

# Biblical Parenting

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*This is the book of the generations of Adam. In the day when God created man, He made him in the likeness of God. He created them male and female, and He blessed them and named them Man in the day when they were created. When Adam had lived one hundred and thirty years, he became the father of a son in his own likeness, according to his image, and named him Seth.” Gen 5:1-3 Adam & Eve, along with their sons and daughters (Gen 5:4) comprised the original family; they were*

*truly the “first family.” From the creation, families have played an essential role in developing and sustaining the emotional, physical and social health of individual family members, and have served as the basic building block of society.*

We understand that God created mankind, but it’s also important to acknowledge that He created the family as the basic social organization unit. We remember Adam’s proclamation, *“a man shall leave his father*

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and his mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and they shall become one flesh,” (Gen 2:24) and can envision the establishment of that initial family. This process of leaving our parents and establishing new families has been repeated countless times down through the ages and will likely continue as long as this earth stands.

It is in the family that we first learn to play, to share, to help and to love. Some families prepare family members to be solid, contributing members of society more effectively than others. So what characteristics, what key strengths do these effective families exhibit that can help all of us? Different researchers observe different characteristics of effective families, but the following six characteristics are observed frequently.

**First and foremost, strong families develop spiritually.** The words of Ruth speak volumes, “... where you go, I will go, and where you lodge, I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God, my God.” Ruth 1:16 Clearly Naomi’s family had shown great faith in God while in Moab and had shared their faith with Ruth. Their influence turned her from idolatry to the one true God. Moses commanded the Israelite families, “*These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart; and you shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up.*” Deut 6:6-7 Unfortunately although Joshua’s generation served the Lord, they failed to teach their children about God. “*And all that generation also were gathered to their fathers; and there arose another generation after them who did not know the LORD, nor yet the work which He had done for Israel.*” Judg 2:10 Spiritual development not only orients us to the Creator, but also connects families to the much larger spiritual family where we can count on additional support, affirmation and love within a common fellowship of faith.

**Commitment to the family.** Commitment goes two ways. Each family member is valued, supported, sus-

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tained and loved. At the same time individual family members are committed to the family. Family members have a sense of being part of a team and help each other succeed. There is an attitude of “one for all and all for one.” There is joy in spending time together. Noah’s family is an excellent illustration of this key strength. Noah found favor with God and was told that God planned to destroy the earth and mankind. He was instructed to save his family and the animals from the coming flood by building a great ark (Gen 6:13-22). How did Noah actually build the ark? The project wasn’t accomplished by Noah alone; he enlisted the talents and sweat equity of his wife, his sons and their wives and as a family they worked together to build this huge “boat” over an extended timeframe. They were committed to a common goal, and their salvation, both physically and spiritually, depended on their shared commitment. They each had an interrelated part to play and they all succeeded together as the Noah family.

**Clearly defined family roles.** Members of successful families know their role in the family. With a clear, yet flexible structure in place, family members know their responsibilities in and to the family. This is essential to the family’s everyday functioning, as well as vital to adapting to stress, conflict and changing situations. In His unfathomable wisdom, God has clearly delineated family roles, “*Wives, be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord.*” Eph 5:22 And, “*Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.*” Eph 6:1 Successful families embrace the Lord’s guidance.

**Appreciation, affirmation & encourage-**

**ment.** The feeling of being appreciated is a basic and important human need. Strong families are those who appreciate each family member for who they are and cultivate a loving atmosphere of encouragement. They look for the good in each member and openly acknowledge it. They nurture the development of individual interests and strengths, while reinforcing a sense of belonging to the family unit. Paul’s introductory words to his Philippian spiritual family serves as a good illustration of this characteristic, “*I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, always offering prayer with joy in my every prayer for you all.*” Phil 1:3-4 The special relationship between Paul and these brethren is clearly evident, just as it should be between family members.

**Ability to adapt and effectively deal with conflict, stress and crisis.** You may remember a famous Forest Gump line, “momma says, life is like a box of chocolates, you never know what you’re going to get.” Life is nothing if not full of challenges and surprises. Stress and conflict come from both without and within the family. Successful families develop appropriate emotional responses to life’s inevitable ups and downs, and learn to effectively cope. Instead of allowing stress and conflict to push them apart, successful families harness it to draw them together to strive against a common enemy. Paul wrote, “*Be angry, and yet do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and do not give the devil an opportunity.*” Eph 4:26-27 That is sage guidance, but to be able to respond appropriately, family members must learn to think before they react. Proverbs 15:1

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states, *“a gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.”* As Jacob was returning to Canaan after many years with Laban, he was, *“greatly afraid and distressed”* at the prospect of meeting up with Esau. Gen 32:7 Years before, Jacob had stolen Esau’s birthright and blessing; now Esau was coming to meet him with 400 men. What could Jacob do? Jacob poured out his heart to the Lord in prayer as recorded in Genesis 32:9-12. He asked God to deliver him from Esau’s hand and when they met, *“Esau ran to meet him and embraced him and fell on his neck and kissed him, and they wept.”* Gen 33:4 Some things can only be solved by the Lord.

**Communication.** The presence of effective communication is one of the most frequently mentioned characteristics of strong families and is perhaps the basis of the key strengths we’ve discussed. Communication should be clear, open and frequent. In strong families, members talk to each other often, they are open and honest. Fellow family members learn to listen and give each other the opportunity to express themselves freely. Alter the flood God told Noah and his sons to, *“be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth.”* Gen 9:1 However, as the earth was being repopulated you’ll recall how his descendants settled together as one people with the same language at Babel (Gen 11). God knew how to scatter them across the face of the earth, He said, *“Come, let Us go down and there confuse their language, that they may not understand one another’s speech.”* Gen 11:7 When communication is disrupted, interaction between family members suffer and the whole family suffers.

Each writer In this issue is an experienced parent. We’ve been there, done that and got the tee shirt,. It has been said that by the time you really know how to be a good parent, you’re out of business. Without a doubt we learned many things as we raised our children. We’ll strive to share God’s wisdom, as well as pass along some of the lessons we learned from our collective experience. We aren’t perfect and admit that we made our share of mistakes in this God given endeavor.

### The Power of Parental Example

(positive & negative)

Pat Lumpkin

The power of Parental Example in the home is extremely strong. Nothing, in fact, is quiet as daunting as realizing that the destiny of a precious soul, almost entirely depends on whether we as parents faithfully fulfill the role God has given us. This responsibility is outlined for us in Proverbs 22:6, *“Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.”* The example we as parents set, whether positive or negative will set the tone as to how our children will view God, react to people in relationships, carry forth into the workforce and especially into the work of the church.

