

BRING  
THEM **Up**

The logo features the text 'BRING THEM Up' in a sans-serif font. 'BRING' and 'THEM' are in grey, while 'Up' is in a bold black font. The text is overlaid on a green geometric design consisting of several overlapping, semi-transparent shapes that form a stylized, abstract figure. The overall composition is modern and clean.

**Our Duty,  
God's Grace**

**The Problem  
With Parenting**

**Disciplining Your  
Children**

**Instructing Your  
Children**

**Don't Exasperate  
Your Children**

# PARENTING

## Our Duty, God's Grace

Both the Old and New Testaments have seminal passages on parenting that are our jumping-off point for understanding what God has called parents to do.

In the OT – **Deuteronomy 5:32-6:9**

In the NT – **Ephesians 6:1-4** and **Colossians 3:20-21**

JOHN MACARTHUR JR. (Ephesians, 308) - "When the other teachings of Scripture supportive of those verses are studied and applied, every parent and every child has all the foundational information necessary for godly and harmonious family living."

### I. OUR DUTY AS PARENTS

#### A. The What

While not specifically mentioned in these passages, it goes without saying that care for a child's material needs (provision and protection) is a fundamental duty of parents. However the emphasis of scripture's instruction falls on the duty of caring for our children's spiritual needs. Scripture defines these as twofold – instruct and discipline.

FRANCIS FOULKES (Ephesians, 173) – "The discipline and instruction of the Lord is that which the Lord is able to bring into the life of a child if parents do their work of teaching and training in the Word of the Lord. This is the highest duty of Christian parents. As Dale puts it, 'parents should care more for the loyalty of their children to Christ than for anything besides, more for this than for their health, their intellectual vigor and brilliance, their material prosperity, their social position, their exemption from great sorrows and great misfortunes.

#### 1. Bring them up in the instruction of the Lord

In Ephesians the word used for instruction means to call attention to, mild rebuke and warning; the shaping of the mind through teaching. It is instruction that is not primarily academic but moral. The goal is to develop character and values.

A. SKEVINGTON WOOD (Expositors, 82) - "What Paul is referring to here is training in righteousness. 'Instruction' (*nouthesia*) is correction by word of mouth. Remonstrations and reproof are implied, but also advice and encouragement."

Interestingly, Deuteronomy doesn't limit this instruction to only the commands of God (6:1) but includes also his character (6:4-5). In fact, instruction regarding His commands was to be founded upon instruction regarding His character. (See also **Exodus 20:2, Deuteronomy 4:9**) Our children's ability and motivation to obey God's commands is directly proportional to their understanding of His character, and increasingly so the older they get. To fail to teach both the character and commands of God, including the gospel, is to put our children in danger of legalism and behaviorism.

Why? Teaching God's wonderful character inspires our children to love Him, which is the primary command out of which all true and lasting obedience springs. If you simply impose requirements, you are not giving your children what they need to fulfill those requirements. We too often start with rules and regulations and expect that our kids (especially unsaved ones) are somehow going to have the desire and ability to obey them. It simply won't work. Your children must be motivated to holiness and mission by their love for God and not simply by rules and regulations.

A.W. TOZER (The Knowledge of the Holy, 1) – “What comes to mind when we think about God is the most important thing about us.”

J.A. THOMPSON (Deuteronomy, 122) - “Israel's obedience was not to spring from a barren legalism based on necessity and duty. It was to arise from a relationship based on love...It was love toward God and the remembrance of all His past mercies that moved men to obedience.”

## **2. Bring up in the discipline (training) of the Lord**

In Ephesians the word for discipline means to nurture, educate and train, especially to train and control by inflicting punishment for the purpose of perfecting moral character.

There are times, because we are by nature fools and sinners, when instruction is not enough, when further reinforcement is necessary. Because foolishness and sin is “bound up in the heart of a child” (**Proverbs 22:15**), it is difficult to get rid of.

DEREK KIDNER (Proverbs) - “God's wisdom is not lightly picked up nor lightly imparted.”

## **B. The How**

The how of parenting is to teach and model at home in a way that doesn't exasperate. Both the father and mother make unique contributions to this process.

**1. Teach** – includes the instruction and discipline mentioned above.

## **2. Model**

**Deuteronomy 6:6** And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart.

**1 Timothy 4:16** Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers.

There is a prerequisite here. It (“the words) must first be “upon your (the *parents*) hearts”. Our love for God, our obedience to God and our mission for God can’t just be external but must be internal.

WILLIAM FARLEY (Gospel Powered Parenting, 107) – “Kids internalize their parents’ passions. They alone see what or who you really love, and not what you merely pretend to love...When parents practice what they teach, God gives them moral authority in their children’s eyes. All teaching in the Bible starts with example.”

ED MOLL and TIM CHESTER (Gospel-Centered Family, 18) – “Often our true values are revealed in the expectations we have for our children. On Sunday in church we sing about how knowing Jesus is the greatest thing. But our priorities and hopes for our children suggest that what matters most in life is educational development, career development, social development, skills development.”

Our example is a critical element in our children’s instruction. This doesn’t mean that we must do everything perfectly, there are no perfect parents - but that we must present an authentic example of what a disciple of Jesus is to be. Your example will either confirm or contradict what you are trying to teach.

**Proverbs 20:7** The righteous who walks in his integrity—blessed are his children after him!

**1 Corinthians 11:1** Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ.

Scripture often connects this modeling to our fear of the Lord, i.e. love, reverence, awe, a desire for His favor and a dread of His displeasure.

**Psalm 103:17** But the steadfast love of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear him, and his righteousness to children's children,

**Psalm 25:12-13** Who is the man who fears the Lord? Him will he instruct in the way that he should choose. His soul shall abide in well-being, and his offspring shall inherit the land.

**Psalm 112:1-2** Blessed is the man who fears the Lord, who greatly delights in his commandments! His offspring will be mighty in the land; the generation of the upright will be blessed.

J.C. RYLE (The Duties of Parents, 30) - "Instruction, and advice, and commands will profit little, unless they are backed up by the pattern of your own life. Your children will never believe you are in earnest, and really wish them to obey you, so long as your actions contradict your counsel. Archbishop Tillotson made a wise remark when he said, 'To give children good instruction, and a bad example, is but beckoning to them with the head to show them the way to heaven, while we take them by the hand, and lead them in the way to hell...Fathers and mothers, do not forget that children learn more by the eye than they do by the ear.'"

### **3. At Home**

**Deuteronomy 6:7-9** You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

How are you hoping your kids get this? Deuteronomy commands daily interaction with your children centered around life at home. The most time in the most crucial years of a person's life are spent with their parents. The foundational training in vision and values, character and theology, etc. is primarily entrusted to them - not to day care, school or the church. There is no substitute for personal training at home. Both the father and the mother have a unique role in this training.

**Fathers** – Fathers are to be the head of their home. While duties are shared, the father is ultimately responsible for what goes on in the home. This is why the primary parenting scriptures address fathers. Sadly, many fathers, even Christian fathers, have abandoned this responsibility to their wives.

CLAYTON BARBEAU - "The notion of responsibility is at the crux of true fatherhood. The conscious sense of responsibility for the physical and spiritual well-being of others is the mark of a true father."

That means that the father is the primary manager and minister in his home. A manager is one who plans, directs and guides.

**1 Timothy 3:4-5** He must manage his own household well.

CHUCK SWINDOLL - "Effective family life does not just happen, it's the result of deliberate intention, determination and practice."

The father is also the primary minister in his home, the pastor and spiritual leader of his wife and children.

**Mothers** – As in marriage, a mother's primary role is as her husband's helper. However, while the basic tasks of parenting are the same, the ways we go about them are different because men and women are different. Mothers have a place in their children's lives that fathers can never have. They carried them for nine months and were their first source of nourishment, in many cases they will be the parent who provides primary care in the child's early years. Every child remembers his or her mother and father differently because of the unique roles they play and the unique grace they have. In general, fathers go off to provide, mothers stay home to care.

**Titus 2:4-5** and so train the young women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind, and submissive to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be reviled.

DOROTHY PATTERSON - "No one - not teacher, preacher, or psychologist - has the same opportunity to mold minds, nurture bodies, and develop potential usefulness like a mother."

ABRAHAM LINCOLN - "No man is poor who has had a Godly mother."

