

Grace For Raising Children

Joseph Arthungal

"Next to thy God, thy parents."
William Penn.

Also By Joseph Arthungal
Grace For Family Life

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A Word of Thanks

I give thanks for the faith of my father and mother who gave me God's Word from my childhood; for the many brethren in Christ who have loved me and helped me with fatherly care; for the example of many fathers and mothers I know who exemplify the message contained in this book; for the example of my three children from whom I have learned and continue to learn, and who to this day serve the Lord; and for the example of my dear wife who devoted her life to raise our children and to serve the children and families in the church.

I write to share the blessings with as many parents as possible. Please, therefore, share this book with other parents.

Special Note: The reader would notice some thoughts and sentences repeated. It is hoped that these repetitions fit the contexts, and enable reproduction of these sections as self-contained articles for distribution.

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Preface

The message contained in this book is intended as a help for parents, children and mentors who lead children to the Lord Jesus Christ.

This book is as much a testimony as it is a teaching. I write as a father and grandfather, as a minister in a local church, and as a caring Christian who has lived in the West (U.S.A) and in the East (India). I believe that the principles set forth here are of universal relevance. I have written what has been tested by the Word and in practice, and has been found good within my family and by many others.

Our children and youth have great trials. Worldliness meets their eyes everywhere. Sin entices them through television, videos, radio, music, magazines, books and many other means. Christian parents can help. Shepherds in the church can help. Every caring Christian can be a mentor for a child or a youth. Please read this book attentively, looking up the Scripture references as you read.

The Vocation and the Blessing

Being a Mother or a Father is a Vocation

What is the most important ministry of Christian parents?

When the risen Lord committed the ministry to Peter, He first said, “*feed my lambs*” (John 21:15). Then He said, “*Feed my sheep*” (John 21:16). The lambs come first! Feeding Jesus’ lambs is the most important ministry in the home and in the church. When the disciples hindered the infants from being brought to Jesus, the Lord said: “*Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not...*” (Luke 18:16).

The mother and the grandmother are the first instructors of the newborn. Timothy’s faith came from the words and examples of his mother and grandmother (2 Tim. 1:5). He grew up to serve God with tears (2 Tim. 1:4). His first mentors were his mother and grandmother. Read Prov. 31:1-31 to see how a mother may teach her child. The father and the grandfather may help. Starting from Prov. 1:8, the first seven chapters are a father’s instructions to his son.

Remember: You can teach your children only as you are willing to learn from your Heavenly Father yourself. Come to God in humility, and read and meditate on His Word. The Holy Spirit Himself will teach you what you may impart to your children. This book is just a guide, but *the* Guide is the Holy Spirit.

How early in childhood should we start? The Psalmist said, “*But thou art he that took me out of the womb: thou didst make me hope when I was upon my mother’s breasts*” (Psa. 22:9). A child on the mother’s breast may receive God’s grace. Through whom? First and foremost through the mother. It was Timothy’s mother (and possibly grandmother also) who taught him the Scriptures from childhood (2 Tim. 1:5).

“Next To Thy God, Thy Parents”

“Next to thy God, thy parents,” wrote William Penn. The parents stand in the place of God for the child until the child comes to the state of accountability. Standing in the place of God, the parents are

co-workers with God in serving their children. This great responsibility should humble us, and make us thankful. Parents are the child's guides to the heavenly Father. Because of the uniqueness of every parent and the uniqueness of every child, parents need to seek God earnestly for wisdom.

No one is more important in a child's life than the mother, though occasionally there may be exceptions. A child's future rests upon the mother more than on any other person. This shows a mother's honor, and her need for support from her husband. The grandparents' roles complement those of the parents.

A child should learn discipline during the first five years of his life, and be trained in godliness by twelve years of age. Such was the understanding among the ancients. The caring parent should ask: "How may I best mentor my child during the first five years? How may I best mentor my child during the first 12 years?"

The premise used in this book is that the first five years of the child should emphasize training of behavior (obedience), and the next seven years should emphasize training in God's Word. It is assumed that the moral conscience of the child is formed during age 3 to 5, and his personality is essentially molded by age 10 to 12. These early years are the time to plant the seed of God's Word and water it; it will grow and bear fruit in the sunshine of God's revelation in years to come. In this task parents are co-workers with God.

The teaching presented in this book is rooted in Prov. 22:6: "*Train up a child in the way he should go [and in keeping with his individual gift or bent], and when he is old he will not depart from it*" (The Amplified Bible). Take note of (1) the task, and (2) the promise in this verse. The task: train up a child. The promise: the trained child will not depart from God's way. Let us confess this, believe this, pray with this, and inherit this.

God Has Blessed Families

It was a family that God created first and blessed in Eden: Adam and Eve. In blessing Abraham, God said, "*...by you and your offspring shall all the families of the earth be blessed, and bless themselves*"

(Gen. 28:14, The Amplified Bible). This blessing is upon our families through faith in Christ (Gal. 3:8-9). Therefore we should bless our families, and speak to them words of blessing. When we bless those whom God has blessed, God's blessing comes upon us (Gen. 12:3).

The family is for fellowship (Ps. 68:6). God is the God of all the families of Israel (Jer. 31:1). Every family in heaven and earth is named for the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ (Eph. 3:14-15). Such is the glory of the family before God, and such is the blessing of God upon the family. This awareness made Paul thankful and worshipful (Eph. 3:14-15).

If we would build the Church, we should build the family which is the basic unit of the Church family – the household of God (Eph. 2:19). Satan who tried to destroy the first family in Eden is attacking the families today. The ministry in the Church should aim at defending the family against Satan.

The Family Extends Beyond the Parents and Children

The blessed “family” in Gen. 12:3 and 28:14 is a “community.” It includes the extended family, is gathered in with the family of God, and it welcomes the strangers (visitors) and the needy. There is enough blessing for all in the family that is blessed of God. It is like the garden of Eden where living waters flow forth. It is like Noah's ark, a refuge. It is a miniature Millennium where righteousness dwells. It is a miniature Jerusalem where God's peace reigns. It is the small unit of the local Church where love unites and comforts. In such a family, God's blessing settles quietly like dew from heaven.

This is realized in our home when we have received grace to bless the immediate family, the extended family, the Church family, and the strangers (visitors). The words of Rev. 22:17, “*the Spirit and the bride say, Come*” are fulfilled in such a family; and the water of life spoken of in the same verse flows forth for the thirsty.

May we not believe God for such blessings to rest upon our families? We may. Are these not our inheritances in Christ? They are. Let us believe, and let us bless with the blessings with which we ourselves are blessed in Christ.

A Peaceful Home For Children

A Peaceful Home Needs To Be Guarded

A peaceful home and godly family are a paradise on earth, but the old Serpent is as active as ever. The word of faith however is that Jesus Christ has crushed the head of the Serpent. The battle is real still, but the Serpent's head cannot hurt those who are in Christ. We as parents may come to Him who crushed the Serpent's head, so that we may receive grace and wisdom to preserve our home and family as a peaceful place for the children. Does the Serpent have power in our home? Jesus Christ has power to save us from the power of the Serpent, and in Him and through Him we may overcome. God grants grace and wisdom for what He requires of us. Our part is to come to Him in humility, ask in faith, keep coming, and keep asking in faith.

Parents, let us pray: "O God our Father, we come to You. We offer ourselves to You to love You and to obey You with all our heart. Grant that we know our sin (Ps. 139: 23-24) and repent, so that our child may hear Your words from humble hearts and pure lips. Grant Lord that our child will see Christ's love in our love, and Christ's character in our conduct. Give us wisdom to train up our child in the way he should go. May Your peace abide in our hearts and in our home. Amen."

The First Fundamental For A Peaceful Home: Parents in Unity

"As fish in water, children should live in the atmosphere of love. There is a thirst for love in a child's heart. Disharmony between parents makes the children feel orphaned." *A grandfather (Ittiavira Varghese)*

God desires that the parents be one in heart and purpose. If this oneness is impaired, the very foundation for building a family would collapse. If this oneness is secure, we can build.

Many families suffer for this one reason: the parents are not in unity. They love their children, but the children see the parents' discord, and this impairs the emotional and spiritual wellbeing of the children. Satan has power in such a home. The children are not free to express

themselves (though the parents may suppose otherwise), because there is a sense of fear in the air.

How may we know that a husband and his wife are in unity? If they are in unity, there is joy and blessing when they pray together (Ps. 133). When they are not in unity, it is difficult to pray together.

Differences between husband and wife are normal, but these can either purify their love and draw them closer, or impair their love and pull them apart. Here we need grace. By grace we are what we are (1 Cor.15:10).

Discord is the work of the flesh – selfish, sinful human nature – arising from lust that wages war in our body (Jas 4:1). As soon as we sense discord, we should hasten to the place of prayer and repentance. Do not put it off for a single day. Let not the sun go down on your discord. Once we humble ourselves and repent, we have grace to speak peaceably to each other, and pray together. Thus Satan is conquered.

Are we willing to hasten to God? This is the main thing while the solution to the problem may seem unclear. ‘Is my heart in a humble state, O Lord?’ let us pray. This is the door that opens into freedom and victory.

Dear father and mother, settle this first fundamental once for all. ‘O Lord, we confess that You made us one, we are therefore one. While the disagreement hurts, let not our commitment and our love be hurt. Help us Lord. Amen.’

