

— TRAIN YOUR —
CHILDREN
— GOD'S WAY —

by David C. Pack

Herbert W. Armstrong led the Worldwide Church of God (formerly The Radio Church of God until 1968) until his death in 1986. Hundreds of millions heard his voice and read his literature. God called him in the fall of 1926 and he was converted in the spring of 1927. Over the course of Mr. Armstrong's ministry, God revealed through him a great many true biblical doctrines, which had been lost to the Church through the centuries. After his death, his successors ceased to believe and teach these doctrines. Although copyright law prohibits The Restored Church of God from reproducing and distributing literature produced while he led the Worldwide Church of God, we are committed to the preservation and teaching of all of these truths!

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The family unit is under assault from an ever increasing array of forces, with children enduring the brunt of the attack. Parents are now facing almost impossible odds against successfully rearing their children!

Yet, God commands parents to “Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it” (Prov. 22:6).

But how can parents—one alone or two working together—do this? What chance do they have of rearing balanced, moral children in today’s wild, *immoral world*? What should children be taught? How should they be instructed? And can you be sure that what you teach your children will *stay* with them for life?

God’s Word addresses these and many other questions—and the answers are not what you expect!

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Introduction

There is not another book about childrearing like *Train Your Children God's Way*. In fact, there has *never* been a volume about childrearing like this one. It is absolutely unique among all others on the subject. This vital book contains sorely needed information—REVEALED KNOWLEDGE, straight from the plain Word of God!

Modern bookstores in almost every city contain a wide variety of books teaching a host of men's ideas about how to rear children. While often containing interesting facts and quotes, and perhaps some few helpful minor points, none of these competing, disagreeing and largely confusing books, which are usually written as though they are trying to impress intellectuals, have succeeded in bringing the answers that the parents of today long for—and desperately need!

Millions of families today are in almost complete despair. Ignorance of the most basic *spiritual knowledge* has brought about a near holocaust of a whole generation, now almost entirely lost to misguided thinking and false values. The terrible fruits of modern families are visible and obvious, but no one knows what to do about it. No one knows where to turn for the answers that countless millions of parents are seeking. The world has not known that there is an INSTRUCTION BOOK containing all the vital information necessary to rear children the right way.

More and more thinking people recognize that civilization is out of control. New problems of every kind are appearing, with older ones growing worse seemingly every day. The current generation of leaders

has utterly failed in its responsibility to improve the world—to make it better for the next generation. *Government leaders* have failed to lead the world out of problems. *Business leaders* have not been able to stabilize the world's economy. *Generals* have failed to bring peace through military intervention. *Scientists* have failed to rid the world of food shortages, pollution and problems such as extreme weather. *Doctors* and *medical science* have been unable to check the spread of deadly viruses and bacteria, and the diseases and other plagues that come from them. *Religious leaders* and *philosophers* have utterly failed in bringing happiness, fulfillment and true purpose to the lives of billions.

All are looking to the next generation to bring final solutions to the world's greatest problems!

Yet, if the *present* picture looks bad, then the *future* looks much, much worse! The world's most important resource—and the backbone of every society and nation on Earth today—are its children. But today's generation of young people is in big—HUGE!—trouble. The condition of the present generation of youth is so bad, with problems so severe, that anyone with eyes to see does not, and could never, doubt this! But this is because parents have failed in their God-given responsibility to give their children the RIGHT FOUNDATION necessary to produce lives full of achievement, productivity and *true* success. They have not met the challenge! Again, no one has taught these parents—no one has equipped them for their responsibility.

Consider this from the perspective of how the world looks ahead to those it is counting on to produce the leaders they suppose—and anticipate—will be tomorrow's "problem solvers":

From today's young people will come the university professors, schoolteachers and childcare professionals of tomorrow. They will also produce the scientists, inventors and explorers of the next age. And from today's younger generation will also come the economists, financiers, business entrepreneurs and chief executive officers of the vast numbers of small businesses, larger companies and multi-national corporations in tomorrow's economy. The next generation of government leaders, senior military officers and members of futuristic "think tanks" will also come from those who are in school today. So will the philosophers, writers and journalists. And then there are the future doctors, psychologists and other professionals who will also arise from the modern generation. In addition, will come the lawyers, judges and law enforcement officials to deal with the worsening societal breakdown occurring today. Most important, the *religious leaders* of tomorrow will come from the children of today, and it is desperately hoped that these

will soon bring leadership that their predecessors have failed to bring for the last 6,000 years!

Of course, all of this first supposes there will even *be* a tomorrow for the world, and there will also *be* an existing generation to produce sufficiently qualified leaders to guide civilization closer to the final utopia *every* generation and *all* nations have sought.

The evidence is not good that either of these things will happen.

The nations of the world possess a vast sum of knowledge, and it increases every day, but they are ignorant of the right *kind* of knowledge—SPIRITUALLY REVEALED KNOWLEDGE. This is because the modern system of education is morally and spiritually bankrupt! Deluded educators have been biased against God and His Word by having had the atheistic teaching of evolution poured into them from childhood. They have taught young people for decades (and these have become today's parents and grandparents) that there are "no absolutes" and that they must follow "situation ethics" in all circumstances. They have led the world into a kind of secular humanism—where people are driven by how they *feel* rather than clear definitions of *right* and *wrong*! But there *is* right and wrong in life—and the educators who are teaching the children of this world have cut themselves off from this knowledge (Isa. 59:1-2). They cannot teach what they were never taught. And neither can parents who have been indoctrinated in their thinking!

Also, this world's religions have kept parents and young people steeped in traditional pagan philosophies and teachings that have deceived the world for millennia. All the world's religions have ignored the great spiritual principle of *cause* and *effect* that governs every aspect of life. They have all neglected to teach true *spiritual* values—that there is an inspired, vital INSTRUCTION BOOK from Almighty God that contains special knowledge. It explains there is a great SPIRITUAL LAW that, when obeyed, brings all the good things every human being seeks. Confused by the conflicting influence of blinded religious leaders and deceived educators, parents have utterly failed in their greatest responsibility, which should have been to teach their children how to live, and to instill in their young minds the marvelous truths of God's Word and the SUPREME PURPOSE for which they were born! Again, they have failed to meet the challenge!

This book strips away the confusion, division, competing traditions and ignorance that have shrouded the truth about childrearing God's Way. May God help you to understand what you are about to read so you can teach your children to understand what has not been available in one book until now!

Facing the Challenge

It has been said that children represent a parent's greatest stewardship. We could ask: What else even comes close?

Think of all that is at stake in how parents rear just one child. This little human being can either be armed with how to succeed in life, or literally *programmed* to fail—left *defenseless* against the many problems that life will throw at him! Further, the child's children—the parents' own grandchildren—will be directly affected by the principles of childrearing (good or bad), which could then in turn continue to be at least partially employed, potentially for generations to come. Then there is the effect the child will have on all the other people with whom he comes in contact throughout the balance of his life. And what about the very real peace and happiness—or lack thereof!—that the child brings to his parents as another direct result of how well they did their job? All these things are measured in very real terms, and carry implications almost too numerous and far-reaching to comprehend.

Your task is to recognize what all of this means to *you* as a parent, which must translate into ACTION—what you must *do*!

The Greatest Challenge

Take a moment to consider the world around you. Reflect on all the different kinds of influences—with seemingly more every day—to which a child is exposed. Rearing children in today's violent, morally

permissive, confusing, “anything goes” world is perhaps the most trying, difficult thing that adults could do.

The situation could be likened to a ship entering what has been called “the perfect storm.” The force of the wind and the size of the waves beating on the “parental ships” of today mean that parents are working seemingly against all odds, and without a compass, maps, a working rudder, or an engine to power their ship—assuming they even knew where to steer it. However, in reality, the greatest “perfect storm” is that which their children are suffering. If it could be said that parents are experiencing 30-foot waves and gale force winds in the open ocean, at least they are on a ship. By analogy, their children are experiencing the same conditions, but in a small, leaking row boat, without oars or even a can with which to bail!

This leads back to the role of parents, the purpose and focus of this book.

For instance, fathers and mothers today must counteract a host of powerful pulls coming from Hollywood, Madison Avenue and social media, all of which glamorize rebellious attitudes and self-centeredness. Then they must contend with a strange, perverse generation of young people who are different from all previous generations, and who have their children surrounded. Youth and teenagers of today have a whole variety of new subcultures, values and thinking—many of which would shock all but the most liberal, open-minded parents!

Consider the following quote from *The Daily Telegraph*, a British newspaper, in an article titled, “Keep out: TV, DVD and computers rule.” It plainly reveals the effect of technology on parenting today: “Technology is destroying traditional family life as young adolescents increasingly spend more time in their bedrooms playing computer games, surfing the Internet or watching television, videos and DVDs, a study released today claims. Whereas the living room used to be the hub of the home, now more and more 11- to 14-year-olds prefer to be alone in their technology-filled bedrooms, communicating with friends via mobile phone texting or e-mail.” (This article goes on to state that 75 percent of children ages 11 to 14 have a television in their room, 64 percent have a DVD player or VCR, and one-fourth have a computer in their room.)

Hopeless Generation

So many children and teenagers today have become hopeless, with no hint, inkling or clue of why they are alive, and whether there is a

PURPOSE for human existence. Just observing their faces in a crowd reveals this much. They can see world conditions grow ever worse, with the news of each day seemingly worse than the day before, and the problems each day becoming worse and greater in number than the day before.

The result of all this is that the vast majority of children and teenagers today simply tune out the cacophony of confusion and emptiness of religion, the division and ineffectiveness of government, the evils and troubles plaguing schools and education, the complex economic forces at work in the modern world and the breakdown of the family, which increasingly often includes their own. This leads them to select from—more like back into—a variety of different means of escape: drugs, alcohol, sex, gambling, endless parties, and mindless, gratuitous entertainment, among others, to occupy themselves. In turn, these pursuits lead to a whole host of problems which are overwhelming society—and parents.

Your children will be—and maybe already are—tempted to turn off, give up and drop out if you are not unceasingly vigilant in your responsibility to keep them in the belief that they can *have a future*, and that it can be wonderful beyond belief, *if* they are carefully building it step by step under your guidance! You, as parents, are charged with giving—infusing!—hope, and helping your children to retain it, when virtually no one around you will be helping.

This means that your task will not be easy!

To produce a happy, moral, emotionally mature and productive adult—including a strong relationship with the true God—parents must swim against a swirling ocean of powerful currents represented by the trends, pulls and overwhelming pressures of the modern age. In addition, great numbers of parents are working alone instead of together toward their children's well-being. Many of them must openly *combat* the efforts of the other parent, who is working directly against the first parent's view of the well-being of the children. Tragically, the vast majority of parents are simply drowning under the strain—and the net effect is that their children are drowning with them.

When it comes to childrearing, parents often do not know *what* to do—or *when* to do it. Do you? To achieve success in their most important stewardship, parents must be fully equipped—and this means thoroughly *armed!*—with ALL the necessary knowledge to reach their goal. All other paths will leave them bewildered, confused and overwhelmed, having no hope to even effectively *communicate* with their children, let alone to actually *GUIDE* them properly!

Of course, and this is most tragic, some parents simply do not care what happens to their children—who may not have even been planned for or wanted in the first place.

But either of the above two scenarios—*interested but ignorant* or *cavalier and uncaring*—need not be you. Perhaps this book can inspire you to see your role as a parent for the exciting, thrilling and ultimately rewarding experience that it can be—if you are properly prepared for what lies ahead!

Instant Gratification

Consider the typical television sitcom: Strong family values, once promoted in the past, have been corrupted into the dysfunctional family values of today. And almost every form of entertainment now reflects this.

Let's take a closer look at Hollywood films: Many glamorize sexual immorality, with movie characters usually portrayed as changing sex partners more often than they change their clothes. Hollywood producers manipulate audiences into rooting for the rebels, anti-heroes and action characters who thumb their noses at every form of authority. The movie industry also promotes an extreme emphasis on physical beauty and appearance. Also, defenseless against the daily bombardment by ads in most teen magazines—with those much younger also reading them in large numbers—up to 63 percent of girls just 7 to 10 years old now go to school wearing make-up and expensive perfumes. This statement alone reflects a sad and worsening picture of childhoods lost! But it gets worse. By age 14, 90 percent of girls are wearing some type of lipstick, mascara or eyeliner. This, in turn, leads to earlier and earlier sexual activity.

Now consider the Internet: With a few clicks of a button, your child can access web pages that promote every twisted, immoral and perverse idea that men can devise. Photographs of absolutely appalling images are only seconds away from your child's mental consumption. And parents seemingly can do little to stop this.

Virtually all societies on Earth are now exposed to the age of instant gratification, through mass media and CDs: television, radio, music, movies, video games, music videos and magazines. All of these deceive children into believing that they are the center of the universe. Children are constantly bombarded with messages of selfishness, greed, deceit and "me first" attitudes. These messages are "boxed, wrapped and marketed" to target an unsuspecting genera-

tion in packages of vanity, illicit sex, hatred, physical aggression and rebellion against authority.

Television has spoon-fed this destructive, awful diet to children for so long that the majority no longer know how to think, reason or solve problems with their *minds*. Instead, the television culture has taught them to solve problems through *violence* and *force*, coupled with deceit in every form.

Tragically, an even worse condition afflicts young people of the modern age. Many have grown up not even having been taught to *think*, let alone *talk*, about anything of DEPTH. Obviously, this is because most people no longer read very much, including any of the important parts of a newspaper—let alone a wide variety of books or *news* magazines. Children no longer read beyond what is required by their schools, and this is usually little more than the basics. To read, one must move his eyes back and forth across the page. And he must think about the words he is seeing and what they describe. Incredibly, experts report that this has become too much effort for a generation that has been programmed to stare at a TV screen. Television does not require thinking—or effort.

There is also evidence suggesting that early exposure to television can perhaps “rewire” a child’s developing brain patterns, changing the child’s thinking for the rest of its life. With commercials interrupting programming approximately every seven minutes, it has been demonstrated to produce a seven-minute attention span in children. This seems to be confirmed in the experiences of a professional storyteller, Odds Bodkin, who reads mostly to children. He observed that children began to be restless after about seven minutes, in anticipation of a commercial break. This new phenomenon has been labeled “Attention Deficit Disorder.”

An article titled “Toddler TV Time May Shorten Attention” points to a link between time spent watching TV and attention problems in children. It states, “Experts know too much TV is bad for older kids, but it may also harm the attention spans of children as young as 1 year old, a new study suggests” (*HealthDay Reporter*).

Another study, by author Dr. Dimitri Christakis of the University of Washington, Seattle, states, “We found that watching television before the age of 3 increases the chances that children will develop attentional problems at age 7.”

The researchers also found the following: “...for each additional daily hour of television that young children watched on average, the risk of subsequently having attentional problems [by age 7] was increased by almost 10 [times].” (This is a classic example of the

unseen law of *cause and effect* in action. But because parents are not looking for it—and this is because no one is telling them that they should—the result is a whole generation of young children with little or no stick-to-it-ive-ness. We will learn more about this generation in the next chapter.)

But let's continue: This means that 1- to 3-year-olds who watched eight hours of television a day “would have an 80% higher risk of attentional problems compared to a child who watched zero hours.” One well-known expert has stated that children should avoid all contact with television *and* video games prior to the age of three.

The book, *Zero to Six: Electronic Media in the Lives of Infants, Toddlers and Preschoolers*, published by the Kaiser Family Foundation, provides a look into the use of media among the very young and their parents. Some of its findings include:

- 83% of children use screen media, whether TV, movies or video games.
- 77% turn the television on by themselves.
- 67% request a particular program or are able to surf channels using a remote.
- 65% live in homes in which the TV is on half the time or more.
- 36% live in homes in which the TV is always on (considered a “heavy” TV household).
- In “heavy” TV households, 77% of children watch it every day.
- Such children are also less likely to read (59% vs. 68%).
- They are also less likely to be able to read at all (34% of children ages 4 to 6 from heavy TV households can read, compared to 56% of others the same age).
- The majority of parents (59%) say their 4- to 6-year-old boys imitate aggressive behavior seen on TV.
- And perhaps the most astonishing statistic in this entire book is that 26% of children under 2 have a TV in their bedroom.

What has been the result of all this? Many young people have never visited a library or ever personally owned a book. (Most of these have little concept of the wonderful world of books.) Virtually their entire perspective on life is limited to what flashes across the TV screen. And what they constantly see is violence, corruption and widespread immorality.

This also means that parents are up against a vast array of problems built into their children by a very early age, ensuring that parents have a long, difficult uphill battle in being able to overcome these things.

More Astonishing Statistics

Consider these alarming statistics, and all of the anguish and suffering that they represent:

- In 1990, 24% of U.S. families were single-parent households. By 1999, it had risen to 27%.
- In 1999, 68% of U.S. children lived in two-parent homes, down from 77% in 1980.
- From July 1, 1998 to June 30, 1999, there were 47 violent deaths in U.S. schools.
- From 1992 to 1999, students were more likely to be victims of theft at *school* than anywhere else.
- The U.S. has the highest number of teen pregnancies of any industrialized nation—one million annually among girls ages 15 to 19. The United Kingdom is the next highest, with about half a million pregnancies annually. But this number actually represents a *rate* that is much higher, since the U.K. is only about one-fifth the size of the United States.
- Of Americans who have been infected with sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) annually, more than three million (or about 25%) are teenagers.
- Each year, about 25% of all new HIV cases occur in people ages 13 to 21.

The following statistics are from “*Heartland Village, Youth Statistics*” unless otherwise noted:

- Every night, 40% of children in America go to bed in a home without a father.
- 66% of children believe that absolute truth cannot be known.
- 10% of adolescent boys and 18% of adolescent girls have made some attempt to take their own life.
- A new study proclaims that teens who spend most of their free time ingesting movies, television and music see pop culture as a valid form of creativity. A study found that 87% of teens rated “directing a movie,” “being a rocket scientist” and “being a good teacher” as equally important pursuits.
- Although teens aged 13 to 17 make up only 7% of the American population, they make up 31% of the shoplifting population.
- A third of American teens say they can get free condoms on a regular basis. Here is the revealing breakdown of percentages describing where they are able to do this:
 - Clinic—40%

- Friend—16%
- School—14%
- Store giveaway—6%
- Doctor—6%
- Parent/relative—4%
- Concerts—2%
- The following is a picture of how American children view homosexuality:
 - 82% say that homosexuals can and should be hired for any occupation.
 - 80% think that same-sex partners should receive the same employment benefits as married people.
 - 73% say that homosexuals should be permitted to enter the military.
 - 64% think that homosexuals should be permitted to adopt children.
 - 61% agree that homosexuals should be permitted to get married.
 - 69% know that intimate contact with a homosexual causes AIDS.
- American teens quizzed with questions that mixed pop culture and constitutional issues provided the following answers:
 - Less than 2% of teens recognized James Madison as the father of the Constitution, while 58% know Bill Gates as the father of Microsoft.
 - Nearly 95% know Will Smith played the role of the “Fresh Prince of Bel Air,” but only 2% know William Rehnquist was Chief Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court.
 - More than 75% know that Beverly Hills’ zip code is 90210, but only 25% know that the Constitution was written in Philadelphia.
 - 41% can name the three branches of government, while 59% can name the Three Stooges, who were popular on television half a century ago.
 - 74% know that Bart Simpson lives in Springfield, but only 12% know that U.S. President Abraham Lincoln was from Springfield, Illinois.
- It costs society \$39,000 per year to keep a youth in a correctional center.
- The average child witnesses 8,000 murders and 100,000 other acts of violence on television by the time he finishes elementary school.

- Every day...
 - 13 young people commit suicide
 - 16 are murdered
 - 1,000 become mothers
 - 2,200 drop out of school
 - 500 begin using drugs
 - 1,000 begin drinking alcohol
 - 3,500 are assaulted
 - 630 are robbed
 - 80 are raped
- 1.1 million teens become pregnant each year, representing 11% of all 15- to 19-year-olds.
- Almost half of all teen pregnancies (449,000) end in abortion.
- One in every *three* teenagers has used an illicit drug within the past 30 days. (This statistic alone represents a mindboggling state of affairs.)
- Suicide is the second leading cause of death among college students.
- American girls, on average, begin having sexual intercourse at age 16, boys at 15. By the time of high school graduation, 70% of girls and 80% of boys have been sexually active (*U.S. News and World Report*, December 22, 1986, p. 8).
- 50% of today's sexually active males had their first sexual experience between the ages of 11 and 13 (Robert Coles and Geoffrey Stokes, *Sex and the American Teenager*, 1985).
- By age 13, boys who have never had *any* form of sex are in the minority. Similarly, girls are in the minority by age 15.

Subcultures All Their Own

Modern teenagers have developed their own entirely unique subcultures and their own set of standards. This includes body piercing, tattoos, drug abuse, seemingly endless wild parties, and other aberrant behaviors too numerous to list here.

Reflecting a somewhat new pattern of conduct, already vast and growing numbers of teenagers now spend an enormous amount of time attending "poker parties." Much of this is done under the "helpful supervision" of many parents who are just happy to see their children safe at home where they can keep an eye on them. This trend also includes children as young as ten! Of course, a now large number of television programs promote poker, and this has created an explosion of products available for sale to teach poker to young children. Then

there is the problem that teenagers and younger children are also being led into other forms of gambling. Since gambling is addictive, all the related problems seen in addicted adult gamblers are being seen at this earlier age.

But poker parties are only the beginning of the “party” problem with today’s youth culture. Understand. These are not the parties of either yours or previous generations. These are truly wild parties, including “raves,” which can have thousands of young people at each party (sometimes held in warehouses, remote beaches, and other such places, where drugs can flow more freely). Then there are the drinking parties in basements and other secluded places, often permitted by the parents for the same reason as the poker parties. Then there are the dance clubs, which are generally about finding sex. (And there are even now “teen dance clubs” for the same purpose, but done under the guise of “safe” alcohol-free activities. Here, the sexually-suggestive music is the worst problem, with actual sex a close second.)

All of this is leading more and more young people into contact with the worst of society’s underbelly—drug dealers, prostitutes, illegal gambling and various other criminal activities, to support their drug habits.