LOVE is the key to family relationships and raising God fearing children. Matthew 22:37 says, *“we are to love the Lord our God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all our mind.”* The very first thing we

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must do is to give our life to Christ. When we've truly made this choice and live our daily lives as a positive example it will lead our children in paths of righteousness. Putting our love for God first "sets the stage" for a good family foundation. Proverbs 20:7 says, *"the righteous man walks in his integrity and his children are blessed after him."* It is who we are, not what we say, that will have the most influence on our children. Character is what counts. Children learn by example and actions speak louder than words. How we deal with and react to situations whether positively or negatively leaves a lasting impression.

As parents we should nurture our children in the way of the Lord. Teach them by example and with instruction from the Word of God. We should prepare them for the future work of the church, to be good citizens in the community and honest workers. Unfortunately this doesn't always happen.



An example of an indulgent father was King David. Although David was a man after God's own heart he was too tolerant of his own children's wrongdoings and failed to crack down on them when they needed it. He did nothing to his son Amnon after the defilement of his sister Tamar. Absalom, another of his sons was a spoiled, self centered son who turned on his father, but David still failed to restrain him. As parents we love our children, in spite of their faults, but the sort of "love" David had for his sons did not help save their souls.

Biblical parenting is also not being a "passive parent." When I think of Isaac, Jacob

& Esau's father, I think of how much better things could have been if Isaac had been more involved in rearing his children. In Genesis 25 we read about this family and the sibling rivalry. Isaac had to be aware of the strife between his sons, but he appeared to have been detached from the issues in his family. Each child is different and it is a parent's job to be aware of each child's needs. Being a detached or passive parent can cause a child to turn away from the family and God. Absentee or passive parenting leaves a vacuum in a child's life and can convey the message that they aren't loved. Also, we as parents are missing out on one of God's greatest gifts. Psalms 127:3, *"Behold, children are a heritage from the Lord."*

Amran & Jockobed (Ex. 1:22-2:10) Moses' parents, trusted in God but they knew they faced a major challenge. They had only a few short years to train him before he had to be handed over to Pharaoh's daughter. Moses retained a knowledge of God and knew right from wrong from his youth. Positive influence on Moses while he was young carried over to adulthood. It has often been stated that what we teach our children the first six years of their life will be with them all their lives.

When writing on the subject of parenting I feel we always need to mention the wonderful parents of Jesus. When we think of Joseph & Mary (Luke 1-2) we often think of them as not having to deal with the daily routine that we as parents go through; but I believe they did even more. The scriptures tell us that Mary was a virtuous young woman who loved God and wanted to serve Him.

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Joseph was a just and conscientious man who wanted to do right. They set a great example for Jesus and his siblings. The scriptures tell us about their care and tenderness toward Jesus and how He increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man. (Luke 2:52)

Last but not least are Timothy's parents. The training of Timothy began with his righteous grandmother Lois and his mother Eunice (1 Tim.1:5 & 3:15). From a child Timothy was taught from the scriptures and by example. We do not have much information about Timothy's father but he appears to have been an unbeliever. Just like today, families sometimes have an unbelieving parent, or live in a one parent family. This can make the responsibility to teach our children fall completely on one parent. It can still be done with consistent nurturing, teaching and example. In 1 Tim. 1:2 Paul calls Timothy a "true" son in the faith. What greater honor could you ask of your son?

None of the above parents were perfect and neither are we. But our faith and trust in God should give us the desire to pass on our love of God to our children. Good children do not just happen! They're the result of careful, consistent cultivation. (*Deut. 5:7-9 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.*) Planting Bible principles in the heart of a child is the most reliable insurance a parent can have against disobedience and rebellion. Positive parenting requires love, patience, and endurance using God's instruction Book.

1 Peter 2:21 tells us how Jesus suffered for us, leaving us an example to follow in His footsteps. Jesus' love for us was sacrificial. Positive parenting often requires sacrifice also. Parenting is a full time job that doesn't end at the end of the day when we put our children to bed. Today's kids face an overall absence of godly example and moral encouragement each day at school, on the TV, in their music, even in their neighborhood. It takes careful thought, planning, and perseverance to keep them on tract. As parents we need to leave behind us a "path" of positive nurturing that will direct our children in Jesus' footsteps.

### Parent or Friend

Russ Ward

I can't prove that it is true, I can't even confirm the possibility, and I have no confirmed data to draw the following conclusions; but I think my life has been shortened some 3-5 years due to loss of sleep from my daughter coming into our room sitting on the edge of our bed and pouring herself out upon my wife in tears, laughter, excitement, worry and trepidation. Sometimes it happens before I even get ready to go to bed and I get that look from the two of them, you know that look, the one that communicates this is our time, girl talk and not for my ears. Like any good father and husband I simply take my leave or go to bed anyway with shooters muffs on my ears. That special time between the two is important. It is the one time where my wife has the unique ability to be friend,

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confidant, mentor, and parent with no barriers in place.

The uniqueness of the scriptures is such that we simply can't go to one specific place where a parenting guide is outlined. In reality that is not feasible simply because relationships aren't defined in linear step by step terms, rather they are defined by ebb and flow, maturation and growth, and an evolution of understanding and wisdom. It is incumbent upon the parent to know and understand at which time they should be friend, companion, and confidant and at which time they should in love be mentor, instructor, and disciplinarian. In short when to be a friend and when to be a parent. Case in point; consider the relationship of Christ and His disciples, was He friend, companion, master, instructor, disciplinarian or mentor? I believe the scriptures bear all of them to be correct. This might be an unusual example for the parent child relationship yet what better example of relationships can be provided for us than that of God who fully understands all things.

We can see the progression in the relationship between Christ and His disciples from the time they were first called by Christ to His last days with them. Christ as instructor, and disciplinarian never waivers from beginning to end. There is not a point at which the apostles forget that He is their master and teacher, and if called upon Christ does not hesitate to implement corrective action when needed. Yet there is a change which is more clearly seen in John's writings. Christ calls the apostles His friends if they do

what they are commanded and in so doing are no longer servants but friends. (John 15:15-16)

As parents we can learn from this relationship and incorporate much of it into our children's lives. Never should we lose sight that we are their authority figure for just a brief time upon this earth. It has been given to us to both discipline and instruct in love, which simply cannot occur unless there is an established and understood authority within the parent/child relationship. Honoring father and mother does not take place before instruction and obedience, rather it is the outcome of such actions.