Some Practical Steps: Read slowly the following verses from Prov. 24:3-4: *“Through wisdom a house is built, And by understanding it is established; by knowledge the rooms are filled with all precious and pleasant riches.”*

Let us pray: ‘Lord I ask for wisdom that only You can give so that I may build my family as You have ordained. Lord, You have promised to give wisdom liberally to those who ask in faith. Amen.’

God placed the first family in a perfect setting, but things went wrong.

Satan won. Many godly couples who begin well run into Satan's trap. Great sorrows come upon the family. But our Lord Jesus Christ in His sufferings and death crushed the Serpent's head for our sake. To Him we must come, and keep coming daily.

We know that it is better to maintain good health than to fall sick and then seek healing. Good health in marriage lies in fellowship and communication between the spouses. What would hinder such fellowship and communication? Our Lord said we must not let the sun set on our anger; if we do, hardness of heart will set in. Darkness lies ahead unless we hasten to repent in godly fear. Remember: When the husband draws near to God and the wife draws near to God, the spouses are drawn close to each other.

Anger: Every time you speak in anger to your spouse, something dies in the spouse: Tenderness in your spouse's heart towards you is killed by degrees. Not a few husbands – wives too – tend to think that such events are normal in families. It is true also that spiritual death reigns in such homes. Let us awake: anger is murderous even in a believer.

“I am sorry,” you would say later, and comfort yourself that you are a good Christian. Please know that saying “I am sorry” does not always mean true repentance without which sin is not washed away; nor is hardness of heart broken. Once you have spoken or acted in anger, you cannot have fellowship unless your repentance is whole-hearted. God's hands joined both of you. You sin against that oneness when you speak or act in anger.

True repentance involves humbling yourselves and praying with your spouse until you are assured that God has restored you to where you fell from. God only knows what it will take; He will show you as you pray with your spouse. If you have hurt your spouse, and her (or his) parents know it, it may be necessary for you to go to the parents as well, humble yourselves before them and ask them to pray for you. Why? Those parents were also hurt by your actions. The same applies to children who have been hurt by your behavior. You need to be accountable to someone (perhaps your shepherd in the church you attend) so that you will have godly fear in your heart to keep you

from sinning. Christ will bruise the Serpent's head in your life, and heal wounded hearts.

Some ask forgiveness without repentance, just to satisfy their conscience and console themselves that they have done what is needed. Has your joy when you pray together been restored? Otherwise it is possible that your repentance was not as God desires.

Please remember: "*A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger*" (Prov. 15:1). A grandmother I know advises spouses, "Be kind and gentle to each other."

Misunderstanding: Misunderstanding can cause great sorrow. When our love is pure, we sense the other's sorrow, and hasten to comfort, to clarify, and to be open. Here we need great grace from God. Is the fellowship hindered? If it is, there probably is some misunderstanding. Seek God's wisdom to know how you may speak a word to comfort your spouse. Let us go the second mile. We do not want to fall into the trap of the Serpent who ruined our first parents. Search your heart before God: 'O Lord, is my love for my spouse pure? Is my heart tender? Is my heart in a humble state? O Lord help me.'

A Great Principle for Victory: While the problems remain, while you endure, please affirm the truth: 'Lord, You joined me and my spouse to be one, we are one, and shall so remain by Your grace.' It is this true confession that breaks the enemy's power.

When Things Go Wrong

To The Wife: While the husband is the head of the wife, he needs the help of the wife to fulfil his role as the head. Often it is the patience and quietness of the wife that brings the grace that calms the husband's anger and impatience. God's will is that we counter the abundance of sin (like a husband's anger) with the abundance of grace (like the patience of a meek and quiet wife), see Rom. 5:20. In the matter of grace, therefore, the wife may in fact lead the way for the husband who may be enslaved to anger. See 1 Pet. 3: 1-2.

Please read 1 Sam. 25:41, and see the humility of the wise and virtuous Abigail who saved her husband from David's sword. Dear sister, you

may very well be the lifeline in your home as it concerns humility, patience and grace.

Stand before God with this confession: ‘Lord God my Father, I commit myself to You and humble myself before You. Show me my sin, O Lord, so that I may repent, and thus destroy the power of Satan in my family. Lord I intercede for my husband, and confess that You joined us to be one, we are one, and shall so remain by Your grace that abounds where sin abounds. Lord, I earnestly pray for the anointing I need to speak words of wisdom, and for grace to endure in love. Lord, I need Your grace, and for this I humble myself. Amen.’

To The Husband: Settle this in your heart: God will honor you if you “*honor*” your wife (1 Peter 3:7; Prov. 12:4). This single realization may help resolve some of your problems, and bring blessings.

Stand before God with this confession: ‘Lord God my Father, I commit myself to You and humble myself before You. Show me my sin, O Lord, so that I may repent, and thus destroy the power of Satan in my family. I trust You to bruise the Serpent’s head in my family. Lord I intercede for my wife, and confess that You joined us to be one, we are one, and shall so remain by your grace that abounds where sin abounds. Lord, I earnestly pray for the anointing I need to speak words of wisdom, and for grace to endure in love. Lord, I need Your grace, and for this I humble myself. Amen.’

To Both Husband and Wife: A possible first step: Request the spouse to pray with you. It is possible that your prayer may melt his or her heart, and God may honor you immediately.

Seeking the help of a brother or sister in the Lord: Pride may keep you from seeking help. True humility wins by yielding to God. Even without opening up all the details, ask a faithful, caring brother (for the husband) or sister (for the wife) to pray with you for an unspoken need. God may immediately honor you, and set in motion the means of grace to bring harmony. It is as if everything depends on your humility, and your prayer.

Seeking the help of your parents: If the parents have faith, ask for

their prayer without necessarily opening up all the details. Are the parents able to counsel you and your spouse? If so, seek their counsel. Earnestly seek God for wisdom.

Seeking the help of your shepherds in the church: Again, you have the option of asking for prayer for an unspoken need without first revealing all details. The prayer of a righteous man avails much. If you at a later point should reveal any of the details, it may be necessary that you consult your spouse first.

If anything beyond what is described above seems needed, follow the counsel of your shepherds in the church. Patience and kindness – *“love suffers long, and is kind,”* 1 Cor. 13:4 – may be the answer to unresolved situations. Examples: (a) When spouse cannot communicate well, (b) When one spouse does not want to pray. (c) When the spouses feel powerless to help.

On the Offensive Against the Enemy

(1) Pray to God earnestly to free you from the past, and make you a new husband or a new wife. Commit the past to God. Focus on whatever is good and lovely (Phil. 4:8), and keep thanking God for His goodness.

(2) Read John chapter 2 (wedding at Cana where Jesus made water into wine): As soon as you sense that the good wine of first love in your heart is running out, hasten to the Lord who made the water into wine; please do not delay.

(3) Read God’s Word together, praise and thank God together, and pray together daily.

(4) Understand that moments of emotional and physical intimacies are pure and blessed in God’s sight, and cherish them. This is very vital for peace and joy in marriage.

(5) Is it possible for the family to live on the income of the husband (assuming that your priorities are according to God’s will and not driven by worldliness), so that the wife may devote herself to the

family? This is a very blessed choice that would facilitate the four preceding items. Please read Luke 8:14, and see how the “*cares and riches and pleasures of this life*” can keep us from God’s best.

The Parent – Child Bond

The Heart-Bond

In the last two verses of the Old Testament (Mal. 4:5-6) we read that God will send Elijah the prophet to turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers. We are therefore warned that the heart of the children and the heart of the fathers will be turned away from each other in the last days, and a prophetic ministry will be needed to turn their hearts towards each other. How great is our need for grace here.

Mother – Child Bond: Proverbs 31:2 shows the intimate mother – child bond: “*What, my son? And what, the son of my womb? And what, the son of my vows?*” Note carefully the words “*my son,*” “*the son of my womb,*” “*the son of my vows.*” These words reflect the emotional, the physical and the spiritual bond between the mother and the child. It is in this bond that the mother knows her child, learns from the child, and ministers to the child.

Giving comfort to children is the supreme motherly virtue. “*As one whom his mother comforts, so I will comfort you; And you shall be comforted in Jerusalem*” (Isa. 66:13). This defines a mother’s heart (as corresponding to God’s) in the deepest sense: giving comfort. God created the mother’s heart, reflecting His own. The mother is a comforter for her children. The Holy Spirit is called the Comforter. God is called “*the God of all comfort...*” (2 Cor. 1:3). The foremost virtue of a Christian mother therefore is the comfort of the spirit she can give to her own children as well as other children. In this ministry she is a co-worker with God. Every Christian mother would do well to seek to be filled with the Holy Spirit – the Comforter – so that she may fulfill this blessed ministry.

Father – Child Bond: If you would see a fundamental aspect of the bond between a father and a son, please read Genesis 22:7-8, and note the conversation between Abraham and Isaac. Isaac addresses

his father as “*my father*,” and not merely as “father”; Abraham addresses his son as “*my son*,” not merely as “son”. This ancient example shows us the emotional bond between the father and the son. From this bond arises the desire to honor the father. Whether or not you use the word “my,” please seek to have the emotional bond that is implied by the “*my*”. May this be true for both father and mother, as well as for sons and daughters.

