but they are easily manipulated.

The church must guard the door of membership by looking for a conversion experience with biblical evidence (Mat. 18:3; 2 Cor. 5:17; Titus 1:16; 1 John 2:3-4). Even a child will have evidence of his or her salvation.

This wise dealing with souls is in contrast to a mere sinners prayer with no evidence. Eternal security goes hand-in-hand with evidence (John 10:27-28).

Dealing with souls properly and looking for evidence requires much patience.

#### **4. A church that is uncompromising about separation from the world (1 John 2:15-17)**

My testimony: I joined an independent Baptist church rather than Southern Baptist because of separation and serious discipleship. Forty years later, most independent Baptists are no different in character than Southern Baptists.

Consider some of the ways that churches are weakening the stance of separation from the world:

*Churches are weakening the stance on separation by the lack of plain preaching against worldliness.* There has been a dramatic weakening of the preaching ministry over the past 20 years: less forthrightness; less rebuke; less clear warning; softer, more positive; less plain identification of sin and error; less naming names of false teachers and compromisers; less clear preaching against such things as rock music, worldly dating, immodest clothing, wicked video games, pornography, and moral dangers associated with professional sports. We are witnessing the same thing today as Jeremiah described in his day (Jer. 23:15, 21-22, 28). Very few preachers preach forthrightly like Enoch (Jude 14-15). In the 1960s, Oliver B. Greene preached 25 radio messages in a row on the wrath of God! A great number of independent Baptist preachers are on the way to being religious politicians like T.D. Jakes, who fudges when dealing with issues such as

women preachers (“who am I to judge?”) and homosexuality (“it is a complex issue, and I am evolving”). Small compromise leads to greater compromise. Compromise in preaching starts with refraining from preaching against unisex fashions and teen dancing and immodest clothing and contemporary music and the errors of prominent preachers, but the compromise never stops.

A strong preaching and teaching ministry helps keep the church separated from the world. Many of the responses we received from people in 2005 pertaining to why churches are losing the youth emphasized the role of the preaching. Following are three examples:

“A key to getting the world out of the home is dad and mom getting sensitive to the Holy Spirit in their lives and getting their eyes off of worldly possessions and attainments and what the neighbors are doing. I think this is where the pulpit is critical. The preaching must challenge the people to cleanse the home.”

“The second issue that I see is the church itself letting up on preaching and teaching about hell and the consequences of living without a close relationship with the Lord. In the fifties, when I was a preteen, the airwaves were filled with hellfire sermons. These taught me a right fear and reverence for a Holy God that was not only loving and merciful but also righteous and would one day judge me. It seems to me that we have accepted a lot more worldly philosophy into the pulpit than we would like to admit.”

“Too often the preaching to young people is just fluffy and light, and oftentimes it is just motivational. Too many young people do not grow up really learning sound doctrine and being taught through books of the Bible. Too many preachers that are youth-focused are trying to be ‘cool’ and ‘hip.’ Many young people have heard very little of the fear of God. They have a warped image of God that magnifies his love and mercy while

almost completely ignoring his holiness, majesty, and wrath. Subsequently, they walk in pride and rebellion.”

*Churches are weakening the stance on separation by a poor example from the pastor and his family.* I recall a pastor who preached against teen dating, but his son dated and sat with his girlfriend during the preaching! Another pastor preached against contemporary music, but his son formed a contemporary singing group. Another pastor preached against gossip, but his wife was the biggest gossip in the church! Another pastor preached against rock music, but he loved country western, which is simply rock music with a country twang!

*Churches are weakening the stance on separation by not requiring that deacons, teachers, song leaders, musicians, singers, and other workers be separated from the world in their lives and families.* Many preachers who preach right won't enforce the standards of God's Word in the daily lives of the church workers. As a result, the example of the church workers speaks louder than the preaching.

## **5. A church that trains the parents to build godly homes**

The church and home must work together to produce disciples (Mat. 28:20; “teaching,” *matheteuo*, is translated “disciple” in Mat. 27:57).

Families are addressed through the church epistles (Romans, Ephesians, etc.).

Families are to hear what the Spirit says to the churches (Rev. 2-3).

Every church should be a serious Bible School.

Churches must train the parents. This must be an ongoing process. It must be an emphasis in the preaching. There should be special classes on this subject. The older women should teach the younger women (Titus 2).

The church must teach about the husband-wife relationship, the father's role, the mother's role, how to have family devotions, child discipline, separation from the world.

Pastor Ken Shaver:

I preach and teach, and I strongly believe, that God keeps His word; and I believe God when He 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).

The Bible very clearly says that it is the parents' responsibility to teach and train their children. 'And, ye **fathers**, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord' (Ephesians 6:4). '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' (Deuteronomy 6:6-7)

Working within this biblical framework, what can a church do to help the family? I would like to consider several things.

*First of all, churches should also make much of the family.* There are several biblical ways that we can and should do this. At Greater Cumberland Baptist Church, where I have been the pastor since starting the church eight years ago, we take a month each year and preach and teach with a special emphasis on the family. We have named this time 'The Family Crusade.' The Sunday School hour, the morning service, the evening service, and our Wednesday Bible study are all used as times to take the Word of God and show the families a biblically-based way to have a God-honoring home. There is much advertising and promotion (many people are interested in how to have a better family), and a special theme is given. For example, the themes for the last two years at our church were 'Having a Healthy

Home' and 'Helping the Home.' Some of the topics were, 'The Joy of Family,' 'Training the Next Generation,' 'Dealing with Difficulties,' and 'Signs of a Healthy Home.' [Some of Pastor Shaver's sermons on the home can be found at the church's web site, <http://www.visitgcbc.com/menu/id/20/Audio%20Sermons> ]

*Secondly, churches can take time during the year to have sermons or lessons on the practical side of parenting.* The roles and responsibilities of family members is a worthy focus. When I first became pastor here, my four children were all in their teens and the church naturally attracted families with teens. As a result of this, my focus fell more on dealing with teenagers and how to help them establish their own relationship with their Heavenly Father; how to have personal devotions; how to have an effective prayer time; how to be a witness for Christ; how to deal with setbacks in the Christian walk. These are all areas where we would spend time in the Word of God. I believe we would be amazed at how many in our churches do not have a good grasp of these basic issues.

After a few years, we had many, many newborns in the church and we concentrated more on helping the family with issues they would face with young children. Areas such as dealing with a child's will and consistency as a parent were points of focus.

*Additionally, and I cannot understate the importance of this, the families should be shown how to have family devotions.* Family devotions are such an important but neglected part of the Christian family. It is a time to draw together as the family draws closer to the Lord. As best as I can recall, every year we have taken a portion of a service, usually one where I was preaching on the family, and actually have had family devotions so that the families can see how it can be done. 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 to 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.

One of my greatest joys as a pastor is to have a parent bring their child to me and let their child share the fact that they trusted Christ during their family devotions. This shows me that Dad and Mom are taking home what they are learning at church as impacting their family.

*Finally, another help I believe the church can provide is make opportunities for families to serve the Lord together.* We have families who work in the bus ministry together, have services in nursing homes together, sing together, clean the church together, visit shut-ins together, and even work in children's ministries together. I believe it is good for the children to work alongside of their parents and to see their parents serving the Lord. Several years ago, I had the privilege of speaking for a friend of mine during a missions conference. While I was up on the platform in front of the choir, the pastor brought to my attention that right behind me were three generations of adult men singing as choir members. What a source of encouragement that was for me.

The local church has the opportunity and the responsibility to help the family be all that God wants it to be. I can say from first-hand experience that it is a

great privilege to serve the Lord as a family (Pastor Ken Shaver, Greater Cumberland Baptist Church, Hopkinsville, Kentucky).

A major emphasis should be to build up the men to take their spiritual responsibilities seriously.

The unmarried men must be prepared for adulthood and marriage, within God's will, and the married men must be prepared to lead their homes as godly husbands and fathers.

One pastor wrote, "We have various times when our fathers are asked to teach or to speak so that their own children may know that their father is a voice to be listened to within the congregation."

Men's retreats: Pastor Mike Sullivant, Pembina Valley Baptist, Winkler, Manitoba: "One thing we have found helpful is having a men's retreat. Last year we had 87 men. We go for two and a half days of fishing, but we have five teaching sessions. It has been so helpful for the men and the families. We have had men saved. We have had men look around and see that Christian men are real men who can enjoy masculine things."

We don't need a home church; we need a church that ministers to the home.

## **6. A church that is more integrated than segregated**

An "integrated church" is the name for a church that focuses on generational harmony as opposed to sharply segregating the youth from the adults.

I believe there is a balance that should be maintained here.

*On one hand, there is a serious problem with the typical "segregated" church.*

Most churches have too much segregation between children and youth and the adults, and they do not encourage and challenge the parents enough to be the trainers of their own children.

Consider the following testimonies by pastors,

“We have youth ministries for the youngest to the teens; however, I believe that the church is a family of faith and that the whole family needs to know each other and fellowship with one another (that would be in contrast to where youth are segregated and have little contact with the adults of the church). We have teens standing and talking with our elderly people after the service and the adults are all interested in the children, talking with them and getting them to know them and respond.”

“We must stop the children’s and youth ministries as babysitting activities. Our children and youth attend all the preaching and teaching times with their parents. We encourage our fathers and mothers to be the ministers. Our church does all other activities together, i.e. soul winning, visitation, convalescent, camps, etc. We do not encourage teaching and classes apart from direct parental involvement. We do have Sunday school classes, but our parents are encouraged to visit in the classes, and we do allow our youth and children to be a part of classes where their parents are. We have various times when our fathers are asked to teach or to speak so that their own children may know that their father is a voice to be listened to within the congregation. I was raised Southern Baptist and did all of the typical Sunday School church growth junk and discovered that when we assume our children and youth will be bored and when we seek to keep them happy by entertainment, pizza parties, etc., when they get too old for the entertainment classes they find the ‘big church’ is boring and move on.”

“Brother Cloud, I see at least two major problems with so many young people leaving the church. First, we have contributed to it ourselves with our Children’s Church, Master Clubs, etc. Years ago the youth programs were not held during church time. Now, in first through sixth grade in our fundamental churches, we have games as well as a lesson and then we sing little chorus songs. We take teens out of the church service

on Wednesday nights as well. When the kids finally begin attending a main church service, they are eighteen years old. For years they have been taught that this is to be a fun time. Singing hymns instead of lively choruses bores them. Although the dress standard and music standard has been good, they were in children's ministries rather than in church. As a result, it seems boring to them and they start attending a contemporary church because it seems like fun. Years spent in youth ministries taught them to expect church to be entertaining. Then, far too many parents are saying, 'At least they are going to church,' not recognizing the damage being done at a compromising church. That leads to the second thing I see that is wrong. Because we have these other 'programs' during church, the workers are not being fed from the pulpit. As they listen to radio ministries that 'used to be' fundamental, they are then fed with error and compromise. Soon they are causing problems in the church, much of it a result of having not been challenged and taught from the pulpit. It is also because of the emphasis on 'programs' that people are going to churches with the best singles or family ministries. They check to see if there are people in their age group. These things become the criteria for choosing a church instead of whether the Word is taught and preached, whether the church has standards of holiness and righteousness, whether it has a conviction about the King James Bible, whether it avoids wrong associations, and other important biblical issues. Instead of the church being considered according to what is preached from the pulpit, it is considered according to the programs. Prayer about the church is not, 'Where would you have me to go Lord,' rather it is, 'Lord, help me to find the one with the best and most programs for my children.'"

I agree with this. The typical "segregated church" ministry follows the world's pattern by putting young people together *too much* to be influenced by their peers and does not

emphasize *enough* about parental responsibility in training, perhaps even detracting from that responsibility.

Pastor Jason LaPat of Old Paths Baptist Church, Columbus, Ohio, practices a “family integrated” ministry. In an article giving ten reasons for this approach, he lists number ten as follows:

“Children will learn more from their peers than they will from their teachers. This is one of the tragedies of age segregated ministries. Good Christian families will go to great lengths to keep certain worldly influences away from their children, but a child of theirs will befriend another child (at church) and will be exposed to the very things that the parents have been so careful to guard against. Rebellious and disruptive children will almost always seem to get all of the attention. My own children have had their curiosity stirred about television shows, super heroes, rock music, movies, popular trends in dress, books, magazines, etc. from children in their classes. All of these things could be taking place unknown to the teacher and the parents. How many of us parents have seen our own children attracted to the wrong kind of kids. Parents will have a greater influence in their own children’s lives by being with them” (“Ten Reasons Why a Family Integrated Church,” <http://www.askfortheoldpaths.org/page.php?7>).

In my thinking, Pastor LaPat gives one of the most important reasons why churches must be extra cautious about throwing kids together for extended lengths of time, year after year, without strong parental involvement.

Children and young people need interaction with adults far more than they need interaction with their peers!

One pastor wrote,

“I believe a church that keeps the heart of a child is one that keeps children around the influence of parents and older men and women. Titus 2 gives us a good place to start with this. Too large a portion of our youth

ministry is folly and the Bible is clear that a companion of fools will be destroyed. We need to point young people to adulthood in their teenage years and promote their God-given roles in life as men and ladies. I especially find that young boys around 13 are eager to live up to the expectations of older men through work and ministry. Too many ‘youth pastors’ are foolish children that have no business being an example of manhood to our young people.”

*On the other hand, unlike the Integrated Church Movement, we don’t believe it is wrong for the church to have children’s and youth classes and youth meetings. It is not a matter of “either or.”*

The Integrated Church position tends to be legalistic in this matter, whereas there is much liberty within the biblical model both for the family and the church. It is legalistic to make laws that go beyond the biblical bounds. Laws should not be made from the Bible’s silence.

There are strong positions on both sides of the issue of segregated youth ministries, but in my estimation, it is not an “either-or” proposition. The important question is not whether a church ever has meetings specifically for children and youth, the important question is whether or not the children and youth are integrated into the full life of the church in a godly manner, whether or not they are interacting naturally and spiritually with adults, beginning with their own parents.

There is no biblical law that requires that entire families must *always* be present for corporate worship. While segregation of the ages has its dangers, there can be a time and place to teach children and young people separately from the adults. A “segregated ministry” has some very real dangers that we need to consider and avoid, but it’s not a heresy.

As the pillar and ground of the truth and possessing the Lord’s commission to “teach them to observe all things

whatsoever I have taught you,” the church has the authority to teach children and young people just as surely as the home has (1 Timothy 3:16; Matthew 28:19). It’s not an “either or” situation. The parents are responsible to teach children; the church is also responsible to teach children. And each church has the right to decide how to accomplish this in a practical sense.

I believe there can be great benefit in having children taught separately from the regular adult preaching services, at least part of the time, and in having some youth meetings. The Bible nowhere says that children and youth must *always* be with their parents. That is to make law out of the Bible’s silence.

If mom and dad want to keep their children with them at all times in church, and if they don’t want their children to participate in youth activities, that is their prerogative before the Lord, but to go beyond this and make such things a law for everyone is to go beyond Scripture.

I have attended a couple of “integrated” Independent Baptist churches and they have many good things that I appreciate, but I also observed weaknesses from the lack of segregated meetings. For example, a strictly segregated church might be fine for members of strong dedicated families, but it can fail to meet the needs of children and youth that attend from unbelieving and broken homes and of young adults who are single. There is no need to make “segregation” a strict law.

We don’t need an “integrated church” or a “family church,” because the church is more than a group of families and its responsibility extends beyond family building.

What we need are Biblicist churches that minister properly to families.

## 7. A compassionate church

Another important characteristic of a church that discipled young people is godly compassion. Many have written to us about this.

“We need to continue to have strong standards, but have more love and compassion as we teach and preach the Word of God. We can stand true and still be loving!”

“Pastors need to love their young people and communicate with them. In our church they certainly are not a bother but a blessing.”

“We need to make each member of the church feel that he is important and a family member, to encourage participation in many activities of the church, as an active member, not only as an observer, and to speak to him and be concerned with his problems, helping him solve them. We need to help each member understand the words of God and how to live it out in daily life and also rebuke worldly actions and laziness.”

Christian compassion starts with the pastors and leaders. One pastor poured his heart out to me as he described how he has dramatically changed his philosophy of ministry over the past thirty years.

