

PARENTING BY GRACE

Sweet Privilege, Serious Responsibility

Session One – The Privilege and Purpose of Parenting: A Biblical Vision

Introduction

Five Foundational Convictions Necessary for Parenting by Grace

I. “Our” Children Are _____ To Us By God.

“Behold, children are a gift from the Lord, the fruit of the womb is a reward. Like arrows in the hand of a warrior are the children of one’s youth. How blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them!” Psalm 127:3-5

A. God’s Sovereignty and Wisdom –

- _____ **God** – A proper understanding of who God is in his essence and attributes is absolutely essential to a proper receptivity and responsiveness to what he says and what he does. If children are a gift, and God is the giver of the gift, we must take great pains to consider the giver if we are to know how to best steward the gift.

*“Knowing about God is crucially important for the living of our lives. The world becomes a strange, mad, painful place, and life in it a disappointing and unpleasant business for those who do not know about God. Disregard the study of God, and you sentence yourself to stumble and blunder through life blindfolded, as it were, with no sense of direction and no understanding of what surrounds you.” (J. I. Packer, *Knowing God*, p. 19)*

- _____ - We must both _____ God concerning our children and _____ God concerning our children. “Fearing” God is expressed in the taking up of our responsibilities and the hard work involved in raising children. “Trusting” God is about our confidence in his promises and his sovereign care knowing that he is at work in every situation to accomplish what is good. There are no out-of-control moments where he is not sovereignly at work accomplishing his purposes. (This should, for example, give confidence regarding *how* are children came to us, that they were given to *us*, *how many* were given, *when* they were given, their genders, their temperaments, etc.)

A child’s regeneration and spiritual growth does not *ultimately* _____ on a parent doing exactly the right things. Knowing that God is more concerned about the spiritual condition of our children, and that no amount of sin can stand against his power to save, should be a wonderful source of comfort and peace to any God-fearing parent.

- **Understanding that God _____ God** has delegated authority to parents for the training of their children. This is a point of supreme importance. **God has given you authority to train your children.** This is both an assignment and an equipping.

“Understanding this simple principle enables you to think clearly about your task. If you are God’s agent in this task of providing essential training and instruction in the Lord, then you too, are a person under authority. Your child and you are in the same boat. You are both under God’s authority. You have differing roles, but the same master.” (Tedd Tripp, *Shepherding a Child’s Heart*, p. 47)

This authority rests principally on fathers.

“Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.” Ephesians 6:4

- **Application for Husbands/Fathers -**

Fathers, with the help of your wife, evaluate your involvement with your children in the following areas:

- a. Initiating time with the children regularly
- b. Showing affection and communicating encouragement
- c. Communicating with the children spontaneously, around the house, etc.
- d. Training the children spiritually on a consistent basis
- e. Taking primary responsibility for discipline
- f. Praying with the children and training them to pray
- g. Leading in praying for the children

- h. Demonstrating by example your love for Jesus, the Bible, the church
- i. Initiating ongoing evaluation of your marriage and home life

A Moment for Reflection Now (and discussion on the way home): Read through the list above. Identify one area where you would like to grow—an area that you think would bear fruit. Take a moment to write down one concrete step of application you could take. Be very specific.

- **Summary** – We have every reason to be expectant that God is going to work through us in the lives of our children—*he* is the one who has made these children, *he* is the one who has very intentionally put them with us, the family is the structure that *he* has put into place, *he* has promised to make of this a blessing—all the more if we work consciously and prayerfully with him.

B. Our Calling –

- **A parent’s responsibility is to train their children and to be the _____ in their lives.**

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

*“Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, **bring them up** in the training and instruction of the Lord.”* Ephesians 6:4

Daily, in a variety of settings, our children will come to us in need of comfort, encouragement, counsel, reassurance. Daily we offer guidance, warning, correction, support, nurture, healing, and sustenance for their souls. Daily, as we carefully and patiently provide these things we are training our children, shaping their view of God and of life.

Children grow up, and once they are adults, the work of child-rearing is done. Parents, therefore, have what might be called a fleeting opportunity to fulfill the Scriptural mandate to “bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.”

There are seasons for the parent of a two-year-old or teenager when it seems the day will never end. In later years, when you have much more time for reflection, those seasons of opportunity will seem like a moment.

- **Only God’s grace can change a child’s _____, but he involves us as parents to be the *primary means* of that grace.**

*“I know that you cannot convert you child. I know well that they who are born again are born, not of the will of man, but of God. **But I know also that God says expressly, ‘Train up a child in the way he should go,’ and that He never laid a command on a man which He would not give man grace to perform. And I know, too, that our duty is not to stand still and dispute, but to go forward and obey. It is just in the going forward that God will meet us. The path of obedience is the way in which he gives the blessing.**” (J.C. Ryle, *The Duties of Parents*, p. 8)*

- **Summary** – It is the parent’s job to disciple and instruct their children. This is our “sweet privilege and serious responsibility” and it must not be transferred to someone or someplace else.

C. God’s _____

- *“Behold, children are a **gift** from the Lord; the fruit of the womb is a **reward**. Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, so are the children of one’s youth. How **blessed** is the man whose quiver is full of them!” Psalm 127:3-5*

Children are a gift, a reward, a blessing! However, this blessing is not the only reason for parenting. In fact, the blessing of parenting is not the primary reality. It is clearly a secondary thing. The primary thing is God’s purpose of salvation with reference to our children. That God also makes parenting such a blessing and joy is just a reflection of his goodness.

II. **God is Seeking to _____ Through Our Parenting.**

*“Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. **Impress them on your children.** Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.” Deuteronomy 6:4-9*

*“O my people, hear my teaching; listen to the words of my mouth. I will open my mouth in parables, I will utter things hidden from of old—things we have heard and known, things our fathers have told us. We will not hide them from their children; we will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the Lord, his power and the wonders he has done. He decreed statutes for Jacob and established the law in Israel, which he commanded our forefathers to teach their children, so the next generation would know them, even the children yet to be born, and they in turn would tell their children. **Then they would put their trust in God** and would not forget his deeds but would keep his commands.” Psalm 78:1-7*

*“Train up a child **in the way he should go** . . .” Proverbs 22:6*

*“Bring them up . . . **in the Lord.**” Ephesians 6:4*

God has called us as parents to lead (train, shepherd, nurture) our children into his ways and, ultimately, into relationship with him.