Compassion – loving forgiveness – is the supreme fatherly virtue. “*Just as a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on those who fear Him*” (Ps. 103:13). This defines a father’s heart (as corresponding to God’s) in the deepest sense: compassion, that is, forgiving love. Our heavenly Father loves us with forgiving love. The foremost fatherly virtue of a Christian father therefore is forgiving love. Forgiving not only to some extent or to a great extent, but all the way, even as God forgave us in His Son. Such a virtue is not ours except it be imparted to us by grace. Let us as fathers seek the face of God for this supreme virtue that should adorn every Christian father.

A picture of such forgiving love is offered to us in the father of the prodigal son. The father’s heart melted (“*felt compassion*,” Luke 15:20) at the sight of the son who had ruined himself and the father’s wealth. Not a thought of condemnation, but only compassion! Of course the returning son was a repenting son; but before the son expressed his repentance in words, he was in his father’s embrace.

Learning From The Children To Become Like Them

We may learn faith by looking at a child sleeping in the mother’s arms in blissful rest. We may learn to be joyful by observing the innocent joy of children in little things. We may learn easily and quickly how to forgive by watching how easily and quickly children get over offenses. Unless we learn these precious but simple lessons of life, how can we expect to communicate with our children?

The Son of God became a man like us to feel like us and communicate with us the words of eternal life. By God’s grace we can become like little children, and speak words of life to them. For this we should

receive the revelation of Christ as the meek and lowly One (Matt.11:29), and love His meekness and lowliness. Great and lasting victories are won in the home and in the church by those who seek to know Christ as the meek and lowly One.

Children are blessed by the words and demeanor of parents who manifest the meekness and lowliness of Christ. A single silent look from Christ brought tears of repentance from Peter (Luke 22:61-62). A caring, loving look from a parent can instruct, inspire healthy fear, and correct.

We stand in need of grace to help our children. Grace seeks the humble heart as water flows to the lowest spot. It is that simple. Let us come to Christ in humility, and keep coming. Let us follow the One who humbled Himself and received grace to be obedient unto death, even the death of the cross (Phil. 2:8). Jesus looked powerless to those who crucified Him; and that powerlessness was the power with which He “*spoiled principalities and powers*” (Col. 2: 15); and for this very reason, God exalted Him (Phil. 2:9). Is this not the ultimate lesson for living in victory? May our hearts seek the humility of Christ.

The Lord said: “*Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not*” (Mark. 10:14). Please note the words that immediately follow: “*...for of such is the kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein*” (Mark 10: 14-15). See in Matt. 18:4 Jesus’ explanation of being like a child: “*Therefore whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven*”. Let us learn from our children how to be like them in receiving the kingdom of God.

Parents’ Care for Grown Children

The twelve sons of Jacob were fathers themselves when blessed by their dying father. If they were to receive the blessing at that stage, surely they had to be revering their father at that time. Jacob himself was in his late seventies when he obeyed his mother, and obtained his father’s blessing. Sons and daughters, esteem and inherit your parents’ blessing. Even as a queen, Esther obeyed her uncle Mordecai

who reared her (Esth. 2:20). Sons and daughters, esteem and submit to the spiritual care of your parents.

Job's seven sons and three daughters were grown and living in their own houses. Yet Job cared for their spiritual welfare. From Job 1:5 we may learn: (1) At the conclusion of the days of feasting, "*Job sent and sanctified them.*" This implies that the caring father invited the sons and daughters to come to the altar at his home, and participate in the prayers and offerings for them. Job was sensitive to the possibility of sin entering his children's hearts while they were feasting. A caring father has the duty and authority to call even his grown children to repentance. From the place of feasting, let us hasten to the place of sacrifice. (2) Job rose up early in the morning, and offered burnt offerings according to the number of his sons and daughters. Burnt offerings for ten children, one offering for each! This teaches us how earnestly we should pray (as if offering a burnt offering; remember Christ's offering of Himself for our sake) for each of our children, even grown ones. (3) Job did this continually; this was his custom (Job 1:4-5).

Encouragement For Expectant Mothers

The Baby in the Womb Shares Your Experience in The Spirit

The first nine months of a person's life is spent in the mother's womb, and therefore are days of maximum intimacy with the mother. The parents, especially the mother, can do much during these days to bless her offspring and shape its future.

It has been said that if the mother's thoughts during pregnancy are centered on God and godly things, such thoughts leave their impressions on the child's personality. The baby in Elisabeth's womb leaped for joy as the mother rejoiced at the voice of Mary's salutation (Luke 1:44). The same baby was to be filled with the Holy Spirit, while yet in the mother's womb (Lk. 1:15). If the baby in the womb shares the mother's joy, we may infer that a mother's experiences in the Spirit would impart grace to the baby.

It was the hearing of Mary's voice that caused the baby in Elizabeth's womb to rejoice; or, we may say that Mary's voice caused Elizabeth

to rejoice, and Elizabeth's joy aroused the baby inside her. Every husband may give joy and peace to his pregnant wife by his voice, and that joy and peace will reach the baby. When we greet or speak to or deal with an expectant woman we would do well to be tender and kind, remembering the impact it can have on the baby as well.

God has placed great honor upon motherhood and mothers. The highest honor was conferred upon motherhood when the Son of God took his abode in a virgin's womb to undo the damage done to mankind at its infancy. Peter instructs the husband to give honor to the wife (1 Pet. 3:7), esteeming her highly (Prov. 12:4) and praising her (Prov. 31:28). The Scripture has conferred a common blessing and honor on all women – both mothers and others – in that the first woman was named Eve (life or life-producer; “*because she was the mother of all living*”) prior to her having children (Gen. 3:20).

After Childbirth

Naming the Newborn: The naming of the newborn had prophetic significance in ancient times (Gen. 4:25; 5:29). The meaning of the name signified both the character and the potential of the child. What does this teach us? While the child is in the womb, the mother and father may pray for the child, and receive faith from the Lord concerning the child's future. Thus they can bless the child with the appropriate name when it is born.

Care for the Mother: Please read Leviticus chapter 12. On this passage the Matthew Henry Commentary says, “There was some time of strict separation immediately after the birth. During these days she was separated from her husband and friends...” In ancient cultures it was recognized that, depending on the health of the mother, several weeks (or even a few months) of rest and nutrition were necessary for her to return to normal life. This would also promote health and happiness in family life.

Breast Feeding: In Biblical times the mothers nursed until the child was two to three years old. Nursing has great health benefits for both the mother and the child.

Training the Children in Obedience and Godliness

The Vision Precedes Training

In Prov. 22:6 [The Amplified Bible]: “*Train up a child in the way he should go [and in keeping with his individual gift or bent], and when he is old he will not depart from it.*” Based on this verse:

One: As a parent, please seek the Lord to reveal the gifts He has given your child, and how He has called him to serve. This is the **vision**. The Lord will open to you this vision progressively, and you may share with the child accordingly.

Two: Encourage your child to seek the Lord concerning the gifts God has given him, and what God’s calling is on his life. Help the child to learn to listen to the Lord’s voice as he reads the Scriptures and prays. Please talk with the child, listen patiently, and pray with him.

The parents may discern by prayer, observation, and faith the way the child should go. This is the **vision** (the way the child should go) towards which the parents may then train the child. Timothy’s mother and grandmother had a vision for him. Samuel’s parent’s had a vision for him. John Wesley’s mother had a vision for him.

Remember that each child is unique: God has a plan for the child. Are the parents able and willing to see that plan? God will show you the plan if you observe the child and pray for the child. The parents are the first level mentors. Mentors in the church can help also. Timothy’s grandmother and mother mentored him as a child (2 Tim. 1:5; 2 Tim. 3:15). This is our model. Timothy’s faith came from the words and examples of his grandmother and mother (2 Tim. 1:5). He grew up to serve God with tears (2 Tim. 1:4).

A Mother’s Prayer, Her Vision, Her Vow: See how Samuel’s mother prayed in 1 Sam. 1:12: “*O Lord of hosts, if thou wilt... give unto thine handmaid a man child, then I will give him unto the LORD all the days of his life...*” Samuel was to serve the Lord as a lifelong Nazarite (not to drink the fruit of the vine, not to cut his hair, not to defile himself by going near a dead person). By such prayer, Hannah

“poured out” her soul before the Lord (1 Sam. 1: 15). Hannah named her son ‘Samuel,’ “because I have asked him of the Lord” (1 Sam. 1: 20; ‘Samuel’ means: name of God, or God hears). Such was the **vi-sion** Samuel’s mother had for her son, and she named him accordingly. The mother and father may seek the Lord for a vision concerning the child before conception (as Hannah did) and afterwards.

Training in Obedience and Godliness

As we receive a vision (the way the child should go), we may pray for wisdom for specific tasks designed to equip the child for the way he should go (and keep him from the way he should not go).

Please read the following scriptures passages with close attention:

Eph. 6:4 (The Amplified Bible): “*Fathers, do not irritate and provoke your children to anger [do not exasperate them to resentment], but rear them [tenderly] in the training and discipline and the counsel and admonition of the Lord.*”

Col.3:21 (The Amplified Bible): “*Fathers, do not provoke or irritate or fret your children [do not be hard on them or harass them], lest they become discouraged and sullen and morose and feel inferior and frustrated. [Do not break their spirit.]*”

From the above two verses note:

- In training up the children, fathers are warned twice not to provoke the children to anger: do not exasperate them to resentment; do not be hard on them or harass them; do not break their spirit. An angry father may see results short-term, but the impressions left on the child could do long-term harm.
- Discipline means (a) instruction, and (b) correction which includes chastisement. Note that instruction (instruction that corrects, molds, and perfects the mental faculties or moral character) is the primary part, and correction is supplementary. See the emphasis on instruction in Prov.1:8: “*My son, hear the instruction of your father, And do not*

forsake the law of your mother.” The parent’s word is law for the child.