We should never lose sight of the end game. What do we really want for our children and our children's children? Is it not a legacy of faithful, hard working, obedient servants in the Kingdom of God! Do we not visualize that our closest companions are our brothers and sisters in Christ and what greater joy can be had for a parent than to see our children's, children's, children in faithful service. (Psalms 78:2-8, III John 4) A band of fellow laborers in the Kingdom, all standing shoulder to shoulder holding up the banner of the cross, all striving in love for truth and obedience to God, all waiting for those word's given by Christ to the apostle's, "*Henceforth I call you not servants...; I have called you friends.*" John 15:15 If we teach our children to have a love for truth, to have a love of God, and a willingness to bend to instruction through obedience and understanding, we will have a child for a short while but we will gain a friend for life.



## Value of Consistency

Ron Gray

**K** *Keep steady my steps according to your promise, and let no iniquity get dominion over me.*” Psalm 119:133

Even though times change and worldly influences that seek to entice our children vary, parenting has never been easy. The task of raising godly children in an ungodly world requires work, prayer, and scriptural guidance.

When a new baby comes into our lives, we are overcome by the purity and innocence of God’s sweet creation. A newborn infant is truly a “bundle of joy.” As time progresses, some of that sweetness gives way to the “terrible twos.” Parents face the reality that they are in this for the long run. Nearly two decades of daily commitment are required to raise this little person from sleeping angel to young adult. As siblings come along, the problems are compounded.

My daughter-in-law posted this e-card on Facebook. *On being a Mom:* “Half of the time I feel like I’m running an insane asylum...the other half I feel I belong in one.” It made me laugh, because it is so true.

How can young parents handle the challenges of making a living to provide for the necessities of life while having the time and energy to “train up a child in the way he should go” (Prov. 22:6a)? Where can they turn for help? God has said, “*I will never leave you nor forsake you.*” Heb. 13:5b In this scripture, we have a guarantee of His constant vigilance and help. Doesn’t that sound like the description of a perfect father? Faithful parents can count on God to

be there for them every minute of every day.

Young parents are not only able to take comfort in God’s constant care, but they can use this example as a template for their own lives. Wouldn’t every little child *love* to hear those words from Mom and Dad, “I will never leave you nor forsake you?” That is a solid commitment; that is *consistency*.

There is a certain comfort and assurance in consistency. In earthly matters, don’t we rest assured that the police and fire departments work 24 hours a day, everyday? When you call 911, help is on the way.

In spiritual matters, don’t we know that we can count on Jesus our Savior? “*Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.*” Heb. 13:8 That is true consistency!

The home environment is not just the place where your child lives; it is the cradle of learning. There she begins her quest to learn, to touch, to see, to hear, and to love. She learns to be just like Mommy and Daddy (for better or for worse). Children long to please their parents and to follow in their footsteps.

If you really want to meet your children in Heaven some glorious day, you have to walk the narrow way. Hold their hands on that walk while they are willing; and when the time comes to let go, they will still be walking by your side. Consistency at home may be hard, but think of the little souls who will benefit from your good efforts! “*Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.*” 1 Cor. 15:58

When I was young, I had a few friends

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who came from families where their fathers were alcoholics. I remember how apprehensive they were about walking in the front door of their homes; not knowing *which* father would be inside. Sometimes he was a loving father, sometimes a babbling drunk, and worst of all sometimes he was a man who just drank “fightin’ whiskey.” They felt anything but “at home” when they were at home. There was no consistency there.

The same situation can occur when parents live in whatever mood they happen to be in. The children who crave stability find inconsistency in their parents: happy, laid back, lazy, “forget the rules today”, seeking escape from responsibility, taking out every frustration on the kids, or just mean as a snake. If a child can’t be comfortable around his parents, he will find comfort in someone else as soon as he can. The hope of training that child in the way he should go is fading fast.

Every one of us has bad days and good days, easy days where everything goes smoothly and hard days when nothing goes right. Each of us needs to remember the saying “the buck stops here.” When we have had a miserable day at work, let’s leave the misery there. “Misery loves company” but nobody loves misery. So don’t come home ready to share it with your family!

Consistency is not a mindless routine. No parent can be a benevolent robot, and should not attempt to become one. Consistency involves deep spiritual goals that both parents set and administer for their families. These should include home Bible study and a commitment to Bible classes and

worship services. When children see that a relationship with God is important to you, it will become important to them. Consistently pray with your family (1 Thes 5:17), praising God, thanking Him for your children and for all of His blessings, letting your requests be made known to God (Phil 4:6). Ask God to guide you in raising your children using His word and wisdom. Teach your children to pray. Set household rules and stick to them. This is a place where consistency pays off. Show your love for each child every day. Open a door of dialog that allows your children to ask legitimate questions without a “because I say so” response. You want them to respect you, not fear you.

Fathers, you are the head of your house. Take time to talk to your children. Do you really know what your child’s interests are?

Have you asked? Do you *really* care? Can you help him fit those interests into a godly life? At the end of each day, before your child closes his eyes in sleep, does he know that you truly love him and care about his eternal destination?

Finally, parents must be consistent in their discipline. Children are experts at exploiting differing judgments between parents. They learn to “divide and conquer” even before parents are sometimes aware of their own disagreement.

The outside world is like a turbulent sea for your children. You cannot change the world, but you can strive to make your home a harbor of safety and calm for your little ones. *“Then they were glad that the waters were quiet, and he brought them to their desired haven.”* Psalm 107:30



Giving Our Children  
**Too Much To Soon**

Ephriam Davis

**W**hat parent of children old enough to have relationships with other children of similar age that are living in other family households, have not heard countless statements like, “Well everybody else has a \_\_\_\_\_” or “Well John’s mom and dad gave them a \_\_\_\_\_?” These relationships of our children could include friends, classmates, neighborhood kids, cousins, or even children of church family members. The above statements are made as argument points to convince the parent to change an answer to “yes” if the original answer to a specific request was “no”. How many parents, have succumb to this manipulative tactic, after being made to feel “guilty” for not complying with false standards set by the perceived majority? In many instances, a wise parent will stand firm with the original “no” answer. Since no parent is perfect, many of us have probably changed our minds in some instances, but it comes down to judgment calls that are made through wisdom that comes by, studying God’s word, (2 Tim 2:15, 2 Tim 3:16-17) for knowledge and understanding, by seeking council from other godly parents who have raised children, and by asking God for it (James 1:5).

Is it possible that we as parents can give our children too much? Is it possible that we can give our children too much too soon? There are obvious things that no responsible person would give to their child even if they asked, due the potential physical harm that it might cause.