“It’s so easy to look successful because you have 45 young people in a Christian school, and yet 10 years later if 80% of them are not following the Lord that is a failure. The difference between then and now is that I try to invest my life in the young people. The Lord asked Peter, ‘Do you love me?’ And he instructed him to ‘feed my lambs.’ It means to nourish them, not just throw something at them from the Bible three times a week, but to be there to help them, to give them what they need as individuals. Jesus said, ‘I know my sheep; I call them by name.’ We live in an age in which we think that success is having 800 people in church on Sunday morning. Can you call them by name? Is this really

God's idea of local church, or is it just a crusade on a weekly basis? I'm not suggesting that these churches don't do some good, but I think we've lost the focus here on feeding the sheep. Not just feeding them, but sitting where they sit, being where they are, trying to understand what a teenager is going through today.

"I talk to all of our young people on a regular basis. I show them that I love them. Recently our young people joined with another church and took an extended field trip to a foreign country for over a week. I took our young people to the airport on purpose. I could have had someone else to do that, but I took them. And I went to the airport to pick them up. When they got off the plane, one of the girls from the other church said, 'I wish my pastor would pick us up.' You know, they long for this. The same girl said that she was so encouraged when she met her pastor in the hallway recently and he greeted her by name. She didn't know that he even knew her name. I think we have the focus on getting big and the young people are falling through the cracks. They are getting disillusioned, hurt. The thing I am trying to do is to honestly before God love the kids that He gives us. They have to individually know that we love them."

But caring for youth should not be the job merely of "designated" people such as pastors and teachers and "youth pastors." It should be the job of every member. Cain mockingly asked God, "Am I my brother's keeper" (Gen. 4:9). The answer is yes! Before God each church member can say I *am* my brother's keeper!

The whole church needs to watch over and disciple the children and young people.

I think back on my own life as a young Christian. I was 23 years old when I was converted. I was single and in great need of help, and the Lord provided that through a godly family in the first church I joined. The Gerald Hoovener family opened their home to spiritually-needy young men

and women and provided a warm, healthy climate, a cocoon for spiritual growth. I was a psychological “basket case” by the time I was saved, because of heavy drug abuse, and I was so withdrawn and insecure I could hardly talk to anyone, but they took me under their wings, showed love to me, and helped heal me.

I think of a teenage boy whose father was in prison, but some of the men in the church took the boy under their wings and loved him and taught him various skills and disciplined him. Today he is a fine young man.

I think of a church that made an effort to “adopt” bus kids. Strong families took an interest in the kids and invited them into their homes, brought them to church for Wednesday prayer meeting, etc.

I think of a teenage girl who was the first member of her family to come to Christ. She was persecuted bitterly by the rest of the family at first, but one by one her mother, sisters, and brother came to Christ. Finally all were saved but the father. She thus didn’t have a godly father to watch over her and train her and her mother was illiterate. But an older female church member took her under her wings and helped her, and others in the church prayed for her every day and when she didn’t have money for school tuition they provided for her. When the church members saw evidence of worldly temptations creeping into this young lady’s life, they exhorted and encouraged and warned her in godly love.

It doesn’t “take a village to raise a child,” but it is a wonderful thing when the church takes its responsibility as the body of Christ seriously and cares tenderly for each of the children and youth that God brings its way.

## **8. A church that exercises discipline**

Lack of discipline has a great effect upon the spiritual climate and attitude of the people, and this is particularly true of the young people.

Pastor Bobby Mitchell, Jr. “Many times young people grow up knowing about all sorts of sin in the church that is not dealt with scripturally. Of course, they also see young people leaving the church and this not being dealt with biblically. They don’t realize how wicked this is and they have no fear of God concerning it.”

Neglect of discipline is one of the root problems with the lack of spiritual power and zeal in Baptist churches today. Dean Register, president of the Mississippi Baptist Convention, said, “It’s very unusual for Southern Baptist churches to take disciplinary action against an individual” (*The Sun Herald*, Biloxi, Mississippi, Sept. 13, 1998).

Neglect of discipline is not a problem that is isolated to Southern Baptist churches, though. In “Church Discipline: The Missing Mark,” R. Albert Mohler, Jr., observed: “The decline of church discipline is perhaps the most visible failure of the contemporary church. No longer concerned with maintaining purity of confession or lifestyle, the contemporary church sees itself as a voluntary association of autonomous members, with minimal moral accountability to God, must less to each other. ... The present generation of both ministers and church members is virtually without experience of biblical discipline. ... By the 1960s, only a minority of churches even pretended to practice regulative church discipline. ... Consumed with pragmatic methods of church growth and congregational engineering, most churches leave moral matters to the domain of the individual conscience” (from chapter 8 of *The Compromised Church*, edited by John H. Armstrong, Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1998).

Among fundamental Baptist churches, there is a rapid decline in the practice of church discipline. Most of the big ones simply don’t practice discipline and have not done so for decades, but even many of the smaller ones are so busy trying to build impressive numbers that they avoid anything

that would interfere with potential growth. That includes not only discipline of the members but also a plain warning ministry.

Church discipline has been abused at times, but this is no excuse to neglect it. Churches are commanded by God to exercise discipline toward erring members (Matthew 18:15-18; 1 Corinthians 5; 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15; 1 Timothy 5:19-20; Titus 3:9-11).

Discipline has the two-fold purpose of bringing the sinning church member to repentance and keeping the church body pure so it can be salt and light in this world. Proper church discipline is a matter of love--love for God, love for holiness, love for the truth, love for Christ's testimony in the church, and love for the brethren. A good study is *New Testament Church Discipline* by James Crumpton. It is available as one of the free eBooks at the Way of Life web site. There is also a lengthy study on church discipline in the *Way of Life Encyclopedia of the Bible and Christianity*.

## **9. A praying church**

A major characteristic of a church that disciples youth is prayer. Prayer is acknowledging our inability and dependence upon the Almighty and casting ourselves upon His mercy and provision. It is one of the four foundational characteristics of the first church in Jerusalem (Acts 2:42). The apostle Paul mentioned prayer in practically every one of his Epistles and listed it "first" in essential church duties in 1 Timothy 2.

If we are going to have the right kind of individual Christian lives and the right kind of churches and the right kind of homes, we must do a lot of praying.

Some churches have a prayer meeting before every service.

One pastor gave the following godly testimony,

“Prayer is essential. Forget the focus of programs, plans, promotions and focus on some serious prayer. We pray with our young people for about a half hour before every school day. We have met at 6 A.M. as a church about 30 days this year to pray for wisdom as specific storms arise.”

## **10. A church that is not boring**

I believe that many young people have quit church for the simple reason that they were bored to death! If the preaching and teaching is dull and lifeless and irrelevant, doesn't that discourage the hearts of the people? Such preaching does not properly reflect God's Word, which is anything but boring and lifeless and irrelevant!

Yet, after attending Sunday School in hundreds of churches over a period of more than 60 years, I can testify that most Bible classes I have attended were boring to tears and bordering on lifeless. I realize that not every church has several excellent preachers and teachers, but in my estimation it would be better to have one class with one capable teacher than 10 classes with nine of them taught by incapable people.

As for preaching, not every preacher is going to be a “preaching machine,” but every God-called preacher can study diligently so that his message is fresh and interesting. Every preacher can put his heart into the message and work up some excitement. Every preacher can work at application so that he makes the Word of God relevant to what people are doing and hearing and saying in their daily lives. Every preacher can study the “art” of preaching so that he can improve through the years.

## **11. A church that is not weird and cultic**

Another thing that doubtless has destroyed the faith and spiritual enthusiasm of many young people is weirdness and cultishness.

For example, there are many independent Baptist churches in the South (the southeastern part of the United States) that think good preaching is a matter of hacking and spitting and screaming and near foaming at the mouth, with very little biblical content. My friends, that is not right and it is not spiritual. It is weird, and young people in those churches tend to go into the world as quickly as they do from the Southern Baptist churches down the street. The Bible tells us how to preach.

“Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine” (2 Timothy 4:2).

Yes, there is reproof and rebuking, and it is right to lift up the voice, but biblical preaching involves exhorting “with all longsuffering and doctrine,” which doesn’t mean to yell so loudly that the people’s ears hurt and to “hack” or otherwise assume a completely unnatural manner when “preaching,” or to rail without biblical substance and to reprove the same sins and only the same sins in every message.

I think, too, of Independent Baptist churches that require unquestioning loyalty to the pastor. This is a practice more akin to a brainwashing cult than a biblical New Testament church. In this environment, the young people can’t ask honest questions and can’t challenge any tradition. We deal with this in *The Hyles Effect*, which is available as a free eBook from [www.wayoflife.org](http://www.wayoflife.org).

Another cultic Independent Baptist group is influenced by Peter Ruckman, who is based in Pensacola, Florida. This twice-divorced, thrice-married pastor exalts the King James Bible as “advanced revelation” that is superior to the Greek and Hebrew from which it was translated. He claims that God shut the door of revelation in 1611 (*The Monarch of Books*, p. 9). It makes you wonder where the infallible Word of God was before the KJV or why the 1611 had to be edited and improved several times! In the books *The Salient Verses*

and *The Unknown Bible*, Ruckman claims to have discovered hundreds of advanced revelations in the King James Bible that no other man has found. He says on page 347 of *The Unknown Bible*, “Do you realize that in these last two chapters, you have learned a dozen things that were unknown to the greatest Bible teachers in the world?” These new revelations include the idea that angels are 33-year-old males, that all believing women will receive 33-year-old male bodies at the Rapture, that when the believer is born again his soul is literally cut loose from the inside of his fleshly body, that demons are winged creatures ranging in size from that of flies to eagles, and that the soul is an invisible bodily shape. In his tract *Millions Disappear: Fact or Fiction?* Ruckman claims that men are saved in different ways in different ages, by faith plus works in the Old Testament and in the Tribulation and by works alone in the Millennium. In his book *Black Is Beautiful*, Ruckman describes his belief in space aliens. He believes that some of the medieval plagues in Europe were caused by UFOs, that a B-52 bomber was downed by a UFO and that aliens disemboweled the crew members, that a crew member of a U.S. Navy ship was transported into the future, that the CIA operates underground alien breeding facilities (p. 256), that there are web-footed aliens (p. 85), blue aliens with blue blood (p. 86), black aliens with green blood (p. 244), grey aliens with clear blood (pp. 310-11), and that Adam originally had water in his veins instead of blood (p. 185).

I thank the Lord that most independent Baptist churches are not man-centered cults, and I would advise parents in the strongest way possible to avoid churches that are guilty of these things.

We must not forget that a biblical pastor is a humble shepherd, not a pompous lord, a teacher of the old paths not a purveyor of new revelation and private interpretations.

## 12. A church that pursues serious training of youth

One pastor wrote, “We must preach the Bible more thoroughly. We need to trust our young people with the Bible and teach them how to properly use it in their everyday lives. We teach fundamentals of math, grammar, spelling and history, why not a systematic study of the Bible geared toward young people? I came to this church finding the second generation barely holding on to the foundations their parents put in place and a third generation that is nowhere to be found. Why? I believe that the Bible was not given a priority and many false assurances of salvation were given at an altar for emotion’s sake and not Christ sake.”

Sunday School and youth Bible studies must be far more serious than they usually are.

- Answers in Genesis found that “Sunday school is actually more likely to be detrimental to the spiritual and moral health of our children” (*Already Gone*, p. 38). They found that students who regularly attend Sunday School are “more likely to become anti-church through the years.” This is because “Sunday school actually didn’t do anything to help them develop a biblical worldview.” The education is typically entertainment-oriented and irrelevant to children’s daily lives.

- This was what I experienced as a child in SS and VBS. I learned a lot of Bible stories but they appeared distant and almost mythical and didn’t seem to have anything to do with my life. When I was confronted by the Bible through a well-equipped believer in 1973 at age 23, I was amazed that the Bible was so practical and actually spoke to the things I was thinking about and doing. That was *not* the way the Bible was presented when I was in Sunday School, and this is a shame.

Avoid trivializing the Bible for children and not connecting the Bible lessons to real life.

- Many Sunday Schools present lessons such as Noah’s Ark and David’s slaying of the giant almost as fairy tales. The Ark

is often depicted as a silly-looking cartoon thing that could not possibly have held all of the animals or survived the raging storms.

- David is depicted as a little boy, whereas he was actually a young man.

- Jesus is depicted as an effeminate, long-haired individual, whereas He was an ordinary-looking, short-haired Jewish man.

- Avoid silly and mindless children's songs ("let the sun shine in, face it with a grin, smiler's never lose and frowners never win"; "This little light of mine...").

Teach children in the most serious manner possible at their age level.

- Teach them how to study the Bible and how to use Bible study tools. This starts with training them to read a portion of the Bible daily as soon as they can read and then extending that portion as they grow older. We give examples of this in the book *Keeping the Kids*. Get them their own Bible dictionary (such as the *Believer's Bible Dictionary*) and teach them how to use it. It involves having them memorize verses and passages but also being sure that they learn to understand and meditate on the Scriptures they are memorizing rather than mindlessly learning by rote.

- Teach them how to understand the words to the hymns and how to think about the words as they sing.

- Teach them how to listen to sermons and write notes and jot down questions.

- Teach them to think about biblical things and to seek answers to their questions.

- We deal more with this type of thing in the section on "The Parents."

In our youth ministry, we don't have organized sports. Our youth meetings consist of serious Bible studies. We have gone through Romans and Proverbs. We spent 12 hours studying the Tabernacle. We have spent much time teaching

on evolution and science and archaeology. We memorize verses and give tests on the material.

We also use the *One Year Discipleship Course*, which is 52 lessons that deal with such things as repentance, daily Bible study methods, seeking wise counsel, wise use of money, tests of entertainment, and finding God's will.

We use the *Effectual Bible Student* course to train the young people in principles of Bible interpretation and how to use Bible study tools. We urge each young person to purchase his own concordance, Bible dictionary, *Treasury of Scripture Knowledge*, and basic commentaries. It is impossible to understand the Bible very well without this training and without the use of such tools.

We teach the young people *how to find God's will* (Rom. 12). First, surrender (v. 1). Second, separation from the world (v. 2). Third, renewal of the mind through God's Word (v. 2). This requires effectual Bible study and is absolutely foundational. It requires time (Eph. 5:16 "redeeming the time"). And it requires training. Fourth, service (vv. 3-8).

We teach the young people *how to live by faith* (Mat. 6:33). Living by faith is living in obedience to God's Word. It means that I don't do anything that will interfere with God's business and God's will (such as education, job, friends).

We challenge the young people *to be studious*, to be students of the Bible and students of life.

- Everything you learn can enrich your life, marriage, and ministry.

- Parents and pastors must have a passion for learning and impart this to the youth

- *Paul* exemplified this even in his old age: "bring the books" (2 Tim. 4:13; 2 Tim. 2:15)

- *Charles Spurgeon* counseled his Bible College students to "sell your shirt and buy books." Spurgeon read dozens of *entire commentary sets*.

- *The KJV translators* were great scholars because they were great students. *John Bois* could read the whole Bible in

Hebrew at age five. His godly father and mother taught him to love education. His mother Mirable read the Bible 12 times and the unabridged *Foxes Book of Martyrs* twice. As a student at Oxford, Bois studied in the library from 4am to 8pm. In the pursuit of perfecting his linguistic skills, he read 60 grammars. He studied in his horse cart on his daily trips from Boxworth to Cambridge, letting his horse find the way. Even in old age, he spent eight hours a day in study.

- *Carolus Linnaeus* who classified living things was so poor he had to stuff paper in his shoes, but when he won a scholarship, he didn't spend it on clothes but on lectures.

- *Michael Faraday*, one of the fathers of modern physics, was totally self-educated. He had a passion to learn, so his boss let him use his library, and he would read into the night after working all day. We must learn how to find answers to questions and not depend on others (e.g., the man who asked what is a house church after I sent out an ad for my book on the house church, instead of obtaining the book and studying the issue).

We teach young people *how to find the right mate in God's will*. Following are some fundamental Biblical principles toward this end:

*Preparation.* A good marriage requires that young people prepare their lives by a know-so salvation, by moral purity, by learning God's Word, by spiritual growth, and by learning the basics of family life. The best time to learn about how to build a Christian home is before marriage. The preparation should be done by the church and by the home. The young person needs to build true Christian character by walking with Christ so that he or she will be ready for marriage.