- Note the emphasis on “counsel and admonition.” Admonition means to warn gently.

Meekness: Meekness is required in those who instruct (2 Tim. 2:25; 1 Pet. 3:15; Matt. 11:29) as well as those who receive instruction (Matt. 11:29; James 1:21).

Incentives for Discipline and Training in Obedience and Godliness: Timely, regular rewards, and praise are highly effective in training. This may make other means of training more fruitful.

Means for Training in Obedience and Godliness

Deut. 8:5: “*You should know in your heart that as a man chastens his son, so the LORD your God chastens you.*” Our heavenly Father chastises us, “*that we may be partakers of His holiness*” (Heb.12:10). Parents chastise their children for training in obedience and godliness. **Chastisement in principle applies always as the denial of the child’s will where needed for discipline and training, and as a punishment when a known law (mother’s, father’s, or God’s) has been willfully broken. This training (learning self-denial) should start early in childhood, and follow a plan with specific goals for the benefit of the child.** The means of chastisement for training in obedience and godliness include the following (some of the items below may overlap):

Very young children (under two to three years of age): Prov.13:24 (The Amplified Bible): “*He who spares his rod [of discipline] hates his son, but he who loves him disciplines diligently and punishes him early.*” As we start early, use of the rod should be appropriate to the child’s tender age. **The objective is to teach self-denial and obedience.** It is the author’s view and experience that for children below two to three years of age, use of the rod to inflict pain should be very minimal, but enough to teach the child to fear the rod. Rod for very young children is usually a small, smooth, wooden stick. Note that there is the ‘*use of the rod*’ and the ‘*use of the fear of the rod*’; the latter may minimize and make more effective the former.

Older children: Please review the following scriptures.

[Important Note Concerning the Old Testament vs. New Testament: The grace in the Gospel and the work of the Holy Spirit could incline the hearts of the children to godliness and to the parent’s counsel more than in the Old Testament dispensation.]

Prov. 22:15: *“Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child; The rod of correction will drive it far from him.”* Note the word *“rod of correction”*. *“Correction”* here means reproof or chastisement. The purpose is to save the child from his or her foolishness.

Prov.29:15: *“The rod and rebuke give wisdom, But a child left to himself brings shame to his mother.”* The purpose of the rod and rebuke is to give the child wisdom.

[The above two verses imply that the parents need to be thoughtful in the use of the rod of correction.]

Reproof (reprimand) and Rebuke (sharp reprimand): Prov. 1:23: *“Turn at my rebuke; Surely I will pour out my spirit on you; I will make my words known to you.”* The purpose of rebuke is for us to turn to God. A rebuke should turn the child to the parent, and lead to heart-to-heart communication. See Mal. 4:6: *“And he will turn The hearts of the fathers to the children, And the hearts of the children to their fathers, Lest I come and strike the earth with a curse.”*

Prov. 23:13-14, The Amplified Bible: *“Withhold not discipline from the child; for if you strike and punish him with the [reedlike] rod, he will not die. You shall whip him with the rod and deliver his life from Sheol (Hades, the place of the dead).”* Reed – stem of a tall slender grass of wet areas. The words *“strike and punish”* indicate pain – pain such as a reed can inflict, not any worse. Some parents use belts and such other tools – or, their own hands (the parent’s hands are to give love and comfort, and for gentle patting) - to inflict severe pain and even injuries. This is evil in God’s sight, and will risk serious physical harm and emotional estrangement of the child from the parent. Emotional damage may come through harsh words and unkind dealings also.

If you are a person who struggles with anger, please seek the Lord humbly so that you would not harm your children. If you were abused as a child yourself, you need the comforting grace of the Holy Spirit to be renewed as a new creation, so that your past would not cause you to harm your children. Children can be very trying; parents may become frustrated. Parents may sincerely feel they are responding to the child's behavior, while they may be responding more out of their own anger and frustration. This could easily result in harmful chastisement. Let us remember Paul's exhortation to the fathers not to provoke the children to anger, and Jesus' words not to offend the little ones.

Ps. 23:4, The Amplified Bible: "*Yes, though I walk through the [deep, sunless] valley of the shadow of death, I will fear or dread no evil, for You are with me; Your rod [to protect] and Your staff [to guide], they comfort me.*" With a staff or rod the shepherd (1) corrects the disobedient sheep, and brings them back when they are wandering, and (2) defends the sheep against their enemies. Note the word '*comfort.*' For this we need the help of the Holy Spirit who is the Comforter (John 14:26).

Disapproval of parents: This can lead the child to repentance.

Sorrow in the parents' heart: This also can lead the child to repentance.

Restrictions and Loss of privileges: These can be corrective.

Firmness: This is of great importance at any age of the child.

Consistency: This is of great importance at any age of the child.

Communication: This is of great importance, "*especially counsel and instruction*".

Lead by example: This should go with all the above.

A prayerful mother or father may use any of the above means of (a) according to the ability of the child to respond, and whether he understands the principle involved, and (b) being careful not to emo-

tionally estrange the child from the parent's love.

Difficult Cases: What about when nothing is working to the point of exhausting the parents, especially when a mother has several small children in her care? The parents would do well to pause, and consult and pray with mature Christian parents. We should not react from despair, and end up in unbelief. God is faithful. *“Through wisdom a house is built, And by understanding it is established”* (Prov.24:3). Let us seek the Lord in humility for wisdom to help the ‘lambs’ Jesus has committed to us (John 21:15). When it comes to this, every child – parent combination is unique, and very much in need for grace from God.

A Special Note About Bed Time for the Child: Is it desirable to let a child fall asleep crying for the mother? Having consulted mothers from both the West and the East, here is the author's counsel: It is good for the mother or grandmother or father or grandfather or some other caring person to be with the child or near the child as he or she is being put to bed and is about to sleep. This is comforting for the child, and would contribute to his or her emotional health.

Commandments For The Children

Little children have only one commandment: Obey your parents (Eph. 6:1). The training therefore should focus on teaching them to obey. **Caution:** Parents, are your hearts humbled in obedience to your heavenly Father?

Older children: 1)Honor your father and mother (Eph. 6:2). 2)Cleanse your way by taking heed to God's Word (Ps. 119:9). 3)Keep constantly the father's command and the mother's law (Prov. 6:20-22; 23:22, 25). The training, therefore should focus on teaching them God's word as part of daily living, and as a testimony in the life of the family (Deut. 6:7-9). **Caution:** Parents, are you committed to love and obey God's Word?

Training the Children to Honor Father and Mother: While the first blessing to the first parents was to have many children (Gen. 1:22), the first commandment with promise to the children was to honor their parents (Ex. 20:12); and the promise was long life on

earth with related benefits. Paul repeats this in Eph. 6:2-3. It is so very important, therefore, for children to learn to honor their parents from an early age.

“Every one of you shall revere his mother and his father, and keep My Sabbaths: I am the Lord your God” (Lev. 19:3). Note how solemn this commandment is. The commandment to revere the parents and the commandment to keep the Sabbaths are joined in one sentence, made most solemn by the addition of *“I am the Lord your God.”* How blessed it is to believe and obey this!

Encourage the children to speak lovingly and reverentially to parents, not casually as they may do with peers. This needs training especially in a culture where such fine distinctions are fading, and most everyone is addressed on a first name basis. Instruct and train the children to listen to the parents with respect. This is highly regarded in eastern cultures, and is worth learning.

Respect for the elderly – not parents only – is pleasing to God. *“You shall rise before the gray headed and honor the presence of an old man, and fear your God: I am the Lord”* (Lev. 19:32). Note, here also, how solemn the commandment is. In some Eastern countries, the younger people rise when an elderly person walks in. In every culture there are traditions that show respect to the aged. We should train the children to enjoy the friendship of older people in the extended family, in the church and in the community. These older people are a rich source of wisdom.

Important: As parents we make mistakes, and some of these would be painful to the children. We should hasten to repent, and ask forgiveness. Saying ‘I am sorry’ without heart-felt repentance may comfort the conscience, but will only perpetuate sin and harden the heart. Saying ‘I am sorry’ with heart-felt sorrow for sin will bring cleansing by the blood of Jesus, and victory over sin. This makes the parents honorable in the eyes of the children.

The First Five Years of Your Child Training in obedience and in God's Word

Love That Instructs And Disciplines

Psychologists say that the moral conscience of a child is formed during age 3 to 5. How precious, how critical, those first five years are! The training that parents should give to a child in the early years is far too important to let it slip. It is the very foundation of the child's whole future. Let us therefore earnestly heed the scripture that says: "*Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it*" (Prov. 22:6). Here we are given a great task - "*train up a **child***" - and a glorious promise - "*he will not depart from it.*" This gives us faith to apply ourselves to the task with a sure vision of our children's destiny.

Impressions from a godly mother begin to impart grace to an infant. Samuel was born in answer to prayer. His mother had "*prayed unto the Lord, and wept sore*" for a son whom she would "*give unto the Lord all the days of his life.*" Samuel's parents raised him for the Lord such that even as a child Samuel was able to minister before the Lord. "*Samuel ministered before the Lord, being a **child**, girded with a linen ephod*" (1 Samuel 2:18).