Of course, television, the movie industry and other forms of entertainment have also played a direct role in all of this. They have glorified such parties and conduct by portraying them to be almost a part of normal everyday life. It is no overstatement to say that the above picture is what a big part of a college education has come to mean for thousands and thousands of young people who seem to now see their “college experience” as one endless “spring break”—no longer just done in places like Florida, California or Cancun.

The appalling condition of the generation that will produce *tomorrow’s* leaders has become one of the enormous statements of our time. How incredible that huge numbers of *today’s* young people have come to look for, and expect to find, a party somewhere—anywhere! This pattern has become a never-ending search and cycle for so many, with just one of the by-products being more and more teen suicides and accidental deaths related to drug overdoses and overdrinking, which all serve to bring the tragedy home to parents who never saw it coming, or who did but had no idea how to stop it.

Ironically, the mantra of today’s youth is that anything is permissible as long as no one “gets hurt.”

We can ask: Is it any wonder that parents are overwhelmed, having no idea what to do? Is it any wonder that thinking people recognize the experts have **UTTERLY FAILED?**

Sexual Revolution Pre-teen Style

As mentioned earlier, teen—and even *pre-teen*—sex is now fast becoming the norm, with large and growing numbers of pre-teens attending “oral sex parties,” because they saw that it was not considered sex by the highest officeholders in the land. This has meant that widespread fornication, leading to an explosion of teen pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases, has become a virtual way of life in Western countries, with Britain now leading the way, as it suffers from an epidemic of all such related diseases. (Large numbers of pre-teens have also been attracted to the above-mentioned “rave parties,” which have led such young minds to be quickly overwhelmed with a variety of problems that minds much older than theirs are not even equipped to deal with.)

Various types of “sex education”—and this is not all simple instruction—are coursework in many middle schools and high schools in the United States as part of the standard curriculum. Why then does anyone wonder that children are having sex in record and growing numbers? Then consider that British girls under the age of 16 are permitted to have abortions without their parents’ knowledge, or without the parents even knowing that their child had been pregnant! This is an absolutely astonishing state of affairs.

The flip side of this coin is that there are growing numbers of younger teenage girls who *do* want to have a baby—because so many of their friends are having them. They are seeing this as a way of having someone in their life who will demonstrate the “unconditional love” that they can find no other way. Many view this as an attractive “trend” that one should be willing to seriously “consider.”

Further, many young female schoolgirls are copying the trend established by call girls and are publishing on the Internet “explicit memoirs” of their sexual escapades and experiences because vast numbers are only too eager to read them.

Before looking into the Bible to see how parents can properly rear their children, we must take an even deeper look at today’s generation.

“*Strange Generation*”

Here is a descriptive reference from the prophet Hosea foretelling the condition of today’s generation of young people: “They have dealt treacherously against the LORD: for they have begotten STRANGE CHILDREN...” (5:7). This is more true than the older generation can even begin to comprehend.

Today’s youth live in a very different world than *all* previous generations. It is one that teaches them careers come first—that individual fulfillment is more important than rearing a family—that stay-at-home mothers have become, and should be, largely a thing of the past—and that households need two-parent incomes, or families cannot survive. It is a world that stresses living almost exclusively for today because tomorrow may never come.

Children today are cynical, emotionally drained and carrying a kind of world-weary mentality. While many may *seem* tough and *talk* tough on the outside, most are morally weak and spiritually vacant inside. They have become a generation of emotionally-stunted children. As a result, they lack empathy—they cannot feel for others, and can only barely feel for themselves. They lack the moral fiber or backbone to do the right thing, even when it is painless. Millions have stumbled into adulthood believing that “if it feels right, do it.”

Is it any wonder that ten students are expelled from British schools every day because of violent behavior? Was there ever doubt that the American trend toward extreme mass violence in schools would also take its place in Britain?

These conditions did not come about all at once. As far back as the 1970s, modern society began rearing a generation of “latchkey kids”—children who came home to an empty house after school. Without adult supervision, they were left to their own devices. Vast numbers of latchkey kids have practically *reared themselves* into adulthood. The final products have not been good.

On the one hand, they have become generally (and often fiercely) independent adults who seem to need little supervision on their jobs. On the other, they never learned to emotionally bond with people and are generally poor team players. They never learned to feel for others, because they have been trained to feel—and fend—*only* for themselves. This has also meant that they do not know how to build loving, mature relationships. And they show little interest in parents who showed little interest in *them*.

“Millennials”

Now imagine the following scenario: You are standing in the “12 Items or Less” cash register line at the local supermarket, waiting to pay for a loaf of bread.

The man in front of you is buying a bottle of wine, which he presents to the cashier—a pimply blonde with streaks of orange, lime and other unnatural colors swirling through her hair, a butterfly tattoo on the inside of her left wrist, and body piercings on parts of the flesh that can only be seen as perverse. Too young to legally ring up alcohol purchases, she signals for help from an older cashier.

A pleasant, personable middle-aged woman suddenly appears. She smiles at the customer and asks, “Hello, how are you today, sir?” as she enters a code into the register. The transaction is made. The older woman thanks the customer for his purchase, and then returns to her other duties.

You are next in line. The young blonde stands at the register and stares at you, saying nothing—not a “hello” or “how are you?” Nothing.

You step forward and present your loaf of bread. She rings it up, bags it, tells you the price, which you pay, and she hands back your change. Your transaction is complete. You pause for a moment, expecting her to say, “Thank you. Come again.”

Nothing, not even a smile. It’s as though she’s a mannequin that breathes.

You smile and offer words of appreciation for her prompt service—to which she grunts, “Yep” or “Uh-huh” or something similar, anything except, “You’re welcome.”

Welcome to the age of Millennials.

They run supermarket registers and department store counters. They loiter in malls in large groups barely saying a word to each other, “too busy” text-messaging other friends. Many graduate from college and take on entry-level positions in office complexes where ties, dress shoes and general business attire are largely extinct—white collar work environments where young employees freely call their gray-haired supervisors by their first names and the expression “Pay your dues” falls on deaf ears. The average Millennial does not know how to professionally conduct him or herself in the office. He or she lacks the training to use proper etiquette at business dinners and other special occasions. Neither was he taught to value the hands-on experience of older, more seasoned generations. And he does not know how and when to accept “no” for an answer.

The age of Millennials has dawned. A chapter about this generation is necessary before understanding what God requires of parents. It is necessary to look in-depth at what have become many millions of people throughout the Western World.

Who They Are

Born in 1980-2000, they are the latest generation of youth in the United States, Britain, Australia and other Westernized nations. Though called by various descriptive names—“Generation Y, Echo Boomers, Generation Next,” and others—a poll revealed that most preferred to be called “Millennials.”

Theirs is the first generation to grow up surrounded by the modern, “instant gratification” technology of digital media. They have no memory of a world without computers, cellphones, digital cameras, email, text-messaging, instant messaging, personal digital assistants, mp3 players, handheld video game devices, blogs, do-it-yourself Internet videos, online virtual worlds, web browsing and remote controlled devices.

An estimated 80 million Americans, Millennials are set to replace baby boomers as they retire from the workforce.

Unlike Generation X, Millennials are more likely to have grown up in two-parent households where both father and mother worked. However, the parents—perhaps in reaction to the childhood neglect “Gen-X” experienced—offered advice to their children and encouraged their little ones to freely express their opinions and input on matters. Millennials were treated as “little adults,” as regularly depicted in TV sitcoms and Hollywood movies.

Their view of life changed from that of previous generations because the world itself had changed, now smaller, interconnected—truly a global village.

In the book *Connecting to the Net.Generation: What Higher Education Professionals Need to Know About Today's Students*, a survey of 7,705 college students in the U.S. revealed the following:

- 97% own a computer
- 94% own a cellphone
- 76% use instant messaging (increasing daily)
- 15% of instant message users are logged on 24 hours a day/7 days a week
- 34% use websites as their primary source of news
- 28% author a blog and 44% read blogs
- 49% download music using peer-to-peer file sharing
- 75% of college students have a *Facebook* account
- 60% own some type of portable music and/or video device such as an iPod
- 90% have had premarital sex

There was a time when one's childhood was localized to a neighborhood, a school, a small town. No longer. Millennials shop, research, phone, text-message and write to each other at any time, and at any place. They've come to *expect* receiving what they want—and what they want, they want NOW!

“Hovered Over” Childhoods

Baby boomers have been called self-absorbed. Gen-Xers have been thought of as cynical and non-motivated. Likewise, Millennials are identified by their extremes, their overall strengths and weaknesses. Of course, all descriptions given to any particular generation cannot paint every person with the same brush. There are exceptions.

Most Millennials are not team-oriented and not loyal to employers. They maintain a “pragmatic” view concerning the modern workplace. Having seen employees laid off after decades of loyal service to the company, Millennials decide, “I won't let that happen to me.”

They have grown accustomed to looking ahead to potential employment options elsewhere. Despite economic disparities, jobs can still be found, which means that fearing to lose one's position is not the same as it once was.

There is another reason fear of job loss is almost nonexistent.

From conception, Millennials were pampered by “helicopter” parents—fathers and mothers who closely hovered over their children's

every move and personally interceded in their affairs. They were raised during the 1980s and 90s, when “Baby on Board” signs and “My kid made the honor roll!” bumper stickers were prevalent. Millennials grew up being catered to. The world revolved around them. They joined soccer teams and received trophies just for participating. They were told repeatedly, “Everyone is a winner”—which means the value of winning was drastically lowered.

Their lives were micromanaged from one activity to another: soccer, basketball, dance, martial arts, learning to play an instrument. Millennials were made to feel sought after, needed and indispensable. Helicopter parents did not hesitate to try to convince teachers to change Johnny’s grade. They negotiated with the soccer coach to give Suzie more game time.

When Johnny and Suzie went off to college, the hovering continued. College instructors received phone calls and visits from intervening parents trying to get better grades for their children. And when Johnny and Suzie entered the workforce in their chosen profession, Human Resources received phone calls and visits from intervening parents. Some sat in on job interviews! Others told their children’s employers that their salary offer or annual bonus was insufficient.

“Our parents really took from us that opportunity to fall down on our face and learn how to stand up,” said Jason Dorsey, who advises fellow twenty-somethings on how to cope with work (*60 Minutes*). Speaking of Millennials, he said, “We definitely put lifestyle and friends above work. No question about it.”

Since they were rewarded all their life merely for participating, adult Millennials have been conditioned into believing they should be rewarded “just for showing up.” The real world does not work that way—yet because Millennials will soon outnumber baby boomers and Gen-Xers in the workforce, employers are having to change their tactics in how they relate to their employees. Today’s office environment emphasizes fun over work, creature comforts and freebies (free drinks, free snacks, etc.) over structure and self-discipline.

Expectations

Parents, teachers—even children’s television shows—repeatedly taught Millennials the importance of having self-esteem, to have a can-do attitude, to be confident in themselves. Time and again they were told, “You are special.” The intentions were good, but the effects were terrible: a generation that expects to be praised for the least bit of

effort yet falls apart at the sound of a raised voice telling young workers where they went wrong and how they can do better.

Millennials want more than a nine-to-five job—they want flexible work hours, the option to telecommute or have a compressed workweek. They cherish fun time, and expect the workplace to be challenging and creative. But above all, FUN!

Millennials are connected 24/7, from the time they wake up to when they go to bed. With email, text-messaging, cellphones and other means of instant communication, the line dividing work from social life has blurred and faded.

Millennials do labor diligently, but only as long as they know the ground rules and have enough time to “play hard.” Having grown up receiving rewards and praise for everything, they expect to move up the ladder of success—quickly!

“Although they are better educated, more techno-savvy, and quicker to adapt than those who have come before them, they refuse to blindly conform to traditional standards and time-honored institutions. Instead, they boldly ask, ‘Why?’” (*Employing Generation Why* by Eric Chester).

This is the same generation that craves interaction with their managers and happily receives feedback, which their parents and grade school teachers taught them to seek, especially if it comes with praise. In return, they expect their opinions and ideas to be heard and respected, despite lack of experience.

Millennials generally lack discretion—prudence—what was once called common sense. They know that once an image, sound bite or email is posted to the Web, it's there forever. Yet the Internet has become a dumping ground for recording the most embarrassing, crude and shocking moments of people's lives. Years later, when applying for a job or attempting to move to a higher position, young teachers, emergency workers and others have their hopes dashed.

Here is why: they may have caroused at a nightclub and “let loose,” a moment captured by a camera phone for the whole world to see—after drinking alcohol past the limit, they sang a hate-filled rant at a bar, recorded and posted to the Internet as an easily downloadable mp3—instead of thinking it through and understanding the impact of words, they typed a mean-spirited email that was picked up by the world of bloggers. Once online, it can never be deleted.

Also, Millennials were reared to be tolerant—“don't judge.” But parents and mentors failed to teach the importance of exercising patience, discretion, prudence. They were not taught to value right from wrong, to understand the difference between one and the other.

Building a Bad Reputation

A new industry of consultants has emerged to teach companies how to interact with, train, motivate—and, in some cases, essentially babysit—a generation that does not take “no” for an answer. These consultants teach Millennials (and Gen-Xers, for that matter) how to cover up visible tattoos; how to conduct themselves as professionals in the office; how to exercise proper dining and business etiquette.

The U.S. is not unique in dealing with Millennials. In Australia, a 2007 survey of more than 315 small- and medium-sized businesses revealed that almost 70% reported dissatisfaction with the performance of Millennial employees, particularly in spelling and grammar, and that they did not understand what constituted appropriate corporate behavior (Australia’s *ABC News*).

The *Dallas Morning News* reported that an advertising executive stopped hiring newly college-graduated Millennials altogether, unless they held advanced degrees or had work-related experience. Though the ad exec called them creative and tech-savvy, he said that Millennials-at-large lacked the ability to be responsible, accountable and to deal with setbacks. “They wipe out on life as often as they wipe out on work itself. They get an apartment and a kitty, and they can’t cope. Work becomes an ancillary casualty” (*ibid.*).

A generational expert told the newspaper that Millennials have been “overparented, overindulged and overprotected. They haven’t experienced that much failure, frustration, pain. We were so obsessed with protecting and promoting their self-esteem that they crumble like cookies when they discover the world doesn’t revolve around them. They get into the real world and they’re shocked” (*ibid.*).

Marian Salzman, an advertising executive at J. Walter Thompson, told *60 Minutes*, “Some of them are...more hard-working. They have these tools to get things done. They are enormously clever and resourceful. [But] some of the others are absolutely incorrigible. It’s their way or the highway.”

“You do have to speak to them a little bit like a therapist on television might speak to a patient,” Ms. Salzman added. “You can’t be harsh. You cannot tell them you’re disappointed in them. You can’t really ask them to live and breathe the company. Because they’re living and breathing themselves and that keeps them very busy.”

Millennials do not like to be told to be patient reaching goals and overvalue their worth to the company. Ms. Salzman said, “I believe

that they actually think of themselves like merchandise on eBay. ‘If you don’t want me, Mr. Employer, I’ll go sell myself down the street. I’ll probably get more money. I’ll definitely get a better experience. And by the way, they’ll adore me. You only like me.’”

60 Minutes also spoke to Mary Crane, a consultant. She said that Millennials “have climbed Mount Everest. They’ve been down to Machu Picchu to help excavate it. But they’ve never punched a time clock. They have no idea what it’s like to actually be in an office at nine o’clock, with people handing them work.” They lack how to react with grace when under fire.

“You now have a generation,” Ms. Crane continued, “coming into the workplace that has grown up with the expectation that they will automatically win, and they’ll always be rewarded, even for just showing up.”

“Old Paths”

God speaks to the citizens of this modern age: “Stand you in the ways, and see, and ask for the *old paths*, where is the good way, and walk therein, and you shall find rest for your souls” (Jer. 6:16).

The “old paths” of true values and right traditions were to be taught within the family unit, the basic building block of any thriving society. If the traditional family institution crumbles, so does civilization.

Millennials are reaching adulthood believing that any group of people can be defined as a family, so long as it exists on “love.” God also states, “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge” (Hos. 4:6)—ignorance of the “old paths” that lead to lasting success.

In extreme cases, parents have pampered their children to the point of being rotten! What has been missing is balance: Parents have either babied their children or ignored them so that they essentially reared themselves.

A Generation Without Values

Many children today are almost completely void of true values—and many are not even aware that they should *have* values. Their minds and emotions are invested in material things, such as \$200 sneakers and expensive leather jackets, and a host of other material possessions that are thought to define their lives. Society has produced a generation in which some teenagers will actually kill to possess what others have, because life has come to be about “status,” “getting respect,” conforming to peer pressure, and living almost exclusively for the

moment. Many do not care about—or even think about—tomorrow, but rather only about what will happen to them today.

On the forty-first anniversary of John F. Kennedy’s assassination, a horrific new video game was released in which players are placed in the Dallas sniper’s window and try to assassinate the president over and over again. A feature is available to add “blood effects” for those who wish to see them as the president’s head explodes from wounds. The game offers point deductions for hitting Mrs. Kennedy, the driver or others in or out of the vehicle. Incredibly, soon after the game’s release, for a short period to help promote it, the producers offered a \$100,000 reward to those who had the best score. However, those familiar with video games such as the “Grand Theft Auto” series and others say that the “JFK” game is fairly tame by comparison.

We could also ask if it is really any wonder why so many school shootings seem to involve hardened kids only too happy to kill other children. It has been evidenced in some of these shootings that 14- and 15-year olds are able to display the skill of advanced marksmen, and military and police snipers. It is worth noting in fact that some of *these* professionals now routinely train on simulations that are variations of these games.

The callousness of those who routinely play these types of games can only be described as appalling! Yet, this is the world that is competing for the attention of your children.

Rarely are children disciplined for their misconduct or even taught that certain actions are wrong. Improper conduct is now largely “winked at”—or even encouraged. Children are taught from a very young age that their *feelings* should be their moral compass. They are taught to reason their way through a situation by using little more than impulses—by following what they *feel* is right.

Gone are the days when children were reprimanded for things like being too loud or unruly on field trips. Because sexual limitations have also been lifted, these same school trips today can be interrupted by children performing sexual acts at the back of the school bus. Because such conduct is not disciplined, these same youth can later turn to pornography in order to pay their way through college. Truly, all such acts are often tacitly accepted or even considered healthy “exploration” of oneself.

Now consider this: How can parents teach their children to be moral, to act justly and to be merciful when the daily news continually reveals the sins and crimes of adults—and in explicit detail? White-collar crime, government corruption, widespread child abuse

among this world's clergymen and others of influence, who are supposed to help in young people's development, terribly distort the picture that children see. To young people, actions speak louder than words.

Society is rearing a "generation that curses their father and does not bless their mother" (Prov. 30:11). This describes the last generation of every previous educated and advanced society—the Romans, Greeks, Babylonians, Egyptians and Assyrians, among others—all of which eventually collapsed. Each of these great empires produced youths who were proud, arrogant, unteachable, lazy, pleasure-driven and generally rotten.

Simply scanning the world around you reveals that such a generation exists once again. As Solomon said, "There is no new thing under the sun" (Ecc. 1:9).

The Bible describes the final generation of a society on the verge of collapse. Let's continue with Solomon's description in Proverbs 30. Modern society is now producing what is described there as a "generation that are pure in their own eyes, yet is not washed from their filthiness" (vs. 12). Millions of young people today cannot be told anything, including that they are wrong. This is because they already "know it all," and would have no need for anyone to offer them instruction. They have witnessed too many television sitcoms depicting children who know more than their "idiot" parents.

Further, this generation does not know the meaning of the word "no," and expects parents to "reason" with them—and to ask for and receive their opinion. Virtually every issue becomes the subject of *negotiation*—instead of simple instruction, coupled with strong admonishment when necessary.

Almost an entire generation of parents have become unbalanced in their childrearing. The "hold-outs" are becoming fewer and fewer. In most cases, parents simply do not know how to properly rear their children. As a result, rarely will they make their children *do* anything—assigning few chores or responsibilities because most young people will no longer be diligent in carrying them out or, worse, will openly defy their parents with the confidence that they will do nothing about it.

Society has forced parents to be more concerned with being their child's *friend* than in being his or her TEACHER and PARENT! And most parents would rather be popular with their children than "upset" them by firmly requiring anything of them—and teaching them *right from wrong*, including the regular application of *discipline* when standards are not met!

All Religions Have Failed

All of the supposed “great religions” have failed to give parents the tools they need to properly rear their children into becoming responsible, productive adults. This includes all of the world’s many brands of Christianity, which teach that God’s spiritual laws—His Commandments—were “kept for us by Christ” and were “done away with,” and “there is no longer a need to keep them.” Therefore, morality has become a matter of personal taste: One man’s *sin* is another man’s *lifestyle*.

Modern theologians routinely substitute the righteousness of God—His Commandments (Psa. 119:172)—for the standards of righteousness established by men, and call it “political correctness.” This greatly adds to the confusion of what children see.

It is no wonder that most teenagers and even younger children today have smug faces and generally smirk at all forms of authority, often making no attempt to hide the rolling of their eyes because they think that they already “know” what is right and wrong. Woe to those who try to teach them otherwise. So many are ungovernable, unmanageable and unruly.

Political correctness teaches young people that nothing is truly bad or wrong—except INTOLERANCE. But herein lies a great irony—those who preach political correctness will *not* tolerate those who take a stand against sin. What hypocrisy!

Teens are no longer taught right from wrong, because so many of their *parents* no longer seem to *know* the difference, even on the basics. So many now embrace a world of “differing shades of gray,” where clear-cut rules of morality, ethics and integrity no longer exist. Large numbers of people—many of whom are parents!—routinely STEAL items from their jobs (pens, markers, paper, notebooks, or much larger items like computers, expensive tools and other equipment—and even *time*, while at work) and then wonder why their *children shoplift*.

What blindness!

Fifty years ago, if a child found a wallet containing a large sum of money, he would likely have automatically turned it over to the police. Today, such a child would be ridiculed—laughed to scorn—by his peers, and even by some adults! He would probably be written up in the local newspaper as a veritable *hero*, simply because practicing what was once considered a civic duty has now become a phenomenon. Such honesty is so rare that it makes headlines!