*Submission to authority and good counsel* (Eph. 6:1-3; Heb. 13:17; Prov. 20:18). We teach our young people not to depend on themselves in regard to finding the right mate but to seek help from the parents (particularly saved parents) and the church leaders. Wise young people will lean heavily on the counsel of godly parents and church leaders. This is the

opposite of the world's way whereby young people seek to find a mate on their own by dating, which often ends up in confusion and moral shipwreck.

*Not dating but courtship.* The dating culture is an invention of the rock & roll culture. It forces young people to encounter temptations they are not ready to face and to make decisions they are not ready to make. The biblical pattern is courtship under close parental and pastoral supervision. Pastor Mario Schiavone of Sydney, Australia, says, "The idea of dating is anathema as far as we are concerned. I found a good book that deals with the issue, and I think all of our main families have a copy of it. It is called *Just Friends* by Mike Ray and Cary Schmidt. It takes a good position against the dating philosophy." Some of the basics of courtship are as follows: (1) The young people are under the supervision of spiritual authorities and are in submission to those authorities. (2) They do not spend time alone together. (3) They do not touch until the wedding (Prov. 6:27). The closer the wedding comes the more potential there is for a couple to let down their moral guard. (4) There must be no pressure or manipulation by any party. The goal is to know God's will, not to make something happen at man's hands. The girl, especially, should be protected from making a purely emotional decision. I think of a young woman who is a pastor's wife today. When the young man who is now her husband began to show interest, she understood that her heart was easily moved just by his attention. She slowed down the process and drew close to the Lord in order to remain sober minded so that God would be in control rather than her emotions. There are no set rules to courtship, as each situation is different; the elders set the rules and the young people obey. For example, the elders might say that all communication must be done at first through a father or pastor and not directly between the young man and woman. This is for protection. If the Lord gives peace to all parties, the young people can begin to communicate more directly.

*Agreement* (Amos 3:3; 2 Cor. 6:14). It is not God's will for a believer to marry an unbeliever or someone of another religion or a different Christian faith. This is confusion. It is impossible to raise children properly in a divided home. Likewise, for the zealous believer to marry a lukewarm one or for a believer with a vision of reaching the world for Christ to marry someone lacking this vision is confusion. Usually what happens is that the lukewarm and the lack of vision dominates the relationship and pulls the other party down spiritually.

*Peace as opposed to confusion* (1 Cor. 14:33; Col. 3:15; 2 Th. 3:16; Jam. 3:13-18). God's will is the way of peace and righteousness, whereas the devil's will is the way of confusion and sin. A major principle of finding God's will is to seek peace. Among our young people, we have seen God's will done as well as the devil's will. I think of one promising young man and young woman. The young lady received Christ in her early teens, and though her unsaved family persecuted her, she was faithful to the Lord. A young preacher, who showed promise got his eyes on the young lady and began to call her and meet her. When her parents and the church leaders found out about it, they were unanimous that it was not God's will. Both the parents and the church leaders exhorted and warned the young couple to break off the relationship. They pretended to agree, but they continued to talk and meet in secret. The relationship had an immediate negative effect on their spiritual lives, resulting in deception and rebellion toward authority. Finally, they ran off together. They refused to repent before the church; they have not done anything in the Lord's service since then; and they have a poor testimony before unbelievers to this day. Another young man and woman prepared their lives and waited on the Lord. They leaned on the counsel of their church leaders. When the leaders recommended the young lady to the young man, he prayed about it and agreed that it was the Lord's will. The young lady did likewise. Both sets of

parents were 100% supportive. (The parents are believers.) The church was 100% supportive. Everyone had peace, and there was no confusion. Their lovely wedding was a powerful testimony to believers and unbelievers alike of the beauty of God's will.

*Patience* (Rom. 8:24-25; Heb. 10:36; Jam. 1:3-4). *Patience* is mentioned 46 times in the New Testament. It is a fundamental part of Christian living. It is a fundamental part of living by faith. God doesn't act according to our human time table, and we must wait on Him. Contrast Saul, who sinned and lost his position because of his impatience (1 Sam. 13:8-14). Likewise, a great many young people have missed God's will by being impatient in major decisions such as friends, employment, education, and marriage, instead of trusting God and waiting until His will is clear. Patience means the young person will not try to manipulate circumstances like tricky Jacob or Sarah (in the matter of Hagar) or Rebekah (in the matter of deceiving Isaac).

### **13. A church that gives young people ministries while maintaining high standards**

Discipleship is doing, not sitting. God's will is something you *do* today, not something you wait for (Rom. 12:1-8).

Pastor Bobby Mitchell says,

“Many times the young people are not really involved in the ministry of the church until they are pressed to do so in their late teens. Too many are just observers and not participators. All that is expected of them is to sit and be entertained instead of training and serving. They are not taught that we exist to glorify God. Practically, they are being taught that the ministry exists to make sure that they are having fun. They are not taught to ‘buy in’ to the work of the ministry. Eventually, they realize that the world's entertainment is better and they look for fulfillment in getting involved in worldly groups and activities.”

We have many ministries for young people and are adding new ones all the time. Some of these are taking up offerings, reading the Bible in our main service and leading in prayer, leading the church in learning weekly memory verses, music, evangelism, teaching Sunday School, leading a home prayer meeting, deaf ministry, the older young people leading services once month, overseeing the church's bookstore, serving refreshments after services to encourage the unsaved to hang around and talk about the Lord, and overseeing the sound system.

Children can serve the Lord at young ages.

“Children need to be involved in the work of the church, with their parents being the leading examples of that. Three of my six children are born again. My oldest works in the nursery twice a month and has started a neighborhood Bible study for girls. My other two (a son age 10 and a daughter age seven), are intending to join the choir, and my seven-year-old works in the nursery once a month. When we show our children they have a place in the work of God's kingdom, then they will gladly seek out the work the Lord has ordained for them to do.”

“We have had children as young as two years old dusting the pews when it is their family's turn to clean the church. When we had a remodeling program, the Sunday School room section was the children's responsibility. Yes, it took extra work, but it was worth it. Their offering paid for the fan lights, the paint, the insulation, and the linoleum. One little guy had to be held on the ladder so he wouldn't fall off while he painted 'his' wall. Some of the carpeting and the linoleum were laid by a 14-year-old kid. Our son was taught at that time as a 17-year-old how to install the electric lights, and another young man learned how to put the windows in, etc. The children start helping with our Scripture Portion ministry when they turn four. Our granddaughter got sick the night before her

birthday because she had waited so long to be four so she could tear apart the Scripture Portion sections, and now the time was finally here and she was sooooo excited. I guess I could sum this all up by saying, if it wasn't for our young people serving in the nursing home ministries, doing special numbers of singing, or instrumentals, serving with the Scripture Portion ministry, passing out flyers, addressing envelopes, cleaning the church, helping others out, I'm not sure we could exist as a church."

Children can be taught to take notes of the sermons and then discuss it instead of goofing off and playing during the services, as we have already mentioned. They can be taught to sing rather than fidget or gawk at the people. Children will be children, and they should not be made to hate church because the adults are overbearing and lacking in grace and joy, but they can still learn many things at their age level if they are taught to do so.

Parents need to serve the Lord with their kids.

When I see a preacher who has his sons with him and who has his sons' hearts, I know that those sons will probably follow in their father's faith in Christ.

Paul Pinkerton of Madison, Alabama: "My idea was to be an example and to take them with me as I served the Lord. When I worked in the bus ministry and Sunday School and children's church, I took the kids with me and had them involved. They actually participated in these ministries by leading songs and doing Bible stories and other ways. We wanted them to be able to continue on after they left our home. So many seem to disappear after high school, but I didn't want that for my kids. The best way I could see to do that was to be an example before them and teach them the Scriptures and teach them to serve the Lord. It's not a secret. It's there in the Scriptures, and it has worked out for us real well."

Bob Nichols, missionary to Brazil, says:

“We always involved our children in the work of the Lord. 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. Now in Brazil, our church memorizes 10 verses a month, and we try to coordinate the two programs. 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 AWANA 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 I give the responsibility on a rotating basis each year to my preacher boys 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.”

Children and young people need to be mentored by adults.

“Children seem to be always separated from adults, but they need to be included with them and mentored alongside of them. I have done this with my kids since they were in elementary school and it has been extremely profitable. Church and serving the Lord has always been part of their lives and they always want to go. The more opportunities children have at practicing their faith, the more likely they are to stay with their faith and church.”

But we must require high standards for service and not allow worldly, spiritually half-hearted young people to serve in ministries. To do so, pulls down the spiritual level of a youth ministry.

We discussed the importance of standards for workers under point # 2: A church that appoints the right teachers and workers. Of all the young people who serve in ministries, we require good testimony of salvation and Christian living (including separation from the world), agreement with the church’s doctrinal position, submission to and good attitude toward the church’s leaders, faithfulness, modest dress according to the church’s standards, and the ability and gifting to do the assigned ministry.

This challenges the young people to live right and do right.

This separates those who are serious from those who aren’t. We care about all the young people, but we give the most attention to those who have a heart to grow. In light of Jesus’ warning, I’m not interested in wasting *much* time on the lukewarm (Rev. 3:16).

#### **14. A missionary church**

The heart of the Great Commission is missionary church planting. This is the theme of the book of Acts and it is the heart of Christian discipleship. The Lord Jesus said, “If ye love me, keep my commandments” (John 14:15). He gave many commandments, but the thing that He emphasized to the disciples in the 40 days after He rose from the dead and

before He ascended back to heaven was world evangelism (Mat. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15; Luke 24:48; John 20:21; Acts 1:8). Christ came to seek and to save that which was lost (Luke 19:10). He died that men might be saved, and His death does not benefit men unless they hear the gospel, which is the power of God unto salvation to those who believe (Romans 1:16). Thus, Christ commanded that the gospel be preached to every person in every nation, and that those who believe be baptized and taught to “observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you” (Mat. 28:20). That is a BIG task that requires a lot of workers, and one of the church’s chief jobs is to challenge the Lord’s people to commit themselves to finding God’s will without this “program” and to train workers for this great harvest.

A church that is doing this will see young people dedicate themselves to this task. I am convinced that this is one measure of a church’s spiritual temperature. When my wife and I look at a church, this is one of the questions we ask ourselves. Are young people entering the Lord’s service? We don’t believe that God calls every Christian young person to be a pastor or missionary or a pastor’s wife, etc., and we don’t believe that parents or churches should pressure young people into such positions, but we do believe that God calls many young people to such things when the challenge is given and the Spirit is given free sway in lives. Else, why would Christ say, “The harvest truly is great, but the labourers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth labourers into his harvest” (Luke 10:2)?

We have seen this in our church planting ministry. We keep the vision and challenge of missionary work before the churches, and many young people have surrendered to seek God’s perfect will.

One respondent to our questionnaire described a missionary church as follows:

“Parents must encourage and instill in their children and teens that the highest calling is in full-time ministry in general and bringing the Word of God into the dark places of this world. The church’s preaching MUST convict and fire up young people to go and the other folks to pray and financially to support and ‘adopt’ missionaries. Missionaries MUST be given the highest priority and exposure, being constantly reported in news bulletins and from the pulpit to fire up the folks back home about the marvelous things God does with the establishment of indigenous churches and disciples by ‘their’ missionaries.”

This is a good description of a true missionary church. In such a church the home teaches the importance of the Great Commission and the church provides the forum for its fulfillment.

One of the things that attracted me to Independent Baptist churches as a young Christian was the missionary church-planting zeal. Independent Baptist churches support missionaries directly. They meet missionaries personally. They don’t just hear about missionaries in a vague manner or take up offerings in the name of dead missionaries. They know the missionaries and keep up with them through their prayer letters. They pray for them specifically.

Growing up in a Southern Baptist church, I don’t recall ever meeting a missionary or hearing a missionary speak personally to the congregation. All of the missionary stories I heard were about things that happened before I was born.

In contrast, when I was converted in the 1970s the Independent Baptist movement was a zealous, exciting, missionary church-planting enterprise. One thing that Highland Park Baptist Church, the home of Tennessee Temple Bible College, did right in those days was to put a strong emphasis on world missions. They gave half of their large budget to missions. They hosted a missionary conference each year that saw as many as 100 missionaries

gathered together to present their fields and to challenge the people to get involved personally. Thousands of young people dedicated their lives to Christ and His great work of world evangelism through Independent Baptist churches in those days, and the fruit has been changed lives to the glory of Christ throughout the world.

There are still many Independent Baptist churches that are emphasizing world missions, and in my experience these tend to see a larger percentage of young people go on to serve Christ.

I think of Madison Baptist Church in Huntsville, Alabama. This church has 25 families that have been sent out to various mission fields directly from the congregation, and several of the MKs (missionary kids) are following in their parents' footsteps. They are serving in various parts of the United States, as well as in Brazil, Spain, Puerto Rico, Uganda, South Africa, South Korea, Mexico, Israel, Chile, and Burkina Faso. The church gives \$500,000 per year to missions. The annual Missions Conference is operated in conjunction with a Vacation Bible School, and the visiting missionaries stay with church families and serve in various capacities in the VBS program during the mornings and then preach and present their ministries in the evenings. The church's teenagers work alongside the missionaries in the various VBS classes. This way the church gets to know the missionaries and the children and young people can interact with them. The church has recently introduced missionary biographies to the Boys Bible Class at its Christian school. The class reads through a biography together out loud, discusses points of interest, and the teacher challenges the students to think about the commitment and courage of the missionaries. They also write short papers on what parts of the missionary story most affected them. Every other year, the teenagers take a missions trip. When they went to Spain, they distributed 20,000 flyers to invite people to the first service of a new work that was being started there.

Other things being right, when a church pays the price to make the Great Commission its emphasis, it is going to see eternal fruit in the lives of its young people. Yes, there is a price. The people have to give; they have to pray; they have to contribute their time and energy to things like children's camps and missionary conferences; they have to set the example for the kids; they have to pay attention to the missionaries and their needs; they have to be open to God's call upon their own lives.

But the price is *far* less than the eternal benefit.

### **Marks of a Church that Produces Young Disciples**

1. A church with qualified leaders and officers
2. A church that appoints the right teachers and workers
3. A church that is careful about salvation
4. A church that is uncompromising about separation
5. A church that trains the parents to build godly homes
6. A church that is more "integrated" than "segregated"
7. A compassionate church
8. A church that exercises discipline
9. A praying church
10. A church that is not boring
11. A church that is not weird and cultic
12. A church that pursues serious training of youth
13. A church that gives young people ministries while maintaining high standards
14. A missionary church

### **How Parents Should Support the Church**

Having found a good church, parents must do everything possible to support it as it follows the Word of God.

## **1. Parents need to support the church by being faithful to the services and activities.**

This is foundational. For parents to be unfaithful to the assembly sends a strong negative signal to the children. Pastor David Sorenson writes:

“One of the simplest practices of the Christian life is that of faithfulness in day-to-day Christian living that translates into being faithful to the things of God. Or put another way, it means being in church every time the door is open. Jesus said, ‘Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life’ (Revelation 2:10). The Apostle wrote, ‘Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching’ (Hebrews 10:25).

“The policy in my home, in my parent’s home, and in my grandparent’s home was simple. Any time the church door was open, we were there. Jesus said, ‘Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness’ (Matthew 6:33).

“Inconsistency on the part of Christian parents, particularly regarding faithfulness to the things of God, is a major factor in Christian young people rebelling or drifting off into the world. I have watched this pattern for forty years. Christian parents who are inconsistent in faithfulness have a far higher dropout rate amongst their kids than those parents who saw to it their family never missed. I have watched Christian men who otherwise are good men and basically living for the Lord suddenly set aside faithfulness when deer hunting or fishing season opened. They usually reaped a bitter harvest later as their kids kicked over the traces when they got out of high school. I have watched men in the ministry who were unfaithful to services when on vacation. Their kids took note thereof. Sadly, more often than not, they reaped a bitter harvest later because of their inconsistency and unfaithfulness. A variant of the

foregoing matter is that of allowing kids to stay home from church to do school work. Over the years I have known more parents than I care to admit who let their kids stay home on Wednesday or Sunday nights to do school work. “They had too much homework to do.” Priorities do not conflict. School work is important, but the things of God are more important.

“Christian parent, you will never regret being completely consistent in the matter of faithfulness. However, those who compromise on this issue will later wonder what went wrong when their kids head off into the world (Sorenson, “Seven Principles for Raising Godly Children”).