Timothy had a godly mother, and a godly grandmother. The Scripture says that the sincere faith that was in Timothy dwelt first in his grandmother and in his mother (2 Tim 1:5). Here we see three generations of faith, the third producing a man who served God with tears (2 Tim 1:4), of whom Paul writes: "*from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation*" (2 Tim 3:15, New American Standard). Timothy knew the sacred writings from childhood. He grew up to be a man of God's Word and a co-worker of Paul.

Giving love, immersing the child in love, is the foremost element in conditioning the child for training in godliness. As water is to the fish, so is love to the child. Most training in godliness is painful to the carnal nature, and such pain is assuaged by floods of love. Such

giving of love is in God's nature (John 3:16), and we partake of it through the Holy Spirit. (Rom. 5: 5).

Often parents are tempted to let the child have its way when it is very young. They think it is love for the child, but it in fact is self-love, not love for the child. If a mother would watch her child closely, and ask God for wisdom (James 1:5-6) to correct and train the child, and work with the child according to the wisdom God gives, this is love for the child. It would be a life-long blessing to train a child in gentleness, respect for people and property, habits of cleanliness, orderliness, proper ways of speaking, and behavior at the dinner table.

Overseeing the Use of Television

A newspaper columnist wrote (Leigh Allan, April 22, 1999): "Many media batter us with violence, from movies to video games, but it is TV that is in our homes hours every day, that's embedded in our minds from early childhood, that makes the glorification of violence seem a proper part of life, that merges reality and fantasy in far too many minds." Along with violence, sin in many forms is made powerfully appealing on television.

While it does educate, television's main attraction is entertainment. The entertainment element comes with a value system, a culture, and a spirit. Often the good is mixed with the deadly, as sugar with poison. What is the poison? The value system, the culture, the spirit; over these your child has little control. The child simply swallows the poison coated with sugar. The sweet hides the deadly. The caring parent should ask: What is God's will concerning my family's exposure to television? What guidance is available to me from God's Word? What guidance is available to me from the other parents in the church? What is the witness of the Spirit in my heart? Have I really sought the Lord about this? How do I discern the damage already done to my child? What corrective measures can I take? What shepherding can I do from now on?

The answers to these questions will depend on the vision you have received from the Lord concerning the future of your child. Please ask: What is the TV doing to my child's innocence? Many godly

parents have chosen to raise their children free from TV. I personally believe that it is best for young children and teenagers to have the minimum possible exposure to modern television programs, especially entertainment designed to arouse and feed lustful thoughts that lead to sin. If they should watch TV (or use the internet), please shepherd them with vigilance. Consult with other parents in the church concerning the programs you should let the children watch. Monitor with care the effects on the children. The other parents in the church may observe the undesirable traits in your children's behavior which you may fail to recognize. But are they free to tell you?

Many parents allow their children to spend time in worldly television programs, movies and videos, bad literature and music. Addiction to rock music does much lasting harm to the thought patterns – and behavior – of children, like that of drugs. Before they are teenagers, the children have drunk deeply from the spirit of the world. Now they are teenagers. They continue to drink from the spirit of the world through friends. The parents begin to worry. The tastes of the children are vastly different from those of the parents. Sin has taken root, and soon will bear fruit. It hurts, and the parents grieve.

Even at this late stage we must cry out to God for help. It may be difficult with older children, but let us work earnestly with the younger ones. Let us remember the example of Samuel and Timothy. There is hope in God. Mothers, work with your sons and daughters, and draw their hearts to God's Word from childhood days. Don't wait until they are teenagers! It is much easier to bend a tender plant than a grown tree. "*Train up a child.*" we are told (Prov 22:6).

Children indeed need to play and have fun, but in wholesome company, and in purposeful activities. In consultation with other parents in the church, you may develop wholesome activities for your children and theirs. Such activities can be judged by asking: Is this activity turning my heart (or my child's heart) to God rather than away from Him? Is there a godly purpose behind this activity? What impressions are left on the mind of the children? We would do well to choose activities that focus on God's creation (like walking in the woods, working in the garden or with animals and birds, or visiting

the sick and helping them) rather than on man's work (like harmful entertainment on TV). The mind is easily defiled as it passively receives streams of ideas designed to arouse and satisfy fleshly thoughts. Contrast this with activities that involve physical exercise or training to develop skills. Let us also help the children to see the importance of enjoying doing things with the family, not just with peers.

As parents, what example are we setting for children in this matter? Many forms of evil entertainment on the TV may seem innocent or harmless. But if you would guard the purity of your heart, please ask in all sincerity: *Lord, how is this affecting my fellowship with you?* You will surely know the answer. On this hinges the state of your present moment, and the present moment affects the future.

I know the testimony of a Christian who grew up without TV. As a young adult he happened to read a book which, though educational, aroused impure thoughts. His spirit was grieved. He was warned by 1 Cor. 9:25: "*And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things...*" Please read verses 24-27 if you would see the power of this instruction.

What delights you most? If you give hours and hours of your time for things that feed the flesh, your longing for God and His Word will dry up. You go to church, pray, and read the Bible; and therefore your conscience rests secure. But what delights you most? What we delight in shows our true nature, whether we are godly or ungodly, whether we are spiritual or carnal. God has promised to make us joyful in prayer, and there are pleasures for us at His right hand. We may find delight in God's Word. These are reserved for those who would separate themselves from sin, and from the ways of the world. Formal religion may have a form that satisfies, but only the Spirit gives joy, the joy of the Lord.

Thank God if your delight is in Him and His Word. If not, please consider, and repent. Ask God to fill your heart with the Holy Spirit. God gives the Spirit to all those who ask. If we learn to delight in God and His Word in this life, we can be sure that the experience will continue in eternity. What shall we be in eternity? What shall we do

in eternity? For us who are in Christ, eternity will be a continuation of our life in God here. In this we may rejoice even now, and praise the One who gave His life for us. Now we see as through a glass dimly, but then face- to-face. That is the glory that awaits us. Amen.

Ages Six To Twelve

Intensive training in God's Word

Teaching By Word And Example

Psychiatrists say that a person's value system is locked in when he is around ten years of age. The intensive training until age 5 will prepare and condition the child for disciplined study of God's word during age 6 – 12. Here also parents are the primary teachers (especially as examples), and the church's role is supplementary. The children see in action in the daily life of the family the Word they are taught at home and in the church: Prayer, reading of God's Word, patience in trials, hospitality, frugality, punctuality, repentance, forgiveness, and, above all, unconditional love.

Let us learn from the example of Jesus as a child and as a teenager. It is written of Him: "*And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon Him*" (Lk. 2:40). Let us teach our children to pray and grow strong in the spirit as the child Jesus did. Let us give our children God's Word so that they will be filled with wisdom as the child Jesus was. Then God's grace will rest upon our children as it did upon the child Jesus.

By the time He was twelve years of age, Jesus had gained such knowledge of the Scriptures that He was able to sit with teachers, both listening to them, and asking them questions. All who heard Him were astonished at His understanding and answers (Luke 2:46-47). At this very young age of twelve, Jesus knew, "*that it was necessary (as a duty) for Me to be in My Father's house and [occupied] about My Father's business*" (Luke 2:49, The Amplified Bible). Even with such knowledge, Jesus remained "*(habitually) obedient*" to Joseph and Mary (Luke 2:51, The Amplified Bible). Let us keep before our children the example of Jesus as a child and as a

young boy. Let us show them the glory of learning God's Word, and of habitually obeying their parents.

The Responsibility Of The Fathers: Eli was judge and high priest in Israel, but "*his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not*" (I Samuel 3:13). But of Abraham, God said "...*I know him, that he will command (teach and command, the Amplified Bible) his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord*" (Gen. 18:19). It is a father's ministry to teach and command his children in the ways of the Lord. How shall a father teach and command? "*Fathers, do not irritate and provoke your children to anger - do not exasperate them to resentment - but rear them (tenderly) in the training and discipline and the counsel and admonition of the Lord*" (Eph. 6:4, The Amplified Bible). Fathers often are likely to get angry and provoke the children to anger. Paul knew this, and so he gives counsel. Let us take heed.

Again we read: "*You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up*" (Deut. 6:7). God's word thus becomes the center of life in the home. The father and the mother keep God's Word in their hearts, and it overflows in loving words to the children in ordinary conversations. The pressures of daily life often make this difficult. We therefore need to be diligent, heeding the exhortation to "*teach them diligently to your children.*" We may do this at the dinner table. We may do this when we travel. We have opportunity to do this especially during family devotions. Of the virtuous wife it is written: "*She opens her mouth with wisdom, and on her tongue is the law of kindness*" (Prov. 31:26). What a blessed ministry for a mother! When we love our children, we will discover new ways of communicating with them in daily life. This is fellowship. It is pure joy to see your child receiving God's Word trustingly from your lips.

Praying For, and With Our Children

Prayer is our life-breath both in personal life and in family life. How earnest and united is the prayer of a couple as they pray together? I believe here is where we experience peace and prosperity in marriage

and family. How earnest are we in praying for the children, and praying with the children? If we have a vision for our child, we may have specific goals to pray for, and to share with the child. The vision is communicated effectively when we pray aloud in the hearing of the child.