**A note on stay-at-home moms:** Society has put a lot of pressure on women regarding their roles. Secular feminism defines women's greatest problem as their male-defined roles as wife and mother. Departure from the role of wife and mother and the establishment of economic and professional independence is seen therefore as the key to women's equality with men. While I don't think Titus 2 commands women to stay at home, it is expressing a biblical priority. A married woman's first priority is to serve those in her home; her best is to go to her home.

There are many reasons to work outside the home: single moms or economic pressures (husband loses job or is underemployed) may necessitate doing so. Or there may be circumstances where employment is more possible - women whose children are older or in school.

My opinion only here: I think before children a woman should seriously consider working to help save money for the future or to buy some of the things that will help get your home established, pay off school loans, etc. However, care must be taken to not rely on two incomes.

When children come I would urge each couple to seriously consider the benefits of having mom stay home with their children, especially in the early years. I would suggest this standard – any work outside the home should only be undertaken after first considering its impact inside the home.

**A note on marriage:** One man said - "A husband and wife are apt to be successful parents when they put their marriage first. Don't worry about the children getting 'second best. Child-centered households produce neither happy marriages nor happy children." The best thing parents can do for their children is to love their spouse. Why? Because a healthy marriage produces security and stability in the home and models a loving relationship for children.

BRYAN CHAPPELL (Ephesians, 310) – “The love of one’s spouse must take precedence even over the concerns of the children. A parent who pours affection and attention into children at the expense of honoring a spouse may seem to be serving the children, but such priorities actually jeopardize the ultimate welfare of the children. Because God intends for the parents’ relationship to bring the reality of Christ’s love into the home, a spouse who sacrifices the marriage even out of concern for a child jeopardizes the spiritual welfare of that child.”

**A note on the church.** Although parents are called as the primary discipler in their children’s lives, this discipling takes place in the larger context of the church’s call to disciple. While parents are primary you are not alone.

#### **4. Without exasperating**

This command highlights the importance of consistent, gracious, affectionate parenting which follows the Lord’s instructions in this area. If the atmosphere of the home isn’t one of conspicuous love, the good effects of instruction and discipline can be largely undone.

### **C. The Why**

As with anything in the Christian life, it is not just important what we do but why we do it. Understanding the higher purpose behind parenting will serve to motivate parents particularly during the inevitable discouragements that accompany raising children.

PAUL TRIPP (Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands, 124) – “What is God's goal for your parenting? It goes way beyond clean rooms, good manners, proper dress, the right college, a good career, and marrying well. In all these things God calls parents to work toward something deeper and more lasting. Paul captures it in Ephesians 6 when he calls parents to bring their children up in the “training and instruction of the Lord.” This radically changes the parental agenda. Gone is the horizontal focus. The call is to be part of God's work of heart transformation – to help the child change from a self-absorbed sinner to one who loves God above all else. Paul's model of parenting is distinctly redemptive, but when parents forget that moments of difficulty are moments of redemption, they stand in the way of what the Lord is doing.”

J.C. RYLE (The Duties of Parents, 8) - "Precious no doubt are these little ones in your eyes; but if you love them, think often of their souls. No interest should weigh with you so much as their eternal interests. No part of them should be so dear to you as that part which will never die. The world, with all its glory, shall pass away; the hills shall melt; the heavens shall be wrapped together as a scroll; and the sun shall cease to shine; but the spirit which dwells in those little creatures, whom you love so well, shall outlive them all, and whether in happiness or misery (to speak as a man) will depend on you. This is the thought that should be uppermost in your mind, in all you do for your children. In every step you take about them, in every plan, and scheme, and arrangement, that concerns them, do not leave out that mighty question, 'How will this affect their souls?'"

FRANCIS FOULKES (Ephesians, 166) – “Parents should care more for the loyalty of their children to Christ than anything besides, more for this than for their health, their intellectual vigor and brilliance, their material prosperity, their social position, their exemption from great sorrows and great misfortunes.”

## **1. God's glory must always be our primary motivation**

## **2. Your Children's Welfare**

**Deuteronomy 5:32-33** You shall be careful therefore to do as the LORD your God has commanded you. You shall not turn aside to the right hand or to the left. You shall walk in all the way that the LORD your God has commanded you, that you may live, and that it may go well with you, and that you may live long in the land that you shall possess.

**Deuteronomy 6:3** Hear therefore, O Israel, and be careful to do them, that it may go well with you, and that you may multiply greatly, as the LORD, the God of your fathers, has promised you, in a land flowing with milk and honey.

**Ephesians 6:1-3** Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. “Honor your father and mother” (this is the first commandment with a promise), “that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land.”

The direction, health, and closeness of the parent-child relationship will, in a significant way, determine the outcome of one’s life, now and in eternity. If this command (“obey your parents”) is not kept, it is probable that none of the others will be kept either. It is a parent’s instruction and discipline that prepares one for conversion and obedience to the rest of the commands.

There are **serious consequences** for disobedience. Most children tend to see disobedience to parents as a minor sin. Scripture treats it as a serious sin. It involves not only the immediate sin but the prospect of future sin and suffering for the one who won’t be trained (**Proverbs 5:11-14**). It is so serious that in the OT the death penalty was attached to striking, cursing or being stubborn and rebellious toward parents (**Deuteronomy 21:18-21**).

But also **serious blessings** for obedience. The promise relates to both the quality and quantity of life your children will experience. Nowhere does scripture promise that our children will be saved but there are many promises that our children will prosper if we will be faithful in parenting. In this promise of prosperity salvation is at least intimated.

**Isaiah 65:23** They shall not labor in vain or bear children for calamity, for they shall be the offspring of the blessed of the LORD, and their descendants with them.

**Psalms 103:17** But the steadfast love of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear him, and his righteousness to children's children,

**Proverbs 22:6** Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it.

### **3. Your Children’s Mission**

Parenting can’t be compartmentalized. It has to be seen in the larger context of God’s purpose for the world in general and for Christians in particular. The dominant theme of the Bible is God’s set purpose to redeem a people for His glory out of fallen mankind. This purpose goes on generation after generation from Adam to the Second Coming.

Our goal has to be bigger than raising nice kids who are well behaved, don’t get into any serious trouble, get good grades and enjoy the benefits of the “American dream”. Not that these things are wrong. They just aren’t enough.

The promise to Abraham and his offspring was not only to be blessed but to be a blessing.

CHRISTOPHER WRIGHT (NIBC, 11) - "God's call of Abraham was explicitly for the ultimate purpose of blessing the nations...There was a universal goal to the very existence of Israel. What God did in, for, and through Israel was understood to be ultimately for the benefit of the nations."

CHRISTOPHER WRIGHT (NIBC, 8) - "Deuteronomy is a book for a people on the move, literally at first, spiritually and morally thereafter...It presents therefore, a God of sovereign worldwide purpose and a people with a sharp spiritual mandate and moral agenda...Deuteronomy bends every rhetorical, literary, emotional, and moral skill to the task of equipping and motivating God's people to live for the purposes of God in each generation."

The Great Commission is the way the church is to partner in this great purpose. We are to make disciples for Jesus Christ, and for parents that disciple making starts with their own children. Our job is to train disciples who will then take up this commission and themselves become disciple makers. As parents we must help our children to see that their purpose is not just to follow a certain set of rules but to live a life that brings glory to God and witness (blessing) to the nations.

## **II. GOD'S GRACE**

Children are a stewardship from the Lord. Your children are more than just the product of a biological chance meeting of a sperm and egg. God gave them specifically to you. You are a part of His eternal plan for their life.

**Psalms 127:3** Behold, children are a heritage from the LORD, the fruit of the womb a reward.

Parenting is a tremendous responsibility. Children are a terrible (extreme, formidable) responsibility. The tremendous love we have for them, our sense of responsibility, their vulnerability and the sense of their future in our hands stirs our emotions like nothing else ever can or will. I truly grew up the day my first child was born. There was a life in my care that could not do without me.

Parents face many temptations to anxiety, condemnation and legalism (its all up to me). We can think that perfection in parenting is required of us. I didn't raise up in the way he should go, I made mistakes, my child is doomed! Parental perfectionism is crushing and condemning.

**A. Parenting is Hard Work** - We have to fight the expectation that is it going to be easy. Faithful parenting is not for lovers of ease.

**B. Parenting is a Process** - Parenting involves patiently applying the principles expressed in the Scriptures. There are no magic tricks or easy steps.

**C. Parenting is Beyond our Ability** - We are insufficient for the task in and of ourselves, we need God's grace every day. Faith is needed because faith is the way we access daily grace.