## **2. Parents need to support the church by modeling submission to God-ordained authority.**

If parents want to see their children submit to God and to God-ordained authority, they must model this submission in their own lives. In many cases Christian parents have torn down the potential spirituality of their children by their own stubbornness and rebellion. See 1 Samuel 15:22-23; 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13; 1 Timothy 5:17; Hebrews 13:17.

One respondent to our questionnaire stated:

“Parents must show respect for authority. Even if the authority was wrong, we did not let the children know that we had a problem with what was going on.”

Pastor Bobby Mitchell, Jr., warns that one reason why so many leave the church is that “they hear their parents criticize the pastor and other strong Christians in the church; this can result in confusion.”

If the parents regularly have “roasted pastor” for Sunday lunch and if they are stubborn and refuse to submit to the pastor’s preaching, they should not be surprised if the children rebel against God.

The following statement is adapted from the article “Why Are Our Kids Leaving?” by Pastor Gene Haymaker:

“Our attitudes toward authorities have often set our children on the throne of self-reliance. We are often found shrugging off the wisdom of our God-given leadership. Then we have the audacity to wonder why our children are resisting and abandoning their authority and leaving the church. The Scripture gives us some clear ideas of how we are to look to and treat our spiritual leaders.

- Know them (1 Th. 5:12)
- Honor them (1 Th. 5:13)
- Love them (1 Th. 5:13)
- Obey them (Heb. 13:17)
- Support them (1 Tim. 5:17-18)
- Pray for them (Eph. 6:18-19)

“If we would follow these biblical attitudes toward spiritual authority, perhaps our young people would see the need to stick around and listen to someone they have been taught to revere.”

One respondent to our *Keeping the Kids* questionnaire suggested that the families pray for their church leaders every day at the family altar. This is a wise suggestion that will accomplish two things. First, it will bring God’s blessing on the church leaders, because godly prayer changes things. Second, it will help keep the family members’ hearts tender toward the leaders.

Modeling submission to authority necessitates taking a stand with the authority against the children’s misbehavior.

If the parents side with the children against their spiritual leaders, they will breed rebellion.

Some respondents to our questionnaire gave examples of how parents can foolishly encourage their children’s bad behavior instead of standing for godly discipline,

“Parents must not justify their children and make excuses for their bad behavior. We recently had three families leave because a speaker called out some teens for misbehaving in church service.”

“If you want to lose your children, always side with them when your child is corrected by SS teachers or others in authority. We have someone in our church who is going to lose several children, and that is his testimony in the church. Everyone says don’t even bother going to him about his children’s misbehavior, because either he will not do anything or he will side with his child every time.”

“In my experience of ministry spanning about twenty years, the teens that have had BOTH parents that were faithful in church attendance (by faithful I mean every service) had a greater chance of remaining faithful themselves as adults. The same went for those who have had parents that backed their pastor and sided with him when the teen did something wrong. When a parent or parents were not faithful or complained about the preacher’s stand on things, less than five percent of those teens became faithful as an adult. If parents and pastors and teachers all pull on the same rope, in the same direction, we would have better results with our young people making the right choices in serving the Lord.”

“One young person left as a result of not wanting to abide by some dress standards placed for a church function. Her parents were the biggest reason why her dress standards were not right as they approved of the revealing clothing that she wore after they had been told and shown the standards we expected. As a result the entire family left the church even after the pastor and I tried to reach out with a tender loving hand to explain the reason for the standards.”

“If we allow our children to see us loving God and enjoying church, they will also reflect this attitude in their lives. If we slam the church, the pastor, youth group, etc., then we can kiss them good bye, because they will not stay.”

Pastor Mike Allison of Madison Baptist Church, Huntsville, Alabama, told me what has happened many times in his ministry. The church has rules for its Christian school, for example, and they have often had to disciple students who break the rules. When that happens, the parents have the choice of siding with their children or with the school, and the wrong choice has devastating consequences. Pastor Allison observes,

“We have to do some kind of discipline, and that always makes us the bad guys. And when the parent sides with the child, they have lost the child, but that’s normally what happens.”

We are not saying that church members should give blind loyalty to pastors.

God’s people are instructed to test everything by God’s Word (Acts 17:11; 1 Th. 5:17). Parents need to model this before their children, just as they model proper submission to pastors and teachers.

No pastor has the authority to teach or lead contrary to the Bible, which is the *sole* authority for faith and practice (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

The pastor must hold fast the faithful Word and not veer from it (Titus 1:9).

No pastor is above the church’s discipline (1 Timothy 5:19-20).

What we are emphasizing in this section is simply that Christian parents must show proper and scriptural submission to authority and godly attitude toward authority as an example to the children and youth.

We have dealt extensively with this in books and reports such as *The Pastor’s Authority and the Church Member’s Responsibility* and *Unquestioning Loyalty to Pastoral Leadership the Mark of a Cult*, which are available at the Way of Life Literature web site.

### **3. Parents need to support the church by supporting its biblical standards and capturing every good thing they can from its ministry.**

Pastor Allison observes, “All the church can do is give out the truth; the homes have got to put it into practice.”

That is correct, and when Christian parents take the godly biblical teaching and preaching and live it out in the home, that is when the children are “kept for the Lord.” All too often, though, the parents refuse to do this.

A Sunday School teacher in one church told me that some of the teens in his class are not submitted to Christ in their hearts and show little or no interest in the things of God in their personal lives, and he can trace some of this attitude to the stubbornness of their parents toward the church’s standards. He gave me an example of the issue of men wearing shorts. The pastor wants the men and boys to wear long sweat pants when playing in the church gym, but some of the parents think this is silly and chafe at the rule, speaking against it before their children. A wiser position is to always give the pastor the benefit of the doubt and to submit to godly leadership in every way possible in order to model obedience and godly attitude before our children. I personally believe you might be able to make a case from the Bible that it is not wrong for men to wear loose, longer shorts, but I would not make an issue of such a thing and put my opinion in this before that of the pastor. This father said that when his son asked about that rule and shared with him that some of his peers in the church speak against it, he explained to his son that they want to please the Lord in their family and that even if they don’t always agree with something the pastor requires, that they would rather err on the side of being submissive. *Always give the pastor the benefit of the doubt.* Many issues are not so black and white in Scripture, and in such cases the church leaders should be followed.

The exception is when a pastor is preaching or commanding something that is clearly contrary to the Word of God. In such matters, we must follow God rather than man, as Peter expressed to the Jewish leaders who forbade him to preach Christ, “We ought to obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29).

Whether a man does or does not wear shorts is not the major issue in this context; the major issue is obedience to God-ordained authority and maintaining unity in the church body (1 Cor. 1:10).

Pastor Bobby Mitchell, Jr., warns that one reason why many young people leave the church is that parents undermine the church’s standards:

“There is an open or even silent disagreement with what is taught by the church concerning entertainment, dress, roles in the home, etc. The inconsistency communicates to the young people that the parents are not really set on doing things the biblical way. They become unstable and are easy prey for the world.”

In contrast, wise parents do everything possible to support the church’s ministry by upholding the same standards in the home. Paul Pinkerton, a member of Madison Baptist Church, was saved in 1974 and has four grown children serving the Lord (the youngest died in a car crash while traveling with a Bible college singing group). He told me that one of the things that he believes he and his wife did right in their Christian lives was to submit to the church leadership and to put into practice the things that the pastor preached. Following is his testimony:

“As my family was growing up, we tried to take the things that the preacher taught and warned about and apply them to our home. When I got saved at age 24, I realized that there was a lot missing from my childhood, since I grew up in a weak church. The strong preaching was like honey to me. Being in a church that preached the truth was just like the Bible says; it was like honey. I

just ate it up and tried to apply it. As I matured in the Lord, the preaching just made more and more sense and you could see that the truth worked. So when I would hear the preaching about things such as Santa Claus and clothing, I would apply them and take them home and we would talk about them and my wife and I would purpose in our hearts to apply them to our family. When we learned that Santa Claus is not a good thing, we cut that out. When we learned that Christian education was a good thing and that the secular education system had many evil things, we took our kids out of the public school and put them into a Christian school. We basically purposed to follow the preaching that we heard from the pulpit as well as what we learned and studied on our own from Scripture. We started applying those things. I believe that making the church a center and focal point for our family was a major thing. We were at church whenever the doors were open. That in itself will not win the battle, but that was certainly a help. If children hear something from the pulpit and the parents don't implement it, the children think that it is not important. Whether it is clothes or discipline or whatever, if they hear it and everyone is saying 'amen' but they don't see it at home then they don't have that feeling that the church is real."

Again, we are not saying here that parents should support pastors and churches blindly, regardless of what they do or teach.

# The Youth

## **Biblical Principles of Spiritual Protection**

It is not enough to have rules. We must learn Bible principles that can be applied to every changing situation. Parents and churches need to maintain a strong teaching ministry that grounds the people (old and young) in God's Word in such a way that they learn how to interpret it for themselves and how to apply it to their daily lives. Young people need practical instruction. The church must explain the whys of the faith.

“Churches and Christian schools must establish standards for the students, but they often fail to give a biblical reason for these standards. I believe that we have an attitude among church leaders that goes like this, ‘Because I said so, that’s why.’ If the child asks why, he is reprimanded for challenging authority. Thus, he conforms, but he does not do so because he understands the rule or the Bible, but because he knows he is to obey. This works as long as the child is still under his parents’ or school’s authority, but what happens when he graduates from high school and can make his own decisions? Since he has no biblical basis for the standard, and since he is no longer forced to keep the standard, he drops it. Now, is he going to want to continue to attend a church that practices standards that he has rejected, or will he want to associate with a group (secular or religious) who also rejects them? Obviously, he will choose the latter, which means that he will go to a weak church or no church at all. The solution is to teach the Bible in a practical way. Give biblical reasons for what you do and what you believe and challenge the students to learn them. Don’t just tell kids what they ought to do; expound the Scriptures so that the Holy Spirit can guide them into all truth.”

For example, if you establish a list of do's and don'ts about clothing, the list becomes obsolete when clothing styles change or if you move to a different country and culture. But biblical principles are applicable to every time and place.

The same is true for the use of electronics. Twenty years ago, you could have rules such as don't go to movies and don't rent R-rated videos and don't have MTV on your television. But those rules won't protect you today when movies and MTV music videos are on YouTube and can be watched with your cell phone!

The situation has changed dramatically just in the past five years. When I published *Keeping the Kids: How to Keep the Children from Falling Prey to the World* in 2010, the word "smartphone" was not even mentioned in the book.

The child of God must learn these biblical truths over and over. This is one reason why there is so much repetition in Scripture. We could develop these same principles from Paul's other epistles, from Peter's epistles, or from John's epistles.

All of the principles are taken from Ephesians 4-6, which is a major passage on Christian living. The same principles could be developed from Paul's other epistles, from Peter's epistles, and from John's epistles.

## **EPHESIANS 4-6**

1. Live to please the Lord.
2. Live by the law of the Spirit.
3. Practice humility.
4. Pursue Christian growth.
5. Pursue edification and ministry.
6. Pursue honesty.
7. Practice vigilance and separation.
8. Pursue pure speech.
9. Redeem the time.
10. Pursue temperance.
11. Obey and honor your parents.
12. Trust in God's mercy.

## 1. LIVE TO PLEASE THE LORD (Eph. 4:1; 5:1, 10).

This is the standard of protection in a nutshell: Salvation, a love for Christ, and a desire to please Him and do His will. This is the true Christian life. This is the heart of discipleship.

If a person does not have a love for Christ and an earnest desire to please Him, no list of rules will protect him. He will find a way to do what he really wants to do, and if he cannot do it now, he will do it as soon as he is on his own.

In Proverbs this is called “the fear of the Lord.” Proverbs 3:7 says the fear of the Lord is the motivation to “depart from evil.” This is addressed to “my son” (Prov. 3:1). It is the fear of the Lord by which the youth departs from evil. If I fear the Lord (know Him and love Him and desire to honor Him) my motivation to please Him is stronger than my motivation to pursue evil. I will be like Job who made a covenant with his eyes (Job 31:1) and like Joseph who fled from the adulterous woman (Gen. 39:7-12).

Two things are missing in the lives of many young people who grow up in Bible-believing churches.

### ***The first thing that is missing is salvation.***

They go through the motions of professing Christ. They know how to give the right answers and to act right when it is necessary, but the reality of the kind of supernatural salvation that we see in Scripture is foreign to their daily lives.

Consider the following testimony which is typical of hundreds we have received through the years:

“Having taught in my church’s Christian school, I truly believe that out of an enrollment of 40-50 kids, most likely more than 95% were lost. It breaks my heart to see so many young people have a head knowledge of Christ, but they have never truly believed from the heart. What concerns me even more than that is that many parents and even church leaders seem to not want to acknowledge the reality of the situation. We comfort ourselves with the fact that our kids memorize Bible verses and come to church, when in reality most of

them come because Mom or Dad makes them, and then during the services most of them are sleeping, laughing and talking to their friends, or checking their cell phones. Most youth groups in Independent Baptist Churches are an absolute joke. My wife and I spent 20 months on deputation visiting Independent Baptist Churches, and we could not believe some of the things we were seeing from the youth groups. It is high time that Independent Baptist churches face the issue of our unconverted youth, because if we don't our churches are headed for disaster."

I know this by experience. I grew up in a Baptist church and professed Christ at about age 10 or 11, but I wasn't saved. I had no inner motive and compulsion to do right. I had zero personal love for the Bible. I broke my parents' rules, snuck around, lied, pursued every worldly thing, and found a way to do what I wanted to do. As soon as I could, I left home and "followed my heart."

The missing element in my life was repentance toward God (Acts 20:21), and this is what is missing in the lives and hearts of many young people. I "believed in Jesus," but so do the devils (Jam. 2:19). In fact, the devils tremble, which is far more than the average "Christian" young person does! I knew about Jesus and believed in Him, but I did not surrender to God's authority. That is the essence of repentance. The sinner has rebelled against God and broken His law, and he must repent of this. Repentance is a change of direction *in the heart*. It is not a change of life; it is a change of heart that results in a change of life. Two great biblical examples of repentance are the Prodigal Son (Lk. 15:17-19) and the idolaters at Thessalonica (1 Th. 1:9).

Parents and church leaders need to look for clear evidence of salvation. We are warned about those who "profess that they know God; but in works they deny *him*, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate" (Titus 1:16).

Some biblical evidences of salvation are the following:

- *A life-changing conversion experience* (Jn. 3:3; Mat. 18:3). Salvation is not praying a sinner's prayer and receiving a "spiritual birth certificate." It is a new birth experience! If there is no change, there is no salvation. In every case, the New Testament examples of salvation are dynamic conversion experiences (e.g., the woman at the well, the Prodigal Son, Zacchaeus, the 3,000 on Pentecost, Cornelius, Paul, Lydia, the Philippian jailor, the Ethiopian eunuch).

- *Personal knowledge of the Lord* (Jn. 17:3; Mat. 11:28-30; Gal. 4:6). Salvation is not a reformation or a new religion. It is to know the Lord personally, to walk and talk with Him as Lord and Saviour and Father and Friend. It is to cry, "Abba, Father" from a converted heart. Many young people in churches are like Samuel who knew not the Lord (1 Sam. 3:7). Jesus warned about those who profess Him as Lord, but He says to them, "I never knew you" (Mat. 7:21-23) and "I know you not" (Mat 25:12)

- *Love for God's Word* (Jn. 8:47). The saved person will have a new desire for and understanding of the Bible. Attitude toward the Bible is one of the clearest evidences of one's spiritual condition.

- *Love of righteousness* (1 Jn. 2:3-4). The saved person will have a new love of righteousness. He still has a fallen nature and is still tempted to sin, but he *wants* to obey God. David Sorenson, a pastor's son, made a profession of faith at age five and was taught to tell others that he was saved. But he says, "I had no interest in the things of God. I only went to church because my dad was the pastor. I didn't care about the Bible." At age 20 he was saved in Bible college and his life changed. He began to love the things he used to hate and to hate the things he used to love. There will be a change in attitude toward authority: toward parents and teachers and church leaders. The first thing I did after I was saved was get right with my Dad. When we speak of love of righteousness, we are not talking about any sort of sinless perfection Christian life.