A. **Parenting _____**

- **Begin with the _____** - Our goal is not behavior alone. For many, the goal of parenting is to have well-behaved children. However, this goal falls short of the Bible’s standard. (Some of Jesus’ strongest rebukes were directed at people who focused on behavior as opposed to the heart, cf. Matthew 23:25-28.) Our goal is the transformation of the character of the heart.

“All behavior is linked to some attitude of the heart. Therefore, discipline must address attitudes of the 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.” (Tedd Tripp, *Shepherding Your Child’s Heart*, p. 22)*

- **Be “_____”** – We must be taking initiative in addressing _____ if our children are going to be led to conviction. So we need to be paying attention in the home, in their relationships and in their spiritual lives. We need to regularly be asking: What does their behavior indicate about their hearts? How are their attitudes? What patterns of relationship are we observing with their siblings? Who are they relating to outside the family? Why are they relating to them? How are they relating to them? What are they talking about and doing with their friends? How do they resolve conflicts with their friends? How do they respond to authority? How do they receive correction from other adults? Who are they living for? What are they concerned about? Do they speak about God? Do they ask questions after being taught his Word? Are they entering into worship? Are they learning to serve others? Do they pray for others?
- **Application for Parents** – Have you discussed with your spouse the spiritual condition of each of your children? Would you be in agreement as to their present state? What are each of your children’s particular struggles, temptations, patterns of sin? Are you dealing with the heart issues in these situations? Is there any place in your children’s lives where you are not sufficiently “on the watch”?

A Moment for Reflection: Choose one child and identify both a particular struggle with sin and a particular evidence of God’s grace you’ve recently observed.

➤ **Getting to _____ - A Case Study: Conflict in the Car**

- What was it you were wanting when you yelled at your brother? Was your desire to sit in that seat wrong?
- How did you respond when he said he wanted to sit there? Did he do that in the right way?
- Was that a humble way to communicate your opinion? Why or why not? What does God say about “yelling”? Is that loving? What would be loving in that situation?
- How else could you have responded in that situation? Asking a question to help you brother? Appealing to your brother? Appealing to Mom or Dad for help?

Repeat the above 200 times!

- **Summary** – Help them to see their sin. Help them to confess their sin. Help them to turn to God for help in feeling sorrow for their sin. Help them to receive and enjoy God’s forgiveness. Help them to learn to turn to God for help to change.

B. Parenting Toward _____ –

- *“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 that will never die. . . This is the thought that should be uppermost on 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?’” (J. C. Ryle, *The Duties of Parents*, pp. 8-9)*

- **Only God can _____**

*“I know that you cannot convert your child. I know well that they who are born again are born, not of the will of man but of God. But I also know that God says expressly, ‘Train up a child in the way in which he should go,’ and that he never laid a command on man which he would not give man grace to perform. And I know, too, that our duty is not to stand still and dispute, but to go forward and obey. It is just in this going forward that God will meet us. The path of obedience is the way in which he gives the blessing. We have only to do as the servants were commanded at the marriage feast in Canaan, to fill the water-pots with water and we may safely leave it to the Lord to turn that water into wine.” (J. C. Ryle, *The Duties of Parents*, p. 8)*

- **Our Goal is _____ Conversion** – *“Many of us have friends and relatives who profess to be Christians but in whose lives there appears to be no evidence of the discipline of grace. Oftentimes we cling to a frail hope that such persons are believers because they made a profession at some time, despite the lack of any evidence of the Spirit’s work in their lives. It seems parents are especially prone to this form of denial regarding children who show no evidence of a genuine work of grace.”* (Jerry Bridges, *The Discipline of Grace*, p. 82)

We must make sure we are parenting our children with a biblical understanding of conversion. We must shepherd our children toward an awareness of their need for a Savior. We must help them to see there is no other way to be free from the grip of sin, and the wrath of God than by responding to the gospel in repentance and faith. (*Repentance* involves sorrow for sin, changing one’s mind about sin and turning from sin. *Faith* is trusting in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus alone for salvation from sin. *Conversion* is a single action of turning from sin in repentance and turning to Christ in faith.) We must help them see and understand the Cross.

- **When and how do we talk to our children about repentance and faith?**
- **What is evidence of genuine faith and repentance?**

There is a desire to follow Jesus.
There is a growing awareness of sin and dislike of sin.
There are affections for God.
There is a desire to please God.
There is growth in godliness.
There is initiative in the things of God.

C. Parenting Toward _____

- D. **Ultimately, Parenting Toward _____** – *“The chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever, therefore, your objective in every context must be to set a biblical world-view before your children. 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 being with you I desire nothing on earth.’ (Ps. 73:25) Teaching your children to live for the glory of God must be your overarching objective. You must teach your children that for them, as for all mankind,*

*life is found in knowing and serving the true and living God. The only worthy goal for life is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.” (Tedd Tripp, *Shepherding Your Child’s Heart*, pp. 67, 76-77)*

➤ **Summary – What are you parenting toward?**

“Good” children or godly children?
Your happiness or their holiness?
How they behave or what they believe?

III. Our Children Are In A Position Of _____

A. Children Have a _____

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

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

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

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

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

*For **all have sinned** and fall short of the glory of God.” Romans 3:23*

*“Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because **all sinned**.” Romans 5:12*

*“All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our **sinful nature** and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, **we were by nature objects of [God’s] wrath**.” Ephesians 2:3*

- While our children are made by God, like God and for God, they are _____ spiritually dead and blind—in urgent need of the grace of God. They are born to

a life that is defined and governed by a lie. They are born enslaved to their own sinful nature. Without saving faith, which is a gift from God, our children are without hope; therefore conversion to faith in Christ is our goal.