1. **The importance of knowing your inadequacy** - Ok, teach me some techniques, some strategies, some methods; I will employ them and that will ensure smooth parenting. Can't do that!! Even if methods were enough we will never employ them perfectly.

2. **The importance of knowing God's all sufficiency** – BOB KAUFLIN – “parenting with God in the picture” – parenting with one eye on God and one eye on our children

Keeping “God in the picture” inspires faith. Is our reliance on some technique or strategy or on the Father?

There are things we can and must do and things only God can do. When we try to do what only God can do (specifically the Holy Spirit who regenerates and sanctifies) we are ruined – exhausted, discouraged, anxious. And our children will pick up the fear and striving and feel the pressure which doesn't serve them in any way. Be faithful to use means but never mistake the importance of your contribution with the importance of God's. Never lose sight of God in the process.

**Psalm 127:1-2** Unless the LORD builds the house, those who build it labor in vain. Unless the LORD watches over the city, the watchman stays awake in vain. <sup>2</sup>It is in vain that you rise up early and go late to rest, eating the bread of anxious toil; for he gives to his beloved sleep.

**2 Corinthians 12:9-10** But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. <sup>10</sup>For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

ELYSE FITZPATRICK and JESSICA THOMPSON (Give Them Grace, 22) – “Although we long to be faithful parents, we also rest in the truth that our faithfulness is not what will save our children. Giving grace to or children is not another formula that guarantees their salvation or obedience. Grace-parenting is not another law for you to master to perfect your parenting of your children.”

ELYSE FITZPATRICK and JESSICA THOMPSON (*Give Them Grace*, 62) – “God doesn’t promise our children’s salvation in response to our obedience, because he never encourages self-reliance. It would be against God’s character to give us a promise that our children will be saved if we raise them in a certain way. That would mean that he was telling us to trust in something other than Christ and his grace and mercy. He would be encouraging us to trust in ourselves, and God never does that. The way of the Lord is the way of faith – faith in his goodness, mercy and love. Our faith is to be in him, not in ourselves.”

PAUL TRIPP (*Age of Opportunity*, 99) – “It is important for us to look at our task as parents from the vantage point of the awesome power of God – the power by which he created the world, holds the universe together, raised Christ from the dead, and defeated sin. Our God is a God of glorious power far beyond what our minds can conceive. We cannot look at our parental responsibilities only from the perspective of our own weariness and weakness. We must remember that we are the children of the Almighty. He *is* Power! He *is* Strength.”

### **3. The importance of prayer**

Prayer highlights our insufficiency and God’s all-sufficiency. I am of the conviction that the most important thing we can do for our children is to pray for them. It’s not the only thing but the most important thing.

CHARLES BRIDGES (*The Christian Ministry*, 178) – “It is faith that enlivens our work with perpetual cheerfulness. It commits every part of it to God, in the hope, that even mistakes shall be overruled for his glory; and thus relieves us from an oppressive anxiety, often attendant upon a deep sense of our responsibility. The shortest way to peace will be found in casting ourselves upon God for daily pardon of deficiencies and supplies of grace, without looking too eagerly for present fruit.”

# THE PROBLEM WITH PARENTING

## I. THE PROBLEM WITH PARENTS

**Matthew 7:3-5** Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? <sup>4</sup>Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when there is the log in your own eye? <sup>5</sup>You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye.

PAUL TRIPP (Age of Opportunity, 18) – “It is my experience that when parents begin to recognize, own, confess, and turn from their own wrong heart attitudes and the wrong actions that flow from them, the result is a marked difference in their relationship to their (*child*) and in the way they view the struggles of the (*childhood*) years. When we look with concerned eyes toward the (*childhood*) years, we need to look not only at our children, but also at ourselves. Parents who are humbly willing to change, position themselves to be God’s instruments of change.”

Children don’t create our sins; they reveal the sins that were already there. Effective parenting begins with identifying and correcting the sins that keep us from effectiveness.

### Some Common Sins of Parents

1. Anger (harsh, unkind, critical, impatient) – We crave something and don’t get it, our interest in not the child’s best but our thwarted desires.

**Galatians 6:1** Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted.

2. Uncharitable judgment – We can feel like our children are out to get us and read the motives behind their actions as against us.

3. Unforgiveness and bitterness – “Why don’t they change?” “I’m sick and tired of this!” “Why do you put me through this?”

4. Laziness (idols of ease and comfort) – Parenting is hard work, we want rest, we don’t want our agendas messed up, we compromise convictions for our own comfort and convenience rather than for our children’s good.

5. Selfishness – Parenting is selfless work that requires servant leadership; you lay down your life for another.

6. Materialism – Time spent on job, acquiring, enjoying and maintaining possessions, etc.

7. Pride

- Wanting to be recognized and appreciated as a good parent by others – fear that your children may embarrass you
- Wanting to be respected and appreciated by your children – “Look at all I’ve done for you”
- Unwillingness to admit wrong in your actions or wisdom.

8. Self-righteousness – “What’s the matter with you!!??”

9. Self-pity – “Why do I have to go through this?”

10. Fear of man – We don’t want our child’s disapproval; we compromise to avoid conflict.

11. Disobedience

12. Fear and unbelief – Lack of trust in God for your child.

## II. THE PROBLEM WITH CHILDREN

The problem with children is twofold: they are sinners and they are immature.

### A. They Are Sinners

WILLIAM FARLEY (Gospel Powered Parenting, 149) – “The heart of the problem is a problem heart.”

Children are born with an ingrained lust to defy and disobey God and His delegated authorities – the sin nature. Even the regenerate child has to deal with the problem of remaining or indwelling sin.

**Genesis 8:21** the intention of man's heart is evil from his youth.

**Psalm 51:5** Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.

**Psalm 58:3** The wicked are estranged from the womb; they go astray from birth, speaking lies.

**Romans 3:10-12** as it is written: "None is righteous, no, not one; <sup>11</sup> no one understands; no one seeks for God. <sup>12</sup> All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one."

JOHN MACARTHUR JR. (Successful Christian Parenting, 29) – "Every child comes into the world with an insatiable capacity for evil. Even before birth, the human heart is already programmed for sin and selfishness. Humanity's relentless penchant for every kind of depravity is such that, given free reign, every boy has the potential to become a monster."

### **Some Common Sins of Children**

Every child sins in a variety of ways. This should not surprise and shock us. It should not be taken personally: they are not out to get you, they are just doing what is natural.

1. Rebellion – The basic orientation of all children (all like sheep have gone astray); the desire to live independent of authority; to be their own master.
2. Pride - self willed, self absorbed, demanding, sullen.
3. Stubbornness (another expression of pride) – Refusal to obey, refusal to repent, willingness to take repeated punishment rather than relent.
4. Selfishness – Not sharing; bossy.
5. Anger – When desires and cravings are thwarted, one of the earliest sins to manifest is temper tantrums.
6. Covetousness/Envy – grabbing toys; "I want that NOW!!!"
7. Laziness/Idleness – Sloppy work; Incomplete work
8. Dishonesty (lies and deceptions) – out right lies, "Oh I thought you said..."
9. Complaining – I don't like this, I want, I hate...
10. Self-righteousness – I can and do keep the rules, this is often the compliant, "good" child. The danger here is more grave than most parents recognize.

## **B. They Are Immature**

Also remember that your children are immature and foolish and need to be instructed and disciplined so they can gain wisdom. It is important that we distinguish sinfulness from childishness.

**1 Corinthians 13:11** When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I gave up childish ways.

DAVID AND SALLY MICHAEL (A Vision for Ministry to Children and Their Parents, 7) – “In addition to sharing the fallen, sinful nature that all humans have, children are also less developed in their physical and emotional capacities than adults are. They are in the process of growing up.”

They don't know how to deal with the temptations and emotions raging in their hearts and heads. They aren't nuanced in their thinking. Self-control is an acquired skill.

## **III. THE SOLUTION**

In order to solve the problem of parenting we must graciously deal with the heart through the gospel. This is true for both ourselves and our children.

PAUL TRIPP (Changing Hearts, Changing Lives Seminar) – The key to change is seeing yourself as the problem, getting to the heart and receiving the grace to change provided at the cross.”