*“9 Or what man is there among you who, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? 10 Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent? 11 If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!” Matthew 7:9-11, NKJV*

Our ultimate goal on this earth is to live our lives in such a way so as to make heaven our home and spend an eternity with God. In the process we also try to influence as many others as possible to do likewise. As with any gift to our children, we must always consider the potential physical and spiritual costs that will have eternal consequences.

Perhaps without considering the attitudes of materialism and entitlement that we may be teaching, many parents have and express the idea, “I want my kids to be happy and I want them to have all of the things that I did not have when I was a child.” Toy manufactures and retailers know this all too well. Advertisements, for the latest and greatest new video games, toy trucks and cars, dolls, and associated accessories that everybody who is anybody “must have,” start well before the Christmas Holiday. One major department store actually had a whole isle dedicated to Barbie dolls and every imaginable accessory. Some of us are old enough to remember the “Cabbage Patch” dolls, and the more recent “Beanie Babies” and electronic “Giga-Pet” fads. For those of us who may have gotten these things for our children or maybe even for ourselves, how long did the “happiness” last? Where did most of these toys end up?

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*"And He said to them, "Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses." Luke 12:15*

*"He who loves silver will not be satisfied with silver; Nor he who loves abundance, with increase. This also is vanity." Eccl 5:10*

*13 "Happy is the man who finds wisdom, And the man who gains understanding; 14 For her proceeds are better than the profits of silver, And her gain than fine gold. 15 She is more precious than rubies, And all the things you may desire cannot compare with her." Proverbs 3:13-15*

Giving our children too much, too soon can lead to an adult life of materialism and a false sense of security. We need to understand for ourselves as well as teach our children the difference between needs and wants. For example, we may need reliable transportation. So which is a wiser choice, to stay within our financial means keeping the Toyota Camry that is paid for and still runs well, or to go beyond our means getting in debt because we want a brand new Cadillac Escalade just because the Jones family next door got one? How many of us know of specific examples of children who's parents gave them everything they wanted, perhaps out of motivation to "buy love" or guilt of being a negligent parent. There is a pattern that has evolved in our society in which many teen aged children have gotten the idea, that they are entitled to a car. In one actual ex-



ample, some parents bought their son a Ford Mustang GT, which he totaled after a few months due to reckless driving. The parents replaced that car and he subsequently wrecked it as well. Would he have been a more careful, responsible driver if he had actually worked instead to pay for that car? By replacing the car did the parents send a message that they would always be around to "fix" his acts of poor judgment? From a biblical perspective, what are our real basic needs? *"And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content." 1 Timothy 6:8*

The wisdom of Solomon puts the balance of material blessings into proper perspective:

*7 "Two things I request of You (Deprive me not before I die): 8 Remove falsehood and lies far from me; Give me neither poverty nor riches-- Feed me with the food allotted to me; 9 Lest I be full and deny You, And say, "Who is the Lord?" Or lest I be poor and steal, And profane the name of my God." Proverbs 30:7-9*

Finally, the best gift we can give is love, which has eternal benefits. (1 Cor 13:13)

## **Tough Love**

Donna Davis

**F**rom the beginning of creation, our Heavenly Father defines and demonstrates the concept of "Tough Love." It is clearly illustrated in relation to his first children as a consequence of their disobedi-

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ence.

As we reflect upon Adam and Eve in the Garden, God impresses upon us how seriously He viewed His parental responsibilities as well as the spiritual well-being of His children. God provided them with a home to keep and tend (Gen 2:15). He communicated to them simple and clear rules/restrictions, as well as consequences if they were disobedient, *"...of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die."* Gen 2:17 The purpose of these rules was to protect and keep them both physically and spiritually.

God was not an absentee parent! He provided Adam and Eve with love, care and guidance. They freely chose to disobey and violate God's rules (Gen 3:6) and he held them individually accountable for their sins. He did not permit them to shift the blame to someone else (although they attempted to do so) (Gen 3:12-13). God's response to their disobedience was as follows: (1) Verbal Action-He explained to them why they were being punished and the form of the punishment (Gen 3:16-19); (2) Physical action was taken. Adam and Eve became spiritually separated from God. They were driven out of the Garden of Eden and no longer had access to the tree of life (Gen 3:17-24). Their physical lives became difficult and they eventually experienced physical death (Gen.3:16-19). God's love was one of action!

God's "Tough Love" was also demonstrated in the lives of the children of Israel. A journey of eleven days (Deut 1:1-3) became forty years of wanderings in the wilderness.

Ten of the twelve spies had given a bad report to the people after returning from spying out the land for forty days and said, *"we are not able to go up against the people for they are strong."* Num 13:31-32 Caleb attempted to keep the people encouraged and said to them, *"let us go up at once and take possession for we are well able to overcome it."* Num 13:30 But the people became fearful and began to murmur (Num 14:1-3). Because of their unbelief, God promises those who murmured against Him that they would fall in the wilderness, from twenty years old and above except for Caleb and Joshua. Not even Moses would enter the Promised Land (Num 27:12, Deut 1:37; Deut 3:26). God punishes them! *"For the Lord had said of them, They shall surely die in the wilderness, so there was not a man left of them except for Caleb and Joshua."* Num 26:65

Did God hate them? According to the world's definition of love, how could these actions by God be defined as love? The answer can be found written in the Bible, *"You shall remember that the Lord your God led you all the way these forty years in the wilderness to: (1) humble you (2) test you and (3) to know what was in your heart whether you would keep his commandments or not ... so He humbled you, allowed you to hunger and fed you with manna ... that He might make you know that man shall not live by bread alone; but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of the Lord...."* Deut 8:2-3 *"So you should know in your heart that as a man chastens his son, so the Lord your God chastens you."* Deut 8:5 (Heb 12:7; Rev 3:16-

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17) THIS IS TOUGH LOVE! GOD'S LOVE! God compares chastisement of His children with corporal punishment. God commands parents to use corporal punishment when needed. (Prov 13:24; 22:15; 29:15)

Let us remember the example of Eli (a priest, a religious man, but an indulgent, permissive father) who did not take his parental responsibilities seriously. Eli's sons were corrupt and did not know the Lord (1 Sam 2:12). Eli heard what his sons did to all Israel (1 Sam 2:22). He talked to his sons about their evil dealings (1 Sam 2:23-25), but his sons did not heed his voice. Eli honored his sons more than God. (1 Sam 2:29) and did not restrain them (1 Sam 3:13). Because Eli did not take physical action, God punished his sons; Hophni and Phineas both died on the same day (1 Sam 3:13). God clearly expected Eli to do more than just talk to them! "... Discipline your son while there is hope, and do not desire his death." Prov 19:18

There are times when even the best parental influence and biblical teaching is inconsequential. An older child may become very rebellious. (Deut 21:18-21) He/she may only begin to develop respect, reverence and humility when they are allowed to suffer the consequences of a bad decision. The Prodigal Son (in Luke 15:14-17) was allowed to do so. His father did not bail him out....he left home v.13....journeyed to a far country v.13 ...wasted his possessions with prodigal living v.13. When severe famine arose, he began to be in need..v.14... and he came to his senses V.17...went home and told his father he had sinned..V.20-21.