“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 baby has the potential to become a monster.” (John MacArthur Jr., *Successful Christian Parenting*, p. 29)

➤ **Some Common Sins of Children**

- Rebellion
- Pride (self willed, self absorbed, demanding, sullen)
- Stubbornness (an expression of pride)
- Selfishness
- Anger
- Covetousness/Envy
- Laziness/Idleness
- Dishonesty (lies and deceptions)
- Complaining

B. Children Are _____

“Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child.” Proverbs 22:15

“When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me.” I Corinthians 13:11

- *“In addition to sharing the fallen, sinful nature that all humans have, children are also less developed in their physical, intellectual and emotional capacities than adults are. They are in the process of growing up.”* (David and Sally Michael, *A Vision for Ministry to Children and Their Parents*, p. 7)
- *“Children’s talking, thinking and reasoning are, by definition, immature. They are often inconsistent. Their thinking can be arbitrary, simple and naïve. These qualities of children and youth are not in themselves wrong—they are the result of the fact that human beings do not spring from the womb fully formed in body or mind. Even Jesus had to grow in wisdom and stature.”* (Robin Boisvert, “Water Baptism and Your Child”)

C. Children Are _____ –

- *“This does not mean that children are sinless or that they are mature. It means that they are helpless and needy and utterly dependent on their parents for what they need. Moreover, they have a kind of natural humility in that they do not make pretense of self-sufficiency. They accept their limitations and lose no sleep over not being able to drive a car or earn a living or run a computer. They are happy to depend on their mother and father for what they need. They are models of happy trust in the protection and provision of their parents.” (David and Sally Michael, *A Vision for Ministry to Children and Their Parents*, p. 8)*

A. Children Are in Desperate Need _____

- *“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 that 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 child-rearing.” (Tedd Tripp, *Shepherding Your Child’s Heart*, p. 145)*

IV. As Parents, We Are In A Position Of Great Need.

A. Because of Our _____ – (see above)

B. Because of Our _____

- **Parental _____** - Remember that our parenting is not “outside” of the progressive sanctification going on in our lives. God is a proficient multi-tasker and he is at work in *our* lives *through* our children. God, in his sovereign wisdom, has specifically arranged for you to be the parent of these particular children with the purpose of your sanctification in mind.
- **Parental _____** - Many times our struggle with parenting reveals sin issues in our own lives. Certain periods of parenting can be particularly hard because they tend to bring out the worst in *us*. Children don’t create our sins they reveal the sins that were already there. Effective parenting begins with us identifying and correcting the sins that keep us from effectiveness.
- **Some Common Sins of Parents**
 - Anger (harsh, unkind, critical)
 - Uncharitable Judgment

- Unforgiveness and bitterness
- Laziness (idols of ease and comfort)
- Selfishness
- Materialism
- Pride (in truth, each of these sins begin with pride)
 - Wanting to be recognized and appreciated as a good parent by others
 - Wanting to be respected and appreciated by your children
 - Unwillingness to admit wrong in your actions or wisdom
- Self Righteousness
- Self Pity
- Fear of Man
- Disobedience (failure to instruct and discipline, spoiling your child)
- Fear and Unbelief

- **Application** - Stop and do a sober assessment here. What sins are being revealed in your parenting? Anger? Unbelief? Self-pity? Impatience? Self-righteousness? Fear of man (i.e. your kids)? Sloth/resignation? Bitterness? Ungodly comparison?

A Moment for Reflection: So, what sins *are* being revealed in *your* parenting? Think back over the past few days and identify a specific situation in which sin in your heart was revealed. Specifically and biblically describe that sin.

- **Another Application** - When we sin against our children, we must be willing to humble ourselves and ask forgiveness. We cannot allow moments of selfishness, impatience and anger to “just fade away.” As we confess our sin and ask forgiveness, it will cultivate trust and openness and provide an example of humility and repentance.

So, when was the last time you asked your child for forgiveness? Does your practice provide a good model? (E.g. Acknowledge sin - “I know what I did was wrong.” Express sorrow – “I realize that hurt you and I’m sorry for that.” Ask for forgiveness – “Will you forgive me?”)

iii. Because of “_____”
Pressures –

- We live in a culture that regularly and sometimes very strenuously says: don’t impose; don’t restrict; don’t punish; don’t cause discomfort; don’t deprive; don’t squelch; etc.

- *“To my eyes, a parent always yielding, and a child always having its own way, are a most painful sight;--painful because I see God’s appointed order of things inverted and turned upside down;--painful, because I feel sure the consequence to that child’s character in the end will be self-will, pride, and self-conceit.” (J. C. Ryle, *The Duties of Parents*, pp. 20-21)*
- *“And be not afraid, above all, that such a plan of training will make your child unhappy. I warn you against this delusion. Depend on it, there is no surer road to unhappiness than always having your own way. To have our wills checked and denied is a blessed thing for us; it makes us value enjoyments when they come. To be indulged perpetually is the way to be made selfish; and selfish people and spoiled children, believe me, are seldom happy.” (J. C. Ryle, *The Duties of Parents*, p. 30)*

V. God Is _____ Us In Our Parenting! And Has _____ To Help Us In It.

*“His divine power has given us **everything we need for life and godliness** through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness.” 2 Peter 1:3*

*“He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, **graciously give us all things?**” Romans 8:32*

*“**God . . . gives grace to the humble.**” James 4:6*

- **Parenting and the Gospel** – How can we be “Gospel-Centered” in our parenting? At least in three ways. We should be gospel-centered by bringing the gospel *to* our children. We should be gospel-centered by bring the gospel to bear *in* our parenting. But we should also be gospel-centered by bringing the gospel to bear *on* our parenting. **Because of the gospel there is grace available to you for your parenting!** (Treasure Romans 8:32 in your parenting!) There is grace for forgiveness for where you have failed. There is grace for places that you want to see change. There is grace in the form of instruction in God’s Word. There is grace for stamina and perseverance. There is grace for everything you need!
- **Application Questions** –

In the pursuit of, or experience of, having children, where were/are you tempted to question God’s goodness, wisdom or sovereignty? Where do your beliefs need to change?

Do you believe God desires to help and to guide you in your parenting of your children? Where specifically do you struggle with unbelief about change in your life? In your children's lives?

In what area of relating to your children do you need to appropriate more of God's grace?

Do you believe that God desires to reveal his grace to your children?