With the fuller picture of today's youth, how can parents hope to effectively rear a child in such a morally and spiritually upside-down world? What chance do they—do YOU—have to train a child God's Way so that he can become a successful, productive, obedient, happy, and emotionally, physically and spiritually mature adult?

There *is* hope. The truths in this book will show you THE WAY—but you must first see, and then be willing to meet, the enormous challenge that lies before you! This almost certainly involves much more than you now realize. But *you can succeed*—and you should proceed as though you WILL!

The Biblical Doctrine of Childrearing

Most people view childrearing as a matter of personal opinion. With no idea that there is a right way—and *many* wrong ways!—to rear children, they either make up their own rules, repeat the methods used by their parents or listen to confused, disagreeing “experts.” In effect, anything goes.

How many have come to think like the following new, young parent, a 19-year-old superstar, professional athlete, who, upon the arrival of his new infant son, born out of wedlock, said this about why he would not seek advice from good role model parents around him offering help?: “You can’t teach someone to be a father. There are no tips like playing basketball. You have to raise your own kids.” Such ignorance is astonishing to the point of being almost breathtaking. But this is to be expected when *children* have children—and no one has taught them what they are getting into.

In regard to discipline, this kind of thinking causes parents to fall into two extremes, neither yielding positive results:

(1) They discipline too much, even to the point of child abuse. Every year in the United States, several thousand defenseless children are literally beaten (or shaken) to death, and four million more are abused annually in an adult tantrum holocaust of growing proportion.

(2) They discipline too little—or not at all. These parents listen to psychologists and other “authorities” who warn against the “hazards” of spanking, scornfully referring to it as “beating.”

Ignoring the facts, and forgetting that generations past who were firmly disciplined for wrong conduct were much more stable, respectful and wholesome, these supposed experts now declare that spanking only teaches children to be aggressive and violent. Yet, they fail to explain why there is *so much* widespread violence among youth—theft, assault, rape, murder—at a time when parents are spanking *less than ever!*—and many or most not at all. No one is helping parents who desire guidance and help to “connect the dots” between today’s problems and the ever-changing rules and guidelines of modern childrearing.

Vast numbers of parents, forced to rely on themselves or on the misguided opinions of so-called experts, have no way of knowing what to do when it comes to properly rearing children. They need help, not recognizing the problems that they are facing are *spiritual*, not physical. They need to turn to the only SOURCE of true spiritual understanding—the Bible—God’s Word!

Most do not know that childrearing *is* a biblical doctrine—and that the Bible has much to say about it. They do not recognize that it is a *teaching from God*, like baptism, conversion, salvation, tithing, the Sabbath, God’s annual Holy Days, faith, grace, law and sin—and every other teaching in His Word.

Two Approaches to Childrearing

When God’s servants, those truly carrying His authority, teach the only way to properly rear children, most people would see it as *meddling*, not BIBLICAL INSTRUCTION. This is because it hits close to home and becomes personal. And, like children, many simply do not want anyone—this includes God!—telling them what to do, even when they have no idea themselves.

This book is written for those who recognize that they do not have all the answers.

Within the Church that Christ built, the Eternal God has established His ministry to teach His Way of Life in *all* points—the way that mankind has rejected since Adam and Eve’s fateful decision in the Garden of Eden to rebel against God’s rule over them. But God *is* calling a very few (John 6:44) out of this world’s customs, values, traditions, false teachings—and erroneous thinking of supposed experts—to understand and live His spiritual laws. These few are reaping the spiritual benefits.

This can include you. But only if you can recognize that all forms of childrearing fall into two categories:

(1) God's Way, revealed in His Holy Word.

(2) The world's way, as influenced by the "god of this world"—Satan the devil (II Cor. 4:4; Eph. 2:2). This fallen spirit is the unseen source of human nature (Rom. 8:7).

Anything contrary to God's teachings—*His* doctrines—is error. The apostle Paul warned, "a little leaven leavens the whole lump" (I Cor. 5:6). Error, like leavening, *spreads*. Wrong principles of childrearing are no exception. Childrearing as practiced today stands on a completely wrong foundation. What started out wrong has grown much, much worse!

Authorities in society, and some parents, do teach *certain* good things concerning the rearing of children. But this means that they are teaching a *mixture* of good and evil. This is the lesson of the tree of the knowledge of good *and* evil in the garden, which God explained was to be rejected. Only God's Way is pure, with no hidden "downside."

If you want to rear your children to lead successful, abundant lives, God's *Master Instruction Book* will guide you. Revealing the hidden shoals in a dangerous world that threatens your child, the Bible is filled with correct teachings and spiritual principles that *always* yield positive results to those who faithfully practice them. But you must deeply *desire* to learn God's way of childrearing, and *then* diligently apply it without compromise—and for many years!

You must be prepared to throw away the intellectual nonsense taught by people who have "credentials" but who reject God's authority over this and all other matters in life. You must be prepared to put God's Way into practice as you learn it.

Rearing a Family

Let's examine some basic statements about what God says regarding rearing a family.

Paul was also inspired to record, "for whatsoever a man sows, that shall he also reap" (Gal. 6:7). Then notice this: "Except the LORD build the house, they labor in vain that build it: except the LORD keep the city, the watchman wakes but in vain. It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows..." (Psa. 127:1-2).

If God is not in the "house" you are building—if you do not involve Him in the way you rear your children—you are destined to reap pain and sorrow of almost every kind.

Verse 3 continues: "Lo, children are an *heritage* of the LORD: and the fruit of the womb is His *reward*." Plainly, your children are God's special gift to you. Unlike most people, who cannot wait until their

children are grown up and gone, you should cherish them throughout their time under your charge.

So tragically, many people think that children are a burden. They do not understand that it is selfish *not* to want children. Such people would rather focus on THEMSELVES than share their knowledge, experience and attention with the next generation. They are unable to see children as little fellow human beings with whom they can practice and share the love of God.

When God brought Adam and Eve together in marriage, He instructed them to “be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth” (Gen. 1:28). Recognize that this instruction was actually a *command* from Him to have children, because the family unit is the human pattern picturing His own Divine Family. While this is a subject of other books and booklets—and I have written many explaining this pattern within God’s SUPREME PURPOSE—it should at least be briefly acknowledged here in the context of the shrinking size of the average family in Western civilization.

Verse 4 of Psalm 127 adds more: “As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man; so are children of the youth.” By, in effect, “shooting an arrow,” you (as a parent) are extending your life beyond yourself—*through your children*. This is one of the reasons verse 5 concludes with “*Happy is the man that has his quiver full of them!*”

Now read the very next Psalm, and its exciting promise: “*Blessed is every one [who] fears the LORD; [who] walks in His ways.*” This is because if you do, “Your wife shall be as a fruitful vine by the sides [heart] of your house: your children like olive plants round about your table. Behold, that thus shall the man be *blessed* [who] fears the LORD” (128:1, 3-4).

Children are sent to parents as a blessing—not a burden. So says the Creator God.

Understand, however. God has *not* given children to you to merely be your *possession*. Remember that they are your *blessing!*

Childrearing Is a Stewardship

As previously mentioned, God has given children to you as a gift of STEWARDSHIP. If you are a true Christian, called out of the world and being led by the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:9, 14), you understand that your children could one day have the same opportunity. At some point in the future when your stewardship is completed, God will *take back* your children. When it becomes time for Him to offer them salvation, and for them to receive His Holy Spirit, following repentance

and conversion, your final record will have largely been written. The efforts of your stewardship—your childrearing *today*—will have made God’s job *tomorrow* either harder or easier.

Grasp this. You hold far more authority in this process than you may have dreamed!

In ancient Israel, God did not consider people to be adults until they had reached the age of 20. Today, for most, this is age 18. In this sense, God has given you approximately 18 to 20 years of stewardship, to finish the product that He will receive.

Upon Christ’s Return, all God’s *true* servants will have to give an accounting of every aspect of their life. How well parents “occupy” in wisely carrying out their child training stewardship now reveals to God whether He can trust them to rule over cities in the World to Come. Take a moment to read this extraordinary, detailed parable. As a Christian and a parent, your stewardship includes your children and family. In verses 20-22, Christ *agreed* with the unprofitable steward that He was “austere.” But verses 23 to 26 show that God expects us to *use* the stewardship He gives us!

Jesus explained to His disciples that the Christian walk is difficult. Here is what He told them to expect: “Enter you in at the strait [difficult] gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leads to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leads unto life, and few there be that find it” (Matt. 7:13-14).

The living Jesus Christ has very high standards for those who choose to follow Him. It is the Christian parent’s task to sow a bountiful crop—it is Christ’s plan to reap it.

The Four Important Rules of Childrearing

Contrary to common belief, people are *not* born with the knowledge of how to be good parents!

Due to all the stresses of today’s fast-paced life, we have seen that parents turn to television to help keep their children occupied. In an effort to have some quiet time, and to avoid the hard work of training their children, parents essentially hand their children over to the worst possible “babysitters” and “nannies”—Hollywood screenwriters, television producers, computer programmers (those who produce video games), etc. These people become the children’s most dedicated mentors!

It takes hard work to be a parent! It is a full-time job that requires substantial, ongoing effort. Many parents today seemingly have little

or no *time* for their children! Without correct priorities, most will also not *make* the time for their children!

Long gone are the days when the entire family would spend time together discussing an endless array of interesting topics. Gone are the times when children would read book after book, learning about the world around them. Now, their minds are drained by technology, and parents willingly give up their responsibility to teach their children how to live, how to think and how to become productive, successful adults.

Again, you may have never thought of correct childrearing as a biblical teaching, but it is. Properly rearing a child—made in the image and form of God, destined to be born into His Family—requires spiritual understanding from God. In fact, because of all that is at stake in the outcome of just one child, of course God would have to give detailed instruction.

No parent *naturally* knows everything about how to rear a child the correct way. God must *teach* this knowledge—like any other doctrine revealed in His Word. The parent must become a student of God's Word on this vitally important subject.

Some people *are* naturally better at parenting and working with children than others. Some are better at nurturing children. Others are better at admonishing them. Yet, *all* parents must be taught by God. *All* parents need to study His instruction on childrearing. Strive to merge the good things that you may have already been blessed to know with what God's Word reveals.

Notice the New Testament instruction in Ephesians 6: “Children, OBEY your parents in the Lord, for this is right. HONOR your father and mother: (which is the first commandment with promise)” (vs. 1-2). Children must be *taught* to respect their parents—this does not come naturally. If followed, this commandment—and the application of all childrearing principles—will yield blessings, as Ephesians 6 continues: “That it may be well with you, and you may live long on the earth” (vs. 3).

This Bible chapter next addresses parents: “And, you FATHERS, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the *nurture* [education, training, instruction] and *admonition* [mild rebuke, warning, correction, discipline] of the Lord” (vs. 4). We will revisit this passage in Chapter Seven in a different context.

Help your children to honor you. Make it easy for them. No child will grow up to respect a nagging parent who berates him at every opportunity. Would you?

Set clear boundaries for your children. This means being committed to using discipline when necessary.

You must also be determined and equally committed to continually teaching your children all the vital lessons and important principles of life. It has been said that the single greatest gift you can give your child is to be a wise and understanding parent, one able to teach them in almost every circumstance.

Now for what I call the FOUR GREAT RULES of childrearing:

- (1) Teach!
- (2) Teach!
- (3) Teach!
- (4) Teach your children absolutely everything they need to know!

Do not allow your children to merely stumble into adulthood. Just as God teaches you, so you must TEACH *them*. This is *your* responsibility, as the following scripture shows: “And these words, which I command you this day, shall be in your heart: and you shall TEACH them *diligently* unto 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 up” (Deut. 6:6-7).

Be prepared to teach your children *all* the time, and on every occasion—the proverbial morning, noon and night. Your responsibility is to instruct them in all the values they need in order to succeed. God designed children to be like sponges—they were *created to learn*. Your children are unconsciously looking to you to teach them how to navigate the increasingly complex maze of today’s world.

Think of little minds as clay. You can literally mold them into whatever you choose—good or bad.

The greatest gift you can give to your child is to train him in God’s Way. Notice: “Train up a child in the way he should go: and [margin: even] when he is old, he will not depart from it” (Prov. 22:6).

After your 18 to 20 years of good stewardship, your children will produce positive fruit!

Never Let Discipline Become Abuse

The wise parent recognizes the *proper* and *timely* use of physical discipline. He or she never disciplines out of anger—when emotions have been allowed to get out of control. The results can prove to be disastrous, in more ways than one.

We have already mentioned parental violence against children. Children must always be understood to be little people who have absolutely no way of defending themselves. Remember that you are

almost certainly much bigger, much stronger, and weigh much more than even the largest of your children.

Keep this in mind at *all* times. Your child must never be given the opportunity to think that he is the object of your *uncontrolled wrath*—or the victim of an assault. There is not a single good thing that will come from administering this kind of discipline, and your child will come to resent and even hate you for it. He must recognize that you are disciplining out of a pure motive of concern for his long-term well-being.

Yet, remember that discipline must never be merely “love taps” to a child or it will accomplish nothing. The child must know that spanking is something he or she does *not* want to experience—for any reason! This alone becomes a reason why spanking, done properly, usually becomes a rarity.

Is God's Way Harsh?

Let's momentarily examine how God dealt with rebellious teens in ancient Israel: “If a man have a *stubborn and rebellious* son, which *will not obey* the voice of his father, or the voice of his mother, and that, when they have chastened him, will not hearken unto them: then shall his father and his mother lay hold on him, and bring him out unto the elders of his city, and unto the gate of his place; and they shall say unto the elders of his city, This our son is stubborn and rebellious, he will not obey our voice; he is a glutton, and a drunkard. And all the men of his city shall stone him with stones, that he die: so shall you put evil away from among you; and all Israel shall hear, and fear” (Deut. 21:18-21).

Notice that God told the Israelites to actually put to death—execute!—teenagers who refused to obey their parents or respect authority.

This sounds harsh, even barbaric, in today's world, but God understood what was at stake for His society if such a rotten attitude was unleashed upon it for an entire lifetime.

Understand that God set this standard to be an example. Upon witnessing such a graphic execution—and probably of one who was at least an acquaintance—how many teens would even *think* about rebelling against their parents? *Few*—if any! God's punishment was actually merciful. And, in the end, it *SAVED* many lives, and resulted in many obedient, respectful teenagers. Very few would have to die, because they would not dare to break God's Fifth Commandment—“Honor your father and mother”—if they knew it would have cost them their lives!

At that time, God carried out punishment within His Law very quickly. He did not waste months and years of trials, retrials, appeals and the like, as do the time-and-money-consuming courts of men. Unfortunately, mankind, cut off from God (Isa. 59:1-2), has not learned this lesson. Notice: “Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil” (Ecc. 8:11).

God moved swiftly to administer justice in a carnal-minded society, one whose citizens did not have His Holy Spirit. The ancient Israelites did not have the opportunity to repent spiritually—to change and grow from carnal ways to the ways of God.

Today, God administers justice in a *spirit-minded* society—His Church! True Christians *do* have the power of God’s Spirit dwelling in them to change from the “way that seems right unto a man” to the way that produces real peace and true happiness. Certainly, it is not God’s purpose to put Christians to death. In His mercy, He has given them an entire lifetime to change, grow and OVERCOME—to develop His holy, righteous character (II Pet. 3:18).

When people read Deuteronomy 21, they tend to focus on the person who is executed and thus miss the point. But God, in His supreme wisdom, focuses on the ones who will *not* be executed—those who will take His laws seriously as a result of what they witness happening to those who rebel. God’s wisdom is higher than man’s (Isa. 55:8).

Divine understanding is superior to human reasoning every time!

Strengthen Your Children

Today’s youth are *defiant*, but essentially weak, because they have not had to suffer as have most previous generations. Their defiance only makes them *appear* to be strong, and confuses what is actually happening. The world’s focus on pursuing pleasure and the “good life” teaches children to be weak—to lack the moral strength, stamina and perseverance of generations past.

There are a number of studies demonstrating that teens invariably do better—grow stronger—when the father is involved. They become less delinquent and more educated because they have fathers who tenderly teach them *everything* they need to know in order to achieve success.

Fathers, of course with mothers assisting, you must always be willing to literally “spend” yourself—continually putting forth the effort to keep your children from stumbling into the many pitfalls of the twenty-first century world!

Is Spanking Bad for Children?

The “experts” of modern society have developed their own ideas about the use of spanking—and they conflict with the truth of God. Here, contrasted with what God teaches, are their feelings, in their own words:

The world’s way: “Spanking sets the example that it is okay to hit when a person is displeased or upset.”

God’s Way: If done properly with love and consistency, spanking sets boundaries—and can literally save a child’s life. Children must know that they cannot dart into traffic, play with electrical sockets, steal or do other dangerous things. If they refuse to heed instruction, spanking becomes their “wake-up call.”

The world’s way: “Placing a child in timeout is an old but effective method of punishment...Giving a couple of warnings for bad behavior is fine, but never acting on the threat of a timeout will let the child know you will not act on their bad behavior.”

God’s Way: First, giving children more than one warning for bad behavior is *not* fine. Parents should always speak **ONLY ONCE**.

Second, timeouts are not much of a deterrent, and children know this. If a timeout works, then fine. But if it does not, spanking is an effective alternative. Even the *warning* of a spanking can be effective—**IF** you neither abuse nor underuse it.

The world’s way: “Spanking may be a temporary fix to a problem. It may even permanently stop a certain behavior, but the damage being done is worse than whatever the behavior was. A child who is regularly spanked will learn to disrespect their parents. As that child grows older he will seek ways to withdraw from an untrusting and scary relationship.”

God’s Way: Spanking *does* end bad behavior. And yes, it does teach your children to fear you—just as God wants His children to fear Him. Consider the following scriptures: “Blessed is every one [who] fears the LORD, [who] walks in His ways” (Psa. 128:1).

“In the fear of the LORD is strong confidence...The fear of the LORD is a fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death” (Prov. 14:26-27).

“Then you shall say unto your son...the LORD commanded us to do all these statutes, to fear the LORD our God, for our good always, that He might preserve us alive” (Deut. 6:21, 24).

“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge” (Prov. 1:7).

“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom” (9:10).

“The fear of the LORD prolongs days” (10:27).

“Blessed is the man that fears the LORD, that delights greatly in His commandments” (Psa. 112:1).

Spanking, done God’s Way, produces proper fear, respect—and trust.

The world’s way: “No child needs a spanking. Spanking can be dangerous. You can never tell when children will be hurt badly by a spanking if you lose control. Children do not need to be hit in order to learn how to behave.”

God’s Way: Spanking, applied properly, is NOT dangerous. However, never setting clear-cut boundaries, backed by quick but loving discipline, *is* dangerous! Of course, no parent should EVER be out of control, whether in spanking or any other aspect of childrearing.

Parents who seek God, and who ask Him to develop in them the fruit of longsuffering and self-control, will not have to worry about losing control when spanking.

The world’s way: “You can do lots of things that will help your children learn self-control—you can help them feel good about themselves, you can show them how a person with self-control acts, you can guide them, you can set limits, you can correct misbehavior by talking to them, and you can teach them how to think for themselves.”

God’s Way: And if your children refuse to obey you, then what? If you tell them, “Timeout!”, but they continue to run wild, screaming and out of control, then what? If they absolutely refuse to control their emotions—if they continue to whine, wail and cry—or if they make markings on the walls or rip up books—what will you *do*?

Talk to them? Give them more timeouts? Let the TV serve as a babysitter?

Or will you apply God’s clear command to use discipline? “Chasten your son while there is hope, and let not your soul spare for his crying” (Prov. 19:18).

God’s Way always makes *much* more sense!

Discipline—Rules You Can Use

Every parent will find that there are a variety of circumstances that warrant the use of discipline and correction. Here are some important rules to follow:

When Giving Instructions, Always Speak Just Once

Do not repeat yourself or raise your voice when giving instructions. If you do, you are actually programming your child—literally conditioning him!—to respond to the *number of times* that you are willing to repeat your instruction before taking action. You are also conditioning your child to respond to the *level of volume* (and this means the degree of anger) of your voice—the point at which he knows that you are finally going to take action if he does not respond.

Your child must be trained to respond to *what* you are saying, not *how loud* or *how often* you give instructions.

Consider. If you are willing to repeat your directive over and over again, you have NO RIGHT to ask for or expect your child to obey you on the first time. How can you expect or even believe your child will do as you tell him the first time an instruction is given if you are at the same time telling him through willingness to repeat it several times that he need not worry about obeying on the *first* utterance?

Get this! You are actually—and actively—teaching your child NOT to obey your instruction the first time you speak if it is given even twice. Of course, the fruits throughout society today are that the children ARE “obeying” this popular parental “command” to *disobey*.

At this point, if he does not respond, you must punish him. (But make sure that he hears you. Give your instructions firmly and clearly.) Also, always be sure your child knows exactly what actions will bring the punishment. Leave nothing to guesswork. That is unfair to the child.

Were you aware that God declares you *hate* your child if you fail to discipline him or her? Notice: “He that spares his rod *hates* his son: but he that loves him *chastens* him betimes [promptly]” (Prov. 13:24).

Most parents simply will not believe this verse. Many parents say, “Oh no! I *love* my child too much to spank him. I could never do that.” Regardless of what you think, God states that you *HATE* your child in such circumstances. You are refusing to see the long-term damage and pain your child will suffer if his actions are not properly channeled *by you* when he is young.

You must be willing to set aside all personal feelings and every form of human reasoning telling you to follow your own ideas about what defines love and what defines hate in the eyes of God. Recognize that GOD—who declares that He is our Father, and thus the *ultimate Parent!*—knows better how to rear children than do human parents, whom He sees as so many of His own adult children who think they know better than He does! You must be determined to follow, without compromise, all of His instruction about childrearing.

God admonishes human parents, “*Chasten* your son while there is hope, and let not your soul spare for his crying” (Prov. 19:18). But civilization largely rejects God’s wisdom, thinking physical discipline—even *proper* spanking—is child abuse. Therefore, parents must be wise in applying discipline. *Never* physically discipline a child in public. Those around you will not understand that you are merely employing basic biblical principles of loving childrearing. All physical punishment should be administered at home or in otherwise private settings.