The born again child of God has new loves and new hates and a clear new direction, but he still has the “old man” (Eph. 4:22-24) and he still sins (1 John 1:8). Further, believers do not grow at the same rate and surrender with the same intensity or bear the same amount of fruit (Mat. 13:8).

- *Looking for Christ’s return* (1 Th. 1:9-10; 2 Tim. 4:8; Heb. 9:28). Consider the Parable of the Ten Virgins (Mat. 25). The five wise virgins had oil for their lamps and were prepared for the bridegroom’s coming. The five foolish weren’t prepared and the bridegroom said to them, “I know you not” (Mat. 25:12). Consider the Parable of the Servants (Lk. 12:35-48). Of the servant that didn’t watch we read, “The lord of that servant will come in a day when he looketh not for *him*, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in sunder, and will appoint him his portion with the unbelievers. (Lu 12:46).

- *Divine chastisement* (Heb. 12:6-8). The saved person can and does sin (1 John 1:8 - 2:2), but he does not do so without compunction as before salvation. He has an indwelling Divine Disciplinarian who does not let him get away with it! There is even a sin unto death for those who harden themselves against God’s discipline (1 John 5:17). David almost committed this sin, but avoided it by repentance (2 Sam. 12:13). The chastisement is first of all from within (Eph. 4:30). The saved person will have a sensitivity to sin and a conviction about sin.

*What about the carnal Christian?*

We see the carnal Christian in 1 Corinthians 3:1-3. The carnal Christian is a born again saint who has fleshly elements in his life. It is not a person who merely professes Christ with the mouth but does not show evidence in his life. The Corinthian believers were zealous Christians. They were “zealous of spiritual gifts” (1 Cor. 14:12), though they were misusing them.

*What about Lot?*

Lot was a carnal believer who made unwise decisions that resulted in sorrow and destruction, but Lot was “vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked” (2 Pe. 2:7), and unlike his wife and children, he obeyed the angel and fled Sodom. Lot is not an example of a worldly teenager in a church that professes Christ but secretly loves the filthy conversation of the wicked.

Salvation is not difficult. It means to come to Jesus, but when you turn to Jesus, you have your back to the old life. That is repentance. It is like a man and marriage. When he receives one woman as his spouse, he has his back to all other women. Jesus taught that it is impossible to have two masters (Mat. 6:24). You cannot have Christ *and* the world.

***The second thing that is often missing is surrender to God’s perfect will*** (Romans 12:1-2). This is a choice that each believer must make, and it is a choice that is made because of the mercies of God. Because of all that He has done for me, I should be motivated to surrender my life to His service.

The goal of parents and church leaders must be to lead young people to true salvation and surrender so they can be disciples of Jesus Christ.

## **2. LIVE BY THE LAW OF THE SPIRIT (Eph. 5:8-9, 18).**

This is the law of the Christian life. It is not the law of Moses; it is the new law of Christ and His Spirit. We walk by the law of the Spirit. He enlightens us; He leads us; He empowers us.

*The Spirit leads by Scripture.* He will never lead contrary to God’s Word.

For example, in marriage, it is never God’s will to commit fornication (e.g., running away together without getting married), never God’s will to marry multiple wives, never God’s will to marry an unbeliever or a believer of different doctrine).

*The Spirit leads in the paths of goodness, righteousness, and truth* (Eph. 5:9). This is the standard of Christian living in a

nutshell. We are at liberty to do everything that is according to goodness, righteousness, and truth.

This is the ultimate test for everything in the believer's life, including the use of a cell phone or computer or tablet: Is this thing good by God's standard? Is it righteous? Is it truth? If so, I am at liberty to enjoy it ("God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy," 1 Tim. 6:17).

This was God's standard for man in the beginning. Adam had perfect liberty to enjoy everything in the wonderful Garden except that which God had forbidden.

This will be God's standard for redeemed mankind forever. We will have a boundless New Heaven and New Earth to enjoy.

*The Spirit leads by His inner ministry* (Eph. 4:30). The Spirit-led believer is sensitive to the indwelling Spirit and does not want to offend or grieve Him.

In things not spelled out in Scripture, the Spirit leads each individual. For example, in the matter of the use of time. I must seek the Spirit's will in how I use my time -- e.g., golf, fishing, reading. I know a preacher who allows himself one fiction book a year. I know a preacher who loves Kruger Park in South Africa, but he is careful not to allow that love to interfere with his God-given ministry. Everything must be measured by sensitivity to leading of the indwelling Spirit.

### **3. PRACTICE HUMILITY (Eph. 4:2).**

Believers who practice godly humility will not involve themselves in selfish vanity. Humility is the opposite of the "me culture," which is the culture prophesied in 2 Timothy 3:1-2, "lovers of their own selves."

To pursue humility means I will reject self-promotion. I won't spend my time posting endless descriptions of what I am doing and thinking and feeling after the fashion of the pop culture.

Even the world recognizes the narcissism that characterizes this age. At *Business Insider*, a secular web site, a list of the “20 most annoying things friends do on Facebook” includes “Vanity.” The list states, “MySpace may have popularized the ‘selfie,’ but we’re pretty sure Facebook is keeping it alive and well.”

To pursue humility also means I will not be a “know it all.” I will seek teaching and good counsel and spiritual help.

#### **4. PURSUE CHRISTIAN GROWTH (Eph. 4:22-24).**

An important principle of spiritual victory and safety is to be busy preparing yourself for God’s will. If you spend your time in godly and wholesome pursuits, you won’t be captured by the world.

Oftentimes young people will get excited at a youth meeting or revival service and repent of sin and surrender themselves to the Lord, but typically the enthusiasm doesn’t last. This is because they don’t replace their lukewarm ways with passionate pursuit of spiritual growth and service to the Lord.

Romans 12:2 teaches two great truths about victory over the world. *First, the pressure of the world to conform to its image is thwarted by being transformed internally by the power of God’s Word into the image of Christ. Second, the transformation process occurs by the renewing of the mind.* The mind is the chief battleground. The renewing happens by seeking to know and prove the perfect will of God through God’s Word. By that process the mind is changed so that it thinks God’s thoughts and chooses God’s way rather than the thinking and way of the world.

Pursuing Christian growth involves the following things:

#### ***Bible study***

- This is absolutely fundamental to growth and victory and finding God’s will. We have covered the basics in the video

series *The Effectual Bible Student*. We show how to have a daily Bible time, how to interpret the Bible, how to deal with difficulties, and how to use Bible study tools.

- Bible study is the most interesting, thrilling thing in my life, and it has been for the entire 41 years I have been saved. I was thrilled with Bible study from the first day I was saved, and I am more thrilled with it today than ever.

- What benefits there are to Bible study! (1) In the Bible you see God. That is the first purpose of the Bible. I see Him on every page, in every verse. I continually learn new things about His glorious Person and character: His holiness, His majesty, His omnipotence, His omniscience, His unchangeableness, His infinity, His eternity (He “inhabiteth eternity”), His truthfulness, His grace, His patience, His gentleness, His tender mercies, His meekness and lowliness of heart, His kindness, His goodness, His peace. (2) In the Bible you see God’s glorious salvation for sinners through the cross of Christ, which is the central act of human history. (3) In the Bible you see yourself and come to understand yourself better and better. (4) In the Bible you find God’s will. (5) In the Bible you see the past and understand history from God’s perspective. (6) In the Bible you see the future. (7) In the Bible you get understanding for every part of life (“in thy light we see light,” Psa. 36:9).

- The more you learn how to study and the more you study, the more you get out of it, and the more you get out of it the more you enjoy it. As we have emphasized repeatedly in this course, you must learn how to use tools such as dictionaries and commentaries. You must learn the background to the Bible and Bible customs and geography. Our multimedia courses *Old Testament History and Geography* and *Bible Times and Ancient Kingdoms* will make the Bible come alive to you in a way you never thought possible.

- We suggest that the young person develop his Bible study habits first using books rather than electronic programs.

Books are less distracting while you learn the fundamentals of Bible study. It is important to unplug at times and to be able to concentrate fully on the Lord and His Word.

### ***Good music (Eph. 5:19)***

- Note that sacred music is associated with Spirit control. It has the power to change your mood and attitude as it did Saul's (1 Sam. 16:16).

- I enjoy a wide variety of wholesome music, not only Christian music, but good classical, semi-classical, marches, and movie soundtracks, etc.

### ***Good books***

- The English speaker has access to the greatest wealth of literature that's been available at any time in history. Learn to read. The man who does not read is no better than the man who cannot read. I read hundreds of books a year, and it is an enriching thing both to my personal life and to my family and ministry.

- Learn to capture what you read. Don't just read. Underline important things. Jot down thoughts.

- Share what you are reading with others. My wife and I do this constantly, and I do it wherever I go.

- We have made many important books available for free via Way of Life's free eBook series.

### ***Good sermons***

- A Bible college student recently told me, "I don't listen to music much but I listen to a lot of sermons on my cell phone." There are thousands of sermons on SermonAudio, including many dozens of sermons published by Way of Life.

### ***Good videos***

- Video is a powerful technology that can be used for good or evil, and there are countless wholesome movies and videos that can be used for recreation, education, and edification.

- There are many excellent multi-media Bible teaching videos. We have published dozens of these, including *Music for Good or Evil; Biblical Separation; Israel: Past, Present, and Future; The Glorious History of the English Bible; The Emerging Church; The New Age; The Effectual Bible Student.*

- I have benefited greatly from creation science videos. In the report “Creation Science Videos” at the Way of Life web site we describe many excellent and helpful titles. Recently my son finished editing a new video by Dr. Shem Dharampaul about Raymond Damadian, M.D. the inventor of the MRI, and his faith in Christ and rejection of evolution.

- I have benefited from and enjoyed many educational and historical documentaries. Nature series by BBC, such as *Planet Earth, The Blue Planet, African Wildlife, Nature’s Great Events, and The Frozen Planet* are powerfully entertaining and educational, even though the producers are evolutionists and some evolutionary nonsense creeps into the series.

### ***Good conversation with the right friends (“with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart,” 2 Tim. 2:22)***

- Pray that the Lord will give you good friends. This is what I did as a new Christian. My old friends left me because of my zeal for Christ and the Bible, and I asked the Lord for new ones. The first one was a young man named Richard, who had come to Christ about a year before I did. He was a diligent Bible student and helped me greatly the first year of my Christian life. We didn’t talk much about the world or our past lives; we talked about the thrilling things we were learning in Christ. Since then, God has answered my prayer for good Christian friends a thousand times over.

## ***Christian Service***

- To find God's will, the individual must get busy serving the Lord. This is at the heart of Romans 12, which is the guideline to finding God's perfect will. Verses 6-8 describe the many spiritual gifts that God gives to His people.

- In our church, there are many opportunities for service for young people, as we described in the section on "The Church." They read a chapter of the Bible in the main service each week and lead the congregation in a special prayer. They make the announcements. They take up offerings. They play music and sing. They evangelize. They bring friends to church and youth meetings. They do some of the preaching. They put on spiritual plays. They teach Sunday School. They are in charge of the book store. They serve refreshments after the services.

- But, as we emphasized in the section on "The Church," no young person can do any of these things unless he has a good testimony, is faithful to church, is living a good Christian life, is separated from the world, and otherwise meets the church's standards for workers.

## ***Learning***

- Take your school studies seriously. Don't be intimidated by the ignorant crowd. Use this time of your life wisely instead of following fools. I often regret how that I wasted my youth, and a large reason was the peer pressure *not* to excel from the foolish crowd that I ran with.

- Go beyond your required studies. Use your youthful mind to learn good things that will enrich your personal life, your ministry to others, and your service to Christ. The hours that most young people waste on video games or empty talk could be used instead to learn and perfect one's skill on one or more musical instruments or any number of other profitable things. One adult gave the following testimony about why he ordered a children's textbook *The Geography*

*Book: Activities for Exploring, Mapping, and Enjoying Your World:* “As a life-long learner, when I want to learn a new subject I begin with children’s books because they assume no prior knowledge of the subject. I will enjoy working my way through the activities as a base for this new subject of study.” This comment was posted at Amazon’s web site, and it is a good example of how to pursue learning throughout one’s life.

- Learn to study subjects correctly as opposed to the shallow way of the Internet age. It has encouraged “bits and pieces” research, just reading a few bits and pieces of information rather than entire books. It has encouraged haste and shallowness, just glancing quickly at *Wikipedia* or the top ten Google returns.

Resist the world’s wrong thinking and wrong ways in every area of your life. Don’t be conformed.

### ***Photography***

- Photography is a great tool for your personal life, for your family, and for your ministry. It is challenging and educational. It is very useful. It is art. It is fun. It is capturing slices of God’s glorious creation.

- My book *Good Photography Made Simple* can help anyone become a better photographer.

### ***Anything wholesome in God’s will***

Pastor Buddy Smith is a master wood carver and uses his skills to make money for his own needs and ministry, to finance God’s work (he helped finance a church building), and to produce gifts to encourage the hearts of people

Geologist Bill Kitchens studies agates and has a web site [GodMadeAgates.com](http://GodMadeAgates.com) that features studies about agates and beautiful photos of them. He says, “Agates are treasures of God’s grace that, through natural processes, fill voids in rocks around us for people to find, wonder at, and use. ... The

appreciation of beauty and the desire to create beauty, and to understand it, are parts of the ‘image of God’ built into mankind ‘in the beginning.’”

I use my electronic devices for these type of things.

But if you are trying to enjoy God’s creation without putting Him first in your heart and life you are a wicked idolator

## **5. PURSUE EDIFICATION AND MINISTRY (Eph. 4:16).**

Use your devices to help others. This is the opposite of the “me culture,” and it is the opposite of the effect that cell phones and the Internet are typically having on many young people. Cell phones have encouraged selfishness and lack of concern for others.

Consider the following two testimonies about the selfishness of the Internet age:

“No one talks face to face anymore. People at restaurants are on their phones disturbing other diners around them. They ignore the people they’re with. It’s rude. In the stores they stand in the middle of the aisles and hold loud conversations as if they were in the privacy of their own homes. They talk on their phones as they interact with clerks holding lines up and inconveniencing everyone else, but no one else cares because they’re all doing the same thing! People have become so self involved that they forget that there are other human beings around them and that they have lives too.”

“One of our newest church members, who is a college student, has an iPad; and when he first began to attend our church, he would offer for our two oldest kids to play games on his iPad. For a while, we would allow them to play simple, harmless games on his iPad for small amounts of time after the service or when he was at our house. However, even though they were playing harmless games, we saw how totally glued in they

became to the iPad. Our two oldest children are both saved now, and are usually very thoughtful of others. They will engage in conversation with old and young alike; and they are keen to serve and help people. **However, when they started to play on the iPad, they would quickly become selfish**, and would become so glued into the iPad, that they stopped noticing the needs of others around them. We eventually forbade them to play on it at all.”

Send text messages of encouragement and spiritual challenge to others. I do this many times a week.

Call to check up on how others are doing.

Share sermons and good music with others.

One youth pastor sends out devotional texts every morning to his young people.

Use the device for evangelism by maintaining a prayer list and by following up contacts with calls and texts.

We use the Internet for evangelism. We have a gospel web site for our missionary work, and I operate an evangelistic site [KathmanduTraveler.com](http://KathmanduTraveler.com) which features apologetics materials plus some of my photos to draw people’s attention.

## **6. PURSUE HONESTY (Eph. 4:25).**

If you pursue honesty before God, you will avoid many pitfalls.

Contrast lying about yourself on Facebook. We have seen this on the Facebook pages of young people. They boast about false achievements and accomplishments such as degrees they don’t have.

Contrast those who create mythical personas to pretend to be someone they aren’t.

Contrast men who lie to women to steal their hearts.

Contrast young people who deceive their parents by doing things they aren’t supposed to do.

## 7. PURSUE VIGILANCE (Eph. 4:27; 5:15) AND SEPARATION (Eph. 5:3-7, 11).

Even if you are saved and love the Lord and are seeking His will, there are still powerful enemies within and without, and victory requires vigilance and separation. David, the “sweet Psalmist of Israel,” was a passionate seeker of God, but we know what happened to him when he ceased being vigilant.

Note the strictness of biblical separation: “*all uncleanness*” (Eph. 5:3), “*no fellowship*” (Eph. 5:11).