TEDD TRIPP (Shepherding A Child's Heart, 22) – “All behavior is linked to some attitude of heart. Therefore, discipline must address attitudes of heart. This understanding does marvelous things for discipline. It makes the heart the issue, not just the behavior. It focuses correction on deeper things than changed behavior. The point of confrontation is what is occurring in the heart. Your concern is to unmask your child's sin, helping him to understand how it reflects a heart that has strayed. That leads to the Cross of Christ. It underscores the need for a Savior. It provides opportunities to show the glories of God who sent His son to change hearts and free people enslaved by sin.”

### **A. Graciously**

You are a fellow sinner and can relate to your child as such without lessening your authority in his life. Your own experiences and example in dealing with sin and trusting in the gospel will be invaluable in helping your child.

## **B. Deal With The Heart**

**Matthew 15:19** For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander.

**Luke 6:43-45** "For no good tree bears bad fruit, nor again does a bad tree bear good fruit, <sup>44</sup>for each tree is known by its own fruit. For figs are not gathered from thorn bushes, nor are grapes picked from a bramble bush. <sup>45</sup>The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil, for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.

TEDD TRIPP (Shepherding A Child's Heart, 15) – "The central focus of parenting is the Gospel. You need to direct not simply the behavior of your children, but the attitudes of their hearts. You need to show them not just the 'what' of their sin and failure, but the 'why'. Your children desperately need to understand not only the external 'what' they did wrong, but also the internal 'why' they did it. You must help them see that God works from the inside out. Therefore, your parenting goal cannot simply be well-behaved children. Your children must also understand why they sin and how to know internal change."

### **The Threefold Process of Change**

#### 1. Identify and put to death (put off) sinful behavior and its roots

This can be done for all ages in age-appropriate ways. Once a child is old enough to understand and repeat your instructions, he is old enough to grasp this concept.

**Ephesians 4:22** to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires,

The key question here is not just what have they done - that is usually fairly obvious - but why are they doing it. What idol (craving, lust, desire, treasure, fear) is ruling in their heart?

An idol is anything that rules our heart other than God - something that we want or trust in more than God.

KEN SANDE (The Peacemaker, 88) – "An idol is not simply a statue of wood, stone, or metal; it is anything we love and pursue in place of God, and can also be referred to as a 'false god' or a 'functional god'. In biblical terms, an idol is something other than God that we set our hearts on, that motivates us, that master's or rules us, or that we serve."

JOHN CALVIN – “The human heart is a factory of idols...everyone of us is, from his mother’s womb, expert in inventing idols.”

Changing the heart is the key to lasting change. It is the heart where sin brews and eventually emerges in behavior: therefore we must work back from behavior to the heart if we are going to see lasting change. Attempting to control a child’s behavior through strict discipline will not do anything to change the real source of the problem. We can’t help anyone long term by changing their behavior but only by changing the roots of their behavior.

PAUL TRIPP (Changing Hearts, Changing Lives Seminar) – “The Bible says that the heart is active: it causes, directs, shapes, and shepherds our behavior...People and situations never make you do what you do, it is your hearts reaction to these things.”

## 2. Identify and inculcate (put on) godly behavior and its roots

**Ephesians 4:23-24** to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, <sup>24</sup>and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

It is not enough to simply focus on what we are not going to do but to discover what God would have us do and what heart attitudes need to be developed to produce that behavior. This requires teaching your child the positive character qualities – obeying, humility, sharing, cheerfulness, etc.

## 3. Appropriate the grace to change available through the cross.

This grace includes the gift of regeneration. However, even a child who is not yet regenerate can appropriate God’s common grace to respond to his parent’s correction.

**Note:** Be careful of accepting alternative solutions to your child’s sin problem

Modern psychology has proposed numerous conditions and disorders that seek to explain a child’s sinful behavior. We must beware of accepting this “wisdom of the world” contrary to the Bible’s clear teaching on sin and its remedy.

JOHN MACARTHUR JR. (Successful Christian Parenting, 87) – “To attach a clinical name to chronic misbehavior and use it as an excuse for sinful behavior is a serious mistake. Disobedience is sinful, regardless of what factors shape the child’s natural aptitude.”

### **C. Through The Gospel**

The goal of child rearing is to bring your child into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ through the gospel. It is through the gospel that our children will receive forgiveness from the penalty of sin and strength against the power of sin.

TEDD TRIPP (Shepherding A Child's Heart, 145) – 'The central focus of child-rearing is to bring children to a sober assessment of themselves as sinners. They must understand the mercy of God who offered Christ as a sacrifice for sinners. How is this accomplished? You must address the heart as the fountain of behavior and the conscience as the God-given judge of right and wrong. The cross of Christ must be the central focus of your childrearing...The focal point of your discipline and correction must be your children seeing their utter inability to do the things which God requires unless they know the help and strength of God.'

# DISCIPLINING YOUR CHILDREN

Even the most secular person would probably agree that a caring atmosphere and excellent instruction are necessary for a child to mature. Where we as Bible-believing Christian most widely diverge from the world is in this area of discipline or how to help our children accept/do what is right. This is a crucial element of parenting, without which we will most likely find ourselves failing in the other two areas of practical parenting (care and instruction) and failing in our overall goal of parenting, which is to prepare our children to glorify and enjoy God as disciples of Jesus.

## I. THE WHYS OF DISCIPLINE

### A. Defining Discipline

The two main New Testament words that express this concept are discipline and chastisement.

Discipline (Vines Dictionary) - an admonishing or calling to soundness of mind, or to self-control.

Chastise (Vines Dictionary) - primarily denotes to train children (instruction), chastening by the infliction of evils and calamities, to chastise with blows.

Our working definition will be: To train and control by inflicting punishment for the purpose of perfecting moral character.

### B. Why Discipline?

1. Your children are commanded to honor and obey you

BRYAN CHAPELL (Ephesians, 3:12) – “We will parent well only if we know what God expects us to nurture in our children.”

**Colossians 3:20** Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord.

To obey means to follow the commands of those in authority. This is not a tricky or nuanced concept. There are not subtle meanings in the Greek word. Someone in authority tells me to do something and I do it. Someone in authority tells me not to do something and I don't do it. That is obedience. Biblical obedience starts in the heart (a right heart attitude toward those in authority, thus the connection between honor and obey) and ends in appropriate behavior - to do what God (either directly or through delegates) commands me to do.

Obedience is not occasional or situational but rather “in everything.” Obedience is to be comprehensive (assuming that a Christian parent would never ask his child to do anything that was contrary to Christian character), ongoing and habitual.

The primary focus of a child’s obedience to his parents is the Lord. Children are to obey not primarily to please their parents but to please the Lord. Parents are to be honored and obeyed because to do so is to honor and obey the Lord, not because they are older, wiser, bigger, stronger or perfect. It is vital for children to see their parents as the Lord’s representative/agent in their lives. Obeying parents is one way a child can express Jesus’ lordship in his or her life. Parents are to teach their children this truth.

## 2. It is commanded by God

**Proverbs 23:13** Do not withhold discipline from a child; if you strike him with a rod, he will not die.

**Proverbs 29:17** Discipline your son, and he will give you rest; he will give delight to your heart.

Teach your children that you discipline them because you want to obey God. They need to know that this isn’t simply something you have decided to do but something God has commanded you to do. This allows them to see that you trust and obey God as a disciple.

## 3. It is modeled by God

**Hebrews 12:3-11** explains God’s discipline of His children.

- Discipline is motivated by love (vs.6, 10)
- Discipline is painful (vs.11)
- Discipline (when responded to) is fruitful (vs.11)

## 4. It is necessary because of the predisposition of the child

TEDD TRIPP (Shepherding A Child’s Heart, 127) – “What is the nature of the child’s most basic need? If children are born ethically and morally neutral, then they do not need correction, they need direction. They do not need discipline, they need instruction.”

We don't need to teach our children to disobey or rebel; it comes naturally to them. Every child seeks to rule his or her own life. Your child, if left to himself, will not develop godly character.

**Proverbs 29:15** The rod and reproof give wisdom, but a child left to himself brings shame to his mother.

J.C. RYLE (The Duties of Parents, 32) – “You must not expect to find your children’s minds a sheet of pure white paper, and to have no trouble if you only use right means. I warn you plainly you will find no such thing. It is painful to see how much corruption and evil there is in a young child’s heart, and how soon it begins to bear fruit. Violent tempers, self-will, pride, envy, sullenness, passion, idleness, selfishness, deceit, cunning, falsehood, hypocrisy, a terrible aptness to learn what is bad, a painful slowness to learn what is good, a readiness to pretend anything in order to gain their own ends, all these things, or some of them, you must be prepared to see, even in your own flesh and blood. In little ways they will creep out at a very early age; it is almost startling to observe how naturally they seem to spring up. Children require no schooling to learn to sin.”