Modern civilization views Proverbs 23:13-14 as harsh: “Withhold not correction from the child: for if you beat [other translations say “spank”] him with a rod, he shall not die. You shall beat [spank] him with a rod, and shall deliver his soul from hell [the grave].” Since society will not employ God’s laws, principles and teachings, is it any wonder that the world is filled with every conceivable problem, trouble, evil and ill?

One of the greatest acts of love that you can show your child is to teach him to respond the *first time* you speak. He will learn to do this with his school teachers, coaches, future supervisors, police officers and all other authority figures. Think of this as teaching your children not to be their own worst enemies!

If you diligently discipline your children *now*, in their early years, you will only rarely need to discipline them *later*. And God states that if you faithfully carry out this responsibility, your children will “give you rest” (Prov. 29:17).

The Punishment Must Fit the Offense

Every wrong action does not carry the same weight of offense. For example, cursing is much worse than not washing behind the ears, and stealing is worse than coming home after curfew. If you do not show your child the *right balance*—the fundamental ability and common sense to discern serious misconduct from minor infractions—you

will teach him bitterness and injustice, to never give the benefit of the doubt and to be merciless to others. Expect that he will reflect the same imbalance you demonstrated in matters of judgment about his actions.

Remember, good parents did not start out this way. They had to *learn* to become good parents. And learning proper balance in childrearing TAKES TIME.

Immediately Show Affection Every Time You Discipline Your Child

Never permit your child to feel that his actions have brought your rejection, that he is now “in your doghouse,” until he can work his way out and earn your affection once again. Otherwise, when your child becomes an adult and sins (Rom. 3:23), he will almost invariably fall back on the pattern of childhood, and feel rejected by God. He will have trouble believing that God will forgive him (if he repents), no matter what the sin may have been. Also, he will similarly feel rejected by future teachers, supervisors, and others, when simple mistakes are pointed out.

Hug your child with genuine affection. Teach him or her that the discipline is over, and that there has been no rejection. All children love—and require—affection.

Never Forget the Power of Example

Perhaps the single, most powerful tool you can use to teach your children is your example—the way *you* live.

All children, but particularly small ones, automatically look up to their parents. For younger children, you are the center of their expanding world, and your example affects them more deeply than anything you could teach them.

Are *you* applying the laws of success in your life? Are *you* living the way of “give” and following what you are learning about the true God of your Bible?

The success of your children hinges on your answers!

Do you want your children to regularly pray and study God's Word? Then show them how—study and pray *with* them. Do you want them to save and spend money wisely? Then you must do the same. Do you want them to spend less time watching television and to pursue worthwhile things—books, hobbies, sports, etc.? Set the example. Too many parents, in effect, unconsciously tell their children, “Do as

I say, not as I do.” Be careful your children might not be able to hear what you are *saying* because of what you are *doing*.

Now that you know the *importance* of teaching children, the chapters ahead will guide you in both *what* to teach them and *how* to teach them.

Where Teaching the Basics Begins

All parents want their children to lead happy, abundant, successful lives. But this will not be achieved by accident. Children need SPECIFIC GUIDANCE. Everyone recognizes that people are most influenced when they are young. This is why it is so important for parents to instill, beginning from a very early age, the proper focus and framework on which to base their lives.

The next three chapters contain an extensive list of different attributes and qualities to teach your children. No book of this kind could address every important character trait necessary to lead a happy, productive life. Therefore, this list is not all-inclusive, and other points could certainly be added to it, but it covers all of the most crucial things that children need to learn in order to be properly equipped for adulthood.

Parental involvement is critical in the successful EDUCATION of all children—meaning not just how well they do in school but in a host of other vitally important areas of their development. It has been demonstrated that children tend to thrive in a more tightly managed routine. This is particularly important when it comes to how well they will do in school.

For instance, as we have seen, doctors and educators now talk in terms of “Attention Deficit Disorder” (ADD) and “Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder” (ADHD) when they are describing a child that is out of control. In reality, many of these children have been permitted to *grow up* out of control—without order and structure in

their lives—and these terms have been invented to provide an excuse for what is usually merely bad parenting. A growing number of voices are announcing that vast numbers of parents have been “had” by false theories that have led so many parents and children to believe that they have a “disease” that needs to be treated with medication, rather than a behavior problem that is linked to faulty character above all other factors. Yet, there are now over six million American children who are being medicated for ADD and ADHD.

In the end, it will be up to you to help your children develop all the necessary traits and qualities that will permit them to come to full maturity. These will be the subject of discussion in the next three chapters. Understand that there is necessarily a certain amount of overlap on the many principles and other aspects of teaching throughout the book.

Make Clear the Importance of Setting Goals

By age 70, many people will have spent about *ten years* watching television. There are thousands of television programs waiting to capture your children’s minds and reduce them into mindless “sponges,” absorbing information without being able to differentiate between what is good and bad for their consumption. Without your intervention, your children are almost certainly destined to become “couch potatoes.” Millions today waste their entire childhood in physical and mental idleness, staring at “the tube.”

You can counteract this by limiting your children’s television watching, and by teaching them to set proper goals.

Teach them to read books—and to perhaps write book reports (my grandfather paid me one dollar for every book report that I wrote and read to him over the phone, as long as it had over 300 words). Encourage them to take up hobbies, such as building model ships or airplanes, or collecting coins, stamps or postcards. Guide them to participate in sports, such as basketball, soccer, tennis, swimming, etc. Encourage them to learn a musical instrument, such as the flute, guitar or piano. They can learn to skate, build and fly a kite, keep a journal, make watercolor or oil paintings, model with clay, keep a garden, and many more things—the list is endless.

Help your children expand their minds and explore their talents. They have untapped gifts just waiting to be discovered. But they need your guidance to do this.

Teach your children to *write down* their goals. Over time, they will learn which goals can be reached, which should be amended and which should be dropped. Then teach them how to take steps toward

the goals, and to be able to measure their progress along the way. Be sure to remind them often that the Proverbs teach, “The desire accomplished is sweet to the soul” (13:19).

Sports will teach them lessons and values. (“It’s not whether you win or lose, but how you play the game”—following the rules, respecting the coach and learning to emphasize teamwork.)

Coach your children to participate in activities with enthusiasm, and not to give up or quit when “the going gets tough.” It has become a sign of the times that poor sportsmanship has sunk to new levels, with professional athletes leading the way. Sadly, the problem of the proverbial “little league parents” out of control has grown to epidemic levels as well. This means many children have become poor losers.

You must teach your children to cope with losing—but to desire to *achieve!*

Guide Toward the Pursuit of Excellence

Strive to instill within your children the desire to reach their POTENTIAL, to go above and beyond what is expected of them—to learn how they can do much more than they ever thought possible. Teach the principle of Ecclesiastes 9:10: “Whatsoever your hand finds to do, do it with *your might*.”

Any goal or thing of worth requires HARD WORK—one must pay the price. Most today are no longer willing to pay that price and will happily settle for second best, or less.

Teaching your children to persevere will give them the inner strength needed to achieve their goals. This will have implications in not just their goals and desires, but in *every* aspect of their lives! Teach your children to never give up—even in the face of hardship—and you will virtually ensure their success.

Inspire your children with the knowledge that life rewards those who go the extra mile: “See you a man diligent in his business [NKJV: “who excels in his work”]? He shall stand before kings; he shall not stand before mean [inferior] men” (Prov. 22:29).

Jesus had much to say about those who only do what is expected of them. Notice this: “But which of you, having a servant plowing or feeding cattle, will say unto him by and by, when he is come from the field, Go and sit down to meat? And will not rather say unto him, Make ready wherewith I may sup, and gird yourself, and serve me, till I have eaten and drunken; and afterward you shall eat and drink? Does he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I think not. So likewise you, when you shall have done all those

things which are commanded you, say, *We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do*" (Luke 17:7-10).

Most people today are not interested in going above and beyond, preferring instead to do as little as possible. Many are now perfectly willing to do sloppy, slipshod work, no matter the waste or cost to the company, because they are in a hurry to finish—with so many always looking ahead to the next thing that will be “fun.”

Not only should your children be willing to go the extra mile, but they should always be willing to do it with joy, zeal and enthusiasm—from the heart! Regardless of the problems they are facing, do not let them mope or moan about “how hard” things are or how hard their life is. Remind them that things could always be harder—and probably *will* get harder at times later in life.

Help Your Children Discover Their Talents and Interests

Some people live their entire lives unaware of what their strengths are, or worse, believing that they have none. Most often, this has been because no one helped them discover these talents, and they did not know how to do this themselves. While this book can only scratch the surface of the subject, it should at least inspire you to see that you can greatly encourage and inspire your children if you help them see the natural talents that they were born with. If tapped, apart from the importance of their relationship with God, these qualities offer them the greatest chance for fulfillment and happiness.

Think of it this way: Almost every human being has strengths and weaknesses. There are virtually no exceptions to having *some* talents and absolutely no exceptions to having certain weaknesses. One of your tasks is to help your child discover his or her God-given abilities, talents and interests. For instance, your child may be extremely gifted in a particular area or way, and this gift could be something that has never before appeared in your family. Be on the lookout for such gifts, and do not squash them when you see them simply because you have never seen these particular talents or abilities before or because they are not *your* strengths. On the other hand, do not decide that you see talents that are not really there. Be careful that you do not try to remake your child in your own image. You are a unique human being, unlike any other person on the face of the Earth.

So is your child!

Consider for a moment your own strengths and interests, regardless of how you came to know of them. What if your parents, teachers, coaches or employers had never taken an interest in your poten-

tial, or worse, actively sought to quash these interests? What if you had never been able to discover and develop them? How different would your life have been? Would you be in the same career or even close to the level of happiness that you have been able to enjoy? The answer is almost certainly not.

The other side of the coin is that it is possible that your mentors did *not* encourage you to develop your strengths, and to become all that you could have. If this is the case, avoid doing the same with your children. You can yet thrill to the realization of a success in their development that you never had, and this will be a REWARD unlike any other a parent can enjoy!

Do your children have an interest in music, art, science, mathematics, sports, model-making, stamp-collecting, horticulture, animals, reading, rock-climbing or a host of other things? Strive as hard as you possibly can to *recognize* and *nurture* these interests. ASK your children what they enjoy. Observe and talk to them. Try to discern where they may and may not be naturally talented and where their interests lie. Try to be supportive in a balanced way, also not allowing them to quit simply because the early going in a particular sport or activity is tough, when this is always the case in any new endeavor.

Set Limits

Of course, costs can create certain limits—skydiving?!, deep-sea fishing?!—and children cannot pursue every sport, every hobby, every musical instrument, every activity—and every dream—that they may have. Obviously, everything in life has a reasonable and natural limit. Teach your children this principle and to be able to find this limit on their own, in everything that they do. They must also understand that they should finish what they start and not hop around from activity to activity, sport to sport, and hobby to hobby, or they will never learn perseverance and to continue through to final achievement.

A word of caution. Avoid at all costs turning your children's interests, talents or gifts into "idols" that you and/or your children unwittingly worship. This can happen most often where a young person has an unusual or truly extraordinary gift. The parents of such children must work exceptionally hard to keep their child from becoming unbalanced and overly focused on one gift or one interest to the exclusion of all others. Be careful of this, or your child's *extreme gift* will sentence him or her to a lifetime of *extreme misery!*

It could be said that much of the satisfaction of a happy life is about reaching one's potential, and even more so with special poten-

tial. On occasion, and this will be *very* rare, private coaches may be a help if, when weighed against all other priorities, it fits into the family budget.

Strive to stand behind your children as they explore what they can and cannot do.

The Worst Parental Sin—Spoiling Your Children!

The subject of the last sections introduce a related subject, and one that could scarcely be more important.

There could be no more awful curse to place upon a child or children than to be a parent who spoils. This produces a host of problems in both the character and personality of children that will adversely affect them for an entire lifetime. But it does not even end there because the effects will then be transferred and intensified in subsequent generations.

The generation that lived through and experienced the Great Depression of the 1930s, and that suffered through the myriad of horrors, as well as the holocaust (of many nations), of World War II, was left forever changed by what they endured. This is often referred to as “The Greatest Generation.” Among other qualities learned and instilled, these millions were more hard-working, stronger of character, thankful for freedom, courageous, willing to sacrifice, patriotic, more appreciative of all that others take for granted, and held a completely different perspective toward what people perceive today to be their “rights.”

History has shown that the peoples of America, Britain and other Western democracies came through perhaps their gravest trials ever because of the *sacrifice* of millions (many of whom lost their lives) who thought in terms of integrity, honor and the privilege of freedom. This thinking has been replaced by a belief based on *entitlement*, meaning liberty, material possessions and all the good things of life should be automatic—are birthrights.

But, like every generation, even this “greatest” one were parents. As such, they made one seemingly collective, terrible mistake—they decided their children must never have to endure the rigors, difficulties, challenges and “going without” as they had to experience. This is perhaps likened to the parent who was spanked too often as a child and erroneously concludes, “I will *never* spank my children.”

The result was a generation, usually referred to as “baby boomers,” with less interest in building character and more interest in focusing on themselves and in the accumulation of physical things. But it got

worse. The baby boomers in turn reared a terribly spoiled, ego-driven generation that was dubbed “Generation X” because no one had any idea how they would ultimately turn out. The end product was far from good. But it got worse—again. The less industrious, selfish, largely “pain-free” Generation X we saw went on to produce a yet again *much* worse *next* generation—and this is true of strength, character, values, selfishness, knowledge, experience, health, and almost every other measure of success in the life of any human being. If Generation X is immoral—and it is—this one is *amoral*, and in almost every way.

This newest generation, the “Millennial Generation,” could only be described as infinitely more spoiled—truly rotten! (as you have understood from Chapter Two)—than their relatively barely spoiled baby boomer grandparents just two generations older. Those were virtual paragons of altruism and selflessness by comparison. It is as though the modern generation believes themselves put on Earth for the sole purpose of pleasure and partying.

Avoid at All Costs!

Parents, above all, do *not* spoil your children. Avoid this trap at *all costs*! If you do not, you are literally sentencing them to be stubborn, selfish, self-focused, ego-driven, rude and demanding, and almost entirely materialistic. The net effect is that they will be powerless to deny themselves their every want, and to miss the pain and suffering that comes with this. In addition, you will have made them weak and built into them a sense that everything should always be fair (discussed momentarily)—and that they are *entitled* to all that they have—to what previous generations *earned*—when this is not true of life.

You are also instilling into them, and this is often done by over-praising, that they are “special” and/or “gifted.” This thinking (a plain lack of humility) will make them very difficult or impossible to teach because they will not receive criticism. They will find it difficult, or be completely unable, to admit they are wrong, no matter the offense. They will, however, be well able, and happily willing, to criticize the shortcomings of others.

After a while, such children in effect “own” their parents—and from a young age they realize this. This is because the parents have been more willing to cave in to—even constantly “make” over, if necessary—them than to deal with the exhausting aggravation and hassle of never-ending arguments and whining from the child *every*

time it does not get its way! Ask: How often have you heard, or found *yourself* exclaiming, “I just can’t deal with them”?

Finally, the children who are the greatest candidates for being spoiled are often the “only child,” or the last born—“the baby”—and particularly the “*late life* baby” who either came much later than its siblings or after the parents were told that no more children were possible. (But this can also happen with a firstborn child.) When older, and having reached the stage of thinking more like grandparents, such parents often find it difficult to discipline such children, and even more difficult to tell them “no.”

Be on the lookout for the natural tendency—a potential within every parent!—to run a popularity contest with his children and to take the easy path of “smothering” them with the best of everything. (I wish I had a nickel for every time my father reminded me that “I am not running a popularity contest here.”)

Make this a simple equation: *spoiling* usually equals *ruining*!

Repeat often to your children that they are no better than anybody else, and that the measure of their value and success is solely tied to regular contact with God, strength of character, pursuit of the right goals, willingness to overcome obstacles in their path, real achievement, how much they give versus get, the amount of honor extended to generations that have gone before them, and the volume of effort and sweat expended to earn what they have.

Instill these and other vital, related internal qualities with an unceasing relentlessness that your children cannot miss for their importance!

There is no greater parental sin than spoiling children!

Teach Your Children They Cannot Always Have Their Way

Millions of parents now routinely cater to their children. The ways in which they do this are practically endless. It is as though parents feel they must satisfy their child’s every whim—and do this on an almost minute-to-minute basis.

Take just the matter of bedtime. Vast numbers of children, when put to bed, will get up for a host of reasons, offering a creative variety of excuses—“I’m hungry,” “I’m thirsty,” “I can’t sleep,” “I’m scared” (in this case, said as an excuse), “I’m not tired,” “You didn’t read me a story”—and parents are trapped as real prisoners to their children’s inventions about why they do not need to obey their parents—and GO TO SLEEP! Worse, I have observed many parents who cannot put their child to sleep unless they take him into the

car and drive him around, sometimes for long periods, until he falls asleep. This is costly, time-consuming, fatiguing—and ridiculous!

This kind of catering teaches children to grow up *expecting* to be catered to and sets them up for a rude awakening.

There are some things we just cannot have. Fair or not, that's life—and your children must comprehend this. However, most parents have no idea that they should be instilling into their children even this most basic fact of life.

Try this experiment: The next time you are walking through a supermarket, listen to parents talking to their children (and try to notice if you are seeing and hearing *yourself* at the same time). Watch how parent and child interact. While it may not be obvious at first, you will notice that the *child* is getting what he wants and the parent is almost invariably giving in and obeying the child. Today's children can be seen actually directing their parents.

For instance, a toddler may grab cookies from the shelf while his mother is pushing the cart down the aisle. When the mother takes the cookies and returns them to the shelf, the child often explodes into a tantrum. Frustrated, the mother attempts to *reason* the child back to calmness, by coaxing and explaining—and sometimes turning to pleading and begging—that this is not the proper reaction, and not the right place to “express” himself.

This may be followed by a series of attempts to verbally placate the child, all of which ultimately fail. Finally, driven by embarrassment and desperation, the parent places the cookies back into the cart, quickly calming the child—but teaching him a devastating lesson. This “lesson” often goes so far as to include opening the package immediately and giving the child a cookie. I have seen it.

Instead of simply being told “no,” and responding obediently—and demonstrating *happiness* with the parent's decision—the child learns how to manipulate his parents in order to get what *he* wants—how to satisfy *his* wants or desires. In effect, the parents are teaching the child to do, feel and think what is “right in his own eyes” (Prov. 12:15), with no regard for those around him.

Even God's most faithful servants did not always receive what they desired or asked for. God used Moses to guide ancient Israel out of Egypt, and through 40 years of wandering in the wilderness, until coming to the Promised Land. Yet, Moses was not permitted to enter the land with Israel.

Paul faithfully preached and spread the gospel of the Kingdom of God throughout the Roman Empire. Throughout his ministry, he never wavered in teaching the full truth of God. Yet, the facts of

history indicate that circumstances had taken him from what must have once been a previous life of considerable comfort. Here is what he recorded:

“Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more; in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths often. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Beside those things that are without, that which comes upon me daily, the care of all the churches” (II Cor. 11:23-28).

Educate your children to the basic fact that they cannot always get what they want—that life does not always deal them the hand they expect or feel that they deserve. Like Paul, they must learn to be satisfied with—and appreciate—what they have. Here is what suffering and difficulty taught Paul: “Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be *content*. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: everywhere and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need” (Phil. 4:11-12).

Since God gives the above instruction to you as a Christian, you will increase your child's future happiness immeasurably if you teach him to be **CONTENT** with his life, including all the things that he cannot control.

Teach Your Children Life Is Not Fair

Prepare your children for perhaps life's harshest reality: What happens is not always fair. Some people are born blind, deaf or otherwise physically disabled. Sometimes, people with less talent but more attractiveness or better “connections” are selected for certain responsibilities or rewards over those more qualified.

Your children need to know that they could be discriminated against because of their social or economic background—or because of their accent, nationality or race. Explain that these injustices could happen to *them*.

Then teach your children that even Christians who faithfully obey God could also be discriminated against—that, at times, they will

almost certainly suffer injustices. In all these things, remind them that this is not God's world, and that their ultimate reward comes from Him.

My father made a point of telling his three children, literally, that he was not trying to be fair, and actually had no interest in being fair—because *life* is not fair. His thinking continued: if he always needed to be fair—something he knew was not really possible in many cases with children, anyway—he would be programming us to believe that we would always be treated fairly *when this is not what life is for anyone!* He wanted us to understand that we had to succeed when things were not fair, and to not waste time believing life would always deal us “a good hand.” In other words, he taught, you have to play the hand you are dealt either way, so practice succeeding with “a bad hand.”

If you ready your children at an early age, they will be prepared for life's stumbling blocks and take them much more in stride.

Teach Your Children the Meaning of the Word “No”

Tragically, most parents are no longer willing or able to tell their children “No!” in emphatic terms. Modernists have seduced millions of parents into reasoning with their children—endlessly! A generation of child psychologists have carefully taught parents *how* to reason with their children over almost every issue—to *ask* their child if they will do this or that, seemingly needing to get permission from the child to secure obedience.

Schooled in the false theory of evolution, which rejects revealed knowledge, these “educators” are themselves educated in all the WRONG VALUES and, lacking true understanding from God, have assumed that godly forms of punishment harm children's self-esteem and development. Such reasoning has been *proven* unsound, and studies show that children are actually *incapable* of reasoning in any but the simplest matters until they reach age seven or eight.

“No” is the most character-building word in the English language. Your children have a right—and need—to hear it from you! Never be afraid to tell them what they NEED to hear in lieu of what they may WANT to hear. You are the parent. They are the children. Keep this distinction clear—in your mind and theirs.

Ask yourself how often you hear others—or yourself!—tell your children to do something (anything) followed by the request for their stamp of approval by ending with “Okay?”—“It's bedtime, okay?”, “Put your toys away, okay?”, “Let's eat your green beans, okay?”, “Let's put your coat on, okay?”, etc.