Where do you see evidence of God's grace and activity in your life? In your children lives?

A Moment for Reflection: What is presently the greatest challenge to your faith in your parenting?

- **God is for you in this task!** *He* has given this task to you. *He* has a purpose he is seeking to accomplish. *He* is eager for your success and *he* is ready to supply all that you need. Remember that he is getting things done in your life as well so you can expect this task to be challenging but do not interpret that as failure or as fate. *God* is at work in your parenting and is deeply committed to your success! So, "go forward and obey. It is just in this going forward that God will meet us."

PARENTING BY GRACE

Sweet Privilege, Serious Responsibility

Session Two – Bringing Them Up: Training and Instruction

Introduction

*“These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. **Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.**” Deuteronomy 6:6-9*

*“Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. ‘Honor your father and mother’—which is the first commandment with a promise—‘that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth.’ Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up **in the training and instruction of the Lord.**” Ephesians 6:1-4*

“I know well that God is a sovereign God, and doeth all things according to the counsel of His own will. I know that Rehoboam was the son of Solomon, and Manasseh the son of Hezekiah, and that you do not always see godly parents having a godly seed. But I know also that God is a God who works by means, and sure am I, if you make light of such means as I have mentioned, your children are not likely to turn out well. Fathers and mothers, you may take your children to be baptized, and have them enrolled in the ranks of Christ’s church;--you may get godly sponsors to answer for them, and help you by their prayers;--you may send them to the best of schools, and give them Bibles and Prayer Books, and fill them with head knowledge;--but if all this time there is no regular training at home, I tell you plainly, I fear it will go hard in the end with your children’s souls. Home is the place where habits are formed;--home is the place where the foundations of character are laid;--home gives the bias to our tastes, and likings, and opinions. See then, I pray you, that there be careful training at home.” (J. C. Ryle, *The Duties of Parents*, p. 36)

A parent's responsibility is to train their children and to be the _____ influence in their lives. Only God's grace can change a child's heart, but he involves us as parents to be the primary means of grace.

I. The Key Biblical Passage – Ephesians 6:1-4

“Children, obey your parents **in the Lord, for this is right**. ‘Honor your father and mother’—**which is the first commandment with a promise—‘that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth.’** Fathers, **do not exasperate your children; instead**, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.”

A. God's Instructions to _____ – Notice the very clear and very limited instructions God gives for children. They are to “**obey**” their parents and “**honor**” their parents. While honoring includes the idea of obedience it adds the quality of respect so that what the Lord commands is **respectful obedience**.

Notice that this commandment is with reference to _____ parents.

[Note: The phrase “in the Lord” carries the same meaning as the phrase “as to the Lord” found in the surrounding verses (cf. 5:22; 6:5) and the phrase “for this pleases the Lord” found in the parallel passage in Colossians 3:20. The point that is being made is “Children, obey your parents as a way of submitting to God's authority” not “Obey only those parents who are believers.” Scripture is clear that if a choice must be made we are to obey God rather than man (Acts 5:29) but that is not the point being made in Eph. 6:4. That point is not even raised.]

➤ **What does _____ look like?** – Obedience should be **immediate** (taking into account the child's age and the situation) as opposed to deliberately delayed through argument/debate or diversion. It should be **complete**, not partial or token. It should be **joyful**, i.e., without grumbling or complaining.

Look for _____-**responsiveness** on the part of your child. Obviously the external behavior of obedience is important but we are seeking to cultivate a heart that increasingly loves to obey. Remember that children need to be *trained* in this obedience and it is our job to do all that we can to *help them obey* (more on this below).

“Parents, determine to make your children obey you, though it may cost you much trouble, and cost them many tears. Let there be no questioning, and reasoning, and disputing, and delaying, and answering again. When you give them a command, let them see plainly that you will have it done. To my eyes, a parent always yielding, and a child always having its own way, are a most painful sight;--painful, because I see God's appointed order of things inverted and turned

*upside down;--painful, because I feel sure the consequence to that child's character in the end will be self-will, pride, and self-conceit. You must not wonder that men refuse to obey their Father which is in heaven, if you allow them, when children, to disobey their father who is upon earth. Parents, if you love your children, let **obedience** be a motto and a watchword continually before their eyes.” (J. C. Ryle, *Duties*, pp. 19, 20-21)*

Note: It is important to differentiate between things that call for patient instruction over time (e.g. manners, skills, wisdom) and situations that require immediate obedience. To attach the weight of immediate obedience to things that need patient instruction is a sure way to exasperate and even embitter your child.

B. God's Instruction to Fathers/ _____

Notice that God's instruction to us is also very clear and limited. First, we are to “**bring them up**.” This is the same word used just a few verses earlier—“*For no one ever hated his own flesh, but **nourishes** and cherishes it*” (5:29). So, “to bring them up” means to “nourish,” “love,” and “care for.”

*“Train up your child with all tenderness, affection, and patience. I do not mean that you are to spoil him, but I do mean that you should **let him see that you love him**. 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 . . . You must set before your children their duty, but if affection be wanting in your treatment, your labour will be all in vain.” (J. C. Ryle, *The Duties of Parents*, pp.4-5)*

If you don't have the _____ that this is God's will for you it is unlikely that you will invest in the ways necessary for this to happen.

Next, we are instructed to “bring them up” by means of “**training**” and “**instruction**”. “Training” refers to a comprehensive equipping for life but is especially focused on the shaping of the *will* through *discipline* (both proactive and corrective). “Instruction” is the shaping of the *mind* through *teaching*. It is training by means of the spoken word.

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

"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." – Campbell Morgan

Parents, we must take seriously our responsibility to intentionally and actively train our children through _____ instruction and careful discipline. This is what God has _____ us to do.

Application: A word about the very real possibility of “exasperating” our children – There are several things that are sure to exasperate and potentially embitter our children: constant criticism, ridicule, neglect of relationship, favoritism, disrespect, harshness, unrealistic expectations, unclear expectations, inconsistent discipline, hypocrisy, self-righteousness, failure to teach them the things of God. Let’s do a sober inventory here. Next time one of your children is exasperated (biblically understood) ask the hard question—“What in *me* provoked that?”