#### 5. It is necessary to establish parental authority

We have authority in our child’s life. I have a concern that we have lost the notion of authority and are afraid to use it. Our primary role isn’t to be our children’s friend or peer or partner.

TEDD TRIPP (Shepherding A Child’s Heart, 13) – “God calls His creatures to live under authority. He is our authority and has vested authority in people within the institutions he has established. You must not be embarrassed to be authorities for your children. You exercise authority as God’s agent. You may not direct your children for your own agenda or convenience. You must direct your children in God’s behalf for their good.”

ED MOLL and TIM CHESTER (Gospel-Centered Family, 13) – “Parents are God’s gift to children to teach us how to live under authority. We learn to submit to authority instead of living for ourselves by learning to submit to our parents.”

The first and most foundational training lesson for every child to learn is that he is an individual under authority. A child learns he is to obey God by obeying you. This is the training goal of the infant and preschool stage. If it is not established early it will be much more difficult to establish later.

KEN WILSON (The Obedient Child, 72) - "To say that a child's will is subject to the parents means that the child will yield to the direction of his parents when the child wants something else. The child will obey, submit, defer. In other words, by two years of age the basic power struggle should be settled.”

You can't begin really effective instruction until you have gotten your children under control. I'm not saying that there should be no gospel or heart instruction; just that those things should be limited until your authority has been established.

6. It is necessary for your child's good

**Proverbs 23:14** If you strike him with the rod, you will save his soul from Sheol.

**Proverbs 6:23** For the commandment is a lamp and the teaching a light, and the reproofs of discipline are the way of life

CHARLES BRIDGES (Proverbs – 429) - "Except he be restrained, he will die in his sin. God has ordained the rod to purge his sins, and so deliver his soul from hell. What parent then, that trembles for the child's eternal destiny, can withhold correction? Is it not cruel love, that turns away from painful duty? To suffer sin upon a child, no less than upon a brother, is tantamount to "hating him in our heart."

7. It is preparation for saving grace

God uses the parent/child relationship to teach/model invaluable lessons about the gospel and our relationship with Him.

### **C. Why Parent's Don't Discipline**

KEN WILSON (The Obedient Child, 22) - "Indeed the Scripture views withholding physical discipline as a sin against the child; it is a failure of love, something that harms rather than helps him or her."

There many reasons but here are some common ones...

1. We don't fully own the authority/wisdom of the Bible

TEDD TRIPP (Shepherding A Child's Heart, 131) - "The use of the rod is an act of faith. God has mandated its use. The parent obeys, not because he perfectly understands how it works, but because God has commanded it. The use of the rod is a profound expression of confidence in God's wisdom and the excellency of His counsel."

## 2. A misunderstanding of true love

Some people have a difficult time associating punishment, especially physical punishment with love. Yet God disciplines those He loves and commands that we do the same. If we fail to discipline we are leaving our children to their sin and that will cost them later because God will discipline them.

**Proverbs 13:24** Whoever spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is diligent to discipline him.

KEN WILSON (The Obedient Child) - "The relationship between father and son (parents and children) is understood as a training relationship of deep love which includes the exercise of authority, including painful punishment."

KEN WILSON (The Obedient Child, 22) – "Indeed the Scripture views withholding physical discipline as a sin against the child; it is a failure of love, something that harms rather than helps him or her."

## 3. A fear of child abuse

Biblical discipline has nothing to do with child abuse. It does not involve anger, frustration, or impatience. It is not motivated by a desire to dominate or show who is boss or to beat/scare a child into submission or because he or she irritates you. It is never unfair or unexpected.

Biblical discipline must always be careful, gracious and measured. Every parent must develop self-control. If you can't spank with a right attitude, you would be better off not spanking.

TEDD TRIPP (Shepherding A Child's Heart, 52) - "Your focus can be sharpened by the realization that discipline is not you working on your agenda, venting your wrath toward your children; it is you coming as God's representative, bringing the reproofs of life to your son or your daughter. You only muddy the waters when the bottom line in discipline is your displeasure over their behavior, rather than God's displeasure with rebellion against His ordained authority."

TEDD TRIPP (Shepherding A Child's Heart, 53) - "Any change in behavior that is produced by such anger is not going to move your children toward God. It moves them away from God. It moves them in the direction of the idolatry of fearing man."

#### 4. Fear of exasperating your child

Just and faithful discipline is not what exasperates a child. It communicates that a child is loved by his parents. It is harsh or inconsistent discipline that exasperates.

#### 5. Laziness

Proper child discipline takes time, energy and perseverance. Parents must be willing to endure the hard work, perseverance and consistency it takes to discipline properly.

#### 6. Discouragement/Defeat

Sometimes children can be slow to respond to discipline. It doesn't seem to be working, you always seem to be disciplining, you often feel like a policeman/judge/executioner instead of a parent.

You are in a war of wills with your child - he wants his own way and will resist your way. Sometimes the child wins the battle of wills; in those times his will to disobey/rebel is simply stronger than our will to discipline.

**Proverbs 22:15** Folly is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of discipline drives it far from him.

## II. THE HOWS OF DISCIPLINE

### A. Setting Clear Expectations

#### 1. Start young

Each parent must judge when to start spanking but 9-months to one year old is not too early. At that age a child can usually understand simple commands (“No”, “don't touch”, “lie still” etc.) and associate disobedience with pain. Watch for signs of self-will like squirming during diaper changes or purposely touching forbidden objects. Be careful they can not only understand the command but are able to carry it out.

TEDD TRIPP (Shepherding A Child's Heart, 155) – “The most important lesson for the child to learn in this period is that He is an individual under authority. He has been made by God and has a responsibility to obey God in all things.

Children can't start learning if they aren't under your control. Self-control begins with parental control. Win this battle young and it will help you to reduce spanking in the future because they are more amenable to your instruction especially when they are regenerate.

## 2. Clearly instruct your children

Your children should know the rules and consequences for breaking them, and you should know (not merely assume) that they know them.

Teach them what obedience means – it includes an inward attitude of honor and respect as well as outward compliance.

Teach your children to respectfully acknowledge your commands (“yes sir/yes dad” or “yes ma’am/yes mom”).

Whenever possible instruct from scripture (vs. “because I said so”). This teaches the children to value scripture, connects them to God’s commands and helps them to understand the why behind your instructions. Remember, children are commanded to obey “in the Lord.” One caution: they don’t always need to know why. “Why?”, can become an excuse for delaying obedience.

## 3. Graciously train your children to obey promptly, respectfully and fully.

**Ephesians 6:1** Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.

KEN WILSON (The Obedient Child, 55) - "Children should do whatever they are told to do, when they are told to do it, without fuss or resistance."

KEN WILSON (The Obedient Child, 55) - "What is the difference between outright refusal (“No! I won’t!”) and a response characterized by whining, complaining, ignoring the direction given? Not much. They’re essentially the same response."

Parents need to be careful with issuing warnings as a precondition for obedience. Your child will quickly learn that you don’t mean business until you raise your voice or start counting to ten before you discipline. This practice will tempt you to frustration and anger which are not the right motivates for discipline. Establish with children that you expect them to obey your directions.

#### 4. Be reasonable in your demands

If you are teaching a new rule or your child violates a rule for the first time in some time, give them a warning or reminder to reinforce the rules. You might also want to consider extenuating circumstances before deciding whether to spank or not. Consistency needs to be tempered with grace but never with inconsistency, laziness or surrender. Your children will greatly benefit from your consistency.

### **B. Spankable Offenses**

Parents need to develop prayerfully their own criteria for when to spank or discipline. It is important that spouses be of one mind when it comes to discipline. Discuss the issues that are to receive discipline, agree and stick to it. You do not serve your children by having mom spank for one set of things and dad for another, by parents arguing in front of a child about how to discipline them, or by constantly changing the rules.

1. Willful disobedience - When your child chooses to disobey a clear command.
2. Improper attitudes - When your child displays an attitude that they have been instructed is sinful or inappropriate.
3. Disrespect - Refusing to treat others (adults or children) with kindness, humility and responsiveness.
4. Lying – Telling falsehoods or withholding truth about their words, attitudes or actions. Trust between a parent and child is so crucial, especially as they get older.
5. Hurting others - Using physical or emotional means to hurt others.