Separation from the world is strongly emphasized throughout Scripture. See Deuteronomy 7:26; Psalm 101:3; Proverbs 4:14-15, 23-27; 6:25-26; 7:6-10; Romans 12:1-2; 1 Corinthians 15:33; 2 Corinthians 6:14-18; 1 Peter 5:8; James 4:4; 1 John 2:15-17.

Remove temptations from your phone.

- Examples are wrong music, wrong apps, even the web browser if necessary.

- One young man says: “Before I got saved, I listened to rock music, copying it to my memory cards. After I get saved, for some time I couldn’t delete the songs. I used to say that I would be able not to listen to them, but I was easily tempted to listen to the things that were already in my phone. I was making provision for the flesh while promising not to fulfil the lusts thereof (Rom. 13:14). So one day I decided to delete them totally from my memory card and from my computer too. I thank the Lord, I have never regretted that decision.”

Use a web browser filter like CleanInternet.

Have an accountability partner.

- Some use Covenant Eyes for accountability. It monitors the individual’s Internet usage and emails reports to selected people for accountability. The accountability report lists web sites visited, Internet searches, and the times of day when the Internet is used. It also features a score that ranks the individual’s level of objectionable Internet usage. Covenant

Eyes also has a filtering service that can be used in combination with the accountability service. Another service of this type is X3 Watch. It provides accountability on computers, cell phones, and tablets. While I have not used this personally, it has been recommended by friends.

- Others use a church leader or mature Christian friend as an accountability partner. One single young adult wrote: “I have a friend in Bible college who has the restriction codes to my phone. I cannot access the App Store, I cannot access the browser. I personally deleted every game I had off the phone, deleted Facebook and anything else that I felt ‘drawing’ my mind away in ways that I thought were a hindrance to my walk with God. A great example of this is FoxNews. The App shows a lot of news, to be sure. The space directly below it has a lot of entertainment news, which was basically nothing but soft porn. I got sick and tired of seeing this and deleted that app as well. If SnapChat or other items are a hindrance, the partner can block those as well by restricting it. Remember that browsers can be downloaded through the App Store, so even if Safari or the base browser is blocked, there are ways around it.”

## **Some of the Greatest Dangers**

### ***Videos***

YouTube, music videos, X-rated movies, parents used to keep MTV out of the home, but now MTV and much worse is on the kids’ phones!

### ***Pop music***

29 of the 30 most popular YouTube videos in 2015 are music videos, and most are filthy. The total views of the 29 videos is 26 BILLION!

Psy “Gangnam Style” (2.3 billion views)

Justin Bieber “Baby” (1.2 billion)

Katy Perry “Dark Horse” (1 billion)

Taylor Swift “Blank Space” (1 billion)  
LMFAO “Party Rock Anthem” (906 million)  
Eminem “Love the Way You Lie” (896 million)  
Shakira “Waka Waka” (889 million)  
Jennifer Lopez “On the Floor” (846 million)  
Miley Cyrus “Wrecking Ball” (784 million)

Rock is intimately associated with illicit sex and always has been. Even a mere glance at iTunes proves this. The covers of the albums and the lyrics are filthy, and a child of God seeking purity will not touch the unclean thing (2 Cor. 6:17).

Consider the following testimonies by rock & rollers:

“That’s what rock is all about--*sex with a 100 megaton bomb, THE BEAT!*” (Gene Simmons of the rock group KISS, interview, *Entertainment Tonight*, ABC, Dec. 10, 1987).

“Rock ‘n’ roll is 99% *sex*” (John Oates of the rock duo Hall & Oates, *Circus*, Jan. 31, 1976).

“Rock ‘n’ roll is pagan and primitive, and very jungle, and that’s how it should be! ... the true meaning of rock ... is sex, subversion and style” (Malcolm McLaren, punk rock manager, *Rock*, August 1983, p. 60).

“The THROBBING BEAT of rock provides a vital sexual release for adolescent audiences” (Jan Berry of Jan and Dean, cited by Ken Blanchard, *Pop Goes the Gospel*).

“The great strength of rock ‘n’ roll lies in ITS BEAT ... it is a music which is basically *sexual, un-Puritan* ... and a threat to established patterns and values” (Irwin Silber, Marxist, *Sing Out*, May 1965).

“Everyone takes it for granted that rock and roll is synonymous with sex” (Chris Stein, lead guitarist for Blondie, *People*, May 21, 1979).

“Rock and roll is fun, it’s full of energy ... It’s *naughty*” (Tina Turner, cited in *Rock Facts*, Rock & Roll Hall of Fame and Museum).

“Pop music revolves around sexuality. I believe that if there is anarchy, let’s make it sexual anarchy rather than political” (Adam Ant, *From Rock to Rock*, p. 93).

“The sex is definitely in the music, and sex is in ALL ASPECTS in the music” (Luke Campbell of 2 Live Crew).

Pop music and rap will steal your heart for the world. At best you will have a divided heart.

Pastor Dave Sorenson tells how that as a teen his heart was captured by rock music that he listened to in his bedroom via a transistor radio that his pastor father let him have.

I was captured by rock music via 45-rpm records at a friend’s garage. He was a deacon’s son.

### ***Video Games***

“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: So shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth, and thy want as an armed man” (Prov. 6:9-11).

“See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, Redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord *is*” (Eph. 5:15-17).

Video games are very addictive and they are great time wasters. Also many of them have very wicked content. Even the more innocent games use rock music as a background, thus addicting young people to the sensual rock rhythms.

If young people are allowed to play video games, they must be carefully chosen and the play time must be strictly limited by the parents.

### *Video games and addiction*

“The more we looked into it the more we found that gaming was taking over the lives of kids.”

“Some studies suggest that gaming is absolutely taking over the minds of children all together.”

“Virtual life becomes more appealing than real life.”

Beware of role playing games. Nothing takes over young people’s hearts and minds more than these. They are called MMORPG (massively multiplayer online role-playing games).

The most addictive games in 2015 are the following: Madden, Dota 2, Grand Theft Auto, Tetris, Candy Crush Saga (the company is valued at \$7.5 billion), Minecraft, EverQuest (called “never rest” and “ever crack”), The Sims (player has omnipotent control over people), World of Warcraft (called World of War Crack), Call of Duty (the last two are played by more than 100 million players), Halo 3 (called Halodiction), Total War, Pong, Civilization, Diablo 3, Super Meat Boy, Team Fortress 2, Dark Souls 2, Counter Strike, Starcraft 2, Persona 4 Golden, Monster Hunter 3, Elder Scrolls, Angry Birds, Faster Than Light, Peggle, League of Legends, Civilization V, Pokemon.

Even in remote places like Nepal, gaming competition is becoming popular. A report on Nepali gamers in the *Kathmandu Post* (Aug. 29, 2015) was entitled “By Their Bootstraps.” Gaming started in Nepal in internet cafes in 2010. The 2015 Colors E-sports Carnival at the Civil Mall had 500 participants competing at *Defense of the Ancients* (DOTA), a multi-online battle game.

### *Video games and violence*

Beware of violent games. One of the most popular is *Grand Theft Auto*. Players assume the role of lawless, destructive criminals who kill innocent bystanders, policemen, and military personnel, “while dealing with only temporary consequences.” It has been called a cop-killing training machine. Some of the versions require the player to

torture people in brutal ways to advance to new levels. Sexual elements include hiring and killing prostitutes (by means of the player's choice of fist, machete, bat, or gun). Real life murders have been committed by people who were obsessive players of *Grand Theft Auto* and have even admitted to being inspired by the game.

#### *Video games and the occult*

Many of the video games are occultic. Consider the current craze, Pokémon Go. Almost overnight it has become the most popular mobile game in American history, increasing the stock market value of part owner Nintendo more than 50%. “Pokémon Go, the newest iteration of the nearly 20-year-old Pokémon franchise, engages players in an ‘augmented reality’ where they try to find and capture Pokémons hidden throughout the real world. The *Australian Business Review* has suggested that it may be a ‘watershed moment’ in the development of virtual reality” (“Pokémon Go craze drawing gamers to church,” *Baptist Press News*, July 15, 2016). The game “uses the mobile phone’s camera to create the perception that the Pokémon characters are actually in front of the players.” It is so engaging and addictive that people have crashed their automobiles and walked into dangerous situations. Two men recently fell off a cliff near San Diego while engaged in the game.

Pastor David Brown, First Baptist Church of Oak Creek, Wisconsin, who made the effort to investigate *Pokémon* and apply the test of God’s Word to it in 1999, says, “The name *Pokémon* is derived from POCkEt MONstEr. ... One of the first things I did was to find out who produced the Trading Card Game. Here is an exact quote right from the Web page of the producer - “The *Pokémon* Trading Card Game is a new collectable Card Game that is made and distributed by *Wizards of the Coast*. The same company that made the best-selling game ... *Magic: The Gathering*.’ *Wizards of the Coast* also owns TSR, the producers of *Dungeons & Dragons*. When I discovered who owned the American *Pokémon*

Trading Card Game rights, I knew it was not just an innocent card game for elementary school children. [The Pokémon rap mantra says]: 'I will travel across the land/ Searching far and wide/ Each Pokémon to understand/ The power that's inside/ Gotta catch them all.' ... To be sure it is a game, but a game that does not glorify God! When God says something is wrong, it is wrong regardless of what form it is in. Not only that, but many of the kids who play this game *are* seduced into believing the principles that the game subtly teaches" (Dave Brown, "The Problem with Pokémon").

In the official literature, the main characters of the game are described as headstrong, stubborn, quibbling, hormonal, having a fascination with and trying to "score" with the opposite sex, self-centered, vindictive, obnoxious, and prone to cross-dressing!

Pokémon promotes the search for occultic power. The cards are called "energy cards." Players engage in "pretend" occultic warfare. Currently there are 729 species of Pokémon monsters, and 151 of them are sought by Pokémon Go players. Two of them are named *Abra* and *Kadabra*, long associated with magic. The *Abra* card promotes the ability to read minds. The *Kadabra* character has a pentagram on his forehead. What an incredibly dangerous, wicked influence for children! Nintendolife says there are poison types, psychic types, dark types, fairy types, dragon types, and ghost types.

There is nothing innocent about Pokémon. It is a clever attempt at demonic mind-control. For more about the dangers of Pokémon see "The Problem with Pokémon" by David Brown, <http://logosresourcepages.org/Occult/more.htm>

Even the more innocent games use rock music as a background, thus addicting young people to the sensual rock rhythms.

### *Video games and wasting time*

The average gamer spends eight hours per week playing video games. This equates to 416 hours per year.

Last year, a teen told me he wanted to learn to study the Bible on his phone, but when I asked to look at his phone, I found that it was filled with games. I challenged him to get rid of them and to spend that time on Bible study and other profitable things. I told him that until he was willing to put aside wasteful things, he wouldn't make much progress in his spiritual life.

One young Christian lady we know became concerned about how much time she was spending on video games, and she decided to figure it up. She concluded that she was spending three months out of a year playing games! She deleted the games from her iPad and is spending that time memorizing Scripture and other profitable things.

Young people who want to find God's will must learn to be careful about time. "Redeeming the time, because the days are evil" (Ephesians 5:16). We deal with this in the section of the course on "The Youth."

### ***Pornography***

"But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart" (Mat. 5:28).

"I made a covenant with mine eyes; why then should I think upon a maid?" (Job 31:1).

"For the commandment *is* a lamp; and the law *is* light; and reproofs of instruction *are* the way of life: To keep thee from the evil woman, from the flattery of the tongue of a strange woman. Lust not after her beauty in thine heart; neither let her take thee with her eyelids. For by means of a whorish woman *a man is brought* to a piece of bread: and the adulteress will hunt for the precious life. Can a man take fire in his bosom, and his

clothes not be burned? Can one go upon hot coals, and his feet not be burned?” (Prov. 6:23-28).

“Hearken unto me now therefore, O ye children, and attend to the words of my mouth. Let not thine heart decline to her ways, go not astray in her paths. For she hath cast down many wounded: yea, many strong *men* have been slain by her. Her house *is* the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death” (Prov. 7:24-27).

Consider some frightful facts about pornography and the Internet:

- Pornography makes up nearly 40% of the total content on the Internet.
- Nearly 25% of Internet search queries are about pornography.
- Over 50% of boys and over 30% of girls first viewed pornography before age 13.
- A study in the UK in 2013 found that 50% of 18-year-olds have received nude pictures.
- Nearly 70% of boys and a majority of girls have seen homosexual acts online.
- Nearly 70% of young adult men and about 20% of young adult women view pornography at least once a week.
- About 55% of divorce cases involve one party having an obsessive interest in pornographic websites.

The man is visually oriented in his sexuality, which is why the Bible repeatedly warns of the man’s lust of the woman’s body (Job 31:1; Prov. 6:25; Mat. 5:28). Women are not naturally inclined to be so visual in their sexuality, though they can become perverted as is happening today.

The heart is a bottomless pit of evil, and pornography will carry the heart deeper and deeper into filth and perversion (Jer. 17:9).

This terrible process is described in Romans 1:21-30. Note that it begins with what is happening with the “imagination”

and “heart” (verse 21) and ends with the corrupt of the “reprobate mind” (verse 28).

The only victory is complete abstinence. It requires making a covenant with one’s eyes as Job did (Job 31:1).

Young people (and old) must remember that pornography will do the following and more:

- It will enslave you.
- It has the power to carry you into ever deeper and unspeakable regions of moral filth.
- It will pervert your way of looking at women and hinder your ability to have proper relationships.
- If you are single, it will ruin your chance for a truly pure marriage.
- If you are married, it will harm or even destroy your marriage.
- It will hurt your children.
- It will hurt your testimony and result in shame and disgrace.

### ***Sexting***

Sending sexy pictures of oneself by text messaging is hugely popular.

A study in the UK in 2013 found that 50% of 18-year-olds have received nude pictures.

Studies have found that many young people consider sexting mere entertainment.

“As a criminal lawyer, I can tell you that teens (and sometimes even younger children) use the picture taking capacity of most cell phones to take and communicate vile images of themselves. The possibilities for harm are virtually endless. This is not a minor matter. ... I don’t think this particular danger can be overestimated.”

Snapchat is often used for this purpose. It is used by 60% of smartphone users ages 13-34. It is used to send a photo,

video, or drawing that disappears in 1-10 seconds (user determined). The messages are called “snaps” and over a billion are sent daily. “It is popular for ‘teasing/sexting’ as teens think the pic cannot be saved. But all one has to do is take a screenshot or even a picture of the photo with another phone.” There are also unofficial apps and web tools that override snapchat’s deleting function. The FBI has warned that Snapchat is being used by pedophiles to lure young victims. Snapchat can also be used for video chatting.

### ***Conversations with the wrong people***

“Girls need to know that boys should not be any part of their lives until they are old enough to marry. Fathers need to keep their daughters’ hearts until they love Christ with all of it.”

Many of the people who wrote to us on this subject shared horror stories of girls who have been enticed away from their families by men they met either by phone or texting or Facebook.

This happened to a girl in our church about three years ago. A young man started calling her on her cell phone, and at first she said that she didn’t want to hear from him. Her parents and church leaders warned her against talking with him, but she refused to listen. Eventually they ran away together out of wedlock.

A Nepali girl recently told my wife her sad story. A man started calling her and wooing her. He told her that he had passed SLC (high school equivalent), had a good job, and didn’t drink. Finally she ran away with him and quickly learned that he was lying about everything. He eventually left her for another woman. With a broken heart she said to my wife, “I shamed my parents; they don’t want me back; I ruined my life.”

A pastor friend told me about a girl who got a SIM card from another person. An unknown male called that number and started talking to her. She unwisely continued conversing

with him on the phone. When she resisted, the guy threatened to commit suicide if she didn't marry him, and eventually she eloped with him.

Don't talk on the phone or Facebook, etc., with a young person of the opposite sex except relatives. Creeps are using social media to trap unsuspecting victims.

Don't make plans to meet the wrong people.

Don't hide anything you are doing from your parents and church leaders. God has given them for your protection.

## **8. PURSUE PURE SPEECH (Eph. 4:29-31; 5:4).**

Talk to the right people about the right things.

Don't talk with people who use filthy language or talk foolishly.

A missionary wrote to me about his son who received a text message from a friend who used foul language in reference to a movie. He expressed a desire to see a man and woman having sex. The missionary's son replied, "HaHa." The father took immediate and drastic steps to intervene in the son's life.

Pursuing pure speech requires not listening to cursing and blasphemy in movies and music and literature and comedy.

