

Lesson 3 The Spiritual Training of Children

Never before in all history has there been such a concerted, worldwide, all out assault upon the home. The family is one of the oldest institutions known to man. It is coexistent with the human race, and predates by considerable time the other great institutions of humanity, such as human government, the school and the church. The godless philosophy of communism is openly and blatantly carrying out a campaign to destroy the family unit. They are attempting to break down the discipline and unity of the home and replace it with the communal system. There are destructive forces at work sapping the life out of many homes. Sex parties, drinking parties and drugs are a threat to homes. Often a spirit of anarchy and rebellion enters the home and there is fighting and shouting and physical attack. The atmosphere is often one of nervous tension, or at best, an armed truce. All of this is part of a Satanic strategy, a deliberately planned attack, to destroy what has been one of the bulwarks of moralism, religion, and faith—the atmosphere of the home.

Satan has brought a more subtle attack against our Christian homes. There are some that say, “My wife and I have agreed that we do not want to force our religion on the children. We want them to be free to make up their own minds about matters as important as that. They should be allowed to choose for themselves.” That may sound sophisticated, but it is sheer nonsense. If neutrality is the attitude of the parents, it will become the religion of their children. Neutrality about Christianity would be an injustice to the children. Parents have a God-given responsibility to bring their children to Christ. Children are a gift from God and they would not be in a Christian family unless God wanted them to hear about the good news of Christ.

Most people have never stopped to ask themselves in this busy madness of life and the highly organized church just where God intends children to get Christian training. Most people think of Sunday school and church as the primary places, but this is utterly ridiculous. Out of 168 hours in every week, only about 30 minutes is spent in teaching the children in Sunday school. Approximately 56 hours is spent sleeping, 35 are spent at school and the remaining (77) are spent at borne. If parents want to give their children a godly heritage, then they must do it at home.

The answer to this modern-day dilemma for Christians is not found in worldly wisdom but in a return to the wisdom of God and an understanding of His principles for the home. If we come back to these, we shall discover weapons of mighty power that can counteract the strong forces that are at work to undermine and destroy our homes. ***“For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ (2 Cor. 10:4-5).***

Deuteronomy 6:4-9

Introduction: Someone may object to using a verse written directly to the nation of Israel as a basis to teach Christian truths on the home. But the great principles of God’s workings among men never change.

Christians Must Have a Proper Concept of God (6:4): Each Christian must have a doctrinal understanding about the existence and nature of God. All of life and all theology must start with God and not with man. This is the great secret behind all things. Back of every exploration that man can make in the realm of science, psychology, or sociology lies the ultimate reality of the one true God. Every road leads to Him; every exploration must start with Him. He is the explanation of human history. This is why the scripture declares, *“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.”*

Christians Must Have a Personal Relationship With God (6:5): It is not enough to know that God exists but one must be personally related to God and love Him with all one’s heart, soul and mind. God is asking for a relationship with Him and if we love Him, all else in life will fall into place.

Christians Must Have a Desire to Obey God (6:6): God has made hundreds of commands for Christians to keep, and he expects Christian parents to obey before they teach their children these commands. The issue here is not perfect performance but genuine desire to keep God’s holy commands. Every Christian is conscious of failure in his life but God wants us to desire more and more to serve Him. Parents are to set the example for the children. If parents do not desire to please God, then they are destroying the family unit.

Christians Must Teach God’s Commands to Their Children (6:7a): Christian parents are to give personal instruction to their children about the Word of God. Children can never learn to love God if they have no information about God. It is impossible to love God until you know something about Him. The emphasis in this verse is upon “you,” not “them.” This is a responsibility of the parents, not the Sunday school and the church; these things are never a substitute for the home, and, at best, they are a supplement.