### **C. Principles for Spanking**

After we have developed biblical conviction about spanking and determined what the spankable offenses will be, we can begin to institute discipline.

## **1. Spanking**

Spanking is not a quick smack on the bottom. To be effective it must be an event that the child can remember and learn from as well as a means to provide forgiveness and restoration for the offense committed.

- Spank immediately whenever possible.
- Spank privately.
- Let the child know why he is being spanked - what he did, what God has commanded you to do, your love for him, his need to learn to obey.
- Spank the child - Spanking should be done on the bottom with a rod and hard enough to hurt. The exception may be when a child is very young, then a quick slap on the hand or thigh may suffice.
- The child must submit to the spanking. No kicking, writhing, placing hands over bottom, etc., can be allowed. If they won't cooperate that is another spankable offense. However, if your child gets hysterical, stop - you are not accomplishing anything. Let them calm down and try again later, but do not let a child escape a spanking because of these behaviors.

## **2. Bringing restoration**

- Hold your child until they stop crying: he needs your gentle presence. Affirm your love for him. Never apologize for spanking your child.
- Have the child ask for forgiveness from both you and God. Clearly declare your forgiveness to them. If a third party was involved like a sibling or friend they should ask for forgiveness from them as well. If they are unrepentant or defiant, it may be appropriate to spank them again. Pray with the child for God's help in doing better.
- Declare that the incident is over. Don't hold a grudge or be aloof.

Always remember that discipline is one of the prime opportunities to reinforce the truths of the gospel in your child's life. Seize chances to affirm the goodness – blessing and forgiveness – that flow from repentance. It also provides an opportunity to talk about what they could have done differently, how they can respond in the future, and to rehearse good behavior.

#### **D. Other Ways To Discipline**

As your child gets older you may use other means to discipline. For younger children, additional measures may be taken, but they should not replace spanking as the primary means of discipline.

## INSTRUCTING YOUR CHILDREN

JOHN ANGELL JAMES - "The chief end of every Christian parent must be the spiritual interests, the religious character, the eternal salvation of his children."

**2 Timothy 3:14-17** But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it <sup>15</sup>and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. <sup>16</sup>All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, <sup>17</sup>that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work.

"Wise for salvation" doesn't simply mean to get them saved but to train them in all they need to know as a disciple of Jesus, that they may be "competent, equipped for every good work".

### I. WHY TEACH?

#### A. The Mandate To Instruct

**Deuteronomy 6:7** You shall teach them diligently to your children

**Ephesians 6:4** Fathers...bring them up in the...instruction of the Lord.

Parents are primarily responsible for instructing their children. Both of these key commands are directed to parents. There is only so much that you might delegate and there is no area that you can abdicate.

Instruction is to be purposeful. We can't afford to think that this will just happen. In Deuteronomy we are told to actively "impress" certain things upon our children and to do so with diligence.

G. CAMPBELL MORGAN - "It is well that we remember that the fathers were principally responsible for the giving of this religious instruction. Sometimes it seems as though Christian people have lost something of this ideal, and especially Christian fathers. There is a great tendency to trust the religious teaching of our children to others than ourselves, such as preachers, Sunday-school teachers, and those who specialize in that work in one form or another. For the work of all such we cannot be too thankful; but we ought to remember that the first responsibility for the diligent teaching of the children belongs to those to whom they are entrusted as the most sacred and blessed gift of God. The teaching of the things of God by fathers and mothers has a value and a virtue which can be supplied by none other."

## II. WHAT TO TEACH

### A. The Gospel

WILLIAM FARLEY (Gospel Powered Parenting, 42) – “Saving faith, deeply rooted in the children’s hearts, is the supreme goal of Christian parents.”

#### 1. Present the gospel

General training of our children prepares their hearts for the gospel. That general training, however, won’t convert our children. Only the gospel is the power of God for salvation. We must preach the gospel early and often. In making it understandable to our children (they will not understand in the same way as an adult) we must be careful to make it the gospel - there is not one way to enter for kids and another for adults.

**Romans 1:16-17** For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. <sup>17</sup>For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, "The righteous shall live by faith."

TEDD TRIPP (Shepherding A Child’s Heart, 76) – “You must always hold out to your children both their need for Christ’s invasive redemptive work and their obligation to repent of their sin and place their faith in Jesus Christ.”

There is a faith and humility in children that makes them more naturally softened to the gospel. Childhood is an ideal time to lead someone into a relationship with the Lord.

**Matthew 11:25** At that time Jesus declared, "I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children;

**Matthew 19:14** but Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven."

Teaching the gospel includes teaching on:

- Sin – what it is, that they are sinners by nature and deed, unwilling and unable to repent, unable to save themselves, slaves to sin.
- The Law – God commands help them to see what is expected of them but also that they are powerless to obey. The good effect is they can find hope only in Jesus.

**Galatians 3:24** (NIV) So the law was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith

A child can't ever be allowed to think his or her "goodness" or obedience satisfies God. Obedience is good and to be commended but it doesn't save.

- Holiness and wrath – that God takes sin seriously.
- The gospel itself – what happened and why it was important; the love, grace and mercy of God that underlie the gospel.
- The proper response to the gospel – repentance and faith.
- The effects of the gospel – justification, reconciliation, glorification/heaven.
- The "behind the scenes" working of God – election, regeneration

JOHN MACARTHUR JR. (Successful Christian Parenting, 47) – "One of the worst things parents can do is be intimidated into thinking someone else would make a better evangelist for their child, thus abdicating their most crucial responsibility, missing the best opportunities for reaching their children, and forfeiting the best blessings of parenthood...Think of leading your children to Christ as a long-term assignment – the most important duty God has given you as a parent."

## 2. Trust the Lord

**John 6:44** No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day.

The doctrine of divine election can cause either great comfort or great anxiety to parents. I take great comfort in it because I know that, while I have no guarantees, I do have great reason for hope because of my covenantal relationship with God. At the same time, there is the paradox of election/personal responsibility. Each child must come to faith in Christ: a parent's faith cannot convert him or her.

**John 1:12-13** But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God. <sup>13</sup>who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

## 3. Be patient

Don't press your child into a commitment he either doesn't understand or doesn't really want to make from the heart. Our goal is not to get our children to pray a prayer that will ease our anxiety but to come to genuine faith and repentance.

Parents with otherwise good judgment can have that judgment clouded by affection and hopes. The genuineness of a child's conversion will be important in his or her future discipleship.

- We can mistake natural curiosity for a prepared heart.
- We can mistake intellectual knowledge for heart commitment.
- We can mistake wanting to be part of the crowd (my friends, siblings) for personal devotion.
- We can mistake learned behavior that is Christian-like for a life changing relationship.

#### 4. How do you know they are ready?

- Increased initiative on their part - they are pressing you.
- Increased questioning on their part.
- Increased understanding of their need for forgiveness
- An understanding of the gospel that they can explain in their own words.
- Whether your children are ready or not, affirm every bit of interest they show. Don't be discouraged by their ups and downs. They will probably experience times of interest and apathy. Maintain your faith.

#### 5. Caring for the fruit

Praying a prayer isn't the end of gospel instruction, it is only the beginning. You also have a vital part to play in the discipleship/sanctification process.

Continue to talk about your child's conversion experience. Reinforce it. Make sure he or she still understands it. Help them to go from childlike faith to adult faith (faith that is more informed, yet still faith).

However, be careful about premature assurance. Are they starting to "bear fruit in keeping with repentance"? Is there a maturing understanding of what it means to commit themselves to Christ? Is there a growing (and independent) passion for Him? Do you see evidences of grace in their character? Are they more easily and frequently convicted of sin? Are they worldly? Is there a desire to please God? Is there a sincere love for Jesus?

Parents must walk the fine and difficult line between “now you are saved” and “well, I don’t really know”. My recommended approach – treat them like they are saved without overly assuring, meanwhile, keep an eye on the fruit of their life over the long haul. I think the best time to question and/or challenge a young child’s profession of faith is when they are 16-18 years old and are exercising more freedom and choice than ever before.

The scriptures are clear that if your child is genuinely saved the effect will be apparent in his life. You can’t have the Holy Spirit come to indwell and remain unchanged. Behavior (what they say and do) and values (what they care most deeply about) start to change. Parents are often too willing to settle for fleeting changes and flimsy evidence because we want to be assured of our child’s salvation. (“whew, that’s done!”) The question is too important for that. If there isn’t solid evidence of a changed heart you need to do some more work.