More Shocking Television Statistics

The reach of television has changed dramatically. Children once had only eight or nine channels to choose from. If there was nothing interesting to watch, they had to find something else to do—ride a bike, draw pictures, play outside, etc. Never mind before television existed.

Today, children have access to hundreds of channels. There are individual stations specifically devoted to action, mysteries, westerns, cartoons, food, game shows, history, pets, comedy, soap operas, science fiction and religion. The list is growing—even exploding!

With so many channels to “surf,” it is not surprising that time spent watching television has skyrocketed, especially among children. Sixty percent of all children watch television and use the Internet an average of *six hours daily*.

In a survey of 3,155 children ages 2 to 18, half said that they did not have parental rules limiting their time viewing television or the kinds of programs they watched. And 61% of children ages eight and older said they watch what they want, when they want.

According to one study:

(1) Men and boys portrayed on TV often focused on the opposite sex. One boy in the study said about a character, “His main goal is to get the girl.”

(2) One in five male characters uses physical aggression to solve problems.

(3) 49% of the children polled watched music videos daily.

(4) More than 25% of the videos included some degree of attention to female breasts, legs or torsos. Also, 50% of the time, women were likely to be featured semi-nude or dressed in revealing clothing.

Here are more facts about TV viewing in the U.S.:

- 98% of households have at least one television, 34% have two, and 40% have three or more.

- In the average home, television is on 7 hours, 40 minutes per day.

- Among children ages 2 to 11, the average child watches 1,197 minutes—almost 20 hours—of television per week! Yet, his parents only engage in 38.5 minutes per week of meaningful conversation with him.

- According to the U.S. Department of Education, “Academic achievement drops sharply for children who watch more than ten hours a week of TV.”

For example, 6th and 12th grade California students who were heavy TV watchers scored lower on reading, written expression and math achievement tests than students who viewed little or no television.

- 52% of children ages 5 to 17 and a very high percentage of children ages 2 to 5 also have a TV in their bedroom.

- 70% of daycare centers use television during a typical day.
- When asked to choose between watching TV or spending time with their fathers, 54% of children ages 4 to 6 preferred television.
 - The average youth spends 1,500 hours per year watching TV—but only 900 hours per year in school.
 - There is only a 1-in-12 chance that parents will require their children to do their homework before watching TV.
 - By the time the average child completes elementary school, we saw that he or she will have witnessed more than 100,000 acts of violence on TV, including 8,000 murders. By age 18, these numbers double!
- We also saw that by age 70, most people will have spent about *ten full years* watching television.
 - 80% of Hollywood executives believe there is a link between TV violence and real-life violence. Yet they do nothing about the programming that they offer!
 - 81% of children ages 2 to 7 watch television alone and unsupervised. This rises to 95% for older children.
 - According to a 1999 *CNN* report, "...a typical teen-ager views nearly 15,000 sexual references, innuendoes and jokes on television each year, of which fewer than 170 deal with abstinence, birth control, sexually transmitted diseases or pregnancy..."
 - "The so-called television 'family hour,' from 8 p.m. to 9 p.m., contains more than eight sexual incidents per hour—four times as many as in 1976..."
 - "Alcohol, tobacco or illicit drugs are present in 70% of prime time network dramatic programs..."
- Children who are extensive television watchers tend to have a greater risk of obesity, alcohol and drug abuse, and sexual activity.
- Children who watch 4 or more hours of television daily spend less time on homework, have poorer reading skills, interact less well with friends, and have fewer hobbies than children who watch less TV.
- According to *www.limitv.org*: "Watching TV impedes the growth of longer attention spans...the approximately seven minute length of program before a commercial interruption can condition a child to a seven minute attention span. *The Wall Street Journal*, February 10, 1994, relates the experience of Odds Bodkin, who performs before some 100,000 people a year, most of them children." (Recall his comment that after about seven minutes, restlessness sets in as children's inner clocks anticipate a commercial break.)
 - "Watching TV interferes with the development of reading skills. A child must learn to move the eyes back and forth across the page in order to read. But with television, the eyes fix on the screen. One hour a day in school learning to move the eyes back and forth cannot compete with four or more hours with the eyes fixed on a TV screen. It's little wonder that many children find difficulty learning to read."

For those who will receive the message, a fully mature adult parent asking a small child for approval is a towering statement about who is in charge—and doing this will teach your child to become a debater, and that your every instruction is up for discussion. Your children need to ask YOU if something is okay or not. YOU are supposed to be in charge, never the child!

No wonder the prophet Isaiah said of the final age before Christ returns, “As for my people, children are their oppressors...” (3:12). It is the sad experience of millions of parents today that their children have virtual mastery over them, running them ragged, with the parents having no idea what to do about it or even that it should be any other way. Modernists have coined the phrase “childcentric families” to describe millions of today’s homes. In what has been called “a vast family management meltdown,” great numbers do not know where to turn or that *God* gives instruction in such matters.

Your Authority Is Often Enough

Teach your children to accept the simple phrase, “Because I said so,” and that this may be all the explanation they will receive. They will learn to submit to authority without having to always know why.

When I tried to tell my parents in circumstances where I wanted a reason that they were unwilling to give, I tried perhaps a couple times to tell them, “Well, other parents allow my friends to do (whatever may have been the case).” Invariably, my parents answered with a simple, “You don’t have other parents. You have us!”

On a side note, for those who need their very small children to be quiet in public places or at church services, it is crucial that you teach them when to “hush.” While it is wonderful to watch tiny children “discover” their voices, they must understand that there is a time and place for this. Be sure you are regularly teaching your children the importance of “quiet time.” This means making them practice at home. Your children need to understand that at naptime, or at any other time you want them to do this, they must respond to the meaning of “head down.” It is a good idea to try to coordinate your little children’s naptime to the time you need them to be quiet, such as during church services. But this also applies to them being quiet when awake in a public place, such as a restaurant.

Be sure that you are requiring obedience in *every* circumstance. Never fall for the siren song that disobedience is “just a stage they are going through” or that they are experiencing the “terrible twos,”

which inevitably lead to the “terrible threes” and the “terrible fours.” The real problem is simply *terrible disobedience*.

Unfortunately, too many parents have taught their children, through nagging and not applying proper discipline, that “no” means “maybe,” “possibly” or “we’ll see.” Make your children understand that “no” is *not* the opening round of a *negotiation*. While this does not mean that you can never ask their opinion, they must understand that your decisions are final! You will love the benefits of following this principle—and the peace and rest that it will give you in the place of endless frustration. Remember Proverbs 29:17, which showed that practicing proper childrearing can result in your children “giving you rest.”

Also, children must learn very early that their parents do not exist for the sole purpose of making them happy—for satisfying their every whim, want and desire. The God-ordained role of parents is to provide for and train children, while instilling in them all the attributes, qualities and skills necessary to be productive, successful and happy.

This means that parents must not fall into the trap of thinking that they must *buy* everything the child wants. (Of course, television ads are not your friend in this regard.) Many do this in an endless, exhausting—and very expensive—cycle. While you may wish to get the occasional really special item your child desires, remember that nothing will *remain* special if he can have everything he wants.

Educate Your Children in the Art of Communication

The ability to communicate effectively is one of the most important skills to acquire, and socializing in a host of different settings is inseparable from life! Being able to communicate *effectively* will benefit your children in countless ways—and for the rest of their lives. It will help them build friendships, open doors for them and help them succeed in the workplace.

The art of communication takes practice. It takes time to learn to accurately and tactfully express yourself, and to communicate well with others. Children will not do this naturally. Most people today use the same words, terms and phrases over and over, generally because they never learned to develop their vocabulary. They continually fall back on very weak expressions. Here are just a few things people say when they do not know what to say next—when they do not know how to respond with something of *meaning* or *value*: “You know,” “okay?,” “really!”, “yeah, right,” “you know what I’m say-

ing?,” “like...,” “uh-huh,” “whatever,” “and what not,” “totally!” and “suuuure!”

Parents and schools once placed a strong emphasis on doing a tremendous amount of reading, particularly of longer books. This greatly enhanced people’s ability to converse across a wide range of diverse ideas and thoughts—as well as to think about those ideas and thoughts. This served to make people familiar with famous authors, philosophy, world history, geography, current events and world conditions, great leaders, and so much more—and their discussions reflected depth.

This has all changed. In a world in which millions of teenagers and young adults lead a soap-opera existence, where most seem to discuss little more than an endless stream of shallow, unimportant topics—usually centering around updating one another regarding not much more than the typical “he said, she said” events occurring in *other people’s* lives—very little meaningful conversation occurs.

I learned the value of expanding one’s vocabulary very early. From the time I reached first grade, my mother *required* me to get our enormous family dictionary (it was almost as big as I was at the beginning) to look up words that I did not understand. Although it frustrated me then, because none of my friends’ mothers required it, I am now grateful beyond words for this exercise. It is still enriching my life over fifty years later.

Teach your children that they can rise above all of the nonsense—that they can think and talk about bigger things, including important ideas, and what is happening in the world around them that is changing so quickly. Also, encourage them to express thoughts with *color* and *enthusiasm*, and to expand their vocabulary by learning and using new words. They will discover that others will find them interesting, and even fascinating, to talk to. They will stand out to those who THINK!

Encourage Your Children to Respond and to Reflect Thoughts and Feelings

Young people in this generation have come to be jaded, cynical and perpetually moody. So many appear to be almost entirely joyless, bored and selfish. Observe a group of typical teenagers, and you will notice that most seem to wear expressionless, emotionless masks, hiding their true feelings. Instead of saying what they really feel, they generally say what adults want to hear. One of the tragedies of our time is that almost an entire generation literally does not know how

to talk—how to intelligently express a thought. Of course, not all thoughts are simple. Many are quite complex and require intelligent analysis and a larger reservoir of words through which to convey them than exists in the vocabulary of the average young person today.

Teach your children to be bright and enthusiastic—to respond to events around them. Do not allow them to be cynical or moody, or to develop and hold wrong attitudes. Make them change their mood and tone. This will lead to a habit of making *themselves* do this. The universal mantra of youth today is “I’m bored.” What makes this so incredible is that never have children had so many kinds of things to occupy their time. This becomes its own great testimony to the fact that *having everything* has little to do with *having happiness!*

Children should literally almost never find themselves bored. It has been shown that boredom has often been a precursor to creativity. When your children are complaining of boredom, this can be a message to you that you are not teaching them to explore, to think “outside the box”—to create with their God-given minds. Turn these opportunities in a creative direction.

Teach your children to develop the capacity to enjoy! The Psalms declare, “This is the day which the LORD has made; we will rejoice and be glad in it” (118:24). How many people do you know who practice this way of thinking? The answer is surely many fewer than just a generation ago. How many parents are teaching this kind of approach to their children, focusing them on the challenge of each new day that lies ahead?

Let me offer an aside: My mother emphasized learning to enjoy what we did as children. Her own example made this easier. Because she was a gourmet cook, many were the evenings, at dinner time, when she had prepared something unique—and new to us—and then announced, “Children, tonight we are going to tutor our taste buds.”

Do not permit your children to function like robots. Teach them to *feel*, to have empathy for others. For example, teach them to be happy when a friend or schoolmate wins an award. Also teach them to be sensitive to the *suffering* of others.

Consider the big picture of Bible prophecy: In the future, God will allow many nations to suffer what is called the Great Tribulation. This describes a time of military invasion, captivity and slavery for countless millions. But He will show favor to those who “sigh and cry” about all that they are witnessing.

Notice Ezekiel 9 and the message it contains about how God wants his servants to feel regarding the increasing suffering of so many around the world: “And the LORD said unto him, Go through

the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof. And to the others He said in my hearing, Go you after him through the city, and smite: let not your eye spare, neither have you pity: slay utterly old and young, both maids, and little children, and women: but come not near any man upon whom is the mark” (vs. 4-6).

God expects His servants to feel deeply for others, to demonstrate *real* concern for them—and to be able to reflect that concern in words and body language. Teach your children to do these things, that sympathy and empathy for the plight of others is inseparable from life! In so doing, you will have done your children a great service, and will have indirectly taught them to be more thankful for the special knowledge that God has given you and you are giving them.

Require Proper Handling and Saving of Money

The entire Western World is awash in consumer debt. The ease with which credit can be obtained, and the constant temptation to overuse credit cards, coupled with a growing lack of restraint and self-control in the world at large, are pushing more and more people into the financial tragedy of bankruptcy. But far greater numbers are living right at the limit, having put themselves on the *edge* of bankruptcy.

Instill into your children the value of saving for “rainy days,” because hard times *always* come. In a world driven by the urge for instant gratification—where merely seeing something in a store window means that one must have it NOW!—people are no longer taught or see the *need* to save. Building a “nest egg” for marriage, retirement, to buy a home or to send children to college, is no longer as important to millions of families. Implant the big picture into your children from an early age. Train them to save by telling them that they can buy certain items if they are willing to patiently *save first*. Perhaps be willing at times to share the cost with them, when they do this.

Prepare your children to understand that they must plan for and pay bills (and to do so on time). Many couples get married with little or no training (and, in some cases, without even an expectation) that they are soon going to actually receive a “light bill”—and that it will have to be paid ON TIME!

Start your children off with the habit of regularly paying God's tithes and offerings—*first!* Teach them to make God their “financial partner” (Mal. 3:8-12). Distribute their allowance in a way that they

can easily subtract 10 percent. Teach them that 90 percent goes farther when they have God's blessing than does 100 percent without it—and that they literally cannot afford *not* to tithe. While God's "math" makes no sense to the carnal mind, tithing brings extraordinary blessings to those who faithfully practice it. Though it takes faith, it always pays in the end. (To learn more about tithing and the blessings that following this command brings, encourage your children to read my booklet *End All Your Financial Worries*. Then they should also consider reading *Taking Charge of Your Finances*.)

Teach your children the far-reaching *importance* of money—that it can only be spent *once*, that it should always be spent wisely, that credit cards can be a wonderful blessing or a curse of catastrophic proportions carrying the potential to cripple an entire future, that God's tithes come first and that saving is important, among numerous other principles.

Have your children occasionally report to you what they did with *their* money. This will teach them to carefully account for it. It will also help them avoid being enslaved to a lifetime of stress, constantly overwhelmed by debt.

Teach your children that they have no hope of success in life without learning to properly handle money!

Guide Your Children to Be Selective in Choosing Entertainment

We saw that the average American child (all ages included) watches an astonishing 6.5 hours of television each day. A typical teenager is exposed to nearly 15,000 sexual references, innuendos and jokes each year, among many other wrong acts of violence and disrespect for authority. This has a very real—and sometimes permanent—effect on the development of a child's mind.

In I Corinthians 15, Paul wrote, "evil communications [Greek: companions] corrupt good manners [character]" (vs. 33). Diligently train your children, with the explicit instruction to guard their minds against this world's mindless entertainment. If you allow them to waste hour upon hour associating with coarse humor, graphically violent video games, and sexually-explicit song lyrics, do not be surprised when they take on the values they are seeing and hearing.

Teach your children what it means to select the right kinds of entertainment. Instruct them that *all* forms of entertainment should be of good quality, and that they must seek it in balance, and at the right time—and that entertainment should never be pursued as a means of *escaping* problems.



Lives are in your hands when you bring children into the world. Accepting that responsibility is the first step. It is never too late to educate ourselves in the skills needed in order to do this well.





Start early to help your children positively face life's challenges. They will learn that problem-solving can be exciting and fun.





Learning how to cooperate and get along with their siblings and how to respect others is vital. Also, good manners and proper etiquette will be invaluable, and will serve them for a lifetime.





Too many parents postpone training until trouble arrives—and it is too late. Since you will not always be present, it is crucial that you teach right decision-making so that you *and* your children avoid disastrous consequences.





Children are important members of the family team. Explaining family goals and expecting shared effort and shared responsibility binds families together and gives everyone a sense of contribution and purpose.





When hobbies are encouraged and interests are developed, confidence is built. Children learn that they can enter the adult world expecting to succeed.





Help your children realize their potential by looking for talents that might need reinforcement. Teaching the habit of pursuing and sticking with a goal instills perseverance—stick-to-itiveness—and brings countless rewards.



Regularly talking to your child one-on-one is critical for a host of reasons. It will keep you aware of their thinking so that you can respond as necessary. This also shows your children that their thoughts and concerns are important to you. This will build openness and a bond of trust that will last a lifetime.





Sometimes, it takes strong character to resist what is wrong. Teaching children all the elements of good character, and not to succumb to the world around them strengthens children against wrong influences. Also, being pulled into activities that unnecessarily exclude others is not showing outgoing concern.





Good eating habits, which can be coupled with building good work habits, must be established early to provide healthful nutrition and a solid base for physical growth and strength throughout your children's lives.



One of the greatest gifts you can give your children is a hunger for knowledge, and this can be cultivated in children when young. Teach your children to love learning. They will love *you* later for it.





The Bible teaches that “...there is a friend that sticks closer than a brother” (Prov. 18:24). Doing things as a family unit first develops close relationships between siblings. But these are the base for building other wonderful relationships that can last a lifetime. The bonds of true friendship will help support your children in their most difficult trials.





Make sure that your children never disconnect what they *think* from what they *ARE*. Explain to them that if they feed their mind with senseless junk, disguised as entertainment, it will affect how they live and who they become.

Encourage Your Children to Be Balanced and Well-Rounded

More and more people lack even the most basic common sense held by most adults of only a generation ago. This is because the majority no longer experience life as widely as most once did.

Many today are conditioned to follow extremes—extreme sports, extreme conduct, so-called “reality television” depicting people doing appalling things (which are actually far from reality), extreme violence, extreme parties, extreme music, entertainment and video games, and even extreme language. The principle of doing things in moderation has given way to the need for exhilaration, titillation and achieving a certain shock factor—pushing every limit—connected to making everything as graphic as possible.

Your children are witnessing and, whether you recognize it or not, being drawn to these kinds of activities. You will have to resist the trend. If you are teaching your children from an early age to be balanced, they will be less interested in pursuing extremism, and your task will be easier.

In addition, the course of society has trended toward students specializing throughout their education, enroute to a *career* of specializing, often in a very narrow endeavor. Fight the influences—particularly at school—that will try to force your children into making decisions about their future before they are prepared to do this, before, in most cases, they could even begin to have any idea what they want to do with the rest of their lives. I remember well feeling this pressure in high school long before I had any idea about my future career. Emphasize to your children not to become too narrow or overly focused on one thing. Guide them to be balanced in *everything*: hobbies, sports, reading, exercise, games, homework, eating, travel and other aspects of life. Teach them to seek and enjoy a wide range of interests and activities, and that life is more fulfilling when they are experiencing variety in everything.

The Danger of False “Tolerance”

A word of caution: Be sure that you do not confuse balance and well-roundedness with tolerance, which today means accepting all views,

opinions, lifestyles, values and perspectives. *Experiencing* widely does not mean *accepting* widely. While this is addressed in other sections of the book, be sure that your children understand the clear difference between right and wrong—good and bad—and that extreme conduct generally translates directly into SIN!

People once knew that they needed wisdom to survive life's endless *obstacles* and *pitfalls*. Of course, there are many such TRAPS waiting to swallow your unsuspecting children if they are not educated to what can happen when they are least expecting it. Ask God to give *you* an abundance of wisdom (Jms. 1:4-8). And then expect that He will. If your ways please Him, and if you are determined to obey Him, He will guide you in teaching your children proper balance, to be well-rounded and to experience widely across a broad array of activities.

Strive to inspire your children toward *wholesome* activities that will broaden their thinking, improve their confidence—and deepen their happiness!

Teach Your Children to Come to You with Questions

Society today (driven by Satan the devil, who hates the family unit because it pictures a relationship he can never enjoy) promotes antagonism between young people and their parents—often labeled benignly as a “generation gap.” This hostility includes viewing nearly all adults as the “enemy,” and the result has been that few children any longer consider it necessary to seek, in search of wise counsel, the opinions of adults.

It is a tragedy that the relationship between parents and children has become a virtual battlefield, with intermittent sniper fire, skirmishes and hidden landmines. Millions of young people show little or no respect to the people who brought them into the world, and who worked (including fathers and single mothers having to sometimes work more than one job) to nurture, feed, clothe and teach them. They are too busy feeling *misunderstood*—when, in fact, their parents understand them all too well. But many of these parents do not actively promote, when their children are young, an openness that will carry into the teen and adult years.

Young people often feel that parents do not understand their present circumstances. Be sure this is not the case with your teenagers and younger children. Listen carefully to your children. You have many years of experience to offer them, as a basis for giving sound advice in a broad array of areas. It is your responsibility to instill within them

sufficient warning about smoking, drinking, drugs, pre-marital sex, gambling and any other vices that could harm them. This is much easier to do if your children feel that they may easily and comfortably come to you with questions about these things.

Your children should never be afraid to ask you questions. They should consider you a fountain of wisdom and guidance in every important matter. Do everything in your power to promote an atmosphere in which they will feel comfortable asking you about anything that is on their mind. Avoid at all costs making them feel like their questions are unimportant or “stupid.”

At age eight, my father began what became the regular habit throughout my childhood of having “man-to-man” talks with me. Many of these discussions took place during long walks—five to ten miles—down country roads with our German Shepherd running alongside. But he would also occasionally sit me down to ask what questions were on my mind. It helped that he used the phrase “man-to-man,” because it told me that I was not just a “dumb kid” in his eyes, and made me feel that I could ask him anything. I can still remember specifics of these discussions, over 50 years later.

How sad that so many children today find it easier to go to the Internet for “answers” to questions because they cannot or will not go to their parents. This should simply never be (unless done under the guidance of a parent who may have instructed them to do it).

Encourage your children to develop a deep thirst for knowledge. Teach them to be inquisitive—to be fascinated with life—to seek to be “millionaires” in knowledge and understanding. Explain to them that they should always look to God’s Word as the ultimate source of true wisdom, knowledge and understanding. Teach them to look into the book of Proverbs for answers to questions that they have, and for solutions to problems they are facing. (Few recognize that up to 20 percent of corporate Chief Executive Officers in the United States read this book of the Bible for wisdom.)