Christian Parents Should Teach by Unforced Application (6:7b): These words, “talk about them when you sit, when you lie down, when you rise up,” do not mean that parents are to moralize or preach at their children. There is nothing more deadly than continual parental moralizing. This verse means that God is to be related to everything in life, and the challenge to parents is to find what that relationship is, and use it when the occasion demands. Use every little thing that may come up to teach the children about God and then relate it to the Word of God. Parents should not make a club out of a scripture verse and beat the child over the head with it until he gives in or rebels. No, there must be an unforced, natural application of truth to life and life to truth.

Christian Parent’s Lives Should Command Authority (6:8-9): The Jews took this verse literally and put verses on their heads, other parts of the body and doorposts. From this verse, it may be that we Christians can put up verses in our homes to help us remember God, but the more likely meaning is spiritual. This says these shall be “for a sign.” A sign is something that compels belief; it is that which establishes authority. Thus, the children know that the parents are in subjection to God’s authority and they have the authority of God in their own lives. Christian parents have spiritual authority in their lives that command the respect of their children. When we fail in spiritual authority with our children, we often turn to rigid controls and threats.

Psalms 78:5-8

Introduction: The Psalmist is attempting to arouse the sluggish souls of those around him to share with their children what God has done for them. In this Psalm, he encourages the parents

to teach their children about God's works for His people and the people's disobedience. This Psalm shows how easily men and women can forget about God.

Children are to be Instructed by Christian Parents (78: 5): This is a clear command to Christian parents to instruct their children in the ways of God.

Children are to Know God's Word (78:6a): Simply stated this means that parents are to share God's Word with their youngsters. We are raising a generation of Biblical illiterates. Children growing up in a scientific age know more about getting to the moon than they do about getting to heaven. We are stunned when our children cannot withstand the temptations of the world, but many have been given nothing substantial to stand on. God has preserved for us at least 4000 years of spiritual history and we are failing to pass it on to this generation. We work and save to send our children to a decent school, and yet we spend little time teaching them the Bible. We are to share God's Word with our children. We cannot make them become Christians. God must work in their hearts and they must trust the Savior for themselves.

Children are to Grow Up and Instruct Their Children (78:6b): Parents are to train their children not only that they may know God's truth, but that they, in turn, pass it on to their "children yet to be born." There is a very real sense in which every parent is responsible for his grandchildren. Parents have a spiritual heritage to pass on to their children and to their children's children. If parents rebel against God, this has an effect upon future generations. ***"And he passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, "The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children and their children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation'" (Exo. 34:6-7).*** If they obey God, this will have a positive effect upon future generations. Think of it, parents today will influence grandchildren not yet **born!**

Children are to Establish Their Hope in God (78:7a): **Children are to be taught about God so "that they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God."** God can stabilize children in this fast moving, highly technological society and waning economy. Much of our children's fears and tears come from a lack of hope. If you forget that God is at work in history, and feel that He has left the wheel of history, you can't help but be disturbed. Every time you open a newspaper or flip on a news program, you have enough to shake you war, famine, disease, corruption, etc. Whenever you think of the uncertainties of tomorrow, if you don't have a trust in a God of might and power, you have no hope. If you don't know His works, you have little to hope for and nothing to hope in.

Children are to Obey God's Commandments (78:7b): Children can only obey God if they know what God wants them to do. When a child has learned to think God's thoughts after Him, it solves many of life's choices when he is faced with problems of right and wrong. Children will be spared many heartaches and heartbreaks in life if they learn early to obey God.

Children are Not to Follow the Example of their Rebellious Fathers (78:8): The history of the Bible tells us of two types of professing believers. One group—a small minority—do God's will and walk according to His Word. They are the people who learn from the acts of God in history. The other group—the larger of the two—is stubborn and rebellious. They have no faith in God and do not trust His saving power. Undoubtedly one of the reasons for their rebellion was that as children they were not instructed by their parents.

CONCLUSION

Parenthood is a calling and a ministry. Parents are called by God to teach their children to walk with God. Think what it means to introduce our children to Christ, the Bible and the hymnal. Are you, as a parent, fulfilling your God-given responsibility?