It is never too early to begin the process of praying to God to give us wisdom (Jas

1:5), in raising our children (including the unborn). Manoah (the father of Samson) said, "...O my Lord, please let the Man of God whom You sent come to us again and teach us what we shall do for the child who will be born." Judg 13:8 Hannah valued prayer (1 Sam 1:10). She prayed for a child (1 Sam 1:11), then dedicated her son Samuel to God before his birth (1 Sam 1:11). Samuel grew up to become faithful to God and a man of integrity (Heb 11:32-34; 1 Sam.12:1-5). Our children are a precious gift from God (Gen. 33:5). How much do we value this gift? How much do we value the word of God? "... If you love me keep my command-

### Guiding Your Children's Choice of Friends

Carol Fertig

**Y**ou are sitting at the playground watching your four-year-old climbing around on the monkey bars with another child. Suddenly your child's new "friend" bumps his head against the post of the apparatus and turns the air blue with profanity! Not the child's fault, of course, as he has probably heard the words from his parents; nevertheless, knowing your child can pick up bad habits from friends (I Cor 15:33), you distract your youngster from the association with a promise of a long time of pushing him high on the swings. It's easy to solve the problem when your child is four, but how do we teach our children to make the choice to move away from bad influences on their own and gravitate to people who will be good and positive friends?

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We all want the sort of friendship sung about in the show "Anything Goes" for our children as well as ourselves:

It's friendship, friendship,  
Just a perfect blendship,  
When other friendships have ceased  
to jell.  
Ours will still be swell!

We want friendships that will blend our goals with those of our friends: friendships that last and are fulfilling. Parents need a clear idea themselves of what desirable friends look like in order to be able to guide our children in seeking them. The most beautiful friendship in the Bible to me is that of Jonathan and David. If ever there seemed to be a situation for a man to be jealous of another, it would be that of Jonathan. His father Saul depended on David for military support and for personal support. When Saul was disturbed, David's music soothed him. In addition, all Israel knew David was God's anointed to take Saul's place as king when Saul died. All these things seem to be offices a son would fulfill, but David held this place. Not only was Jonathan not jealous, he *"loved him [David] as his own soul."* 1 Sam 18:1 He gave David his own robe, armor, sword, bow, and belt. In addition to material gifts, Jonathan gave David his covenant before God that their love for each other would extend through their future generations! David returned the approbation of Jonathan; when they both knew David would have to leave to keep Saul from killing him, *"... David rose from beside the stone heap and fell on his face to the ground and bowed three*

*times. And they kissed one another and wept with one another, David weeping the most. Then Jonathan said to David, 'Go in peace, because we have sworn both of us in the name of the Lord, saying, 'The Lord shall be between me and you, and between my offspring and your offspring, forever.' "* 1 Sam 20:40-42 When Jonathan was killed along with Saul in a battle with the Philistines, David mourned them both with a beautiful lament recorded in the first chapter of 2 Samuel. The last part of the lament was reserved for David's devoted friend:

*How the mighty have fallen in the midst of the battle! Jonathan lies slain on your high places.*

*I am distressed for you, my brother Jonathan; very pleasant have you been to me; your love to me was extraordinary, surpassing the love of women.*

*How the mighty have fallen, and the weapons of war perished!*

2 Sam 1:25-27

Some basic precepts of godly friendships can be isolated in the history of David and Jonathan. Both men served God faithfully; thus, they had a common goal. They wanted what was best for each other, even vowing before God to teach their descendants to love each other as they had. There was no jealousy or pettiness between them, only respect for who and what they were: David was King and Jonathan was his friend and helper. They cared for each other's safety and well-being. They gave to each other the very best that they had:

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terial and spiritual. Our children would do well to be such a friend and to have such a friend. It is up to the parents to guide them into this sort of relationship.

When God wanted Israel not only to keep His precepts themselves, but to teach them to their children also, He told them how to do it. Deuteronomy 6:4ff records that God instructed the people *“You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.”* First the words were on the hearts of the parents themselves (Deut 6:6), then they were passed to the children.

In guiding our children in choosing friends we first look at what sort of friends we have ourselves [teaching by example is covered in another essay in this publication], then using God’s method we lead our sons and daughters to form godly friendships, also. The key to teaching children in the passage cited above seems to be to **talk** with them about what they need to know: in this case, about fruitful friendships. God even suggested some good times to do that: when you’re around the house, going along the way, at night and in the morning. In modern experience this can mean when we’re watching a program together, eating dinner, driving in the car, when we get up in the morning and when we go to bed at night. Some of the most enlightening conversations my children and I ever had took place in the car! In other words, any time is a good time. We need to be diligent in our approach, but never to bowl a child over with admonitions. Behavior which marks a person to be a good

friend may be noticed and discussed. Encouragement to perform as a good friend himself, showing kindness and caring, will lead the youngster to look for others who treat him likewise. Make sure your children know of the beautiful friendships in the Bible such as that of David and Jonathan. Look in Proverbs for a multitude of suggestions about friendship. Jesus considered friends of supreme importance: *“Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.”* John 15:13

All quotations from ESV

## The Problem of Favoritism

Steven D. Baxley

One pitfall that parents sometimes face in parenting is the problem of favoritism. Favoritism is when one or both parents show an inordinately disproportional amount of love, favor, or attention to one child at the expense of the others. Favoritism can have lasting effects on the parent/child and child/child relationships in the family.