Appearance Is Vital

In a world increasingly given to ridiculous, garish and endless forms of outlandish dress, your children will want to fit in. They will be under tremendous pressure to look like everybody else. This puts parents in a very difficult position. They must decide whether to: Teach their children the importance of modesty and moderation, and do not permit them to always follow trends (which is also very expensive and time-consuming), *or* cave to the peer pressure of modern youth influencing

their children to become—and, in this case, look like—virtually all the things that God teaches against.

It is important to carefully instruct your children about all aspects of proper dress. Explain to them *why* they should not dress in a sloppy or crude fashion—*why* your daughters should avoid wearing indecent or suggestive clothing. Teach them to wear the appropriate clothes for the right occasion (for example, to make the point, not wearing jeans to a wedding or bib overalls to Church services). But make this interesting and fun, not drudgery—teach them to color-coordinate and to take satisfaction in knowing how to reflect quality.

Teach your children to comb their hair and to maintain presentable hairstyles. This means hair that is sufficiently long for girls, and sufficiently short for boys (I Cor. 11:1-15).

This instruction must also include why they should *never* get a tattoo. Notice Leviticus 19:28: “You shall not make any cuttings in your flesh for the dead, nor print any marks upon you: I am the LORD.” Those who have become role models of every kind throughout society today seem to be almost covered in every kind of bizarre, perverse, sexually suggestive, and even outright satanic, tattoo that a “creative” mind (at a tattoo parlor) cut off from God could dream up.

Explain to boys why earrings should not be worn by men, but why they can be a beautiful adornment on a woman. God’s Word mentions earrings worn by men in several places, but they *all* involve His servants telling people to *remove* them. See Genesis 35:4, Exodus 35:22, Numbers 31:50 and Judges 8:24-26.

Teach your children that first impressions count in life—and that this is directly connected to APPEARANCE. The way a person looks and dresses carries far more weight to the important, older people who are watching them than young people today any longer recognize. Be sure that *your* children are an exception to today’s thinking.

Teach Your Children to Practice the Basic Laws of Health and Good Nutrition

The nations of the West have been described as overfed and undernourished (and the rest of the world is fast catching up). Further, because so many children are addicted to junk food and live a couch potato existence, vast numbers are overweight and physically weak. Most eat too few fruits, vegetables and grains, and believe that drinking carbonated soda is just as good as a glass of water. An emphasis on fat, sugar, fast foods and many other foods devoid of nutritional value define the diet of millions today. On top of all this, most are getting

far less exercise than they should. Astonishingly, various studies now reveal that children are showing signs of hardening of the arteries as early as age seven.

The role of parents in their children's health is often overlooked. Like instilling a desire to learn, you must also instill the KNOWLEDGE of how—and *what*—to eat. No matter what excuses may be put forth, your children's health is YOUR responsibility. YOU control what they eat and, in turn, YOU largely control their health!

Think very carefully about what you feed your children. Do you follow the principle of staying on the *outside aisles* of the supermarket—raw fruits, vegetables, meats and grains? Or do you often shop in the aisles where much of the processed, sugary and unhealthy foods are generally located?

Explain to your children that many studies have demonstrated that fruits CLEANSE, vegetables BUILD, grains SUSTAIN, and herbs can HEAL. Require them to eat healthy foods. Teach them to love good food. And, perhaps similar to what my mother did, try to make it fun.

An almost endless array of studies show that large numbers of children and teenagers simply have no stamina—no physical staying power to complete the most basic physical tasks and chores. This is because they are never made—never required!—to do much exercising beyond the bare minimum at school, and a growing number of schools are neglecting this vital part of well-rounded development. Many today are allowed to give up too quickly when faced with adversity, when having to sweat a little. Due to safety concerns, great numbers of parents now feel forced to drive their children to school even when the walk is just a few blocks and the weather is pleasant. Gone are the days of my childhood when I often had to walk three miles home from high school, even in the winter. I walked over a mile each way to and from grade school!

Too many young people are allowed to sit for hours on end playing video games, which only stimulate the brain (and not for the better), and perhaps develop hand-eye coordination, but do very little in the way of challenging such children to exert themselves. Military leaders have noted the precipitous decline in strength and stamina observed in those who are entering the various branches of the service. It has been noted that, compared to just one generation ago, the condition of 18- to 20-year-olds applying for the service (to enter rigorous basic training) can only be described as pitiful.

Few parents today require their children to practice the basic laws of health and nutrition. The result has been disastrous—for all but the doctors, clinics and hospitals!

Give your children the wonderful gift of good nutrition and proper stressing of exercise. Be determined: Teach them to eat whatever food *you* serve them. Don't give in! Do not allow *your children* to determine their diet, or you can literally curse them to a lifetime of low energy, sickness, medication(s), hospital waiting rooms, surgeries and endless visits to the doctor.

For those who are unfamiliar with the important principles about health revealed in the Bible, we recommend our booklet *God's Principles of Healthful Living*. Although it is a basic guide, it introduces these principles in a thorough, helpful and common-sense way straight from God's Word.

Teach Your Children to Think!

We discussed earlier the fact that people once did much more reading than they do today. As a direct by-product, they were forced to think about and discuss national and world events. Once more founded on the value of receiving a good liberal arts education, many started out in life having received well-rounded educations. Young people were generally taught to more deeply research, analyze, reason, use the rules of logic—and to THINK!

But today, people rely on computers and televisions to do much of their thinking *for* them. The result has been that millions of children do not know how to be alone with their thoughts. They must constantly have music or television blaring in the background, things that once caused people to express in exasperation, "I can't hear myself think." To a certain degree, this has almost turned around to the point that many young people now could state, "I *can* hear myself think!", and be equally frustrated. One of the tragedies of this generation is that so many have no idea what to think about when something is not pre-occupying them.

Get your children in the habit of thinking—analyzing—using logic—problem-solving! Teach them to think about the cause and effect of problems, and to find solutions, no matter how elusive, through the art of either inductive or deductive reasoning. Encourage them to stretch their minds beyond self-imposed limits. You will find that they *will*—and they will find that they *CAN*!

Teach your children to meditate about life and what they see in the world around them—and to consider their own mortality and future (Psa. 8:3-9). Also, Proverbs 4:26 states, "PONDER the path of your feet, and let all your ways be established." Teach your children to carefully "ponder" and think deeply about what they are doing—where their decisions are taking them.

If you permit your children to be mindless couch potatoes, you are literally conditioning them to a lifetime of shortsightedness and mediocrity. They will never be able to address and overcome hurdles, obstacles, trials and difficulties, common to *every* human being. Facing the smallest barriers will leave them feeling as though they are at the foot of Mt. Everest.

Do not leave your children feeling helpless as they reach the greater trials of adulthood!

Teaching About All-important Character

If you were told that there is one thing that you can teach your children that is spiritual—therefore eternal, indestructible and perfect—what would you say it is? The answer is CHARACTER, once referred to as *virtue*, the term used in the Bible. Almost no one today values or even talks about character. Yet, this topic speaks to the supreme purpose for which every human being who has ever lived was born. Sadly, it is also true that very few have any idea *why* they exist—*why* God gave them life and put them on Earth.

You must come to understand—to deeply grasp—why you exist—why you are here—or you will never be able to teach this supreme truth to your children. Once this is clear in your mind, two things will happen: Not only will you find it *easier* to teach them, but you will also be more *eager* to fulfill this duty!

Think for a moment about all the things that people pursue in search of success and happiness. Then recognize that not a single one of these things eternally benefits the person who has them. Literally, there is not one of them that “you can take with you.”

Perhaps the number one thing that people seek to accumulate in this life is *money*. Many people are obsessed with pursuing more of it. But no matter how much they may have at the end of their life, it will all get left behind.

Directly related to money is the accumulation of *possessions*. Most people are actually more interested in what money *buys*—the “toys” it will bring into their life—than in having a certain large

number attached to a bank account. Yet, if the saying is true that “the goal is to see who can die with the most toys,” then it is equally true that none of those “toys” can be retained by the person past his lifetime.

The same is true of *power*. As with money and possessions, many are obsessed with acquiring more and more power, and this usually involves control of additional and bigger companies, and the wealth they represent, and includes the authority to direct, hire and fire vast numbers of people. It can also mean achieving political power. But all of this gets left behind at death as well.

Related to power is *fame*, which, like money and power, can even be very fleeting in *this* life. Yet, when famous people die—and their fame may be outliving them in the minds of people still alive—it certainly cannot be taken into the afterlife.

Next would be *talents* or *gifts*, and *skills*. Though related, these are not the same. All human beings are generally born with talents and gifts but must develop various skills. In either case, no matter how gifted or talented the person is or how extensive the skills become, these also get left behind. No one has figured out how to transport them to the afterlife.

Beauty, *youth* and *strength* are three additional pursuits that seem to drive the lives of countless millions of adults and growing numbers of children. Finding ways to achieve these things—cosmetic enhancements, botox treatments, workout routines, diets—has become a worldwide trend and focus. Yet, those who obtain any or *all* of them are doomed to see them fade even *before* death, with no possibility of taking them past the grave.

The best definition for CHARACTER I have ever heard comes from Herbert W. Armstrong, the man who taught me much of what I teach you now. It is found on page 138 in his extraordinary book *The Incredible Human Potential*:

“What *is* perfect character? It is the ability, in a separate entity with free moral agency, to come to the KNOWLEDGE of the right from the wrong—the true from the false—and to choose the right, and possess the WILL to enforce self-discipline to DO the right and resist the wrong.”

It is your responsibility—your DUTY—to teach your children the absolutely vital, all-important, lifelong pursuit of CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT. Character forms the greatest defense that a human being can have against every conceivable pitfall, threat, roadblock and hurdle that life can throw at him.

While this chapter, or even an entire book on the subject, could not reveal and explain everything that a parent must know and teach

regarding character, it covers many of the basics, and these set up the balance of this chapter.

The Value of Work

What has been called the “basic work ethic”—once a way of life for whole generations, including most of each generation—has seemingly gone the way of the horse and buggy. Today’s generation is much more interested in recreation and pleasure-seeking than in productive work. Yet, no one has any chance of achieving happiness, success, or any of the basic necessities of life—food, clothing, shelter and certain other possessions—without learning at the deepest level that work, and sometimes *hard* work, is intrinsic to life.

By having to set goals—and working to achieve them—children will develop a proper work ethic and confidence.

Teach your children the lesson of Proverbs 14:23—that **HARD WORK EQUALS PRODUCTION**, and is directly connected to achieving success: “*In all labor there is profit*: but the talk of the lips tends only to penury [NKJV: poverty].”

Also carefully explain to them Proverbs 10:4-5: “He becomes poor that deals with a slack hand: *but the hand of the diligent makes rich*. He who gathers in summer is a wise son: but he who sleeps in harvest is a son that causes shame.” Stress this principle often, and the many scriptures that support it, taking the time to carefully study them with your children, so that they are deeply internalized. Then gently remind them of this principle when they forget it.

These proverbs were written thousands of years ago. Human nature has not changed since then. Every human being will *still* periodically be tempted to want something for nothing, and this can include being potential victims of scam artists and “get-rich-quick” schemes. Many today *expect* to be given things for free—and in this age, it is as though handouts have become a “right.”

For example, third and fourth generations of families that have grown accustomed to receiving welfare benefits typically develop an “I deserve it” attitude. Whenever there is public discussion of government cutbacks, many act as though welfare *belonged* to them in the first place. Millions have forgotten that these benefits, deceptively labeled “entitlement programs,” are actually a *gift*—and that they were never available on a national basis until just a few decades ago. Your children must understand and remember that there is no such thing as “a free lunch,” and that one must work to achieve or obtain everything he needs.

On the other hand, people who work long, hard hours appreciate what their effort produces: steady paychecks, paid bills, a comfortable home and having at least all the other necessities of life.

Ingrain in your children the fact that there is no such thing as getting “something for nothing.” Routinely give them chores and responsibilities. Then, again, check their progress. Vast numbers of children today are not given regular chores, and fewer still are required to actually *do* whatever minimal tasks they may be given. Tie all or part of their allowance directly to their chores.

Teach them to be self-motivated—to take on jobs and responsibilities without being told. Initiative is a quality that is increasingly disappearing among the modern workforce. Most habitually do as little as possible, or just enough to get by, and then resent those who want to go above and beyond. Tell your children they could face this resentment.

Teach your children the example of the ant, contrasted to the slothful—the lazy: “Go to the ant, you sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise: which having no guide, overseer, or ruler, provides her meat in the summer, and gathers her food in the harvest. How long will you sleep, O sluggard? When will you arise out of your sleep? Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep: so shall your poverty come as one that travels, and your want as an armed man” (Prov. 6:6-11).

Instruct your children about why they can *enjoy* hard work! They will thank you for it later. If done correctly, your children will learn to feel guilty if they are not being regularly productive at every job, task, assignment, chore and duty.

Teach the Importance of Wise Decision-Making

Your children will literally make thousands of decisions throughout the course of their lives. Some will be small, others medium-sized, still others large, and some enormously important, and literally towering over other decisions they will make—for example, whom they marry, when and how many children to have, changing careers, buying a home, and, most important, the decision to pursue baptism and conversion.

How can a generation that knows no limits, sees no boundaries and yields to no rules of ethics be expected to make right, moral judgments?

Solomon was inspired to record, “a wise man’s heart discerns both *time* and *judgment*” (Ecc. 8:5). Put another way, this verse states that, in every situation, a person must know both *what* to do and *when* to do it.

This verse introduces several categories of people. Consider: Some people do not know either what to do or when to do it. Others know what to do, but not when they should do it. Some others know when something must be done, but do not know what it may be. Then there are those who know what to do *and* when to do it, but do not have the strength to follow through and carry it out. The final category of people is the same as the last one except that they *do* follow through on their decision.

Wise parents teach their children how to be a part of the fifth category described here. Here are some points to instill into your children regarding decision-making:

(1) Be sure that they understand the importance of getting all the facts in a matter before making a decision. This process cannot be rushed and your children must be patient in carrying it out (Prov. 15:28; 18:13).

(2) Explain the Bible teaching that a wide variety of counsel brings “safety,” “peace,” “wisdom,” and “purposes that are established” (Prov. 11:14; 12:20; 12:15; 15:22).

(3) Teach your children to establish priorities. This means helping them learn the difference between *wants* and *needs*, explained later in the book.

(4) The all-important final point is to teach your children to be certain that they are seeking God’s Will in the matter—and in all matters. They must understand that everything else, done correctly in the process, is of little use if they are not asking for God’s guidance.

Tragically, millions of people have absolutely no idea how to make RIGHT DECISIONS. Unable to break the cycle of making wrong decisions, the result becomes an entire lifetime of bouncing from one calamitous mistake to another.

You hold the power to protect your children from this pattern!

Teach Your Children Respect for All Authority

Let’s momentarily return to something previously discussed. Recall that the Fifth Commandment declares, “Honor your father and your mother: that your days may be long upon the land which the LORD your God gives you” (Ex. 20:12). When its intent is properly understood, with parents as the all-important starting point, this command extends broadly to respecting *every* form of authority—grandparents, teachers, police officers, coaches and others.

If you teach your children to respect and obey you, you are teaching them to develop a similar relationship with God. As a parent, you

must understand that, to your children, you play this vital role. In the early years, *you* represent the most that they can understand about the power of God.

When you teach your children—when you correct them—when you encourage them—when you inspire them—you are creating a basis on which they will respond to their *Divine* Parent later, when they are called.

Teach your children to never show disrespect, belligerence or rebellion, hostility or defiance to authority. The apostle Peter wrote of conditions on Earth prior to Christ's Return: "But chiefly them that walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness, and DESPISE GOVERNMENT. Presumptuous are they, selfwilled, they are *not afraid to speak evil of dignities*" (II Pet. 2:10).

The modern age could easily be called the age of disrespect and rebellion. Make no mistake. Your children are surrounded by these influences and could easily be overwhelmed by them if they are not carefully prepared to resist them.

Never forget that if *you* do not respect authority—and this will be readily apparent to your children—why should *they*? If you do not, they will not.

In addition, thoroughly instill into your children's thinking a respect for, and obedience to, all of man's laws when they do not conflict with the laws of God (Acts 5:29; Titus 3:1).

Train Your Children to Listen and Be Quiet

Train your children in the difference between *hearing* and LISTENING. This will help them to perform better in school, to correctly follow instructions, to be a better friend—and, in the future, to be a better husband or wife, and a better father or mother.

The apostle James wrote, "...let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath" (1:19). A quick look at news talk shows provides ample proof—every night!—that the world does not heed this passage. Also, reporters are trained to *speak* in "sound bites" because most people do not care about the details and only want to *hear* in "sound bites."

Therefore, you must actively *teach* your children to listen carefully. And you must show them *how*, and this means learning not to interrupt when someone else is speaking. When you give them instructions, sometimes make them repeat what you said. If they cannot remember, make them sit and wait for you to repeat it again at your convenience. You will be surprised how much better listeners they become.

Proverbs 23:22 states, “Hearken unto your father that begot you, and despise not your mother when she is old.” In the family, fathers and mothers hold offices that require—should demand—respect! Children must learn to respect their parents—and listen to them. Romans 8:7 reveals that this is far from automatic—that it must be *learned*. The office of “parent” is one of the highest offices in your children’s life—one that they must deeply respect, for their own good. So declares the Fifth Commandment.

However, you cannot expect them to do this if you are never willing to listen to them. Many parents continually “put off” their children, treating them as though they are inconveniences in the way of more important things. Incredibly, only 16 percent of people even believe that children are important to marriage.

You have no doubt heard it said that “God gives us two ears but only one mouth for a reason.” This is important for both parents and children to understand. If you expect your children to listen to you, then you must listen to *them*. Of course, this comes with limits you must discern.

Above all, teach your children that life actually *requires* them to listen—that it is *essential* for SUCCESS in every endeavor, small and large. Their future college education and careers will depend on developing this quality!

Ingrain into Your Children to Never Violate Trust

Teach your children that if they want to be trusted, they must always be *worthy* of the trust they receive. If you do this correctly, present and future friends will be comfortable opening up and confiding in them. Others will be willing to share their personal dreams and aspirations (as well as their problems and worries) with your children once they become adults. This will put them in a position to be able to help more people through life.

Teach your children that future employers may need to share highly sensitive information with them. One cannot *demand* trust from others—your children need to understand that they must be *worthy* of having such important confidence extended to them. Also explain that they cannot expect others to keep certain things confidential if they do not do the same.

All of this means teaching them that they must learn never to gossip. Teach them God hates this practice. Notice just a few scriptures:

“You shall not go up and down as a talebearer among your people...” (Lev. 19:16).

“But unto the wicked God says, What have you to do to declare My statutes, or that you should take My covenant in your mouth?... You give your mouth to evil, and your tongue frames deceit. You sit and speak against your brother; you slander your own mother’s son” (Psa. 50:16-20).

“A talebearer reveals secrets: but he that is of a faithful spirit conceals the matter” (Prov. 11:13).

“The words of a talebearer are as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly” (18:8).

“He that goes about as a talebearer reveal secrets: therefore meddle [associate] not with him that flatters with his lips” (20:19).

Those of the World War II generation will never forget the motto: “Loose lips sink ships.” This is true in a great many ways. (However, teach your children that there are exceptions, such as if a crime or sin is involved, or if someone will be hurt if action is not taken.)

All children must *learn* to keep things confidential—to never betray the trust of another human being, particularly after they have given their word. Your children must understand that their word has to *mean* something—that “their word is their bond.” No one carries this quality innately from the womb. Of course, some children are more naturally given to gossip or to revealing secrets, while others seem more naturally able to keep sensitive matters to themselves. Determine which category your children fall into and nurture them to see what is at stake if they do not learn the all-important quality of trustworthiness in every regard.

Train Your Children to Never Lie or Steal

The world is filled with people who habitually steal, and who seem to lie about almost everything. (For instance, it has been revealed that 80 percent of all students now cheat in school.) Keeping your children from joining their ranks is an increasingly difficult task.

Now notice God’s view of lying: “These six things does the LORD hate: yes, seven are an abomination unto Him: a proud look, a *lying tongue*, and hands that shed innocent blood, an heart that devises wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief, a *false witness that speaks lies*, and he that sows discord among brethren” (Prov. 6:16-19).

Every child is born with carnal human nature. Inevitably, this nature will lead the child to consider lying, stealing or other forms of deception. Parents must teach their children—from their earliest years—that these are very serious offenses. If you fail to do this, at

best, your children will be dishonest, and, at worst—and this is growing more common in the modern age—you could literally be sentencing them to a life of crime!

On rare occasion, find ways to reward your children for telling the truth. Periodically, when they admit an offense—when they tell the truth under duress—refrain from disciplining them, and tell them why. This will serve to teach them not to lie, to instill in them that it was the truth that *protected* them. And be sure to remind them of this point at key opportunities so that it will become *automatic* when they are “under the gun” and tempted to lie.

This principle also applies in the following way: If, when *confronted* with his wrong behavior, your child is willing to admit that he is guilty—no matter how serious the infraction—consider rewarding him for telling the truth. Continue this until the habit is ingrained. This means still *admonishing* the child to do better, but, from time to time, it means *not* punishing the child because he or she *was* willing to “fess up” under examination. Again, your child must come to directly connect the fact that the *truth protects* him or her instead of the other way around, as most suppose.

However, when your children *do* lie or steal, punish them immediately, sometimes including long-term consequences so they *never* forget that lying is one of the worst offenses one can commit, and that stealing is also a form of deception. Conversely from the above, this serves to teach them that lies *endanger* them—and you *must* connect this in their thinking. Talk with them about how lying will invariably get them into worse trouble, potentially destroying their reputations entirely, if they do not avoid it at all costs.

Instill Morality

In the United States, half of all wives and two-thirds of all husbands now commit adultery. This means that an astonishing almost five out of six marriages have at least one adulterous partner.

Referenced earlier, the growing phenomenon of middle school oral sex parties has taken root because so many children have come to believe—following the thinking of a former American leader—that “it’s not really sex”!

Some time ago, a television news program conducted an experiment. In various countries around the world, wallets containing money and identification were strategically placed on local streets for strangers to find. As news crews secretly taped them, most people who picked up the wallets kept the money. In fact, one woman crossed

herself, as a sign of religious devotion, then counted the money and stuffed it into her pockets!