Note: See Appendix A for more relating to the topic of exasperating children.

Moment for Reflection - Are any of the above-mentioned things present in your parenting? What action steps need to be taken to get rid of whatever might be a source of exasperation? Humbly invite your spouse into this evaluation process.

Summary - Our children’s responsibility of respectful obedience dovetails perfectly with our responsibility to train and instruct. The major reason for our responsibility is to help them fulfill their responsibility (i.e. we are to “train” and “instruct” **for the purpose of** helping them to “obey”). And the major reason for their responsibility is to help enable us to accomplish what God is seeking to get done in their lives through our parenting (i.e. they are to “obey” **so that** our “training” is effective).

II. _____ **Instruction**

*“Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. **Talk about them** when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.” Deuteronomy 6:4-7*

[**Note:** There are two basic areas in which we will need to instruct: 1) **in obedience** which we will cover under the heading of “Discipline” and 2) **in the ways and Word of God** which we will cover here.]

A. **Instructing in the _____ and _____ of God**

Carrying out Deuteronomy 6 means that parenting must involve intentional and diligent instruction in the following areas:

- The Gospel
- God
- The scriptures
- The spiritual disciplines
- How to battle sin
- Wisdom
- To love the church
- How to relate with people
- How to work
- Living skills
- Academics

****Note: See Appendix B for specific examples relating to each of these categories of teaching.***

Another way to describe this responsibility is to say that the _____ of instruction is to help our children form a Biblical worldview. A biblical worldview is a way of understanding that the truths of scripture relate to, inform, and impact every area of our lives. Children must be instructed to think biblically and respond biblically.

B. Instructing by _____ – All effective parenting begins with and is built upon your own example. Modeling always precedes instruction. Our teaching involves simply explaining to our children what they are already observing in our lives.

“Fathers and mothers, do not forget that children learn more by the eye than they do by the ear. No school will make such deep marks on character as home. The best of schoolmasters will not imprint on their minds as much as they will pick up at your

fireside. Imitation is a far stronger principle with children than memory. What they see has a much stronger effect on their minds than what they are told . . . Think not your children will practice what they do not see you do. You are their model picture, and they will copy what you are. Your reasoning and your lecturing, your wise commands and your good advice; all this they may not understand, but they can understand your life.” (J. C. Ryle, *Duties*, p.31)

*“Not long ago, after I had spoken on the subject of biblical worship at a large metropolitan church, one of the elders wrote to me to ask how I would try to get across my main points to children (fourth to sixth graders). He was referring in particular to things I had said about Romans 12:1-2. I responded by saying that kids of that age do not absorb abstract ideas very easily **unless they are lived out and identified**. The Christian home, or the Christian parent who obviously delights in corporate worship, in thoughtful evangelism, in self-effacing and self-sacrificing decisions within the home, in sacrificial giving to the poor and the needy and the lost—**and who then explains to the child** that these decisions and actions are part of gratitude and worship to the sovereign God who has loved us so much that he gave his own Son to pay the price of our sin—will have far more impact on the child’s notion of genuine worship than all the lecturing and class-room discussion in the world.”* (D. A. Carson, *Worship by the Book*, pp. 62-63)

Application – Are your children observing the following in your life? Humility in repentance (i.e., acknowledgment of sin and request for forgiveness when you’ve sinned against them)? Respectful speech toward you spouse? Toward them? That you respect the authorities you’re under? Genuine heart-felt worship in the corporate meeting? Genuine love for Jesus expressed at home?

[**Note:** There is a very helpful teaching on “Authentic Example” in the “Gospel-Centered Parenting” set by C. J. Mahaney.]

C. _____ **Instruction** –

- **Capturing _____ for Instruction** – The critical factors here are *attentiveness* and *time*. Make it a priority to spend time just “hanging out” with your children and when you are with them make sure your mind is fully present with them. It would be hard to overemphasize the importance of “planning” for this “spontaneous” time. So much of your child’s processing of life occurs circumstantially and it cannot be scheduled. We need to make time to be together with them so that we can be present when the thoughts and questions come and the life-situations occur and so

we can then seize the opportunity to “instruct” from God’s point of view. **Make it a priority to be *with* your child.**

- **Creating _____ for Instruction** – This is for specific planned instruction in the ways of God and the Word of God. While there are many areas of conduct and character that will need instruction (for example, some basic training issues are: coming when called, looking in the eyes, responding to no, learning to say please and thank you, changing attitude when adjusted, respect for adults and an adult environment, not interrupting, kindness to other children, serving others, greeting adults, sitting quietly), we should certainly include instruction in: 1) reading and applying God’s Word, 2) prayer, and 3) worship.
What might some of these contexts be?
- **Discipline** – (see session three)
- **“Family” Instruction** – family “devotions”, family reading, dinner conversation
- **Individual Instruction** – breakfast/lunch “dates”, individual devotions, bedtime routines
- **Overnight Retreats** – these are wonderful opportunities to **get away** with your child for the specific purpose of covering pertinent topics and addressing issues of sanctification in a relaxed, unhurried setting. (These also end up making great memories for you and your child.) Prepare your child for these ahead of time—give them an idea of what to expect and create some anticipation for the special time together.

III. Building _____

A parent’s responsibility is to train their children and to be the primary influence in their lives. Only God’s grace can change a child’s heart, but God involves us as parents to be the primary means of this grace. In this process, *our personal relationship with our children is the most important factor.*

- God has set for us the _____ for our relationship with our children.

“How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God.” I John 3:1

“I kneel before the Father, from whom all fatherhood, in heaven and on earth, derives its name.” Ephesians 3:14-15

*“This free gift of acquittal and peace, won for us at the cost of Calvary, is wonderful enough,—but justification does not of itself imply any intimate or deep relationship with God the judge. In idea, at any rate, you could have the reality of justification without any close fellowship with God resulting. But contrast this, now, with adoption. Adoption is a family idea, conceived in terms of **love**, and viewing God as father. In adoption, God takes us into His family and fellowship, and establishes us as His children and heirs. **Closeness, affection and generosity are at the heart of the relationship.** To be right with God the judge is a great thing, **but to be loved and cared for by God the father is a greater.**” (J. I. Packer, *Knowing God*)*

- Our relationship with our children should be **characterized** by _____, tenderness, patience and love. Remember that the phrase “bring them up” (Eph. 6:4) means that we are to *nourish, love and care for* our children.