Vigilance and separation is absolutely essential! Young people must be protected. They can only grow spiritually and find God's will within a hedge of spiritual protection. This is why we started a Bible College. At this point in our church planting ministry, we don't have parents who are properly raising the children and watching over them. The parents got saved after they were adults; the dads and moms both work full time; the parents haven't grown spiritually to the point where they are creating the proper environment in the home to disciple the children. So the church is providing that environment and education with the Bible College, and it is working for those who commit themselves to our training and protection.

## 9. REDEEM THE TIME (Eph. 5:16).

Don't waste the precious time God has given you (Ecc. 12:1). Using one's time wisely is an important part of spiritual victory and fruitfulness.

The book of Proverbs warns frequently about being a sluggard (Prov. 6:6-11). We deal with this in the Way of Life Literature course on Proverbs.

Consider some of the greatest time wasters today:

- *Video games*. We have looked at the danger of video games, but here we consider its role in wasting time. The average gamer spends eight hours per week playing video games. This equates to 416 hours per year. Last year, a teen told me he wanted to learn to study the Bible on his phone, but when I asked to look at his phone, I found that it was filled with games. I challenged him to get rid of them and to spend that time on Bible study and other profitable things. I told him that until he was willing to put aside wasteful things, he wouldn't make much progress in his spiritual life. One young Christian lady we know became concerned about how much time she was spending on video games, and she decided to figure it up. She concluded that she was spending three months out of a year playing games! She deleted the games from her iPad and is spending that time memorizing Scripture and other profitable things.

- *Vain talk* (Prov. 14:23)

- *Day dreaming*

- *Romance novels*

- *Science fiction*

- *Sports* (1 Tim. 4:8). In the 1990s I became devoted to following professional baseball, and I regret the many hours that I wasted on that empty pursuit.

To redeem the time we must learn how to set priorities.

- A major priority is Bible study and prayer. The young person must not allow anything to interfere with his devotional life. Not only must he give time to it, but he must

also give his attention to it. If something is crowding out the Word of God and making it impossible to meditate, that thing should be put out of one's life (Mk. 4:19).

- Another priority is to be faithful to the assemblies (Heb. 10:25). As a new believer at age 23, I determined that I would never take a job that would keep me out of church, and the Lord always provided jobs that didn't interfere with the Lord's service.

- Nothing must be allowed to hinder my Christian life and the will of God. Multitudes of young people have backslidden and gotten out of God's will because of secular education and jobs, as we have already noted.

To redeem the time we must learn to fill our lives with wholesome and eternally profitable things. God has filled even this fallen world with such things for those who are wise enough to chose excellent things above empty things. We have already dealt with this. A few examples of profitable things are Bible study, evangelism, music, church ministries, good literature, wholesome documentaries, photography, creation science, geology, history, and physical exercise.

## **10. PURSUE TEMPERANCE (“be not drunk with wine,” Eph. 5:18).**

Avoid anything that would make you an addict. Following are examples:

### ***The phone itself***

“A pastor friend who does counseling with young people told me a story. Parents brought their daughter, who was incorrigible, for counseling. The counseling was going to be a live-in setting. When he asked the girl to hand over her cell phone as she would not be needing it there, she fell on the floor screaming, ‘*I am going to die without my cell phone!*’”

## ***Rock and rap music***

Rock music, whether hard or soft, is highly stimulating and oriented toward feeling. It is addictive. Consider some testimonies by rock & rollers themselves:

**Steven Tyler** of Aerosmith: “[Rock music] is the strongest drug in the world” (*Rock Beat*, Spring 1987, p. 23).

**Janis Joplin**, describing her first experience performing at a rock show at the Avalon in San Francisco: “I couldn’t believe it, all that rhythm and power. I got stoned just feeling it, like IT WAS THE BEST DOPE IN THE WORLD. It was SO SENSUAL, so vibrant, loud, crazy” (*Wichita Eagle*, Oct. 6, 1970, p. 7A).

**Timothy Leary**, the '60s LSD guru: “Don’t listen to the words, it’s the music that has its own message. ... I’ve been STONED ON THE MUSIC many times” (*Politics of Ecstasy*, 1968).

**Neil Young**: “Rock ‘n’ roll is like a drug” (cited by Mickey Hart, *Spirit into Sound*).

Italian composer Pietro Mascagni: “Modern music is as dangerous as cocaine” (*Slonimsky’s Book of Musical Anecdotes*). He was referring to jazz and the blues and the music that birthed rock & roll.

**Sam Phillips**, founder of Sun Records where Elvis’ first hit was recorded in 1954: “It all came out of that INFECTIOUS BEAT and those young people wanting to FEEL GOOD by listening to some records” (“Sam Phillips, 80, Producer who Discovered Elvis Presley, Dies,” Associated Press, July 31, 2003).

## ***Video games***

Signs of video game addiction are the following: compulsive playing, social isolation, mood swings, hyper focus on game achievements, withdrawal symptoms.

There is even a video game addiction detox center in Amsterdam.

In South Korea, two million are addicted; there are 20,000 PC Bangs (internet cafes) where young people play online games.

Some young people have even died after playing online games for lengthy periods of time.

### ***Pornography***

Nothing is more addictive than pornography (Prov. 27:20). We dealt with this earlier in this section. But here we emphasize its addictive quality.

## **11. OBEY AND HONOR YOUR PARENTS (Eph. 6:1-3).**

The way of spiritual protection and victory is for a young person to follow his parents' rules and counsel.

The only exception is when the parent's authority is in conflict with God's authority. The obedience is to be "in the Lord." Examples are when a parent requires a child to steal or lie or forbids him to attend church or to pursue a Bible education. This often happens when the parents are unbelievers.

Note that obedience must be joined with honor. This is the fifth commandment and the first commandment of the "second table of the law" (Ex. 20:12). The first table of the law pertains to our duties to God, and the second table pertains to our duties to our fellow man.

- Paul adds obedience to the fifth commandment of God's law, because obedience is one way of showing honor. But honor is more than obedience.

- Honor involves showing respect to the parent.

- Honor involves showing patience and mercy toward the parent and not having a judgmental attitude. Young people tend to see everyone's sins but their own, but they need to

focus more on acknowledging and gaining victory over their own sins than on the sins of their parents.

- Honor involves spending time with parents and not withdrawing into one's own selfish world. When young people sit with their parents and talk with them and participate in conversation with adult visitors, that is honoring to the parents.

This is for the young person's protection, not his harm. God gives us parents and authority figures because He loves us.

Submission to parental authority and honoring parents is very important to God.

- It is the first commandment with promise.

- The authority of the parent over the child is a mirror of the authority of God over man. If a young person doesn't like this authority and fights against it, he is a rebel against God. No young person can say that he loves God if he doesn't obey and honor his parents. "The family government is designed to be an imitation of the government of God. The government of God is what a perfect family government would be; and to accustom a child to be obedient to a parent is designed to be one method of leading him to be obedient to God. No child that is disobedient to a parent will be obedient to God; and that child that is most obedient to a father and mother will be most likely to become a Christian, and an heir of heaven. And it may be observed, in general, that no disobedient child is virtuous, prosperous, or happy. Every one foresees the ruin of such a child; and most of the cases of crime that lead to the penitentiary, or the gallows, commence by disobedience to parents" (Barnes).

## **12. TRUST IN GOD'S MERCY.**

The young person who seeks God's will must trust in His mercy. He is a compassionate, longsuffering, forgiving God. This marvelous truth is woven throughout the book of Ephesians (e.g., Eph. 1:7; 4:32 - 5:2; 6:4, 23). Not only has

God forgiven all sins to place me in Christ positionally (Eph. 1:7), He forgives my sins day by day in my practical walk through this world.

1 John 1 teaches us that confession is necessary to maintain one's fellowship with God (1 John 1:7-10).

- Confession of sin means to agree with God that my thoughts and actions are sinful. It is the opposite of ignoring my sins and making excuses for my sins.

- Confession of sin must be specific and plain, not vague and in generalities.

- Confession of sin should be thorough (Psa. 139:23-24).

- Confession of sin involves trusting the power of Christ's atonement. The reason that God is *just* to forgive sins (1 John 1:9) is that Christ died for those sins. He paid the full price. If is like having a credit account at a store. The customer obtains things on credit but the bill must be paid. In the case of our sin, the bill was paid in full by the Son of God, and when the believer approaches God in confession, he is forgiven for Christ's sake. The more the believer understands the sufficiency and power of Christ's atonement, the more he can trust God to forgive him. God's grace through Christ's blood is greater than our sin (Rom. 5:20). Christ's blood is "precious" (1 Pet. 1:19), meaning it is valuable. It is so valuable that it is able to cleanse every sin of every individual forever.

# Help for Families Facing Spiritual Crisis

## A study from James 4

When a believing husband and wife find themselves faced with a spiritual emergency in the lives of their children, the tendency is to despair, even to throw up the hands and quit the battle. To do this is the position of doubt rather than faith. It is to surrender to the enemy. See Hebrews 12:12-13.

Christian parents must think soberly about what God has and has not promised. The Christian life is a spiritual battle, and there is no promise of smooth sailing. In fact, the more zealous we are for the Lord and the things of the Lord, the more severe will be the spiritual battle. This is true in all areas of life.

God hasn't promised that believing parents will face no crises in raising their children. Each child has its own will and must make his or her own choice in spiritual matters. Every child must face the reality of his own lost, rebellious heart and must choose to repent and put his faith in Christ and thus come to a salvation experience. This is the work of the Holy Spirit. It takes time, and it can be a very difficult process for all concerned. After salvation, he or she must still choose to surrender to Christ day by day.

Proverbs 22:6 does not promise that there will be no serious problems along the path of training children. It says, "Train up a child in the way he should go; and WHEN HE IS OLD, he will not depart from it" (Prov. 22:6). "Old" is a variable term in the context of child training. It depends on the individual child.

My wife and I have had to deal with spiritual crises with our children, as have countless other parents. In fact, the

family that hasn't had a spiritual crisis in child training is probably non-existent.

When parents have a spiritual crisis with a child, it is not time to pretend that everything is fine. We want to hide the problem so that we can maintain the facade of spiritual perfection, but this isn't honest and it doesn't help others. Christian parents, including pastors and teachers and church workers, can help others by bringing a crisis into the open and showing how do handle difficult situations. Anyway, if our children are going through a crisis, it isn't something that can be hidden. Oftentimes, others know about it before the parents.

James 4 provides a guideline for victory in time of spiritual crises. Even the best of families can benefit from following this plan. Though some parts of it will apply more specifically to some families than to others, there is something here for every Christian family that is encountering a spiritual crisis.

The main thing that must be done in the time of a spiritual crisis is to focus on the problem like a laser beam until there is victory and healing, regardless of how long it takes, and this is what the passage in James emphasizes.

I know of a large number of difficult situations involving rebellion on the part of children in believing homes, and in a great many of the cases, the story turned out happy, with the child repenting and going on to serve the Lord. This is true for situations that seemed almost hopeless, such as a broken home where custody of a child was shared with an unbeliever. All of the happy endings involved parents who focused like a laser beam on the problem until it was healed. We must be like the Canaanite woman who wanted Jesus to heal her demon-possessed daughter and would not take no for an answer! Her persistence was evidence of her faith. Not only did she get what she asked for, she was publicly commended by the Lord Himself. See Matthew 15:22-28. God is the same yesterday, today and forever. He is faithful, and His promises are true.

Just keep on keeping on in the path of God's will, Christian parent!

### **1. Put away the world (Jam. 4:3-4).**

Purify the home from the things of the world. Purge out anything that is spiritually harmful, such as things pertaining to literature, television, movies, music, education, the Internet, video games. Follow the high standard of Ephesians 5:11 and Romans 14:23.

Put up every possible wall of protection. (We deal with this in the sections on “The Parents” and “The Youth.”)

The husband and wife should sit down together and discuss this and write a list of things that must be removed and protections that must be put in place.

### **2. Purify your life by spiritual revival (Jam. 4:6-10).**

God's grace and power are available for those who humble themselves and purify themselves before Him; “he giveth more grace” (Jam. 4:6); “he shall lift you up” (Jam. 4:10).

Obey God and resist the devil (Jam. 4:7). Spiritual warfare must be active and aggressive and purposeful. By God's power, chase the devil out of your home!

Draw nigh to God (Jam. 4:8). Seek the Lord passionately after the fashion of Psalm 119. (1) Drawing nigh to God refers to the Bible. This is the source of the wisdom and power for seeking. This is how the mind is trained to focus on God. It requires doubling down on filling one's life and home with the Scriptures. This is the sword of the Spirit and the living power of God (Eph. 6:17; Heb. 4:12). It will work! Find a way to spend more time reading it, studying it, memorizing it, hearing it read, not only individually but also as a family. (2) Drawing nigh to God refers to prayer. Engage in much earnest prayer; pray privately in your daily prayer closet; pray without ceasing; pray with your spouse; seek prayer partners;

attend every prayer meeting and passionately ask for prayer for your problem; pray with fasting (Mat. 17:21).

Cleanse your hands and purify your hearts (Jam. 4:8). Read the Bible with the prayer that it will reveal your sins and failings, and then confess those sins as they are revealed. Remove anything from your life that is polluting your heart.

Be singleminded for Christ and His will (Jam. 4:8). This is the heart and soul of spiritual revival. It is to cease to be double minded or half-hearted. Compare Mat. 6:22-24.

Be afflicted and mourn (Jam. 4:9). Stop spending so much of the time playing and partying and get more serious about your relationship with God. In the midst of a spiritual crisis, it is not time to laugh; it is time to weep.

Again, the husband and wife should sit down together and discuss these things and decide on what they need to do to bring spiritual revival to the home.

### **3. Put spiritual things before business and economics (Jam. 4:13-17).**

Putting the spiritual before work and finances is the key to things such as the commitment to faithfulness to church services, the mother being a keeper at home, and the father not allowing his job to interfere with his responsibilities as a father and husband.

Putting the spiritual before work and finances is done by standing on God's promises and trusting God to supply (e.g., Mat. 6:33). Faith comes by God's Word (Rom. 10:17).

# About Way of Life's eBooks

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***BIBLE TIMES AND ANCIENT KINGDOMS: TREASURES FROM ARCHAEOLOGY.*** ISBN 978-1-58318-121-8. This is a package consisting of a book and a series of PowerPoint and Keynote (Apple) presentations which are a graphical edition of the book. The PowerPoints are packed with high quality color photos, drawings, historic recreations, and video clips. Bible Times and Ancient Kingdoms is a course on Bible geography, Bible culture, and Bible history and has a two-fold objective: to present apologetic evidence for the Bible and to give background material to help the student better understand the setting of Bible history. We cover this fascinating history from Genesis to the New Testament, dealing with the Table of the Nations in Genesis 10, the Tower of Babel, Ur of the Chaldees, Egypt, Baal worship, the Philistines, the Canaanites, David's palace, Solomon and the Queen of Sheba, Ahab and Jezebel, the fall of the northern kingdom of Israel, the Assyrian Empire, Hezekiah and his times, Nebuchadnezzar and his Babylon, the Medo-Persian Empire, Herod the Great and his temple, the Roman rule over Israel, and the Roman destruction of Jerusalem. Many of the archaeological discoveries from the past 200 years, which we relate in the course, are so fascinating and improbable that they read like a novel. It is easy to see God's hand in this field, in spite of its prevailing skepticism. The course also deals with Bible culture, such as weights and measures, plant and animal life, Caesar's coin, the widow's mite, ancient scrolls and seals, phylacteries, cosmetics, tombs, and the operation of ancient lamps, millstones, pottery wheels, and olive presses. The course begins with an overview of Israel's geography and a timeline of Bible history to give the

student a framework for better understanding the material. Each section includes maps to help the student place the events in their proper location. The course is packed with important but little-known facts that illuminate Bible history and culture. The preparation for the book is extensive, the culmination of 40 years of Bible study, teaching, and research trips. In this context the author built a large personal library and collected information from major archaeological museums and locations in North America, England, Europe, Turkey, and Israel. We guarantee that the student who completes the course will read the Bible with new eyes and fresh enthusiasm. 500 pages book + DVD containing 19 PowerPoint presentations packed with more than 3,200 high quality color photos, drawings, historic recreations, and video clips.