Such is the modern age in which your children are growing up!

Never assume that your children will *automatically* be moral—will *automatically* do the right thing when confronted with important decisions. You must TEACH them to be moral! Just as you must rely on God to teach *you* right from wrong, your children are unconsciously relying on you to teach *them* right from wrong.

Vast numbers of children no longer have any idea what ethics, integrity and morality mean. Nor do they comprehend the most fundamental basics of right and wrong, good and evil, and law and crime, let alone what *sin* is. Clarify these critical differences to them at every turn. Teach your children to always do the right thing, even when no one else is watching. If you have been properly teaching them that God sees everything that they do, this will be much easier for them to understand.

Instill Why Sex Belongs Only in Marriage

The modern world has become drenched in every conceivable kind of fornication and sexual activity. This quickly, and often *immediately*, seems to become part of the interaction between boys and girls—and is seemingly starting at a younger and younger age.

God designed sexual intercourse to be the “glue” that binds a *husband* and *wife* together. However, because of a lack of sexual fulfillment in vast numbers of marriages, many couples conclude that they should “test” each other before marriage, thinking this will help them avoid a sexually troubled marriage.

Never permit intimacy to enter any of your child’s relationships prior to marriage. Recognize that the world is waiting to *ambush* your children! You will have to watch like the proverbial “hawk” to head off your child’s natural tendency to move in this direction.

Part of this training is preparing your children long in advance for the time that they will begin to date those of the opposite sex. It is crucial that dating not occur too soon, before your children are emotionally, mentally or morally equipped to know what dating means—and for what *purposes* they should do this. (All parents who hope to one day see their children fulfilled in a wonderful, happy, spiritually compatible marriage are encouraged to carefully study and to teach your children to apply the principles in my extensive book *Dating and Courtship – God’s Way*. Nothing like it has ever been written. It is filled with helpful principles and truths that will guide *you* in HOW to properly guide your *children*.)

Just consider what has become the never-ending stream of television and newspaper ads offering sexual “boosters” and other products in a way that could not have been dreamed of even a few years ago. And then there are the beer commercials...

So much of television has become utterly vulgar and sex-obsessed to the point that it is difficult, if not almost impossible, to find programming that does not bombard your children with messages that are a challenge for the godly young person to resist when seemingly no one around him is doing the same. The dark pressures on your children to move them away from right values and morals—and directly away from God’s perfect spiritual Law!—are beyond any level of intensity that the world has ever seen. Recognize that what you faced was practically “child’s play” by comparison.

There is an unseen but critical aspect of fornication that almost none understand. The Bible states that this sin is unique, producing a special kind of emotional and psychological “scarring” that is very difficult to leave behind. Here is how Paul put it: “Flee fornication. Every sin that a man does is without [outside] the body; but he that commits fornication sins *against his own body*” (I Cor. 6:18).

Fornication impacts both the body and the mind in a way that no other sin can, and it does this in two distinct ways:

First, those who engage in it will create memories of the kind of intimacy that should only bring one face to mind—his or her mate.

Second, those who fornicate but then go on to marry each other often find it impossible, consciously or unconsciously, to separate previous guilt from the sexual relations that, after marriage, are no longer sin. They have forever intermingled—MIXED—something that God said is good (Gen. 1:27, 31) with something that was bad.

Teach your children to keep lust out of *all* relationships—and to flee all forms of fornication! Teach them that *not* saving themselves for marriage is THEFT—that they are *stealing* from their future mates. Also, again, they are sinning against their *own* bodies.

In the past, both men and women wanted, and expected, to marry virgins. But today, people have come to expect to marry people who may have had countless sex partners.

Yet, God’s Word is very plain about sexual permissiveness. This is made clear in many passages. Notice this from the Song of Solomon: “We have a little sister, and she has no breasts: what shall we do for our sister in the day when she shall be spoken for? If she be a wall, we will build upon her a palace of silver: and if she be a door, we will enclose her with boards of cedar” (8:8-9).

Parents, teach your daughters that they can be either: (1) a “door” (having multiple sex partners and demeaning themselves), or (2) a “wall” (chaste, immovable, pure in marriage). While this particular principle is not *directly* applicable to sons, the overall principle certainly includes them.

Teach your children that marriage—and this includes sex *in* marriage—is wonderful. But they *must* realize that marriage is the **ONLY PLACE** in which sex belongs!

The two previous sections lead directly to one of the greatest challenges that you will face.

Warn About the Dangers of Gambling, Drugs and Alcohol

Directly related to the subject of sex outside marriage, and avoiding it as part of instilling morality into one's character, are the absolute perils of slipping into other dangerous vices.

In the first chapter, significant space was given to the subjects of drinking, drugs, gambling and attending the wrong kinds of parties. Of course, all of these things are linked, and by now that should be well understood for the potentially grave danger that they pose to your children. Teaching your children to be aware of each of these things, and of all of the related pitfalls, traps and other “sinkholes” waiting to snare or swallow them, is of paramount importance in your overall strategy to navigate your children safely to adulthood.

People would only swim with man-eating sharks if they had no idea the *danger* of such sharks. Your children must be educated to the seriousness—the grave danger—of dabbling in things that can almost *immediately* put them in over their head, or even take their lives.

But you cannot educate your children to that about which you have not educated yourself. Your strategy to help them includes learning as much as you can about what leads children into these devastating evils that can destroy them before they knew what hit them. (The final chapter will offer some very helpful additional tools that we have prepared to help you in this regard.)

These dangers are most real to your children. Many families are forced to endure their unexpected death and injury, and are so unnecessarily left to grieve over lost or ruined lives.

Twice for emphasis, the Proverbs state, “A prudent man foresees the evil, and hides himself: but the simple pass on, and are *punished*” (22:3; 27:12). Be sure that you are continually looking ahead—“foreseeing” influences that could suddenly appear in your children's path, so that neither you nor they wind up “*punished*.”

Coach Your Children to Be Strong and to Control Their Emotions and Desires

Again, because people are weaker in character than ever before in history, this age could perhaps best be described as “the age of weakness.” With this in mind, upon close examination, when observing people, it is amazing to see how little mental strength most now possess. Woe to those who cut people off in traffic—who take their parking space—who do not talk to them with sufficient “respect”—who, in some perceived fashion, “violate their rights” or “get into their space.” Few people are taught any longer to curb their feelings. Most have come to believe that they should “express themselves” and that it is more healthy to “vent,” to *release* bad feelings trapped inside.

This is ridiculous, and contrary to the way generations before them viewed life.

Consider Proverbs 16:32: “He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that rules his spirit than he that takes a city.”

In ancient times, it was extremely difficult for an army to besiege and conquer a walled city. That is why God had to personally bring Jericho’s walls down (Josh. 6).

Likewise, it is hard to control one’s emotions, especially under times of duress—and strength must be developed to do this successfully. Remember, a Christian is one who strives to always control his feelings, impulses, appetites and emotions. This is inseparable from learning and developing the character of God—the **PURPOSE** for which you and your children were born.

Never permit your children to scream or throw tantrums—and some parents witness and endure this in an endless cycle—either in public or at home. Wild, raging, out-of-control children will, at best, grow up to be emotionally immature and unstable. At worst, they could harm themselves and/or others.

Again, psychologists once coined the term “terrible twos” to reduce what are often wild, out-of-control tantrums into a mere “phase” of child development. However, for most, the problem does continue as the “terrible threes,” followed by the “terrible fours,” “terrible fives,” and so forth. Anyone who has been behind someone with a child of these ages in a supermarket or in a bank teller line knows that this is no exaggeration.

But there is another unseen peril for those who open their minds and allow the “walls” surrounding them to collapse. Such children are open to dangerous spiritual influences—**EVIL SPIRITS** looking for

an opening wherever they can find it. God's Word reveals that fallen angels, called demons, can sometimes enter people from childhood and remain into adulthood. (Take a moment to read the account in Mark 9:14-21.)

Teach your children to control their emotions and desires—not to be ruled by them. Self-control builds mental “walls” that will protect your children's lives in all situations. Notice: “He that has no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down, and without *walls*” (Prov. 25:28). Without the walls of self-control, children are defenseless against carnal appetites and desires.

Teach them to properly handle things, and not to “go to pieces” whenever they cannot get their way—to remember that “if you faint in the day of adversity, your strength is small” (Prov. 24:10).

Here is a related point, having mostly to do with physical strength, but directly connected to mental strength as well. Fathers (and mothers can assist in this), teach your sons the forgotten principle that “the glory of young men is their STRENGTH” (Prov. 20:29). So many young boys today are either pencil-thin or overweight, evidencing an almost total lack of exercise. But increasing numbers are also going to another wrong extreme to build muscles—taking steroids! Of course, both problems are evident in many girls today as well.

It has become practically a hallmark of this generation that very few boys are made to do heavy physical chores, such as cutting and carrying firewood, digging ditches, shoveling the snow off a long driveway, or the many kinds of chores done on a farm in past generations, such as helping to bale hay or feed and milk cows. Strive to find as many ways as possible for your children to do physical labor around the home, inside and out. These strengthen both body *and mind*.

Hard times ARE coming. We are living in “perilous times” (II Tim. 3:1-4), an age of lust, greed and out-of-control appetites. The Great Tribulation and the Day of the Lord will strike man when he is at his weakest—morally and spiritually.

Teach your children to be physically, mentally, morally and spiritually *strong*! This will help them survive all that Bible prophecy foretells is just ahead for all nations in this age. In other words, you could literally be saving their life!

Educate in the Use and Appreciation of Good Manners

The vast majority of young people today are completely ignorant of what were once commonly referred to as “the social graces.” Even

just the knowledge of receiving an extensive education in these skills has largely become lost to an entire generation. Gone is the time when people understood that manners mattered.

Even a cursory glance at the public conduct of most young people today demonstrates how most are sorely lacking in the areas of dignity, propriety, decorum and related areas of conduct. Many are rude, and even outright coarse and crude when it comes to manners and etiquette—and this is true in almost every one of the social graces. Just watching young people eat today can be a painful experience, a veritable assault on the senses. (It is only barely an exaggeration to state that many young people and teenagers today slump over and eat like hogs slopping at a trough!)

The social graces represent—and reflect—a specific application of God’s law of love. They are based on giving others respect and high regard. The Bible teaches that “love...does not behave itself *unseemly*” (I Cor. 13:4-5). Try to make it your child’s goal to “esteem others better than [myself]” (Phil. 2:3), giving to others, making them feel uplifted and special. In life, little things mean a lot.

Good manners and conduct must begin *in the home*, and this means beginning with your example and your teaching. Instruct your children to strive to be gentlemen or ladies—and that this is what God wants them to be. Teach them to ignore those who feel that such conduct is “lost in the past.” Recall that the Bible declares, “Be not deceived: evil communications [companions] corrupt good manners” (I Cor. 15:33). Even though this verse now applies to the vast majority in this age, it also has direct application in regard to those with whom you allow your children to associate.

Instruct your children to hold the door for adults and girls. Teach them how to shake hands, to rise when adults enter the room, to “be seen and not heard,” to look people in the eye when addressing them, and all aspects of proper table manners. Such instruction includes proper etiquette and all of the differences between good and bad manners. Your children must understand that they too can be AMBASSADORS for God’s Way of Life (II Cor. 5:20).

Instruct in the Seven Laws of Success

All people want to be considered successful—and to, in fact, *be* successful. Your children are no different. Yet, most people have no idea *how* to achieve SUCCESS. And they are not sure how to *recognize* success if they see it—either in themselves or others. Supposed “higher”

education has never taught *true* success. Nor have most understood that there are basic, specific LAWS that must be employed to reach success.

Just what *is* success? So many people seek it, having never defined it. As a result, very few ever achieve *true* success. And most never actually sit down and try to analyze the *reasons* for their failure. Most are generally capable of recognizing that they have failed—but they cannot explain WHY! It is your job as a parent to be sure that this does not happen to your children.

Though some might feel that they are *destined* to fail, this is never true. But circumstances in today's world could easily cause your children to acquire this thinking. They must understand that men and women of all ages *can* achieve success. But they must be schooled in and practice the *right formula*—and only after they understand exactly *what* they are trying to achieve!

Do you want your children to become happy, productive adults? Then thoroughly teach them the laws to success:

(1) HAVE THE RIGHT GOAL. This includes understanding your strengths and weaknesses, knowing where you excel and where you fall short. Plenty of potential architects, engineers, accountants, etc., wind up in the wrong profession, the proverbial “square peg in a round hole.” Even worse, there are some who have no belief in their potential and sit on their talents—all because they lack vision!

(2) OBTAIN THE RIGHT EDUCATION. It should be well-rounded and balanced. Too many people limit themselves by over-specializing.

(3) MAINTAIN GOOD HEALTH. This includes one's physical, emotional, mental and spiritual well-being.

(4) PRACTICE DRIVE. Be zealous and enthusiastic, and maintain a “can do” attitude.

(5) BE RESOURCEFUL. Think “outside the box”—know how to solve problems. Being resourceful in problem-solving could be compared to figuring out what to do when locked out of the house: If you cannot get through the front door, enter through the back door. If that way is locked, go through the window. If that does not work, come through the basement. Or try the roof...or the chimney. In other words, *find a way!*

(6) PERSEVERE. Never give up or give in to doubts. Stick to your goals like a pit bull gripping a bone!

(7) SEEK GOD FIRST. Put Him at the center of your life. This includes obeying the other six laws GOD'S WAY—not your own.

(To better understand and teach these principles, read our booklet *The Laws to Success*.)

The Most Important Teaching

The seventh law of success introduces the most important aspect of your children's education. Therefore, it opens up a wide array of elements of proper childrearing that are very different in nature than the things discussed in previous chapters.

Children initially learn about God from their parents. Parents are in a unique and extraordinary position because they are the ones who lay the foundation of their child's future relationship with God. As with other points, parents must be properly educated in what God expects them to teach their children to *do* and what He expects them to teach their children *not* to do!

Teaching About God, His Word and Christianity

By now you realize there are many vital principles, lessons, character and personality traits you must teach your children to understand and develop. All are essential. However, the most important things you will teach them are those pertaining to God and their future calling as Christians. Remember, your role as steward over your children is temporary. The goal is to deliver your young adult children to God's doorstep, fully prepared for Him to bring them to conversion. This means that there are many additional, more spiritually-oriented—and some *entirely* spiritually-based—elements of your children's training that must receive your special attention!

This chapter focuses on the vital dimension of your child's spiritual development, with the understanding that the ultimate goal of every human parent is to see their children enter the Kingdom of God as very members of the God Family! In a sense, everything that you teach your children must be continually brought back to this ALL-IMPORTANT GOAL. This must be your constant focus, and you must strive to make it your children's constant focus.

Teaching about God involves a variety of vital points of understanding that will create a clear picture in your children's minds of why they were born: They must come to comprehend that they have to always seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, that human beings are incomplete without the Spirit of God and certain revealed spiritual knowledge, and that these things are all connected to later coming to repentance, baptism and conversion. It is of critical importance that you

keep this central focus in the forefront of your children's minds, particularly as they grow through the teen years. However, you can also make young minds look forward to this exciting time.

But the Bible is a book of many *other* true doctrines, and you are responsible for teaching and re-enforcing every one of them—Who and what is God?; Who and what is Jesus Christ?; the one true Church and Body of Christ; the gospel of the Kingdom of God; law, sin and grace; the government of God; the Sabbath and Holy Days; tithing; clean and unclean meats; the truth about salvation and the afterlife; the major points of prophecy; and many, many others. You must also explain that the world offers a deceptive *counterfeit* for each one of these, as well as all of the other teachings of God, no matter how small or insignificant such teachings may seem.

You also have a responsibility to teach your children that they must have their heart in the Work of God, and that loyalty to this purpose is inseparable from their calling. It is good to help them connect even their tiny amounts of tithes and offerings to this purpose.

Lead Your Children to Seek God First

Grasp this central—and all-important—understanding! As previously mentioned, you represent God to your children, particularly when they are young. Just as He provides for you, you provide your children with food, drink, protection, affection, instruction, guidance and much more. At some point, this reliance must be transferred to God. Be sure that they are on the way to understanding that God is infinitely more important than you—or anyone or anything else!

Explain to your children that God is our Provider, and He will never forsake them. Jesus taught the following in the context of seeking the Kingdom of God first: “Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? Or, What shall we drink? Or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek) for your heavenly Father knows that you have need of all these things. But seek you first the *kingdom of God*, and *His righteousness*; and all these things shall be added unto you” (Matt. 6:31-33).

Teach your children that God will always provide for them as long as they put Him **FIRST!**

Actively explain and demonstrate to your children how to study the Bible, and regularly do this with them. Tell them how important daily Bible study is—that God's Word is described as a “lamp” (Psa. 119:105) that will show them how to live, and that it will guide “the path” of their “feet” toward the Kingdom of God.

Similarly, teach your children how to pray and what to pray about (helping them develop a list of important subjects that they should be regularly taking to God). And again, you should be regularly doing this with them. Explain to them that when they are studying the Bible, God is speaking to them, and that when they are praying, they are speaking to God—that this is literally a two-way conversation. Teach them that to seek God through prayer and Bible study is to build a *personal relationship* with Him.

Be sure that you are setting a visible pattern for your children to copy and follow. Let them learn from your example. Again, pray and study *with* them. It is also good for them to know that you are not accessible at certain times because you are privately doing these things.

Think of this as your overall goal: “That they [your children] may set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments” (Psa. 78:7).

If you do not teach your children to seek the true God *FIRST*—through daily prayer and Bible study—they will eventually seek *another* “god.” This is best described as their own human will. Notice: “And might not be as their fathers, a *stubborn* and *rebellious* generation; a generation that *set not their heart aright*, and whose spirit was *not steadfast with God*. The children of Ephraim, being armed, and carrying bows, turned back in the day of battle. They kept not the covenant of God, and refused to walk in His law; and forgot His works, and His wonders that He had shown them” (vs. 8-11).

Your children do not have God’s Spirit in them, but, if you are obeying God as a true Christian, the Bible reveals that they do have it working *with* them. This is God’s promise (John 14:17; I Cor. 7:14), coupled with the promise that if they choose to seek Him later as adults, to the point of coming to repentance and conversion, that Spirit will come to be *in* them.

Learning the Truth and Correct Doctrine

As explained, God’s Word contains many truths—many doctrines. The Bible is not a book containing merely a few teachings, some of which are important and others of which are more obscure and cannot be nailed down. God commands, “*PROVE* all things; *hold fast* that which is good” (I Thes. 5:21). Your children must come to understand that this also applies to *them*.

This section is a little longer than some others so that parents grasp the big picture of the responsibility God places on their shoulders—so

that they see the scope of what God expects their children to believe when He chooses to call and convert them. By now, you understand that you can leave your children either ready for this calling, or terribly deficient in a way that could limit God's ability to deal with them for the rest of this age.

Here was God's commission to the parents in ancient Israel to teach their children about His Plan, His attributes and His ways: "Give ear, O My people, to My law; incline your ears to the words of My mouth. I will open My mouth in a parable: I will utter dark sayings of old: which we have heard and known, and our fathers have told us. We will not hide them *from their children*, shewing [telling] to the *generation to come* the praises of the LORD, and His strength, and His wonderful works that He has done. For He established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which He commanded our fathers, that they should *make them known to their children*: that the *generation to come* might know them, even *the children* which should be born: who should [subsequently] arise and declare them *to their children*" (Psa. 78:1-6).

This passage must become your guide.

Start early, when your children are young, teaching them principles and lessons through means of Bible stories. While this can be done at any time in the week, the Sabbath (beginning Friday at sundown and ending Saturday night at sundown) is an ideal time to do this. Done wisely, and with some preparation, your children will come to love these times. They will also look forward to hearing certain stories *repeated* as they grow older, with these occasions offering an opportunity to deepen the level at which you teach.

As they grow older, first be sure that your children know the overall picture of how God is working with mankind. They must know that He has a 7,000-year Plan to save all human beings, and that the weekly Sabbath and His annual Holy Days depict this Plan as it unfolds in sequence.

Related to this, be sure that your children have a grasp of all the major prophecies to be fulfilled. They must slowly begin to recognize and comprehend that a terrible time of world trouble is coming. But they must also know that if the family is faithful, they are promised protection. (Be sure not to be too graphic in certain areas, telling them too much too early, before they can handle what they are hearing.) Our many books and booklets about prophecy—both those that are filled with hope and wonderful prophecies and those that reflect God's coming punishment on a rebellious humanity—will help you in this task.

Teach your children about God's Law, and how the Sabbath is His TEST COMMAND. They must understand that circumstances will test

their willingness to obey the Fourth Commandment. They must understand that the world is not geared to obeying God, and that sometimes obedience will be difficult—even *very* difficult—to do.

Teach your children that Jesus Christ promised to build His Church (Matt. 16:18)—and that this means there is only *one* true Church—only one unified, organized Body of Christ—also called the Temple of God—where He is leading and guiding. They must also understand that this is inseparable from the only place where GOD’S GOVERNMENT is at work. They must realize that this is a Church that will not compromise any of the true and proven doctrines of the Bible under any circumstances.

Ingrain within your children that God sees all that they do. They must understand that character is often built and displayed when no one seems to be looking—except God! They should be taught to want to please God at all times, and that the Bible explains all the ways that one does this. (Take note that this will be harder to come to believe if they are never able to please *you*.)

Explain That They Are Not of the World

Your children must recognize that they are *not of* the world, its ways, its values and its customs. If they are learning and following God’s truth (John 17:17), they are living a very different way of life from all others around them. Unless you faithfully teach and remind them otherwise, your children will be naturally inclined to want to *copy* their peers instead of setting an *example* for them. Teach them that they cannot follow the world’s pagan customs and traditions, no matter how “innocent” these things might seem.

Praying to God about His disciples just before His crucifixion, Jesus said, “I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which You have given Me; for they are Yours...I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them, because they are *not of the world*, even as I am not of the world. I pray not that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil. They are *not of the world*, even as I am *not of the world*” (John 17:9, 14-16).