The Bible records at least two examples which demonstrate the problem of favoritism. The first of these is the relationship between Isaac and Rebekah and their two sons Jacob and Esau. The record can be found starting in Genesis 25. After the birth of the twin brothers is recorded, the record goes on to state that Esau was a hunter, a man used to living an outdoors lifestyle. Jacob, however, was a quiet man who preferred to remain close to the other members

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of his family. We then read these tragic words: *“Isaac loved Esau because he ate of his game, but Rebekah loved Jacob.”* Gen 25:28 Isaac was drawn to the kind of lifestyle that Esau had chosen, and to the things that lifestyle brought (a pantry full of good game meat). Rebekah gave preference to Jacob’s personality and lifestyle. It is a pity that the record doesn’t record something different: *“Isaac and Rebekah loved both their sons deeply and equally.”*

This favoritism on the part of Isaac and Rebekah will play out ultimately when the time comes for Isaac to bless his son Esau. Some time before, Esau had sold his birthright to Jacob. But now, when Isaac is old and believes that he may die soon, he prepares to grant his special blessing on Esau. Isaac sends Esau out to hunt and then prepare one of his father’s favorite meals. Rebekah learns of this, and hatches a plan to make sure that Isaac gives his blessing to Jacob instead. Jacob is hardly an innocent victim of his mother’s plot, but actively participates in the deception. When Esau learns what Jacob has done, he makes his own plans for the future, *“The days of mourning for my father are approaching; then I will kill my brother Jacob.”* Genesis 27:41 Rebekah sends Jacob away to protect his life. He will spend a period of over 14 years away from his immediate family. Even though in the end Jacob and Esau are reconciled (Genesis 33), the entire family suffered needlessly from the ill effects of favoritism shown by Isaac and Rebekah.

The second example involves Jacob and his sons. Jacob follows in the mistakes of his own mother and father, by showing particu-

lar favoritism to his young son Joseph. Genesis 37:3 tells us: *“Now Israel (Jacob) loved Joseph more than any other of his sons, because he was the son of his old age. And he made him a robe of many colors.”* Jacob’s attitude created immediate discord among his sons: *“But when his brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers, they hated him and could not speak peacefully to him.”* Gen 37:4 Of course, as events continued, Joseph is captured by his brothers, almost murdered, and eventually sold to a band of Ishmaelites, who take him into Egypt. Jacob lives many years believing that his beloved son Joseph has been torn apart by a wild beast. Although God takes these events and uses them to accomplish His purposes, there can be no doubt that much pain and suffering would have been avoided had Jacob avoided the mistake his own parents had made.



Favoritism is very damaging to relationships within the family. An un-favored child may develop very deep resentment towards the offending parent, even to the point of an estrangement in the relationship. This situation will be made worse if both parents are favoring one or more children at the expense of the same un-favored child. The relationship among the siblings may be damaged even more, as one child feels the resentment, and then allows that resentment to develop into dislike, even outright hatred. In the story of both Jacob/Esau and Joseph/his brothers, such resentment reached the point where there was a genuine threat of domestic violence, even murder. As parents, we would be foolish to think that such could not possibly happen to

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our children. Jacob, Esau, Joseph, and his brothers are not so very different from the vast majority of people.

Favoritism is an easy trap to fall into. Although parents usually love each of their children, it cannot be avoided that they will feel more closely drawn to ones with whom they share common interests. However, those feelings must not be allowed to translate into either impressions, statements or outright actions, where one child is ignored or treated as less special. Instead, parents should find common interests and activities with each and every one of their children, and treat them equally in those activities. As parents, we need to exercise great caution to treat each and every child to a fair division of our time and energy, never neglecting one to the benefit of the others, or benefiting one to the detriment of the others. We need to see each individual child as just that: an individual who will be like us in some ways, but different in others, and love each one with our entire hearts. May God grant to each one of us the wisdom and insight to avoid the mistake of favoritism in our own families. May we strive every day, in our actions and thoughts, to show total and complete and equal love to each one of our children.

### Training vs. Discipline

Tom Rutledge

**D**iscipline and Training are a part of everyone's life until the day they die. As we see in Hebrews, Discipline is an essential part of a child of God just as it is for our own children.

### Heb 12: 4-11 (NASB)

<sup>4</sup> *You have not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood in your striving against sin;* <sup>5</sup> *and you have forgotten the exhortation which is addressed to you as sons, "MY SON, DO NOT REGARD LIGHTLY THE DISCIPLINE OF THE LORD, NOR FAINT WHEN YOU ARE REPROVED BY HIM;* <sup>6</sup> *FOR THOSE WHOM THE LORD LOVES HE DISCIPLINES, AND HE SCOURGES EVERY SON WHOM HE RECEIVES."* <sup>7</sup> *It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline?* <sup>8</sup> *But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons.* <sup>9</sup> *Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them; shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits, and live?* <sup>10</sup> *For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but He disciplines us for our good, so that we may share His holiness.* <sup>11</sup> *All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness."*

By God's wisdom it is clear that discipline is necessary for good training. And that holds for everything we encounter. An athlete trains hard to prepare to compete and by that he disciplines himself in his training regimen. A dog is trained to control behavior and that is enforced by discipline. So as parents we have to understand that when Solomon stated in Proverbs 22:6 to, "train up a child in the way he should go and when he is old he will not depart from it," the implication is there that discipline is an essential component of training.

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Discipline and Training may be one of the more controversial and most subjective of all topics when it comes to parents raising our children. Take a poll and you will get a wide variation on what type or level of discipline is warranted and how to train a child. I believe that one thing we can all agree on is that **Discipline** and **Training** are essential components of raising a child. Everyone wants well disciplined and behaved kids. So, how can I train my child and mete out the right amount of discipline? Where do I start?

**LOOK IN THE MIRROR.** Dads and moms how disciplined are you? What kind of example are you of being responsible and providing for your family? Do your children see you treating each other with respect? Do you set clear and fair boundaries, and have accountability in your family? Dad, are you willing to make tough decisions and lead as God wants you to lead? Mom do you help to create harmony in your family? Are you faithful in prayer, bible study, worship and bible class attendance?



Undisciplined parents cannot expect to have disciplined children. If you are a married couple planning to have children or a family with children the first question to ask yourselves; am I leading a spiritually disciplined life? In fact it takes two very disciplined and committed parents to raise disciplined and well trained children. Both parents must be in harmony when it comes to discipline and training.

Whether we realize it or not, we are training our children every day just by what they see in us as you see in the following

poem:

#### THE LITTLE CHAP WHO FOLLOWS ME

A careful man I want to be,  
A little fellow follows me;  
I do not dare to go astray  
For fear he'll go the self-same way.

I cannot once escape his eyes.  
What'er he sees me do he tries.  
Like ME he says he's going to be-  
That little chap who follows me.

I must remember as I go  
Through summer suns and winter snows,  
I am building for the years to be-  
That little chap who follows me.

How often have you seen children who were spiritually well grounded and faithful to the Lord raised by parents who were not faithful in attending bible class and worship? I cannot ever recall seeing that. And so as parents we sometime truly live by the principal to "do as I say and not as I do or don't do" because we are not really that committed to our own training and discipline.

So, I have done the mirror check. Now what? There is no owner's manual that we are given when we leave the hospital. So where do I begin?