Such prayers are most important when the children are very young. At this stage, when the children hear the parents praying, they receive faith.

Imparting the Spirit

Let us emphasize an important point: Begin when the child is a child. The Lord Jesus Christ is calling the children to come to Him (Matt. 19:14). How early may we begin? *“But thou art he that took me out of the womb: thou didst make me hope when I was upon my mother’s breasts”* (Ps. 22:9). We may learn from this verse that as the mother nurses the child, she may also give him or her the pure milk of God’s Word in songs and stories and memory verses. As you pray for and with the child, the Lord will give you wisdom to minister the Word and the Spirit to the child. The mother’s role is prominent in the beginning, and the father joins in due time.

A mother or father who is walking in the Spirit will be able to impart the Spirit to the child’s heart, not the letter of the Word only. *“The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life,”* said Jesus (John 6:63). We are planting and watering the seed. God will give the growth. We must abide in faith for the future of the child even when the results don’t seem encouraging. Such faith on our part pleases God. *“And all thy children shall be taught of the Lord; and great shall be the peace of thy children”* (Isa. 54:13).

The children receive gladly and trustingly from Mom and Dad. The word of God will become a fountain of life in due time, and will keep them from drinking from the spirit of the world in their teenage years. God’s Word will be fulfilled that says, *“How can a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed according to Your Word”* (Ps. 119:9).

A Few Words From the Children to their Parents

(these are actual suggestions gathered from some children in 2001)

The father should encourage children to talk to the mother in making decisions. Listening to the mother should be emphasized.

Parents should not speak badly about other members of the church in front of the children. Little children should be encouraged to respect the authority of the other members of the church.

The children should grow up hearing the parents pray aloud for them, the family, and the church. This gives the children a sense of heritage.

The children should see the parents (especially the father) humbling themselves in difficult moments. This makes a deep impression on children. Parents need to show humility towards each other, before the children.

The children should have the opportunity to see that the parents are devoted to reading and studying the Scriptures. Children are impressed by what is important to their parents. Daily family devotions should be a regular part of the day.

The children should be assured that until they are married they are welcome to live in the home. There may be exceptions to this.

Arguing and fighting between older children and parents damages stability and peace in the home.

In dealing with children with problems, parents should not condemn them in word or thought. Such condemnation hinders the ability to pray and interact with grace.

The Christian family should seek to be free from the sins of the past generations (family problems between parents, grandparents, etc.) and strive to be reconciled with even ungodly relatives. The focus now should be establishing a godly heritage while demonstrating love, forgiveness, and acceptance of those who have done wrong in the past. [Note: We may have to be content with what is possible in some

difficult cases (see Rom. 12:18) and commit all things to God's sovereignty and mercy.]

The spirit of independence between parents and children, husband and wife, fosters the modern thought that the individual is free to act without regard to the effects on the family. Such a view is rooted in selfishness and pride.

The children need to see that parents live for God, the family and the church above everything else. Commitment to unconditional love towards the family and the church members on the part of the parents will make a lasting impression on the children.

The Church Family

The comforts we experience in the church are the comforts of the Spirit. The children learn to enjoy this from the saints who visit their home, as well as during times of fellowship in the gatherings of the church. This meets both the social and spiritual needs of the children, and conditions them for effective service in the Body of Christ in days to come. The relationships formed in the community of saints are an enduring fortress against the onslaughts of the world.

There are trials to be endured in the life of the church, and often the children also experience pain. This is an opportunity for growth in the Lord. Tender care by the parents is needed to comfort and instruct the children with love and God's word.

Parents would do well to integrate the life of the family in the life of the church, knowing that the two are ordained of God to be complementary. Opening the home for prayer and fellowship with other members of the church brings great blessings on the family. Home life and church life should be in harmony as much as possible in the experience of the children. May the home be a house of prayer for the family and the visitors. Is this possible? Yes, by the grace of God.

[Special Note: The reader may notice some thoughts and sentences in the preceding sections repeated in the following sections. It is hoped that these repetitions would help emphasize the message, and enable

reproduction of these sections as self-contained articles for possible distribution.]

The Christian Mother

Giving comfort to children is the supreme motherly virtue.

Motherhood is to be very highly honored by all.

The first occurrence of the word ‘mother’ in the Bible is in Genesis 3:20: “*Now the man called his wife’s name Eve, because she was the mother of all living.*” ‘Eve’ means life or life-producer. This name reveals a mother’s glory. Adam gave this name to his wife prophetically before she bore children! The grace of motherhood, therefore, belongs to all women, and we should esteem all women – especially older women – accordingly (1 Tim. 5:2). This understanding will help promote order and harmony in the home, in the church, and in the community.

Giving comfort to children is the supreme motherly virtue. “*As one whom his mother comforts, so I will comfort you; And you shall be comforted in Jerusalem*” (Isa. 66:13). This – giving comfort to the children – defines a mother’s heart (as corresponding to God’s) in the deepest sense. God created the mother’s heart, reflecting His own. The mother is a comforter for her children. The Holy Spirit is called the Comforter. God is called “*God of all comfort...*” (2 Cor. 1:3). The foremost virtue of a Christian mother therefore is the comfort of the spirit she can give to her own children as well as to other children. In this ministry she is a co-worker with God. Every Christian mother would do well to seek to be filled with the Holy Spirit – the Comforter – so that she may fulfill this blessed ministry.

The mother’s prayers, her tears, her vows, her vision, and her care: Samuel’s mother prayed (she “*prayed unto the Lord and wept sore*”) and made a vow to the Lord, and received her son in answer (1 Sam. 1:11). King Lemuel was the reward of his mother’s vows (Prov. 31:2). This creates a special bond in the spirit between the mother and the child. It was a mother – Eve - who first named a newborn in the Bible (Gen. 4:1). In ancient times either the mother (Gen. 4:1, 25;

29:23) or the father (Gen. 4:26; 5:3, 29; Ex. 2:22) named the newborn. The naming had prophetic significance: the meaning of the name signified both the character and the potential of the child. What does this teach us? While the child is in the womb, the mother (also the father) may pray for the child, and receive an understanding in the Spirit from the Lord concerning the child's future. Thus the parents can bless the child with the appropriate name when it is born.

Sarah's care for Isaac led to the expulsion of Hagar and Ishmael even against Abraham's wishes. God asked Abraham to do as Sarah wished (Gen. 21:12). It was Jacob's mother who guided him in securing his father's blessing. Such being a mother's care, her word should be law (teaching) for the children (Prov. 1:8; 6:20).

The faith of Timothy's grandmother and mother: Timothy had a godly mother, and a godly grandmother. The scripture says that the sincere faith that was in Timothy dwelt first in his grandmother and in his mother (2 Tim 1:5). Here we see three generations of faith, the third producing a man who served God with tears (2 Tim 1:4), of whom Paul writes: "*from **childhood** you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you wisdom that leads to salvation*" (2 Tim 3:15). Timothy knew the sacred writings from childhood. Who taught him? His mother and grandmother. He grew up to be a man of God's Word and a co-worker of Apostle Paul.

The mother's ministry in the household in leading the children to Christ: The filial piety (respect for parents) is the channel that guides the child's heart toward reverence for God. Children will grow up to appreciate God's love in the parents' love. This defines and glorifies the parents' example before young children. Correction has to be in reference to a model, not in reference to precept only. The mother and the father are the foremost role models for the children. Have we failed to see our calling? Have we failed to see our ministry? Let us hasten to the place of repentance.

We read: "*You shall teach them **diligently** to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up*" (Deut. 6:7). God's word thus becomes the center of life in the home. The mother (also the

father) keeps God's Word in her heart, and it overflows in loving words to children in ordinary conversations. The pressures of daily life often make this difficult. We therefore need to be diligent, because we are told to "*teach them **diligently** to your children*" (Deut. 6:7). We may do this at the dinner table. We may do this when we travel. We have opportunity to do this especially during family devotions. When we love our children, we will discover new ways of communicating with them in daily life. It is fellowship. It is pure joy to see your child receiving God's Word trustingly from your lips.

Let us emphasize an important point: Begin when the child is a child. The Lord Jesus Christ is calling the children to come to Him. Matt. 19:14. How early may we begin? "*But thou art he that took me out of the womb: thou didst make me hope when I was upon my mother's breasts*" (Ps. 22:9). We may learn from this verse that as the mother nurses the child, she may also give him or her the pure milk of God's Word in songs and stories and memory verses. As you pray for and with the child, the Lord will give you wisdom to minister the Word and the Spirit to the child. The mother's (and the grandmother's, as in Timothy's case) role is prominent in the beginning, and the father joins in due time. As the Word is received in the child's heart, the Spirit also is received. "*The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life,*" said Jesus (John 6:63). We are planting and watering the seed. God will give the growth. We must abide in faith for the future of the child even when the results are not encouraging. Such faith on our part pleases God. "*All your children shall be taught by the Lord, and great shall be the peace of your children*" (Isaiah 54:13). The children receive gladly and trustingly from mother and father as well as from grandparents. The word of God will become a fountain of life in due time, and will keep them from drinking from the spirit of the world in their teenage years. God's Word will be fulfilled that says, "*How can a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed according to Your Word*" (Ps 119:9).

A Mother's Role in Raising Children for the Lord

By Susannah Wesley

The author of the following passage was the mother of 19 children of whom 8 died in infancy. She spent an hour with every child once a week, instructing him or her in God's Word. She was the mother of John Wesley who brought revival to England in the 18th century, and of Charles Wesley the hymn writer. This is a condensed paraphrase of a letter written by her in 1732.