***THE BIBLE VERSION QUESTION ANSWER DATABASE.*** ISBN 1-58318-088-5. This book provides diligently-researched, in-depth answers to more than 80 of the most important questions on this topic. A vast number of myths are exposed, such as the myth that Erasmus promised to add 1 John 5:7 to his Greek New Testament if even one manuscript could be produced, the myth that the differences between the Greek texts and versions are slight and insignificant, the myth that there are no doctrines affected by the changes in the modern versions, and the myth that the King James translators said that all versions are equally the Word of God. It also includes reviews of several of the popular modern versions, including the Living Bible, New Living Bible, Today's English Version, New International Version, New American Standard Version, The Message, and the Holman Christian Standard Bible. 423 pages.

***THE FOREIGN SPIRIT OF CONTEMPORARY WORSHIP MUSIC.*** This hard-hitting multi-media video presentation, published in March 2012, documents the frightful spiritual compromise, heresy, and apostasy that permeate the field of contemporary worship music. By extensive documentation, it proves that contemporary worship music is impelled by "another spirit" (2 Cor. 11:4). It is the spirit of charismaticism, the spirit of the latter rain, the spirit of the one-world church, the spirit of the world, the spirit of homosexuality, and the spirit of the false god of

*The Shack*. The presentation looks carefully at the origin of contemporary worship in the Jesus Movement of the 1970s, examining the lives and testimonies of some of the most influential people. Nearly 60 video clips and hundreds of photos are featured. It is available on DVD and as an eDownload from the Way of Life web site.

**THE FUTURE ACCORDING TO THE BIBLE.** ISBN 978-1-58318-172-0. One of the many reasons why the Bible is the most amazing and exciting book on earth is its prophecies. The Bible unfolds the future in great detail, and *The Future According to the Bible* deals in depth with every major prophetic event, including the Rapture, the Judgment Seat of Christ, the Tribulation, the Antichrist, Gog and Magog, the Battle of Armageddon, the Two Witnesses, Christ's Return, Muslim nations in prophecy, the Judgment of the Nations, the resurrection body, the conversion of Israel, the highway of the redeemed, Christ's glorious kingdom, the Millennial Temple, the Great White Throne judgment, and the New Jerusalem. The first two chapters deal at length with the amazing prophecies that are being fulfilled today and with the church-age apostasy. Knowledge of these prophecies is essential for a proper understanding of the times and a proper Christian worldview today. The 130-page section on Christ's kingdom describes the coming world kingdom in more detail than any book we are familiar with. Every major Messianic prophecy is examined. Prophecy is a powerful witness to the Bible's divine inspiration, and it is a great motivator for holy Christian living. In this book we show that the Lord's churches are outposts of the coming kingdom. The believer's position in Christ's earthly kingdom will be determined by his service in this present world (Revelation 2:26-27; 3:21). The book is based on forty years of intense Bible study plus firsthand research in Israel, Turkey, and Europe.

**INDEPENDENT BAPTIST MUSIC WARS.** ISBN 978-1-58318-179-9. This book is a warning about the transformational power of Contemporary Christian Music to transport Bible-believing Baptists into the sphere of the end-time one-world "church." The author is a musician, preacher, and writer who lived the rock & roll "hippy" lifestyle before conversion and

has researched this issue for 40 years. We don't believe that good Christian music stopped being written when Fanny Crosby died or that rhythm is wrong or that drums and guitars are inherently evil. We believe, rather, that Contemporary Christian Music is a powerful bridge to a very dangerous spiritual and doctrinal world. The book begins by documenting the radical change in thinking that has occurred among independent Baptists. Whereas just a few years ago the overwhelming consensus was that CCM was wrong and dangerous, the consensus now has formed around the position that CCM can be used in moderation, that it is OK to "adapt" it to a more traditional sacred sound and presentation technique. The more "conservative" contemporary worship artists such as the Gettys are considered safe and their music is sung widely in churches and included in new hymnals published by independent Baptists. As usual, the driving force behind this change is the example set by prominent leaders, churches, and schools, which we identify in this volume. The heart of the book is the section giving eight reasons for rejecting Contemporary Christian Music (it is built on the lie that music is neutral, it is worldly, it is ecumenical, it is charismatic, it is experienced-oriented, it is permeated with false christs, it is infiltrated with homosexuality, and it weakens the Biblicist stance of a church) and the section answering 39 major arguments that are used in defense of CCM. We deal with the popular argument that since we have selectively used hymns by Protestants we should also be able to selectively use those by contemporary hymn writers. There are also chapters on the history of CCM and the author's experience of living the rock & roll lifestyle before conversion and how the Lord dealt with him about music in the early months of his Christian life. The book is accompanied by a DVD containing two video presentations: *The Transformational Power of Contemporary Praise Music* and *The Foreign Spirit of Contemporary Worship Music*. 285 pages.

***KEEPING THE KIDS: HOW TO KEEP THE CHILDREN FROM FALLING PREY TO THE WORLD.*** ISBN 978-1-58318-115-7. This book aims to help parents and churches raise children to be disciples of Jesus Christ and to avoid the pitfalls of the world, the flesh, and the devil. The book is a collaborative effort. It contains testimonies from hundreds of individuals who provided feedback

to our questionnaires on this subject, as well as powerful ideas gleaned from interviews with pastors, missionaries, and church people who have raised godly children. The book is packed with practical suggestions and deals with many issues: Conversion, the husband-wife relationship, the necessity of permeating the home with Christian love, mothers as keepers at home, the father's role as the spiritual head of the home, child discipline, separation from the pop culture, discipleship of youth, the grandparents' role, effectual prayer and fasting. Chapter titles include the following: "Conversion," "The Home: Consistent Christian Living and the Husband-Wife Relationship," "Child Discipline," "The Church," "Unplugging from the Pop Culture," "Discipleship," "The Grandparents," "Grace and the Power of Prayer." 531 pages.

**MUSIC FOR GOOD OR EVIL.** This video series, which is packed with photos, video and audio clips, has eight segments. **I. Biblical Principles of Good Christian Music.** **II. Why We Reject Contemporary Christian Music.** It is worldly, addictive, ecumenical, charismatic, shallow and man-centered, opposed to preaching, experience-oriented, and it weakens the strong biblicist stance of a church. **III. The Sound of Contemporary Christian Music.** In this section we give the believer simple tools that he can use to discern the difference between sensual and sacred music. We deal with syncopated dance styles, sensual vocal styles, relativistic styles, and overly soft styles that do not fit the message. **IV. The Transformational Power of Contemporary Worship Music.** We show why CCM is able to transform a "traditional" Bible-believing church into a New Evangelical contemporary one. Its transformational power resides in its enticing philosophy of "liberty" and in its sensual, addictive music. We use video and audio to illustrate the sound of contemporary worship. **V. Southern Gospel.** We deal with the history of Southern Gospel, its character, its influence, and the role of the Gaithers in its renaissance. This section is packed with audio, video, and photos. **VI. Marks of Good Song Leading.** There is a great need for proper training of song leaders today, and in this segment we deal with the following eight principles: Leadership, preparation, edification, spirituality, spiritual discernment, wisdom in song selection, diversity. One thing we emphasize is the need to sing worship

songs that turn the people's focus directly to God. We give dozens of examples of worship songs that are found in standard hymnals used by Bible-believing churches, but typically these are not sung properly as "unto God." **VII. Questions Answered on Contemporary Christian Music.** We answer 15 of the most common questions on this subject, such as the following: Is rhythm wrong? Isn't this issue just a matter of different taste? Isn't the sincerity of the musicians the important thing? Isn't some CCM acceptable? Didn't Luther and the Wesleys use tavern music? What is the difference between using contemporary worship hymns and using old Protestant hymns? **VIII. The Foreign Spirit of Contemporary Worship Music.** This presentation documents the frightful spiritual compromise, heresy, and apostasy that permeate the field of contemporary praise. Through extensive documentation, it proves that contemporary worship music is controlled by "another spirit" (2 Cor. 11:4). It is the spirit of charismaticism, the spirit of the "latter rain," the spirit of Roman Catholicism and the one-world "church," the spirit of the world that is condemned by 1 John 2:16, the spirit of homosexuality, and the spirit of the false god of *The Shack*. The presentation looks carefully at the origin of contemporary worship in the Jesus Movement of the 1970s, examining the lives and testimonies of some of the most influential people. 5 DVDs.

**ONE YEAR DISCIPLESHIP COURSE**, ISBN 978-1-58318-117-1. This powerful course features 52 lessons in Christian living. It can be broken into sections and used as a new converts' course, an advanced discipleship course, a Sunday School series, a Home Schooling or Bible Institute course, or for preaching outlines. The lessons are thorough, meaty, and very practical. There is an extensive memory verse program built into the course, and each lesson features carefully designed review questions. Following are some of the lesson titles (some subjects feature multiple lessons): Repentance, Faith, The Gospel, Baptism, Eternal Security, Position and Practice, The Law and the New Testament Christian, Christian Growth and Victory, Prayer, The Armor of God, The Church, The Bible, The Bible's Proof, Daily Bible Study, Key Principles of Bible Interpretation, Foundational Bible Words, Knowing God's Will, Making Wise Decisions, Christ's Great Commission, Suffering in

the Christian Life, The Judgment Seat of Christ, Separation - Moral, Separation - Doctrinal, Tests of Entertainment, Fasting, Miracles, A Testing Mindset, Tongues Speaking, The Rapture, How to Be Wise with Your Money, The Believer and Drinking, Abortion, Evolution, Dressing for the Lord. 8.5X11, coated cover, spiral-bound. 221 pages.

***THE PENTECOSTAL-CHARISMATIC MOVEMENTS: THE HISTORY AND THE ERROR.*** ISBN 1-58318-099-0. The 5th edition of this book, November 2014, is significantly enlarged and revised throughout. The Pentecostal-charismatic movement is one of the major building blocks of the end-time, one-world “church,” and young people in particular need to be informed and forewarned. The author was led to Christ by a Pentecostal in 1973 and has researched the movement ever since. He has built a large library on the subject, interviewed influential Pentecostals and charismatics, and attended churches and conferences with media credentials in many parts of the world. The book deals with the history of Pentecostalism beginning at the turn of the 20th century, the Latter Rain Covenant, major Pentecostal healing evangelists, the Sharon Schools and the New Order of the Latter Rain, Manifest Sons of God, the charismatic movement, the Word-Faith movement, the Roman Catholic Charismatic Renewal, the Pentecostal prophets, the Third Wave, and recent Pentecostal and charismatic scandals. The book deals extensively with the theological errors of the Pentecostal-charismatic movements (exalting experience over Scripture, emphasis on the miraculous, the continuation of Messianic and apostolic miracles and sign gifts, the baptism of the Holy Spirit, the baptism of fire, tongues speaking, physical healing guaranteed in the atonement, spirit slaying, spirit drunkenness, visions of Jesus, trips to heaven, women preachers, and ecumenism). The final section of the book answers the question: “Why are people deluded by Pentecostal-Charismatic error?” David and Tami Lee, former Pentecostals, after reviewing a section of the book said: “Very well done! We pray God will use it to open the eyes of many and to help keep many of His children out of such deception.” A former charismatic said, “The book is excellent and I have no doubt whatever that the Lord is going to use it in a mighty way. Amen!!” 487 pages.

***A PORTRAIT OF CHRIST: THE TABERNACLE, THE PRIESTHOOD, AND THE OFFERINGS.*** ISBN 978-1-58318-178-2. (new for 2014) This book is an extensive study on the Old Testament tabernacle and its priestly system, which has been called “God’s masterpiece of typology.” Whereas the record of the creation of the universe takes up two chapters of the Bible and the fall of man takes up one chapter, the tabernacle, with its priesthood and offerings, takes up 50 chapters. It is obvious that God has many important lessons for us in this portion of His Word. Speaking personally, nothing has helped me better understand the Triune God and the salvation that He has purchased for man, and I believe that I can guarantee that the reader will be taken to new heights in his understanding of these things. Everything about the tabernacle points to Jesus Christ: the design, the materials, the colors, the court walls and pillars, the door into the court, the sacrificial altar, the laver, the tabernacle tent itself with its boards and curtains and silver sockets, the tabernacle gate, and veil before the holy of holies, the candlestick, the table of shewbread, the incense altar, the ark of the covenant, the high priest, and the offerings. All is Christ. The tabernacle system offers brilliant, unforgettable lessons on Christ’s person, offices and work: His eternal Sonship, His sinless manhood, His anointing, His atonement, His resurrection glory, His work as the life and sustainer and light of creation, His eternal high priesthood and intercession, and His kingdom. In addition to the studies on every aspect of the tabernacle, *A Portrait of Christ* features studies on the high priest, the Levitical priests, the five offerings of Leviticus, the day of atonement, the ransom money, the red heifer, the cherubims, strange fire, the golden calf, leprosy, the Nazarite vow, the pillar of cloud and pillar of fire, and the transportation of the tabernacle through the wilderness. The tabernacle is very practical in its teaching, as it also depicts believer priests carrying Christ through this world (1 Pet. 2:5, 9). Like the Israelites in the wilderness, believers today are on a pilgrimage through a foreign land on the way to our eternal home (1 Pet. 2:11). Don Jasmin, editor of the *Fundamentalist Digest* says, “This new book on the Tabernacle constitutes the 21st-century classic treatise of this rich theme.” 420 pages.

***SEEING THE NON-EXISTENT: EVOLUTION’S MYTHS AND HOAXES.*** ISBN 1-58318-002-8. This book is designed both as a stand alone title as well as a companion to the apologetics course

*AN UNSHAKEABLE FAITH.* The contents are as follows: Canals on Mars, Charles Darwin and His Granddaddy, Thomas Huxley: Darwin's Bulldog, Ernst Haeckel: Darwin's German Apostle, Icons of Evolution, Icons of Creation, The Ape-men, Predictions, Questions for Evolutionists, Darwinian Gods, Darwin's Social Influence. The **ICONS OF EVOLUTION** that we refute include mutations, the fossil record, homology, the peppered moth, Darwin's finches, the fruit fly, vestigial organs, the horse series, the embryo chart, the Miller experiment, Archaeopteryx, bacterial resistance, the big bang, and billions of years. The **ICONS OF CREATION** that we examine include the monarch butterfly, the trilobite, the living cell, the human eye, the human brain, the human hand, blood clotting, the bird's flight feathers, bird migration, bird song, harmony and symbiosis, sexual reproduction, living technology, the dragonfly, the bee, and the bat. The section on **APE-MEN** deals with Cro-Magnon, Neanderthal, Java Man, Piltdown Man, Nebraska Man, Peking Man, Lucy, Ardi, Ida, among others. The section on **PREDICTIONS** considers 29 predictions made by Biblical creationism, such as the universe will behave according to established laws, the universe will be logical, and there will be a vast unbridgeable gulf between man and the animal kingdom. **DARWINIAN GODS** takes a look at inventions that evolutionists have devised to avoid divine Creation, such as panspermia and aliens, self-organization, and the multiverse. 608 pages.

***SOWING AND REAPING: A COURSE IN EVANGELISM.*** ISBN 978-1-58318-169-0. This course is unique in several ways. *It is unique in its approach.* While it is practical and down-to-earth, it does not present a formulaic approach to soul winning, recognizing that individuals have to be dealt with as individuals. The course does not include any sort of psychological manipulation techniques. It does not neglect repentance in soul winning, carefully explaining the biblical definition of repentance and the place of repentance in personal evangelism. It explains how to use the law of God to plow the soil of the human heart so that the gospel can find good ground. *The course is unique in its objective.* The objective of biblical soul winning is not to get people to "pray a sinner's prayer"; the objective is to see people soundly

converted to Christ. This course trains the soul winner to pursue genuine conversions as opposed to mere “decisions.” *The course is also unique in its breadth.* It covers a wide variety of situations, including how to deal with Hindus and with skeptics and how to use apologetics or evidences in evangelism. There is a memory course consisting of 111 select verses and links to a large number of resources that can be used in evangelism, many of them free. The course is suitable for teens and adults and for use in Sunday School, Youth Ministries, Preaching, and private study. **OUTLINE:** The Message of Evangelism, Repentance and Evangelism, God’s Law and Evangelism, The Reason for Evangelism, The Authority for Evangelism, The Power for Evangelism, The Attitude in Evangelism, The Technique of Evangelism, Using Tracts in Evangelism, Dealing with Skeptics. 104 pages, 8x11, spiral bound.

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