*“Train up you child with all tenderness, affection and patience. I do not mean that you are to spoil him, but I do mean that you should let him see that you love him. Love should be the silver thread that runs through all you 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. . . Children’s minds are cast in much the same mould 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 . . . let them see this, I say . . . **[Work] hard to keep up a hold on your child’s affections.**” (J. C. Ryle, *Duties*, pp. 4-5, 6)*

- **So, let us pursue a lifetime of rich relationship—both friendship and fellowship—with our children.** How might we do this?

_____ **for your children.** Intercessory prayer should be the fountainhead of your nourishing of your children and it will ensure that there is a spiritual dimension to your relationship with your children.

Express your affection physically. This should be _____. This should be lavish. This should never be reserved as reward or withheld as punishment.

Give them daily focused _____. Make sure this is not marked by distraction or tiredness. Listen with your whole self—eyes, face, posture, verbal response. Seek to actively understand. Listen with special attention to matters of the heart. Hear every confession. Listen for what is behind questions.

Daily encourage your children. Share your _____ in them. Commend them especially for growth in character. Help them to see God at work in their lives.

Have fun together often—just the two of you. Remember, you are seeking to build a life-long relationship and this will require making many positive memories together. Read with your children. This is a great opportunity for close time together.

Make your life in the local church a deeply _____ experience. Worship *together*. Find ways to serve *together*. Anticipate Sunday *together*. Pray for and love the people of the church *together*. Make sure the local church figures largely and with great affection in your children's memories.

Moment for Reflection – In which of the above areas do you feel you could most fruitfully grow?

Some Suggestions for Making Memories

➤ **A Daily Rhythm**

➤ **A Weekly Rhythm**

➤ **A Yearly Rhythm**

A Final Word – Remember, God is for us in our parenting and has grace to help us in it. This is no less true in our “training” and “instructing” than it is in our task in general. He has promised to give us everything we need for this serious responsibility of parenting. God *is* at work, and he is *deeply committed* to our success. Live in the good of this grace!

PARENTING BY GRACE
Sweet Privilege, Serious Responsibility

Session Three – Bringing Them Up: Training and Instruction (cont.)

Introduction – The _____ of Blessing

IV. _____ “Corrective” Discipline

*“He who spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is **careful to discipline** him.”*
Proverbs 13:24

“Discipline your son, for in that there is hope; do not be a willing party to his death.”
Proverbs 19:18

“Do not withhold discipline from a child; if you punish him with the rod, he will not die. Punish him with the rod and save his soul from death.” Proverbs 23:13-14

“The rod of correction imparts wisdom, but a child left to himself disgraces his mother.”
Proverbs 29:15

“Discipline your son, and he will give you peace; he will bring delight to your soul.”
Proverbs 29:17

(see also Proverbs 17:21, 22:6, 22:15, 23:24)

A. Biblical Reasons for Discipline

- Discipline is commanded by God
- Discipline is _____ by God
- Discipline is necessary because of the sinful predisposition of the child
- Discipline is necessary to establish parental authority

- Discipline is necessary for our child's _____
- Discipline is preparation for saving grace

“It is natural to be tender and affectionate toward your own flesh and blood . . . take heed that this does not make you blind to your children’s faults, and deaf to all advice about them. Take heed lest it make you overlook bad conduct, rather than have the pain of inflicting punishment and correction. . . Spoiling is a very expressive word, and sadly full of meaning. Now it is the shortest way to spoil children to let them have their own way,--to allow them to do wrong and not to punish them for it. Believe me, you must not do it, whatever pain it may cost you unless you wish to ruin your children’s souls.” (J. C. Ryle, Duties, pp. 24-25)

B. Common Temptations Parents Face Regarding Biblical Discipline

- A lacking faith or conviction in the authority/wisdom of the _____
- A misunderstanding of true _____
- A fear of child _____
- A fear of exasperating the child
- Laziness
- An overwhelming sense of discouragement or defeat

Moment for Reflection – Are you tempted to “overlook bad conduct” to avoid the hassle, inconvenience or work of correction? How frequently? Is there particular “bad conduct” that you are more prone to overlook?

- **There is such a thing as _____ compassion.** This is the parent who in the name of being merciful will shield his child from necessary and appropriate

consequences. If this parent could only see all the misery that this so-called mercy will unfold in the child's future, he would not think of it as merciful at all.

- To _____ is to love!

C. Categories of Behavior which Require Discipline

- Willful disobedience - When your child chooses to disobey a _____ command.
- Improper attitudes - When your child displays an attitude that they have been instructed as being sinful or inappropriate.
- Disrespect - Refusing to relate to others (adults or children) with kindness, humility and responsiveness.
- Lying - Refusing to admit or take responsibility for their words, attitudes or actions.
- Hurting others - Using physical or emotional means to hurt others.

D. Biblical Discipline is Concerned with _____ the Heart –

- Remember in discipline, as in all of parenting, the issue is the heart. This will help you to approach each discipline incident with a larger picture and broader purpose in mind. Contributing to heart-transformation should be the goal of all our corrective discipline. This will revolutionize your discipline! Rather than just dealing with the present situation and “getting it behind” us, we will see each incident as an opportunity in this sweet privilege of training their hearts!
- *“All behavior is linked to some attitude of the heart. Therefore, discipline must address attitudes of the 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.”* (Tedd Tripp, *Shepherding Your Child's Heart*, p. 22)

E. Steps in the Process of Corrective Discipline –

- Start by helping them to _____ in the first place. Instruct them very specifically toward obedience. Help them to know what obedience will look like. Position them for success.
- Make sure you have their attention. Get _____ contact.
- Instructions should be clear and _____.

For example, at early stages instructions like “get ready for bed” may be insufficiently specific. Better to say “brush your teeth and put on your PJs” until the child knows what “get ready for bed” means. Don’t overwhelm. Review, explain, demonstrate, but only as necessary. (If you have their attention and are understood, that’s enough.)

