



“A wise son maketh a glad father: but a foolish man despiseth his mother”
(Proverbs 15:20).

Children in the Home

Central Truth: Children must be reared to become productive members of society.

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“Lo, children are an heritage of the LORD: and the fruit of the womb is his reward” (Psalm 127:3). Think about that! In a time when abortion makes the pre-born child a “throw-away” item, God declares that children are His gift. He says the birth of children is a reward that He gives personally. We must look upon children in any home in light of God's estimate of them. Child rearing is the most solemn assignment any person will ever receive. Good parents will rear their children with three goals in mind. (1) They must become persons of devout faith in God. God recognized that Abraham would teach his children to obey the Lord and rewarded him for it (Genesis 18:19). (2) They must become cooperative members of the family unit. Only then can they live peacefully in society outside the home. (3) They must become productive members of society. We are put here for what we can do for God in serving others, not for what we can get out of others. Stable homes are essential in human society. Nationally, the first line of defense is the homes of the nation. Socially, the home is the training ground for all of life's relationships. Spiritually, the home is the place where eternal values are instilled.

The typical child spends 1 percent of his time in church, 16 percent of his time in school and 83 percent of his time in the home. Which bears the greatest responsibility and has the greatest opportunity in molding the life of the child?

Respect Your Child

Remember that he is a gift from God. It matters not whether you “planned” for the child or if he is “wanted”; that child is a gift from God, bearing the image and likeness of God, and must be respected out of reverence for God Himself. What a difference it should make in a parent's attitude to look at a child (even a disobedient and difficult child) and think, “God gave you to me as a special trust. I will value you and train you for Him.”

The child is capable of knowing God. Many children come to personal faith in Jesus at an early age. I was eleven when I trusted Jesus as my Savior. But I have witnessed the clear conversion experience of children much younger than that. (Special care must be taken in dealing with a young child's conversion experience.) Even many children who are mentally slow can come to faith in Jesus. Your child was one for whom Jesus died. Respect him.

The child is capable of fourfold development, just as Jesus developed as a lad (Luke 2:52). There is intellectual development: Jesus increased in wisdom. There is physical development: Jesus increased in stature. There is spiritual development: Jesus increased in favor with God. There is social development: Jesus increased in favor with man. That is the development you want to see, and must work to accomplish, in your child.

Respect for a child is shown in one's act and in his attitude. Some adults talk to their children as they would never do to the child of a neighbor or stranger. But that indicates that it is the adult, not the child, who is immature. Child abuse is far too common. Whether the abuse is physical, sexual, or emotional, it is inexcusable for an adult to abuse a helpless child.

In ancient times it was customary for kings to place statues of themselves throughout their empire. A citizen who hated the king would show it by defacing one of the statues which bore the king's likeness. Each child is made in the image and likeness of God. Abuse of a child is irreverence toward God, for the child bears His likeness. Child abuse is more than a social problem. It is a deeper and far more serious spiritual problem.

Love Your Child

The Bible commands older women to teach younger women to love their husbands and their children (Titus 2:4). There are four qualities of that love.

Love must be unconditional. It must never be based on performance.

Never threaten the withdrawal of your love or of God's love because of disobedience. Never! There are no “perfect” children. Parents must follow the example of Jesus stated in this rhyme: “Jesus loves me when I'm good/When I do the things I should./Jesus loves me when I'm bad/ Though it makes Him very sad.” Unconditional love is like God's love.

Love must be sincere. A basic need of every person from infancy to adulthood is to be loved. It is essential to mental and emotional health. In fact, tests showed that children who were shown love grew faster than those who were cared for without expressions of devotion. Words, touch, and deeds of love can give your child (or grandchild) a sense of security he can find no other place in the world. Let your child know you love him.

Love must be expressed. It is not enough to show your love for the child by providing the necessities of life. Speak words of love; do deeds of love; go out of your way to express love. Never make it necessary for your child to ask whether you love him. God showed His love by His gift of the Savior. How do you show your love to your children?