## **B. God**

Next to the gospel, the doctrine of God is the most important thing we teach. The two things that most build passion in believers are God and the gospel. The only fruitful long-term motive for obedience is love for God/Jesus. Parenting moves from getting children under control to developing their character to seeing them exhibit self-motivated obedience because they love Him.

**Philippians 3:8** Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ

ED MOLL and TIM CHESTER (Gospel-Centered Family, 20) – “Our job is not to pressure our children into a life of begrudged duty. Our role is to extol the surpassing greatness of Christ. We’re to extol Christ so much that everything else feels like rubbish in comparison.”

### 1. What He is like

A.W. TOZER (The Knowledge of the Holy) – “What comes to our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us.”

- His nature and character
- His deeds – creation, providence, redemption
- His commands

## 2. Our duties to Him

WILLEM VanGEMEREN (Expositors/Psalms, 113) – “The dignity of man is a gift of God and requires a relationship of responsibility as well as a response of praise to the good creator.”

- To Glorify Him – to represent him rightly: to live for him not for self: to please him: to define success biblically not as the world defines it.
- To Love Him
- To Worship Him
- To Fear Him
- To Obey Him

TEDD TRIPP (Shepherding A Child’s Heart, 66) – “From their earliest days they must be taught that they are creatures made in the image of God—made for God. They must learn that they will only ‘find themselves’ as they find Him. Your child must grow to see that real living is experienced when he stands before God and says ‘Whom have I in heaven but you, and earth has nothing I desire besides you (Psalm 73:25).’”

JOHN MACARTHUR JR. (Successful Christian Parenting, 79) – “You have not satisfied the responsibilities of parenthood when you have made your child submit to you. If you are consistent and firm in your discipline, our child may obey you because he or she fears violating your standards. That is a fairly easy thing to achieve but it is not the proper goal of biblical parenting. Your child should fear violating God’s standard, not merely yours. You are only an intermediary with the responsibility of teaching your child to fear God. If your children grow up fearing only your displeasure but not God’s, what will they do when you are not there?”

### C. The Scriptures

What they teach in whole, in part and by topic and how to apply/relate them to one’s life. Without having to say so, you are teaching your children to value the authority and sufficiency of scripture for all they need in life.

**2 Timothy 3:16** All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness,

**James 1:22** But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.

JOHN MACARTHUR JR. - "God breathed Scripture provides for us the comprehensive and complete body of divine truth necessary to live as our heavenly Father desires for us to live. The wisdom and guidance for fulfilling everything He commands us to believe, think, say, and do is found in His inerrant, authoritative, comprehensive, and completed Word."

#### **D. The Spiritual Disciplines**

The spiritual disciplines are the primary means of grace whereby your children may grow in their knowledge (both rational and experiential) of God.

**John 17:3** And this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.

- Prayer
- Bible reading
- Scripture memorization
- Worship

#### **E. How To Battle Sin**

**Ephesians 4:20-24** But that is not the way you learned Christ!— <sup>21</sup>assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus, <sup>22</sup>to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, <sup>23</sup>and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, <sup>24</sup>and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

- Love good and hate evil
- Identify, avoid and resist temptation
- Identify the sinful fruits and roots of sin – to be properly self suspicious
- Identify the godly fruits and roots of virtue
- Appropriate grace to change
- The power of confession and accountability

## **F. To Love the Church**

Other than the gospel itself, the most critical factor in your children's spiritual walk will be their commitment to a local church.

JOHN STOTT - "If the church is central to God's purpose, as seen in both history and the gospel, it must surely also be central to our lives. How can we take lightly what God takes so seriously? How dare we push to the circumference what God has placed at the center?"

Teach them about commitment, service, community life, giving and evangelism.

## **H. How To Relate with People**

**Mark 12:29-31** Jesus answered, "The most important is, 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. <sup>30</sup>And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' <sup>31</sup>The second is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these."

Much of this can happen at home as they learn how to treat their siblings and friends.

This will include things like:

- Humility – consider others better than self
- Respect – for adults, for others, for property
- Consideration
- Loyalty – gossip and slander (Mary is so stupid...)
- Servanthood – when friends come over for fun or to serve
- Communication - greeting, talking to adults, etc.
- Conflict resolution – including forgiveness
- Relating to those in authority
- Relating to the opposite sex
- Relating to those less fortunate.

We must also teach them the vital importance of care in choosing their companions.

**Proverbs 13:20** Whoever walks with the wise becomes wise, but the companion of fools will suffer harm.

**1 Corinthians 15:33** Do not be deceived: "Bad company ruins good morals."

One of the great challenges in this area is how to protect your children from the world while still training them for their mission as disciples to engage the world with the gospel.

**A Note on Abuse:** It is sad to say but child abuse is a reality in our society that we all must be aware of and prepare our children to combat. Abusers aren't just strangers offering candy to kids; only 11% are strangers, 29% are family members, 60% are someone known to the family.

Teach your children about modesty, special/private parts of their bodies, good touches/bad touches/secret touches (bathing suit or underclothes line), happy secret and sad secret, people who would try to hurt them.

## **I. How To Work**

Much of adult life is centered around work. It is both a calling and a means to provide for the necessities of life and to finance the kingdom of God. Therefore, teaching your children a proper work ethic is vital for their lives. Children must learn responsibility, diligence, discipline, excellence, initiative, satisfaction in a job well done, etc.

Give your children chores commensurate with their abilities and train them how to do them. Start at an early age. Toddlers can learn how to put away toys. Be patient and encourage their efforts. Help them to see that families work to serve each other. They are contributing to the family. Teach them to have a cheerful attitude toward work.

**Proverbs 10:4** A slack hand causes poverty, but the hand of the diligent makes rich.

**Colossians 3:23** Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men,

## **J. Living Skills**

Cooking, cleaning, shopping, car and home maintenance and repair, money management, etc.

## **K. Academics**

- Public school
- Christian school
- Home school

Remember that all instruction involves a world view. In Ephesians we are told that our instruction is to be the instruction of the Lord. This is why it is so important that parents oversee all the instruction that their child receives no matter what schooling choice they make.

The Bible uses three main words to talk about a well-instructed person.

- knowledge - the accumulation of truth.
- understanding - the ability to comprehend, interpret and evaluate facts.
- wisdom - the ability to make righteous judgments and correct applications.

There is a worldly understanding and wisdom and a godly one.

**Colossians 2:3** Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge...**Colossians 2:8** See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ

## **III. HOW TO TEACH**

**Deuteronomy 6:7** You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.

### **A. Formally**

One of the key thoughts of Deuteronomy is be careful (take care, carefully). This impressing on our children is to be undertaken with great purpose, accuracy and thoroughness.

WILLIAM GURNALL - "This is the difference between religion and atheism, religion doth not grow without planting, but will die even where it is planted without watering. Atheism, irreligion, and profaneness are weeds that will grow without setting, but they will not die without plucking up."

Some basic principles: Start young; Outline and oversee a plan for personal devotions; have some type of family devotions, try to get some one-on-one time with each child.

How often? – if I had it to do over I would do a little something every day, especially when they are young. Small but consistent will accomplish much.

## **B. Informally**

Be alert to and take advantage of the many teachable moments that each day will present you with. This requires time with your family; that your heart be inclined toward God; and watchfulness – awareness of teachable moments.

This will also require you to get them home more often, limit activities, time with friends, etc. It will also require you to think through what they do at home, e.g. how much TV, video games, computer time, etc.

# Don't Exasperate Your Children

## I. THE BIBLICAL MANDATE

### A. The Warning

**Ephesians 6:4** Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger (NIV – exasperate; NEB – goad to resentment), but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

**Colossians 3:21** Fathers, do not provoke (NASB – exasperate; NIV – embitter) your children, lest they become discouraged (NASB – loose heart).

To exasperate means “to make very angry or irritated.” To embitter means “to arouse bitter feelings in.” In Colossians the verb translated “exasperate” or “embitter” means “to stir up.”

JOHN MACARTHUR JR. (Successful Christian Parenting, 131) – “The children’s duty in the home is to obey. The flip side is the parent’s duty: to teach them that obedience in an environment of godly nurturing, without exasperating them in the process. It’s a tall order. This doesn’t come naturally for parents, any more than obedience comes naturally to kids.”