“First of all, it must be remembered that no mother can bring up her children for the Lord who does not renounce the world completely in her own life to start with. Secondly, she must be willing to devote her entire life to the work of saving the souls of her children, and must be convinced that such a life is a life well spent.

When children are about one year old, they must be taught to fear the rod and cry only softly. [Note by Joseph Arthungal: “fear the rod” must be understood as being gentle but firm correction appropriate to this tender age; not inflicting of severe pain that may cause emotional damage, but warnings and punishments appropriate for the child's age to teach to “fear the rod.” May the mother seek God's wisdom] Thus they can escape an abundance of correction that they would otherwise have to learn later on. That awful noise of children screaming in the house must never be heard in a house. Even in their talking and their playing, children must not be permitted to be loud. Thus there can be peace in the house. At the meal table, children must not be allowed to choose whatever food they like. They must be taught to eat whatever is set before them. They must also be taught that they can get nothing that they cry for. They must ask quietly for whatever they want and must be taught to speak respectfully to their parents.

In order to form the minds of children aright, the first thing that must be done is the conquering of their will and thus bringing them to an obedient attitude of mind. If the will is not subdued at an early age,

they will become stubborn and obstinate and it will be very difficult to correct them later on. A child must not only be corrected, he must be conquered. Only thus can it be preserved until the time comes when it chooses Christ of its own. When the will of a child has been totally subdued, and it is brought to the place where it fears and respects its parents, then a great many problems are solved.

Some childish follies should be ignored and some others reprovved only mildly. But no deliberate disobedience should ever be overlooked. It must be punished - the degree and type of punishment being dependent on the circumstances of the case. Cowardice and the fear of punishment often lead children to tell lies in order to escape punishment. To prevent this, it must be made clear to them that if anyone confesses his fault and is sorry for what he has done, he will not be punished. No child in any case should be rebuked or punished twice for the same fault; and if he changes his ways, he should never ever be reminded of his past failures. Every significant act of obedience that is the result of a child having denied himself in some way should be commended and praised. Where a child makes a mistake, when it intended to do what was right, it should not be punished, but only lovingly taught the right way to do it in the future.

Children must be taught to respect God, to be still during times of prayer, and to pray by themselves every day. They must also be taught to respect the property of others and never to take even a small pin or coin that does not belong to them.

We must never forget that true spirituality is nothing other than denying one's own will and doing the will of God. Since the one great hindrance to our eternal happiness is our self-will, any small indulgence of it cannot be ignored, and every small denial of it will be eternally profitable. Heaven and hell depend on this. And so the mother who works to subdue self-will in her child works together with God to save a soul for eternity. On the other hand, she who indulges her child's self-will actually does the Devil's work for him and helps toward the eternal damnation of her child's soul."

Now let us pray: Heavenly Father, grant me grace that I may comfort my children with the comforts of the Spirit, correct them with motherly

love, and preserve the honor of motherhood you have bestowed upon me. As your child, I ask for your comforts for me, and your correction for me. Grant Lord, that I always abide in utmost reverence for you. Amen.

The Christian Father

Compassion – loving forgiveness – is the supreme fatherly virtue.

God is our Father: The scripture speaks of God as the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ (Rom. 15:6; 2 Cor. 1:3). He is also our Father because we are adopted as sons in the Son. The divine fatherhood helps us understand the human fatherhood, and vice versa. The spiritual truths about fatherhood, both divine and human, are known by revelation from God only.

The father’s compassion: *“Just as a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on those who fear Him”* (Ps. 103:13). This defines a father’s heart (as corresponding to God’s) in the deepest sense: Compassion, that is, forgiving love. Our heavenly father loves us with forgiving love. The foremost fatherly virtue of a Christian father therefore is forgiving love. Forgiving not only to some extent or to a great extent, but all the way, even as God forgave us in His Son. Such a virtue is not ours except it be imparted to us by grace. Let us as fathers seek the face of God for this supreme virtue that should adorn every Christian father.

A picture of such forgiving love is offered to us in the father of the prodigal son. The father’s heart melted (“felt compassion,” Luke 15:20) at the sight of the son who had ruined himself and the father’s wealth. Not a thought of condemnation, but only compassion! Of course the returning son was a repenting son. But before the son expressed his repentance in words, he was in his father’s embrace.

The father’s correction: *“For whom the Lord loves He corrects, even as a Father corrects the son in whom he delights”* (Prov. 3:12). This – correction that is joined to love – defines a father’s heart (as corresponding to God’s). God’s Spirit is poured out on, and God’s

Word is made known to, those who accept the Lord's correction (Prov. 1:23). We see therefore that we as Christian fathers need to receive the Lord's correction ourselves, and have God's Spirit and God's Word, to be able to correct our children in love. We need great grace from God to correct as God would.

The preceding three small paragraphs are very important. So please take time to reflect; perhaps also to repent. It is true that there are instances when a Christian father needs to correct and discipline the children with firmness. Such correction is most effective and edifying if the children are living in the assurance of the father's forgiving love. The father's words will reflect his heart, and condition the response of the children in the many situations of daily life.

The father's ministry in the household: The filial piety (respect for parents) is the channel that guides the child's heart toward reverence for God. Children will grow up to appreciate God's love in the parents' love. This defines and glorifies the parents' example before young children. Correction has to be in reference to a model, not in reference to a precept only. The father as the leader of the household is the foremost role model for the entire family. The word for family in Hebrew means, "father's house," and reflects the father's place as the head of the household. Have we failed to see our calling? Have we failed to see our ministry? Let us hasten to the place of repentance.

A father's ministry at home is recognized in the apostolic teaching setting forth the qualifications of overseers and deacons in the local church which is the household of God. The overseer "*must be one who manages his own household well, keeping his children under control with all dignity (but if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of the church of God?); ...Let deacons be husbands of only one wife, and good managers of their children, and their own households*" (1 Tim. 3:4-12). Home life is a training ground for church life, especially for shepherding God's people. This helps us understand how to think about family life, and seek God's wisdom. "*By wisdom a house is built, and by understanding it is established; And by knowledge the rooms are filled with all precious and pleasant riches.*" (Prov. 24:3-4).

Eli was judge and high priest in Israel, but “*his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not*” (I Sam. 3:13). But of Abraham, God said “*...I know him, that he will command (teach and command, the Amplified Bible) his children and his household after him, and that they shall keep the ways of the Lord*” (Gen. 18:19). It is a father’s ministry to teach and command his children in the ways of the Lord. How shall a father teach and command? “*Fathers, do not irritate and provoke your children to anger - do not exasperate them to resentment - but rear them (tenderly) in the training and discipline and the counsel and admonition of the Lord*” (Eph. 6:4, the Amplified Bible). Fathers often are likely to get angry and provoke their children to anger. Paul knew this, and so he gives counsel. Let us take heed.

Again we read: “*You shall teach them **diligently** to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up*” (Deut. 6:7). God’s word thus becomes the center of life in the home. The father (also the mother) keeps God’s Word in his heart, and it overflows in loving words to children in ordinary conversations. The pressures of daily life often make this difficult. We therefore need to be diligent, because we are told to “*teach them **diligently** to your children*” (Deut. 6:7). We may do this at the dinner table. We may do this when we travel. We have opportunity to do this especially during family devotions. When we love our children, we will discover new ways of communicating with them in daily life. It is fellowship. It is pure joy to see your child receiving God’s Word trustingly from your lips.

Leading children to a personal relationship with Christ: Let us emphasize an important point: Begin when the child is a child. The Lord Jesus Christ is calling the children to come to Him. Matt. 19:14. How early may we begin? “*But thou art he that took me out of the womb: thou didst make me hope when I was upon my mother’s breasts*” (Ps. 22:9). We may learn from this verse that as the mother nurses the child, she may also give him or her the pure milk of God’s Word in songs and stories and memory verses. As you pray for and with the child, the Lord will give you wisdom to minister the Word and the Spirit to the child. The mother’s (and the grandmother’s) role is prominent in the beginning, and the father joins in due time. As the

Word is received in the child's heart, the Spirit also is received. *"The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life,"* said Jesus (John 6:63). We are planting and watering the seed. God will give the growth. We must abide in faith for the future of the child even when the results are not encouraging. Such faith on our part pleases God. *"All your children shall be taught by the Lord, and great shall be the peace of your children"* (Isaiah 54:13). The children receive gladly and trustingly from mother and father, as well as from grandparents. The word of God will become a fountain of life in due time, and will keep them from drinking from the spirit of the world in their teenage years. God's Word will be fulfilled that says, *"How can a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed according to Your Word"* (Ps 119:9).

Job's care for his grown children: Job's seven sons and three daughters were not little any more, but grown and living in their own houses. Yet Job cared for their spiritual welfare. From Job 1:5 we may learn: (1) At the conclusion of the days of feasting, *"Job sent and sanctified them."* This implies that the caring father invited the sons and daughters to come to the altar at his home, and participate in the prayers and offering for them, and be purified from sin. Job was sensitive to the possibility of sin entering his children's hearts while they were feasting. In the midst of seemingly innocent pleasures our hearts may depart from God. A caring father has the duty and authority to call even his grown children to repentance. From the place of feasting, let us hasten to the place of sacrifice. (2) Job rose up early in the morning, and offered burnt offerings according to the number of his sons and daughters. Burnt offerings for ten children, one offering for each! This teaches us how earnestly we should pray (as if offering a burnt offering) for each of our children, even grown ones, and even those living in their own houses. (3) Job did this continually; this was his custom. Job ministered as a priest for his family.