Love must be mature. It is strong, so it must never become an emotion which lacks backbone. The parent who says, “I love you too much to discipline you” is showing weakness, not love. Love will discipline (for the sake of the child, not for the temper of the parent). Love will say no as well as yes, depending on the situation. Love must be mature; otherwise, it is mere sentiment.

Teach Your Child to Obey

Somewhere in life each person must learn to submit to duly constituted authority. It will be in the home under loving parents, in the school under trained teachers, or in the penal institution under strict officers of the law. But it must be learned in order for each person to live in human society.

Obedience is born of duty. “*Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right*” (Ephesians 6:1). Note the requirement: “*obey.*” Note the authority: “*obey your parents.*” Note the restriction: “*obey . . . in the Lord.*” Note the reason: “*it is right.*” A child obeys the parent because the parent is God's agent in training the child. Obedience to parents is obedience to God. Each child is duty bound under God to obey.

Obedience involves attitude as well as action. The command to “*obey your parents*” is followed immediately by the command, “*honour thy father and mother.*” Obey relates to action, and honor relates to attitude.

To honor means to treat with respect, reverence, and courtesy. It is the first commandment God gave with a promise, the promise being a long life (Romans 1:28-31; II Timothy 3:1-5) and well being (Isaiah 57:20-21) if the

command is obeyed. Human history testifies that respect for parents solidifies society.

Obedience is expressed in practical ways. A child should show common courtesy toward his parents. He should accept the parent's judgment without argument or rebellion. He should listen for God to speak to him through his parents. He should obey without hesitation and complaint. He should let love govern all of his family relationships.

The parent is responsible to God for teaching his child to obey.

Train Your Child

“Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it” (Proverbs 22:6). Many people have wrestled over the meaning of that verse. Observe that to *“train”* means much more than to teach. *“Train up”* indicates a long process reaching from infancy through childhood and from the teens to young adulthood. Keep on training.

“The way he should go” may mean (1) the way he is naturally bent for a vocation, (2) the way God would have him go, or (3) according to the state of his development at this time. The second of those possible interpretations seems closest to the meaning.

“When he is old, he will not depart from it” may mean (1) from youth to old age he will never depart from it; (2) though he depart in youth, he will return in old age; or (3) its influence will be with him through all of his life. The third interpretation seems best. Again, note that the parent is responsible under God for that training.

Discipline Your Child

“Correct thy son, and he shall give thee rest; yea, he shall give delight unto thy soul” (Proverbs 29:17).

Discipline means “child rearing.” It includes training in doing right as well as punishment for doing wrong. Take time to check the following Scripture references and the principles they teach.

Discipline as an expression of love (Proverbs 13:24). To fail to discipline is to show unconcern for the welfare of the child. Discipline for the sake of the child (Proverbs 29:15). It is never based on the anger of the parent at that moment. Discipline must be consistent (Proverbs 13:24; 29:15,17). So it must be based on the needs of the child, not the temper of the parent.

Discipline can be administered in different ways. (1) It may be words of

wisdom (Haggai 1:7). (2) It may be withdrawal of privileges (Numbers 20:2-12). (3) It may be requiring unpleasant duties (Numbers 14:33, 34). It may be physical punishment (Proverbs 23:13, 14).

Discipline must be administered in wisdom. Begin early in life and continue it faithfully. Don't substitute words (nagging) for action. Adapt your method to the personality and temperament of the child. Watch for opportunities to shift from parent discipline to self-discipline in the child. And above all, discipline yours as God disciplines His.

The child is like clay in the potter's hands. The most solemn assignment any parent can receive is God's instruction to "Take this child and rear him for Me."

Some of you who read these comments have no child. Or your children are grown and gone from home. But the principles of this study can be applied in your relationship with other people's children. You can still show the love of God toward those children of whom Jesus said, *"Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God"* (Mark 10:14).

Questions for Discussion

1. Why should every child be respected?
2. How can you show respect for children?
3. How can you show unconditional love for a child?
4. Why does every person need to know that he is loved?
5. Why does God require each child to obey his parents?
6. How is obedience related to honoring one's parents?
7. How can you train your child in the way he should go?
8. Why is discipline necessary for every child?
9. How does God discipline His children?
10. What have you learned from this study that will help you in dealing with your children or grandchildren?