We must bring up our children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord with a pure heart and not a self-serving motivation (to impress others, to avoid embarrassment, because we are irritated, because they make life hard). Our children must know they are dearly loved and enjoyed - they are not projects suited for our benefit.

F.F. BRUCE (Colossians, 398) - “Fathers (or parents) are urged not to assert their authority over children in a manner more calculated to provoke resentment than ready obedience.”

CURTIS VAUGHAN (EBC Colossians, 219) - “Fathers are not to ‘embitter’ their children. The sense is that they are not to challenge the resistance of their children by their unreasonable exercise of authority. Firm discipline may be necessary, but it must be administered in the right spirit.”

### B. The Reason

**Colossians 3:21** Fathers, do not provoke (NASB – exasperate; NIV – embitter) your children, lest they become discouraged (NASB – loose heart).

WILLIAM HENDRIKSEN (Colossians, 172) - "When fathers are unjust or overly severe, a spirit of sullen resignation is created in the hearts of their offspring. The children "lose heart," thinking, "No matter what I do, it's always wrong."

FRANCIS FOULKES (Ephesians, 165) - "It is right for parents to demand obedience, but there must not be 'capricious exercise of authority'. Discipline is essential in the home; but not unnecessary rules and regulations and endless petty correction by which children are discouraged."

## II. THINGS TO DO

**Ephesians 4:1-2** I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love,

J.C. RYLE (The Duties of Parents, 4) - "Now children's minds are cast in much the same mold as our own. Sternness and severity of manner chill them and throw them back. It shuts up their hearts, and you will weary yourself to find the door. But let them only see that you have an affectionate feeling towards them, that you are really desirous to make them happy, and do them good, that if you punish them it is intended for their profit...let them see this, I say, and they will soon be all your own. But they must be wooed with kindness, if their attention is ever to be won."

We want to make obedience easy and attractive. The home isn't the army or a prison. A child's obedience can be made easy (or at least easier) by his parent's gracious leadership.

### A. Love

**1 Corinthians 13:4-8** Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant <sup>5</sup>or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; <sup>6</sup>it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. <sup>7</sup>Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. <sup>8</sup>Love never ends.

Love both expressed and demonstrated is crucial to the parent/child relationship.

J. C. RYLE (The Duties of Parents, 4) – "Love should be the silver thread that runs through all your conduct. Kindness, gentleness, long-suffering forbearance, patience, sympathy, a willingness to enter into childish troubles, a readiness to take part in childish joys, - these are the cords by which a child may be led most easily, - these are the clues you must follow if you would find the way to his heart...Nothing will compensate for the absence of this tenderness and love...Just so you must, set before your children their duty, - command, threaten,

punish, reason, - but if affection be wanting in your treatment, your labor will be all in vain."

KEN WILSON (The Obedient Child, 33) - "The affection we show our children...is their first taste of the grace of God."

## **B. Compassion**

**Hebrews 5:2** He can deal gently with the ignorant and wayward, since he himself is beset with weakness.

Compassion is a sympathetic consciousness of others' distress together with a desire to alleviate it. Our children live in the same fallen world with the same sin nature as we have. The more we are aware of our own need for grace, the easier it will be to be aware of the same need in them and to extend the grace and understanding that we ourselves need.

The more you remember you need for God's grace, patience and forgiveness the more you will be aware of that same need in your children and the easier it will be to be compassionate.

## **C. Gentleness**

**1 Thessalonians 2:7** But we were gentle among you, like a nursing mother taking care of her own children

Gentleness means to be kind or amiable, free from harshness, sternness or violence, mild, docile, soft or moderate. Gentleness is not weakness but strength under control. Even though we have authority in our children's lives we are to exercise that authority kindly and softly.

## **D. Patience**

**2 Timothy 4:2** preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching.

**Proverbs 14:29** Whoever is slow to anger has great understanding, but he who has a hasty temper exalts folly.

Patience means manifesting forbearance (to hold oneself back from, to control oneself when provoked) under provocation or strain. Our children's sins can try our patience but we must forebear. This does not mean that we overlook their

sins or fail to confront or correct but that we aren't unreasonably demanding of maturity or change beyond the work of the Holy Spirit.

Patience must be accompanied by faith that our children can change. God's children are never beyond the reach of His grace. Be aware of His grace. Be patient because of His grace.

## **E. Encouragement and Praise**

**Proverbs 18:21** Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruits.

**1 Thessalonians 2:11-12** For you know how, like a father with his children, we exhorted each one of you and encouraged you and charged you to walk in a manner worthy of God, who calls you into his own kingdom and glory.

**Hebrews 10:24** And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works,

**Hebrews 3:13** But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called "today," that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.

To encourage means to give courage or confidence; to raise the hopes of; to help on by sympathetic advice and interest, to strengthen. Growing up can be hard and our children need us beside them cheering them on and pointing them to the grace of God and the gospel to give them hope.

One of the best ways to encourage is through praise. Make sure your children are praised when they do well and that you are recognizing evidences of grace in their life, especially in areas where you have been urging them to grow or where you have had to discipline frequently. Make sure you are more aware of where they have come from than where they need to go, more aware of progress than difficulties, growth than need for growth. Try to catch them doing well!

One caution – praise what they do, not who they are. They may do good by common grace and that is to be celebrated. But they are not a "good boy" or a "good girl". Even when they are saved your praise should always include commendation of God's grace and the Holy Spirit's working which enabled them to obey ("way to go man!" "It obvious that God is really working in you and that you are learning to walk in His grace.")

## **F. Time**

**Psalms 39:4** "O LORD, make me know my end and what is the measure of my days; let me know how fleeting I am!

There is simply no substitute for time spent with our children. Time spent talking and listening (vs. talking at), playing, building memories, serving together, etc. build a relationship in which all our instruction and discipline can flourish.

PATRICK MORLEY (The Man In The Mirror) - "If we end up with regrets over the time we didn't spend with our children, it's a pain that never goes away."

Nothing makes your children happier than you. All the things in the world can't replace you. They need your time and attention. God calls us His friends; we ought to be our children's best friends. I fear that too many dads lose their children's affection through lack of time.

WILLIAM HENDRICKSON - "Fathers should create an atmosphere which will make obedience an easy and natural matter, namely, the atmosphere of love and confidence...When fathers are unjust or overly severe, a spirit of sullen resignation is created in the hearts of their offspring...A good father spends time with his children, teaches, entertains, and encourages them, and by his example as well as by outright, verbal instruction, points them to Christ."

**Proverbs 20:5** The purpose in a man's heart is like deep water, but a man of understanding will draw it out.

TED TRIPP - "The finest art of communication is not learning how to express your thoughts. It is learning how to draw out the thoughts of another. Your objective in communication must be to understand your child, not simply to have your child understand you. Many parents never learn these skills. They never discover how to help their children articulate their thoughts and feelings."

### **III. THINGS TO AVOID**

#### **A. Overindulgence and Inconsistency**

Our children need and desire boundaries. Lack of clear, Biblical standards and/or weak, inconsistent enforcement of standards will eventually exasperate children (although there are times to make exceptions). So will spoiling them by giving them all that they want or not setting high (reasonable) standards or goals.

#### **B. Favoritism**

To be unjust or to favor one child over another will incite anger, especially if some of your children are easier to discipline, more compliant or of sweeter temperament than others.

Beware of comparison – "Why can't you be more like your sister?!" Be aware

that your compliant children are just a different kind of sinners.

### **C. Unrealistic Expectations**

We must beware of setting standards so high our children can never live up to them. This can often be accompanied by parents being harsh, impatient and critical thereby communicating to children that nothing they do is ever good enough.

Also be aware that your expectations can be too low.

The most important consideration is what is God trying to get at today, in this season of life?

### **D. Hypocrisy**

To demand of our children what we ourselves are not modeling will surely exasperate them. So will our failure to live with them as a fellow sinner who confesses sin and asks forgiveness when needed.

### **E. Lack of Relationship**

The old saying “rules without relationship equals rebellion” is true. If we are more general and judge than loving parent and friend to our children they will become exasperated. This will also occur if we become too busy to spend quantities of quality time with our children.

We must recognize the importance of communicating with our children, sincerely listening, valuing their opinions and desires, etc. We must sow into our relationship with them.

My personal and pastoral experience has been that a good relationship with your children won't guarantee that they don't have struggles but it does guarantee that when they do have struggles you will be able to work through them more easily.

A good relationship with parents – founded in trust in God, humility, and genuine affection – is a tremendous means of grace in a child's life.