First of all realize that as parents, we tend to train and discipline in response to how we were raised. Some are strict disciplinarians because we were raised in that manner. Others are from homes where our parents were very passive and not very engaged in raising their children. So what we learned from our environment growing up may or may not be the best for my family.

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Check out what our Spiritual Father says:

*"He who withholds his rod hates his son, But he who loves him disciplines him diligently."* Prov 13:24

*"The rod and reproof give wisdom, But a child who gets his own way brings shame to his mother."* Prov 29:15

*"Discipline your son while there is hope."* Prov 19:18

*"Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child. The rod of discipline will remove it from him."* Prov 22:15

*"Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger; but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord."* Eph 6:4

**So here are a few things to consider:**

Discipline has to evolve as the child grows. What works for a child when they are 5 does not necessarily work the same when they are 15.

No one can really tell you how to discipline your own children because only you know your child. But I can say that fair, firm and consistent discipline is a must!

No one can really tell you how to train your own children. But I can say that wise, thoughtful and patient training is essential!

As parents, or parents to be, if you are not spending time in prayer and seeking council on how to discipline and train your own children you are risking their future. Discipline and training is not a passive, thoughtless process. It demands that clear boundaries are set, children are held accountable and there are consequences for crossing those boundaries.

Discipline cannot be an emotional response to my frustration that has child has done something and this makes me mad.

*"My son, do not reject the discipline of the LORD or loathe His reproof, For whom the LORD loves He reproves, even as a father corrects the son in whom he delights. How blessed is the man who finds wisdom, and the man who gains understanding."* Prov 3:11-13

### **Admonition of the Lord**

Debra Sweet

Just the other day, I was telling a friend that one of my favorite things is having all of our children and their families with us under one roof. There is just something overwhelmingly comforting and peaceful to know that we're all together as a family! This recollection of thoughts caused my mind to wonder and I began thinking about our Lord.

Will our Lord ever be able to look out over his children and smile and sigh and say, "They're all together under one roof?" And then my mind wandered – and I was thinking about birthdays and holidays when we try to choose just the right gift for our loved ones. How could we give our Lord the gift of having all of his children serving him as He has commanded?

III John 4 reads; *"I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth."* Anyone who knows me knows that I am constantly on the search for the perfect gift! I enjoy great satisfaction when I connect a person and their ideal gift! I want

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God to receive this special gift – and I have a few ideas on how to achieve this lofty idea.

We are going to need to start at the beginning and work toward the big picture. The big picture being the entire world truly serving the Lord! If you are a parent, you will play a starring role in this production. If you are not a parent, you can contribute by supporting parents, teaching bible classes and serving as role models for the children as well as the adults.

Deut 6:4 reads, *“The Lord our God, the Lord is one. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might”*. Parents, dedicate your lives to the command! Your total devotion to loving the Lord will incite energy and education! The act of loving Him, truly loving Him will allow your life to fall into place.

*“These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand and they shall be as frontals on your forehead.”* You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.” Deut 6:6-9

The idea is, saturate your home with the love of God. Talk about His creation and His commandments all of the time. Let your children see God through your eyes, through your teaching, through your lives. As fathers, you are instructed in Ephesians 6:4 to bring your children up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. This is simply a matter of prioritizing your life. The Lord has

provided a guide book and all you have to do is follow it, once your heart is correctly placed to truly love Him.

II Timothy 2:15 reads, *“Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth.”* Your children have been placed in your care. I am sure that as you planned for your child’s arrival, you made many plans for his or her life. You may have chosen a “theme décor” for their nursery and selected their pediatrician and dreamed about who they would become. Did you seriously think about their plan for heaven? Welcoming a brand new baby is exciting – imagine how exciting it would be for them to be welcomed into those heavenly gates! You need a plan – and it’s going to require total attention and dedication.

We have to follow the directions – exactly! Think about the toy that needs to be assembled. The ultimate goal is to assemble the toy so that it looks like the picture on the box. If you don’t read the instructions, you’re very likely going to end up with something nearly resembling the toy or with a toy that falls apart. You may have to start all over and really follow the instructions to end up with a quality product. Think how easily that toy will function if it is properly assembled! Our children need to be properly assembled and then the guidance and up-keep are easier.

II Timothy 3:16-17 reminds us that the scripture is provided by God for teaching and training that we might be ready for life. He has provided the instructions; we need only



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follow them. I would suggest that we totally immerse our children. When a foreign language needs to be learned, educators suggest living within that particular culture. Why not live our lives totally engulfed in His principles?

Just as we cannot expect our children to learn everything at school, we need to teach at home, and not expect everything to be learned in Bible class. A home Bible study is always a good idea! Simply opening the pages of the greatest story ever told and talking about those events or using a daily devotional book will add to your home relationships with each other and your relationship with God.

The best way for us to provide God with the gift of seeing His children walking in truth is to start at home. Plant those seeds with them and before you know it, you will be walking in His ways. Make plans to give Him the best gift and others will join you! I'm sure you will be able then to sit back and smile and say, "They're all here together under one roof", our entire family, living as Christ would have them live. That would be a wonderful blessing!

## Managing Outside Influences

Craig Sweet

For those who subscribe to a social media system, if you received a message like this one, how would you re-



spond? Would you confirm or would you ignore it?

Social media is a very popular source of sharing information and it is also a very reflective system, showing who we are and what is most important to us. Would you want Jesus to see your social media page and all the information you have posted and the pictures that you are in? Social media can be a tool that is effective in sharing our Christianity. Too often we see information, pictures and videos that would cause us to question whether or not a person is living a Christian life (Matt 5:16). What about our children using social media? Should we allow them to be part of such an influential source of information? What is most concerning is the number of parents who allow the very young to be involved in social media. There is so much adult information available to young people that if you are not closely monitoring their account, they will gain access to discussions, pictures or other postings that could seriously influence them away from God.

Social media is only a fraction of the problem available in our current electronic age. It is present in many areas such as general internet sites, video games, movies, and even music that children listen to. Parents must manage the usage of all sources of influence. Research shows that more than 75% of teens that play games are playing games rated "M" for mature by the Entertainment Software Rating Board. By allowing such violent and/or suggestive interactions, what are parents allowing to fill their children's mind? Romans 8:5-8 says, "For those who are according to the flesh, set their

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*minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so, and those who are in the flesh cannot please God."*

We cannot blame technology for this problem. It is nothing more than an enabler. Technology is here and will continue to impact every part of our daily lives. However; technology (like any other thing of this world) used in the wrong way can lead to sin or move us away from the Lord if we let it. Parents must manage all aspects of technology with their children. We can teach them, but it also requires proactive management on behalf of the parents. So, here are some practical suggestions that parents should consider. Computers and game systems should be used either in a general access areas of the home or with the doors open. Parents need to be able to walk by the room and see exactly what is on any screen in the house. You need to manage all games that are purchased and/or played for age appropriateness. Parents should enable parental control features on all technology systems in the home. This should include but is not limited to computers, cell phones, game systems and television. You need to have access to all passwords to all of your children's electronic accounts. You need to have physical access to any cell phone at any time. You need to learn the abbreviation language of text messaging such as LOL (laugh out loud) or ROFL (rolling on the floor laughing). Is this

showing a lack of trust? It doesn't have to be. You can always communicate to your children that you have access to the accounts at any time and may check them from time to time. If they are not doing anything wrong, there should not be an issue of trust. This is good parenting and a way to teach that trust is something earned and not a right.