The father's prophetic vision and blessing for children: In ancient times either the father (Gen. 4:26; 5:3, 29; Ex. 2:22) or the mother (Gen. 4:1,25; 29:23) named the newborn. The naming had prophetic significance: the meaning of the name signified both the character and the potential of the child. What does this teach us? While the

child is in the womb, the father (also the mother) may pray for the child, and receive an intimation in the spirit from the Lord concerning the child's future. Thus the parents can bless the child with the appropriate name when it is born.

By faith Isaac and Jacob blessed their sons before death. A father's blessing is an inheritance. We as fathers have a blessing to give to our children because we are blessed of God ourselves. In their old age, both Isaac and Jacob blessed their children with prophetic insight. These patriarchs were so close to God in their old age that they could foresee God's plans for their children's future. As we age let us draw close to God, so that we may bless our children, and be a blessing to them.

A father's honor: See Mal. 1:6: "*A son honors his father... Then if I am a father, where is my honor?*" So great is the honor due to a father because in its essential nature it is like the honor due to God Himself. How thankful a father should be! This is the gift of God to man who was created in His own image. Long life on earth is promised to the children who honor their parents (Ex. 20:12; Lev. 19:3; Eph. 6:2,3). Notice how solemn are the words and promise in these verses. Notice how blessed it is that God has linked parents and children in honor due and honor given. As Christian fathers let us walk in utmost reverence for our heavenly Father so that we may be deserving of honor from our children.

Let us pray: Heavenly Father, grant me grace that I may love my children with fatherly compassion, correct them with fatherly love, and preserve the honor of fatherhood you have bestowed upon me. As your child, I ask for your compassion upon me, and your correction for me. Grant Lord, that I always abide in utmost reverence for you. Amen.

Training Children in Obedience

(for children, parents, mentors)

Three Passages for Children & Parents

Eph. 1:1-4: “Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. 2 *“Honor your father and mother,”* which is the first commandment with promise: 3 *“that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth.”* And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.”

Deut. 5:16: *“Honor your father and your mother, as the LORD your God has commanded you, that your days may be long, and that it may be well with you in the land which the LORD your God is giving you.”* See also Ex. 20:12; Lev. 19:3.

Mal. 4:5-6: *“Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet Before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD. And he will turn The hearts of the fathers to the children, And the hearts of the children to their fathers, Lest I come and strike the earth with a curse.”*

From the above passages note: Fathers are warned not to provoke the children. This implies a father’s natural tendency to behave in a way that might provoke the children.

“And he will turn The hearts of the fathers to the children, And the hearts of the children to their fathers”: Note the word “turn.” This implies a gentle process requiring a ministry of love and wisdom.

See the warning in Mal. 4:6: *“Lest I come and strike the earth with a curse.”*

To Children

- The most important person in a child’s life is the mother (inferred from Prov. 31:2).
- The most important ministry of a mother is raising her children for God (John 21:15).

- The most important ministry in the church is feeding Jesus' lambs (John 21:15).
- Obey your parents with the spirit of obedience: Concerning the spirit of obedience and sonship, see Heb. 12:5-10. If you have the spirit of sonship, you will "yes." This is the mind of Christ. If not, it is like being under the Law, asking: "why" to your parents instead of saying, "yes".
- Treasure the love-bond that comes because the parents live for their children.
- Treasure the discipline-bond that comes through the child's submission to his or her parents.
- Review Isaac's example in Genesis 22. This may be the best example of obedience in the Old Testament.
- The first step to obedience is humility. See Christ's example (Phil. 2:5-9).
- Honor your parents: Obedience to parents shows honor.
- This training to respect your parents will help you to respect older people in the extended family, the church, and your community.
- Addressing older people according to the custom (Mr., Bro., Sir., etc.) instead of using the first name shows honor and respect.
- Respect for elderly people is commanded in Lev.19: 32.
- Remember, there is a reward for honoring your parents. It will be well with you, and you will live long.
- Isaac & Jacob blessed their children. It is good to ask your parents for a blessing.
- Mother's comforts: God shows His comforts through mothers. See Isa. 66:13; 2 Cor.1:3.

- Father's compassion: God shows His compassion through fathers. See Ps. 103:13.
- Older children: Note these relationships in Esther 2:20 and Job 1:4-5.
- Serve God as a family. See the example of Joshua in Josh. 24:15. Children, please cooperate with your parents.
- Children, you may learn much from your parents in childhood that will never be lost. If you lose this opportunity, the loss could be permanent.
- Prov. 3:11-12: *“My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD, Nor detest His correction; For whom the LORD loves He corrects, Just as a father the son in whom he delights.”*
- These young years can be the best years of your life, if you receive these as years of chastening and correction.
- Fifteen minutes a day of Bible reading will cover the Bible in a year.
- Write notes in notebooks.
- Select Bible topics to study. Get helpful books to study as in school.
- Keep a daily journal. Share Christ with others.
- Consider learning by heart one verse or part of a verse daily. Keep a record.
- Pause for a moment of prayer (just look to God; remember God) often as you go through the day. Thus you will learn to walk with God, and be kept from sin.
- Pray regularly. Daniel prayed three times daily; see Daniel 6:10.

All the above will facilitate faithful, optimal use of time during these precious years.

To Parents

Love: In the eyes of love, the object of love has no fault as the object of love. In other words, faults do not hinder love. Our children should know our love is unconditional, and that it is in this love we correct them.

Let the father & mother ask themselves:

- Have I received the spirit of obedience that says “yes” to God without asking “why”?
- Have I seen my lawlessness?
- Am I in unity with my spouse? Please pray with your spouse.
- Is my heart – and my home – a house of prayer? Or, just a busy place?
- Have I committed my time to God?

Am I raising my children in the “*training and admonition*” of the Lord? See Eph. 6:4 quoted below.

Fathers: “*Fathers, do not irritate and provoke your children to anger [do not exasperate them to resentment], but rear them [tenderly] in the training and discipline and the counsel and admonition of the Lord*” [The Amplified Bible]

Ps. 103:13: “*As a father pities his children, So the LORD pities those who fear Him.*”

Fathers, please seek to have a heart of pity – compassion – so you may be equipped to correct as we read in Prov. 3:12: “*For whom the LORD loves He corrects, Just as a father the son in whom he delights.*”

See the father’s compassion in Luke 15:20: “*And he arose and came to his father. But when he was still a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him.*”
No condemnation.

Mothers: Isa.66: 13: “*As one whom his mother comforts, So I will*

comfort you; And you shall be comforted in Jerusalem.” Mothers, please know that giving comfort to your children is your foremost ministry to them, so that your word may be received by them as law (Prov. 1:8): “*My son, hear the instruction of your father, And do not forsake the law of your mother.*” Mothers, seek to have a heart willing and able to comfort your children. Seek to be filled with the Holy Spirit – the Comforter (John 14:26).

Finding Time for Children and the Spouse

Time is Now: Deut. 6:7: “*You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up.*” The children are with us when we sit down at home, when we travel, when we lie down; all these show continuous togetherness and sharing as part of daily life. There is time **now** just as the day of salvation is **now**. We may use time in moments and minutes, rather than in hours and days.

Time and Sabbath: God ordained Sabbath – weekly day of rest – from the beginning of human history. This had two aspects: (a) spiritual (b) physical work. Faith in Christ fulfills (a), but the need for (b) is as relevant as ever. Even animals were required to rest on the Sabbath day. If we honor this principle, we have extra time for fellowship with our children.

Time Committed to God is Holy: Please pray: Lord I commit my time to you. Give me wisdom to use your gift of time.

All Fathers & Mothers: (1) Take a few minutes to pray for the children & parents – their needs – in the church. (2) Mentoring: teach (one - on- one; this is mentoring) the children the verses they learn by heart. Keep notes for memory.

To Spouses

Eph. 5:22-33: “... just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by

*the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church,
not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be
holy and without blemish.”*

Note the underlined words, and reflect. Husband, may your wife be glorious – no spot, no wrinkle, no blemish - in your eyes as the object of your love; then, as “*heirs together in the grace of life*” (1 Pet. 3:7; please look up this verse) you can help each other in your walk before the Lord.

In Bible times Jewish parents taught their children the elementary lessons of Moses' Law before five years of age. The training that parents should give to a child in the early years is far too important to let it slip. It is the very foundation of the child's whole future. Let us therefore earnestly heed the scripture that says: "*Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it*" (Prov. 22:6). Here we are given a great task - "*train up a **child***" - and a glorious promise - "*he will not depart from it.*" This gives us faith to apply ourselves to the task with a sure vision of our children's destiny.

The premise used in this booklet is that the first five years of the child should emphasize training of behavior (obedience), and the next seven years should emphasize training in God's Word. It is assumed that the moral conscience of the child is formed during age 3 to 5, and his or her personality is essentially molded by age 10 to 12. These early years are the time to plant the seed of God's Word and water it; it will grow and bear fruit in the sunshine of God's revelation in years to come. In this task parents are co-workers with God.

To such a task and to such a promise this book invites you. God gives grace for what He has enjoined.

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