- If the instruction involves stopping or interrupting something, help your kids to obey by giving some advance warning (e.g. “Five minutes until supper”). This will give them time to mentally adjust and spiritually prepare.
- Get a verbal response (“O.K. Mom”). Keep working on this as it easily slips.
- Observe to see if they obey. Follow-up is crucial.
- Encourage and praise their obedience. Look for this and be glad in it!

Some Special Situations:

Anticipate situations where your children will face temptations and prepare them by careful instruction beforehand. Then tell them “If I see you start to _____, I’ll catch your eye or gently call your name. (Throw them a lifeline!) If you respond well to that there will be no further action needed. But if you don’t respond I will need to deal with the situation which will very likely be an embarrassment to you. Dad doesn’t want to embarrass you, but I will if that’s necessary.” This preparatory conversation becomes a point of reference both during the situation and after when you will want to circle back and evaluate how things went. **3 steps: Prepare. Observe. Evaluate.**

In conversations with your children, the moment any disrespect is detected, stop the conversation and say, “We’ll get back to that in a second but first we need to talk about your disrespectful tone.” If any disrespect continues, transition immediately to corrective discipline.

Summary

This kind of instruction not only helps our children to obey but it provides a clear basis on which to determine if corrective discipline is needed. When there is clear disobedience or defiance, corrective discipline needs to be administered.

Moment for Reflection – Are there specific things you could be doing (or doing better) to *help* your child to obey?

1. Assess the situation –

- This should be done as _____ as possible after the situation.
- This should be done by the _____ if present.
- It should be done in _____ if possible (though at this stage the mother or another sibling may need to be present to help relate the incident).
- If possible do this in a regular and comfortable place.
- Seek to speak in a softer than usual tone.
- It is very important that you take the time to _____ carefully here while at the same time keeping aware for any evasive or stalling tactics.
- If more than one child is involved, once the situation is assessed and if it is determined that there is a need for a spanking, deal with each child privately.

2. Address **your child's** _____ –

- We must engage them, not just reprove them. This should not be a monologue. We should not simply talk to our children, but with our children. (It will be hard to draw your child out if you have established a pattern of “speaking your mind” first.) The finest art of communication is not learning how to express your thoughts; it is learning how to draw out the thoughts of another. As parents we need to learn this skill. We need to learn how to help our children articulate their thoughts.
- Help your child to clarify the issue in their heart. Some questions that might be helpful in this process are: What were you thinking and feeling at that time? What were you seeking to accomplish when you did that? Why was that so important to you? Was that the most important thing to you at that moment? What was it you were afraid of in that situation? What was it you were trying to get? What made you so angry? If you could go back and do something differently, what would you change? There are three issues you are seeking to help them see in asking these questions: 1) the nature of the temptation, 2) the possible responses to this temptation, 3) his/her own sinful response.
- Obviously, in this probing of the heart you are not limited to the data of the immediate situation. Your observation of your child in other situations will prove helpful. How does he act around his peers? How does he respond when sinned against? What excites him? What does he enjoy talking about?
- It will take time to draw your child out and bring biblical adjustment to their thinking. MUCH PATIENCE REQUIRED.

3. Explain **the** _____ **for and the nature of the correction** –

- Clarify the specific sin issue that requires the discipline: “God’s Word says . . . and you’ve been taught . . .”; “Dad/Mom said . . .”
- Let your children know that there is room for appeal but that they must do it in a way that is respectful. If they need clarification, give it but do not let a secondary issue cloud the main issue.
- The child should specifically acknowledge their wrong-doing.
- Speak the good news of the Gospel to your child. Remind them of their need for a Savior and tell them that there is one and tell them what he did for them.
- Tell them what form of discipline is coming (consider age-appropriateness) and the amount.

- Remind your child that you are disciplining them because you love them--“Yes, this is going to sting but this is to help protect you from a far greater sting.”
4. Administer **the corrective discipline** –
- Forms of corrective discipline – reproof, loss of reward, the “rod”
 - Children should be trained in the habit of receiving discipline willingly—“Come to Dad, lean over knees, need to receive spanking, need to be still, there is to be no screaming, need to stay close afterwards, no comments or criticizing.”
 - This instruction and the discipline must be delivered calmly and with self-control. You must not discipline your child in anger!
 - The “rod” should be a sturdy but flexible instrument, able to cause discomfort without harm or injury.
 - Follow the discipline with lavish affection. Don’t rush into this but at the right time commend your child for receiving the correction, express your gratefulness for him, and affectionately affirm your love for him.
5. Facilitate all necessary _____ –
- Help your child to ask for forgiveness from _____. Pray with them. Encourage them to be specific in their confession and request for forgiveness.
 - Speak words of forgiveness on behalf of God to your child. This is a wonderful privilege! Assure them of God’s ongoing love for them and of his promise to help them. Press this upon them and then encourage them when they face the temptation again to cry out to God for help.
 - Encourage them to ask Dad and Mom for forgiveness for the disobedience/violating of standards.
 - After the child is reconciled with you (i.e. comforted, peaceful, affectionate, communicating) encourage them to go to any other wronged person and ask for forgiveness. (Remind them of the three essential parts: Acknowledge sin – “I know what I did was wrong.” Express sorrow – “I realize that hurt you and I’m sorry for that.” Ask for forgiveness – “Will you forgive me?”) You may need to attend them in this.

Moment for Reflection – What aspects of your corrective discipline could use improvement? What steps will you take to begin a process of lasting change?

Leading by _____: An Important Reminder – God is at work in our children’s lives. We need to be both confident in this reality and help our children to be aware of it. As you relate to your children, what are they more aware of, evidences of God’s grace in their lives or areas in need of correction? (It’s going to be hard for *them* to be more aware of God’s grace if *you* are not more aware of God’s grace in their lives.) If they are more aware of areas in need of correction you will eventually exasperate your child. May all our children grow up in a rich environment where they are the recipients of our affection and encouragement as we observe evidences of grace in their lives. This way, when we need to correct them, which we will most certainly need to do, the correction will be effective because the *environment* isn’t one of correction—the environment is one of grace.