Outside influences are not limited to technology. Other areas might be where the children are involved in things like sports, music, and drama. Schools demand that if you are going to be part of an extra-curricular activity, you are not permitted to miss any of the practices or events. This is where parenting is most challenged. It is a well-known fact that a student who is involved in activities outside of school are typically in less trouble, have better grades, and learn better social skills that help them in their life. However, parental guidance is most important during this time. What is a parent to do when activities conflict with worshipping the Lord? When this conflict arises, it is how parents reach a decision that will teach their children what should be most important in their life. If parents continually choose extra-curricular activities over worshipping God, they should not be surprised when a child grows up loving the world and what it has to offer more than God. Sadly, there are many parents who will not correlate those early decisions with why their children are not walking with the Lord in their adult years. We can take them to church, but we teach them the most from home and by our actions and guidance. If worshipping the Lord is not important when they are chil-

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dren, parents should not assume that it will just magically start being important when they are older.

All in all, parents are more challenged today with outside influences than ever before. We make decisions for our children that will affect the rest of their lives and we have to live with our decisions and the consequences that accompany them.

### Full Time “Opportunity”

Phil Lumpkin

Hopefully these articles from mature parents have given you encouragement, as well as some practical advice and guidance rooted in God’s word about biblical parenting. In conclusion, we want to share a few additional thoughts.

**The parental relationship changes as a child matures.** As children grow, the relationship invariably changes and we must not only accept this change, but prepare our children to succeed in the various stages of their lives.

Babies obviously require constant attention and care. We joyously take care of their every need and lovingly accept their state of total dependence. As a child grows and matures we compare their progress with “typical” developmental expectations. The goal over time is to raise them to be fully independent, fully functional, well rounded adults. But one of the greatest challenges of parenthood is to determine the appropriate schedule of maturation for each child and then guiding that child from infancy to adulthood to achieve his/her full potential.

Samson’s parents (Manoah and his wife) wanted to be good parents. When an angel of the Lord appeared to Mrs. Manoah with the news that they had been chosen to raise a special son, Manoah prayed and entreated the Lord, *“O Lord, please let the man of God whom Thou hast sent come to us again that he may teach us what to do for the boy who is to be born.”* Judg 13:8 They wanted to know how best to fulfill their parental responsibilities so that their son was ready to undertake his life’s work for the Lord. Like them we don’t want to be just parents, we should want to be the best parents we can be. Our children deserve our best effort!

**It’s not over till it’s over.** Yogi Berra supposedly uttered this pithy phrase and it not only applies to baseball, but to many other pursuits as well. In our case, to the raising of our children. So when is the job of parenting complete?

The job obviously is not complete when a child learns to feed himself. That messy milestone is just a beginning. Then is the job finished when he/she starts to Kindergarten or perhaps transitions into middle school? Surely the job is done when teens get the freedom that comes with a drivers’ license? Or better yet, the job has to be over when a child graduates from high school. If the objective of successful parenting is to raise children to be fully independent, fully functional, well rounded adults, then the job is only finished when we’ve done just that. It is convenient to say, “it’s over” at some milestone in a child’s life, or after some protracted period of time, but that may be saying its over—because we as parents quit.

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So parents must stay the course. As we've noted, the relationship changes as a child matures, but the parenting process isn't over until its over. When a young man or woman is capable of standing confidently on their own two feet, make their own decisions and fully accept the rewards and/or consequences of their decisions, we can begin to relax. And oh yes, when they're able to pay their way in life, you know they're . . .

The parental challenge at this point is to allow the young person to be independent. Often it's difficult to cut the apron strings and allow the fledgling to spread their wings and soar. But the maturation process has to transition to that next phase. Young adults must be given the opportunity to make their parents glad (Prov 10:1).

Even when they've flown from the nest, and established their own families (Gen 2:24) children are rarely far from their parents thoughts. Godly parents continue to pray for their children and perhaps pray more fervently for them after they are no longer at home. Thoughtful, wise parents learn to give advice at the right time and place; knowing that it is just that – advice.

**Gender differences.** Just as each individual child is a unique gift from God and parents should rear them accordingly, likewise raising boys and girls introduces interesting nuances into the parenting process. We're probably familiar with the concepts associat-

ed with "women are from Venus and men are from Mars." We sometimes expect our young ladies to be prim and proper while thinking its normal for our boys to be rough and tumble.

Even with notable gender differences we should provide the same loving, nurturing environment for both to grow and mature. We should require the same level of accountability from both. We should provide comparable opportunities for both. We should require the same level of trust with both. Our expectations for each should be based on each child's capabilities, not their gender. Throughout the scriptures we encounter prophets, some major, some minor, some obscure, like Nathan, sent to humble a great king. However, some of the last prophets mentioned in the Bible occurs in Acts 21:8-9, "... the next day we departed and came to Caesarea; and entering the house of Philip the evangelist, who was one of the seven, we stayed with him. Now this man had four virgin daughters who were prophetesses." We don't normally expect girls to be prophets, but apparently the Holy Spirit had other plans for Philip's daughters.

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## Fall Lectures

Oct 18-20

	<table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px;">Thurs 7:30pm</td> <td style="padding: 2px;">Does marriage Really Matter?</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px;">Fri 7:30pm</td> <td style="padding: 2px;">What's In It For Me?</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px;">Sat 2:00pm</td> <td style="padding: 2px;">Enough Is Enough!</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px;">3:00pm</td> <td style="padding: 2px; color: blue;">Gospel Singing</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px;">4:00pm</td> <td style="padding: 2px;">Keys To A Great Marriage</td> </tr> </table>	Thurs 7:30pm	Does marriage Really Matter?	Fri 7:30pm	What's In It For Me?	Sat 2:00pm	Enough Is Enough!	3:00pm	Gospel Singing	4:00pm	Keys To A Great Marriage
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