Application – How recently have you informed each of your children of evidences of God’s grace in their lives?

Summary – When our children are very young and don’t know the difference between right and wrong we will frequently need to use corrective discipline to train them **after** they have done something wrong. As they grow older, part of growing is being able to recognize something wrong **while** doing it and to respond to parents who point out their wrongdoing by stopping the wrongdoing in process. A major part of maturity is the ability to recognize something is wrong **before** doing it. This is wisdom and discernment and it is to this we are seeking to train our children.

F. Some Concluding Thoughts – Parenting With Faith, Parenting By Grace

Faith is a too-oft neglected dimension to our parenting. We can frequently find ourselves relying more on our parenting than on God. Godly parenting certainly requires great faith and we must make sure that we are *exercising* our faith—both in our **praying** and in our **obedience**. And there is every reason for us to be in faith. Remember, **God is for you in this task!** *He* has given this task to you. *He* is eager for your success and *he* is ready to supply all that you need. But remember also that he is getting things done in your life as well so you can expect this task to be challenging. Do not interpret those challenges as failure or as fate. *God* is at work in your parenting and *he* is deeply committed to your success! Remember the encouraging and true words of J. C. Ryle, “*I know that God says expressly, ‘Train up a child in the way he should go,’ and that **He never laid a command on man which He would not give man grace to perform.** And I know, too, that our duty is not to stand still and dispute, but to go forward and obey. **It is just in the going forward that God will meet us.**”*

Bring the good news of the Gospel to bear on your parenting.

“He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all, how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things!” (Romans 8:32)

APPENDIX A 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 admonition of the Lord with a pure heart and not a self-serving motivation. 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.”

A. Love

1 Corinthians 13:4-8 *Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. 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.

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 to manifesting forbearance (to hold oneself back from, to control oneself when provoked) under provocation or strain. Our children's sins can try our patience (*our sins try God's 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 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

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...*

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 frequently discipline. 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.

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, 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."

III. THINGS TO AVOID

A. Overindulgence

Our children need and desire boundaries. Weak, inconsistent enforcement of standards will eventually frustrate and anger children. So will spoiling them by giving them all that they want or not setting high, yet reasonable standards or goals.

B. Favoritism

To be unjust or to favor one child over another will anger and exasperate. Especially if some of your children are easier to discipline, more compliant, of sweeter temperament, etc.

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 our children that nothing they do is ever good enough.

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.

Appendix B
WAYS WE PROVOKE OUR CHILDREN TO ANGER
(Material Provided by Brent Detwiler)

1. Not constantly communicating our love for them.
2. Not regularly letting them know what a privilege it is to have them.
3. Not communicating our gratefulness to God for them.
4. Being resentful of them or bitter toward them.
5. Withholding our affection from them and emotionally withdrawing.
6. Not resolving conflicts with them.
7. Not having regular times of in-depth communication.
8. Not initiating conversation and drawing them out.
9. Not being available and spending time with them.
10. Enforcing rules without a growing relationship.
11. Not encouraging and affirming progress they are making.
12. Not commending strengths and character virtues.
13. Focusing on their faults.
14. Constantly communicating dissatisfaction and disappointment.
15. Not thanking them for deeds of service and commending them for accomplishments.
16. Constantly evaluating them to the neglect of encouraging them.
17. Forgetting the good things in their lives.
18. Expressing constant displeasure and disappointment.

19. Constantly pointing out how far they fall short.
20. Using ridicule and shame to motivate.
21. Being impatient and having unrealistic expectations.
22. Addressing externals rather than internals.
23. Majoring on minors.
24. Imposing restrictions without reasons.
25. Not modeling the values and beliefs we hold them accountable to.
26. Not confessing our own sins.
27. Demanding obedience without relationship.
28. Not disciplining them under control.
29. Disciplining without love and acceptance.
30. Not commending them for repentance and responsiveness to discipline.
31. Speaking harshly or scolding.
32. Reacting angrily.
33. Inflicting extreme or severe punishment.
34. Accusing them and believing the worse about them.
35. Making unrighteous judgments and coming to unwarranted conclusions.
36. Showing favoritism between the children.
37. Comparing them to other children.

APPENDIX C

Training Children in the Ways of God

What to Teach

1. The Gospel

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. 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, 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.”

- Sin
- The Law
- Holiness and wrath
- The gospel itself – what happened and why it was important
- The proper response to the gospel
- The effects of the gospel – justification, reconciliation, glorification
- In time – the “behind the scenes” working of God – election, regeneration
- Assurance

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. God

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

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 Love Him
- To Worship Him
- To Fear Him
- To Obey Him

TEDD TRIPP (Shepherding, 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?”

3. The scriptures

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.*

- What they teach in whole, in part and by topic
- How to apply them to one’s life

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."

4. 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 (and other age appropriate books)
- Scripture memorization
- Meditation
- Worship

5. How to battle sin

Ephesians 4:20-24 *But that is not the way you learned Christ!—assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus, to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, 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
- Identify the godly fruits and roots of virtue
- How to appropriate grace to change
- The power of confession and accountability

6. Wisdom

Proverbs and other parts of scripture contains practical wisdom necessary for a prosperous life. Teach them to love and seek wisdom.

Proverbs 2:1-5 *My son, if you receive my words and treasure up my commandments within you, making your ear attentive to wisdom and inclining your heart to understanding; yes, if you call out for insight and raise your voice for understanding, if you seek it like silver and search for it as for*

hidden treasures, then you will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God.

7. To love the church

Other than the gospel itself, the most critical factor in their 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?”

- Commitment
- Service
- Community Life
- Giving
- Evangelism

8. 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. 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.' The second is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these."*

- Humility
- Respect
- Consideration
- Loyalty
- Servanthood
- Communication
- Conflict resolution
- 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 selecting 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."*

9. 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. Teaching your children a proper work ethic is therefore vital for their lives. Children must learn - responsibility, diligence, discipline, excellence, initiative, satisfaction in a job well done, etc. Make sure to set reasonable standards for 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...*

10. Living skills

Cooking, cleaning, shopping, car and home maintenance and repair, money management and the value and use of money, etc.

11. Academics