The Church of God practices a little-known Bible instruction referred to as the *blessing of children*. This practice is mentioned in three New Testament passages (Matt. 19:13-15; Mark 10:15-16; Luke 18:15-17), each describing Christ’s example of formally laying hands on little children to ask a special blessing of protection on them while they are growing up. This very ceremony denotes the difficulty of bringing children safely through Satan’s world to the age of account-

ability and adulthood. It also reflects how parents need God's help in successfully carrying out the supremely important—and extremely difficult!—task of successfully rearing children. Therefore, the true Church of God practices the biblical teaching of blessing children (but, of course, it can only do this for its members).

It was God's intention that His people never forget all that He had done for them in helping them escape from Egypt. Notice what He instructed parents in ancient Israel to do: "And you shall bind them [the laws of God] for a sign upon your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes...And *when your son asks* you in time to come, saying, What mean the testimonies, and the statutes, and the judgments, which the LORD our God has commanded you? Then you shall say unto your son, We were Pharaoh's bondmen in Egypt; and the LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand: and the LORD showed signs and wonders, great and sore, upon Egypt, upon Pharaoh, and upon all his household, before our eyes: and He brought us out from there, that He might bring us in, to give us the land which He swore unto our fathers. And the LORD commanded us to do all these statutes, to fear the LORD our God, for our good always, that He might preserve us alive, as it is at this day. And it shall be our righteousness, if we observe to do all these commandments before the LORD our God, as He has commanded us" (Deut. 6:8, 20-25).

Regularly remind your children that God calls His people *out* of the world (Rev. 18:4)—*out* of its ways, traditions and customs. If you neglect to consistently do this, your children will return to the world at first opportunity!

Teach Your Children to Be Thankful

It has been said that ingratitude is the greatest sin. Yet, this attitude has become an integral part of society. It is ingrained in the lives of most people—even in a time when much of civilization is awash in material possessions and should feel blessed as never before in history. Most now have an expectation that they have a kind of intrinsic right to accumulate more and more money and physical goods, and then attribute it to their own human ingenuity.

Partly as a result of today's fast-paced world, most people seem to have no time for thankfulness. Work, traffic, family, sports involvement, doctor's appointments, and countless other things are their main priorities. They seem to have no time to thank others, let alone to thank God for all that they have.

Never before in history has the world exhibited this awful characteristic as it does today!

Teach your children to be grateful that they are alive, and, once again, that God created them with an awesome potential that they must not squander or lose sight of. (To learn more about why you were born—and what to teach to your children about God’s supreme, marvelous purpose for all mankind—read my book *The Awesome Potential of Man.*)

Teach your children to appreciate what they have: loving parents who are teaching them God’s Way—warm beds—a home—clothes—food—their toys—their puppy—their health—and on and on.

Then teach them that millions of children are homeless, starving and battling disease as a daily way of life. Explain that many others are being orphaned by circumstances that they themselves will never experience.

If you are living according to God’s standards, then your children have an extraordinary opportunity that the vast majority of human beings do not have, and will not have *in this age*—to be taught by parents who know, understand and *live* God’s Way of Life. Continually remind them of how truly blessed they are, and that they will be protected from all the horrors that lie ahead for a sinning mankind.

In addition, whenever they suffer setbacks or face obstacles in their lives—and they will!—teach them to even thank God for *adversity*. Help them see that bad times are really opportunities to seek and put God first. As they see Him act in their lives, delivering them from difficulties, they will learn to trust Him into and through adulthood.

Explain the Importance of Humility

In most modern societies, psychologists and other so-called “experts” have been teaching the importance of self-esteem and exalting *self* above others—and this has been happening for decades! As a result, guided by this modern thinking, the seeds of self-importance are planted and reinforced by unwitting parents in the very earliest years. These seeds are fertilized and nurtured when children enter the school system. Even at a very early age, they are given more power than they can possibly understand. They are taught that what they *feel* is right *is* right!

Modern psychologists, and millions of parents following their lead, have no concept whatsoever of godly humility, or even of the normal kind of *human* humility that so many in previous ages were taught to exhibit. However, a person has no hope of success in life *without* true humility!

How many concern themselves with verses such as the following: “Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory [NKJV: “selfish ambition or conceit”]; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than themselves” (Phil. 2:3).

Explain to your children that the Earth does *not* revolve around them. Instruct them to have “little heads”—not “big” ones.

Consider what Christ taught His disciples about humility: “And Jesus called *a little child* unto Him, and set him in the midst of them, and said, Verily I say unto you, except you be converted, and become *as little children*, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall HUMBLE himself *as this little child*, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 18:2-4).

Jesus also taught, “And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted” (23:12). God can only work through humble minds that seek His will, not their own.

Take note. Shyness, inferiority or lack of confidence is NOT humility. Real humility is seeing yourself as you truly are—a limited, physical human being, incapable of achieving or accomplishing anything of lasting worth without the help of God. In other words, it is the way *God* sees you.

Teach your children the sobering example of King Saul. God chose this man to become the first (human) king of Israel (I Sam. 9:15-17). At first, Saul responded with humility: “Am not I a Benjamite, of the smallest of the tribes of Israel? And my family the least of all the families of the tribe of Benjamin? Wherefore then speak you so to me?” (vs. 21).

But after some time in office, Saul disobeyed God. He chose to rely on himself (13:1-14; 15:1-23) and fell into disrespect for God’s government over him (15:24-29). He turned to persecuting God’s servants (19:1, 9-10; 22:6-19), with his sins then multiplying, to the end that he killed himself (31:1-4).

Teach your children that pride and arrogance always lead to a bad end. But HUMILITY always reaps benefits. Notice: “Pride goes before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall...A man’s pride shall bring him low: but honor shall uphold the *humble in spirit*” (Prov. 16:18; 29:23). Then teach your children that “with the lowly is wisdom” (Prov. 11:2).

Require Your Children to Admit When They Are Wrong

There was once a time when people almost routinely admitted when they were wrong or had even made a simple error. This trend has given

way to the tendency for many to shift blame to others. It is astonishing to see how many ways human reasoning seems to have learned to do this. Some will admit to “mistakes,” “miscalculations,” “indiscretions,” “errors,” “inappropriate behavior,” or even “foolishness”—and even these admissions are often couched in words like “*if* I have offended anybody,” or “*if* anybody misunderstood what I said”—but are unwilling to acknowledge their conduct as having been *sin* or wrong, regardless of whether or not anyone was offended!

As discussed, people today love to invoke their “rights,” but seem to hate admitting their wrongs! On the other hand, those who are mature are willing to accept and take *responsibility* for their actions. They admit their faults and strive to change. They are not afraid to sincerely apologize when they have been wrong.

Former President Harry Truman had a plaque on his desk in the Oval Office reading, “The Buck Stops Here.” He recognized that as president, holding the highest office in the land, he was ultimately responsible when big things went wrong. He was man enough to admit when he had been wrong, and when the country had possibly suffered as a result. How different from today. Most simply cannot any longer say from the heart, “I was wrong. I hurt you and I was wrong.”

Be sure your children understand that it is “human to err.” But be sure they also understand that they must *learn* and *grow* from their mistakes. They must recognize that it is not where they are *now* that is important, but rather where they are *going*—what they are *becoming*.

Consider the parable of the Pharisee and the publican (Luke 18:9-14). In this parable, the Pharisee boasted of all the things he had done or thought he was doing right. But the publican (tax collector) admitted his wrongs. Jesus said that “this man [the publican] went down to his house justified rather than the other” (vs. 14).

Be sure your children understand that the conduct and attitude of their peers will be constantly pummeling them, trying to reduce the seriousness with which they view WRONG CONDUCT. Explain that this bombardment to desensitize them to the difference between plain right and wrong, and their willingness to admit when they are wrong, will be unrelenting.

Instruct your children that admitting when they are wrong will cause them to stand out from all others, and some may *copy* their good example. Other people will tend to more easily *trust* your child’s present or future leadership, because they will see the importance that he or she attaches to doing the RIGHT thing!

Educate Your Children to See There Is a *Cause* for Every *Effect*

For every CAUSE there is an EFFECT. While “time and chance” happens to everyone (Ecc. 9:11), instill in your children that most things happen for a reason: credit card debt—foolishly marrying the wrong person—problems stemming from associating with the wrong people—wrecking the car because of drinking, speeding or carelessness—an unwanted pregnancy, etc.

For example, we discussed how King Saul eventually refused to obey God. His sins cut him off from God’s protection, guidance and blessings, ultimately leading him to ask another man to assist him in ending his life.

By contrast, King David obeyed God. He hungered and thirsted for God’s commandments—His righteousness (Matt. 5:6; Psa. 119:172). And though he suffered many trials, God rescued him from them all (Psa. 34:19). At the conclusion of a long, abundant life, David died in peace. In the end, God called him a man after His own heart (Acts 13:22). In the future, David will rule over all of the twelve tribes of Israel (Ezek. 37:21-25).

Teach your children to “connect the dots” in life—that “what goes around, comes around.” I repeat: Teach them that there is a cause for *every* effect. Remember God’s admonition: “Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man sows, that shall he also reap” (Gal. 6:7).

Guide Your Children to Hate *Sin*, But Love the *Sinner*

In Matthew 5, Christ taught, “You have heard that it has been said, You shall love your neighbor, and hate your enemy. But I say unto you, *Love* your enemies, *bless* them that curse you, *do good* to them that hate you, and *pray* for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you” (vs. 43-44).

Teach your children to know how to separate the sin from the sinner. God will eventually give everyone the opportunity to learn His truth and to enter the Kingdom of God (II Pet. 3:9). Be sure to emphasize that He does not take pleasure in the downfall of others (Ezek. 18:23, 31-32).

Carefully instruct about and then remind your children of God’s great mercy, forgiveness, grace and patience. And be sure that they truly understand this: “And I [Paul] thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has

enabled me, for that He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry; who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but *I obtained mercy*, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief. Howbeit for this cause *I obtained mercy*, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting” (I Tim. 1:12-16).

Teach your children to hate SIN—“The fear of the LORD is to hate evil” (Prov. 8:13)—but to love the SINNER.

Successful, balanced, well-adjusted people understand that life is too short to waste time being bitter, angry and resentful toward those who offend them. “Rolling with the punches” always produces happier lives. Teach your children to separate *what* was done to them from *who* did it.

Emphasize Affection, Compassion, Forgiveness and Mercy

Jesus Christ, who *never* sinned, was unjustly tried, beaten, reviled and crucified by people who completely misunderstood Him. Further, Roman soldiers even divided His garments and cast lots for them as He hung from the stake, awaiting death.

But how did Jesus react toward those who had done Him such ultimate injury? He asked God, “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34). The deacon Stephen, as he was being stoned to death for pointing out the sins of the religious leaders of his day, immediately before he died, prayed, “Lord, lay not this sin to their charge” (Acts 7:60).

Christ’s prayer reveals His compassion and mercy toward carnal-minded mankind. His perfect example sets the ultimate standard for true Christian living.

Carefully read the following extraordinary passage, and then emphasize it throughout your children’s years at home: “For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it, if, when you be buffeted for your faults, you shall take it patiently? But if, when you do well, and suffer for it, you take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. For even hereunto were you called: because Christ also suffered for us, *leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps*: who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth: who, when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not; but commit-

ted Himself to Him that judges righteously: who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree..." (I Pet. 2:19-24).

God *loves* mercy. In fact, He "is rich in mercy" (Eph. 2:4). He expects the same from His servants.

When Peter asked Jesus, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Till seven times?" (Matt. 18:21), the answer was, "I say not unto you, until seven times: but, until seventy times seven" (vs. 22). In other words, Christians must forgive people *as many times as necessary*, as long as the person continues to ask for forgiveness. Teach your children that such forgiveness will not always be easy to extend.

Just as you must be compassionate and forgiving toward others, and not hold grudges, you must teach your children to do the same. Teach and practice mercy and forgiveness in front of them. This is the Christian way of life.

The habit of extending mercy will take weight off your children's shoulders. They will not go through life burdened with grudges and leaving enemies in their wake who can eventually become *old* enemies waiting for a time to retaliate.

Also teach them that people *will* occasionally wrong them, sometimes maliciously. But they should not be upset—and some are even *destroyed* by offense—when offenders do not apologize.

Instead, teach your children to *feel* for people (the way Christ did), and explain to them how to show affection. One way to do this is to encourage them to talk with the elderly and to be aware of and enjoy little children. This takes them outside their own world.

Of course, far and away the best manner of teaching affection, compassion, forgiveness and mercy is by YOUR EXAMPLE. When your children make mistakes, or sin, be as merciful to them as God is toward you.

Instill into Your Children the Importance of Courage and Standing Alone

If you instruct your children in God's Way, you are automatically giving them godly values that cannot help but separate them from the society around them. But your children will be in the tiny minority. They will probably face some degree of ridicule and derision, including some suffering, from their peers.

Be sure they understand that it takes courage to walk in God's teachings—to keep the Sabbath and annual Holy Days; to always tell the truth; to not join the crowd in observing birthdays, Christmas and

other pagan holidays and traditions. (To learn more, read our booklets *God's Holy Days or Pagan Holidays?*, *The True Origin of Christmas* and *The True Origin of Easter*, as well as our many articles on birthdays, Halloween and the origin of various other well-known holidays of men. They will help you understand all of the many customs related to these holidays of which you must make your children aware. Be sure that your children are thoroughly educated to what they believe about God's Holy Days *and* the world's holidays—and *why* they believe what they do! This will help them explain to teachers and peers why they believe as they do.)

Continually stress to your children what lies ahead of them *if* they remain faithful in God's Way. Remind them of what their reward is *now*: the blessings that flow from obedience to God's laws—and what can be their reward *later*: ruling with Jesus Christ and His saints (Isa. 9:6-7; Dan. 7:27).

Require Your Children to Be Mentally Strong Through Life's Many Trials

In this age, when things go wrong, so many people's first reaction is to simply "go to pieces" and claim that they have been victimized. They do not know how to be strong when they suffer setbacks, because very few parents any longer know to teach these things.

Teach your children—and setting the right personal example is a crucial part of this—not to "lose it," but rather to "keep their cool," when unexpected things derail their plan. Teach them to remember that "the best laid plans of mice and men" can go awry. Point them to Ecclesiastes 3: "To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven: a time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted; a time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up; a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance; a time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing; a time to get, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to cast away; a time to rend, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak; a time to love, and a time to hate; a time of war, and a time of peace" (vs. 1-8).

Be sure that your children understand that life works in cycles. Point them to this principle: "In the day of *prosperity* be joyful, but in the day of *adversity* consider..." (Ecc. 7:14). This means that life involves good times and bad times. In a sense, the bad news is that

when your children are in good times, they need to know that *bad times* will follow. But they also must realize the good news: When they are in bad times, *good times* will follow. Take time to read what Solomon said about this in the rest of the passage.

Teach your children that moaning about their problems will not help or change anything. They need to be strong—because life has *many* trials awaiting them. NEVER permit your children to pout or remain in a wrong attitude! Require them to *always* practice a positive approach to everything they do, and this includes not permitting tears to linger for very long after punishment. Be prepared to tell them, “That’s enough.”

Inspire Your Children to Confidence

All those who are led by the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:9, 14) understand that “God has not given us the spirit of fear, but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind” (II Tim. 1:7).

Children do not select their parents. One of the greatest tragedies that any child can “inherit” are parents who continually put him down, who constantly belittle, denigrate and criticize his every action. This non-stop condemnation and criticism is enough in itself to virtually cause any but the strongest children to lose all hope of developing a “can-do” spirit. Help them come to believe they can accomplish whatever they want in life.

While the world preaches self-confidence and complete reliance on self, Christians rely on boldness, righteousness (Prov. 28:1) and the faith of Jesus Christ (Rev. 14:12). Your children must come to understand this at the very deepest level. Teach them the valuable principle of Proverbs 14:26-27: “In the fear of the LORD is STRONG CONFIDENCE: and His children shall have a place of refuge. The fear of the LORD is a fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death.”

The vast majority of those who consider themselves Christians have little more than a hollow, counterfeit fear of God that is taught according to what God calls “the precept of men.” Notice God’s description: “For as much as this people draw near Me with their mouth, and with their lips do honor Me, but have removed their heart far from Me, and their fear toward Me is taught by the *precept of men*” (Isa. 29:13).

Many “religious” people talk about what they suppose is a genuine “fear of God.” This is not the *true* fear of God, referenced many places in the Bible, but rather reflects the kind of phony, pseudo-fear described in this passage. Be sure that you learn the difference between the *right* fear of the *true* God and the wrong fear taught by

the “god of this world” (II Cor. 4:4), and found throughout the many brands of counterfeit, professing Christianity.

Do not allow your children to be shy or timid. Shyness is a major obstacle to enjoying an abundant, successful life! Help them overcome it. Fearing God produces real CONFIDENCE. When one *fears* God, he will *obey* Him and follow His ways (Prov. 16:6). In turn, God will protect and guide that person—and your children need to know this. It brings the certainty that one cannot fail!

Now notice Proverbs 29: “The fear of man brings a snare: but whoso puts his trust in the LORD shall be safe” (vs. 25).

Instruct your children in the absolutely crucial importance of relying on God, not on self. (To learn more, you may read our booklet *What Is Real Faith?* It will help you understand that *true* faith is something far bigger and more important—and very different—than what you have previously believed.)

Tell your children—and do this regularly—that they *will* succeed, that they have every *reason* to succeed. Nurture them in this belief, helping them to blossom with positive praise whenever the occasion requires. But be sure they understand that complete reliance *on God* is the most crucial element necessary to achieve TRUE SPIRITUAL HAPPINESS—and that it is actually “*impossible* to please God” without faith (Heb. 11:6).

Explain That Some Things Can Only Be Learned Through Experience

You are not your children’s only teacher—or their only effective one. It has been said that, while experience is not the *best* teacher, it is a VERY GOOD teacher!

Look for a moment at the game of chess, or the card game, bridge. Both are considered relatively easy to learn, but hard to master. Doing this takes much time, patience and experience!

Like the process of learning to ride a bike or to ice skate, your children will fall down and will make many mistakes.

Every one of God’s greatest servants learned through his mistakes and suffering. And God records them in the Bible for us to see this. Even Christ, who lived a sin-free life, learned through suffering. Notice: “Though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered” (Heb. 5:8).

Character cannot be built overnight. It takes time, patience, long-suffering, and a lifetime of experience, some of it very difficult and painful. Your children must recognize that a certain amount of suffer-

ing is necessary, and they cannot avoid it. But, if they are wise, they will be able to reduce it to a minimum. Learning from experience can make all the difference.

Teach your children to make the most of all life's experiences. Teach them that "all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to His purpose" (Rom. 8:28).

Teach Your Children That Good Things Come to Those Who Wait

Already described as the "now generation" almost a generation ago, those of this age have become the most impatient in the history of the world. Referenced earlier, rarely are people willing to wait very long for anything—either in the pursuit of goals, until they can make a desired purchase or anything else.

Yet, Jesus taught, "In your patience possess you your souls [lives]" (Luke 21:19). This approach—and it applies to everything in life—flies directly in the face of a world based on instant gratification, where people want things *now*.

Carefully explain to your children to always differentiate between NEEDS and WANTS. The latter can usually wait and, in some cases, the passing of time will prove them to have been an unwise purchase *before* a mistake is made.

Children must be taught that things of value, and virtually every goal of any worth, requires time, preparation, education, persistence and a diligent application of all seven laws of success to have any hope of *reaching* success! This will help your children to automatically eliminate some of their wants because they will see that they are not needs.

The Bible states, "Prepare your work without, and make it fit for yourself in the field; and afterwards build your house" (Prov. 24:27). This scripture is actually a reference to getting married (which *includes* having a home) more than actually building a house. Be sure you are guiding your children to plan far enough ahead so they will be able to establish a "home" at the time they get married—and to have a comfortable savings in place *before* having children.

Teach your children to accept greater responsibilities when asking for a raise in their allowance. Explain to teenagers the importance of growing in their work skills before asking their boss for a pay raise or promotion. Whenever possible, tie these kinds of things together in their thinking. This will further teach your children to connect *cause* and *effect* throughout their lives.

Do Not Neglect Working with Young Children

Many parents wait longer than they should to begin teaching their children about God. They assume that small children are not ready until a point well beyond when they could—and should—have started teaching their children the basics about God and His Way of Life.

Never forget that children are most impressionable at their youngest age. Do not let this precious time slip away when it could be used most profitably to teach your children a host of *right* things at a time when they are ready to believe “the moon is made out of green cheese.” Parents literally hold the power to teach their children anything they wish, and of course this must never be used for anything but good. Remember, the child who is not taught *God’s* Way by his parents will eventually be taught *another* way by someone else! Therefore, counter the wrong religious influences in the world around you by not only programming your young children with the TRUTH but also programming them to resist practices and ideas that their friends will be involved in.

Practice playing any number of wonderful Bible games that are available with your children. This makes learning biblical names, facts, locations, events and principles fun—and it associates God and the Way of Life described in His Word with learning, enjoyment and pleasant feelings.

One of the best games that parents can play is “20 Questions” about a person, place or thing in the Bible. It is surprising how much and how fast your children can absorb information about the Bible, while they are enjoying the process. There are also various Bible board games that can be helpful, if they are carefully chosen so that they do not instill ideas from false Christianity into your children. The creative parent can also devise games of his or her own choosing, and these can be tailored to the age of the children who are participating. But all of this takes effort!

Be sure, however, that you are also doing plenty of just plain basic teaching about the wonderful truths of the Bible. We have already seen that true Christians are in training to rule with Christ over literal cities on Earth (Rev. 5:10; Matt. 5:5; Luke 19:11-27, etc.). It is important that you teach your children that they are also qualifying to be rulers in the Kingdom of God, under those in the God Family. Your children need to understand that they can have an exciting, thrilling future—*if* they learn what God wants them to understand, and *if* they faithfully obey all of His laws and teachings.

One final important point should be mentioned before closing this chapter.

The Restored Church of God has prepared a vast array of material for children of all ages, and these are described in more detail in the last chapter. While of greatest overall importance, this book is only the beginning of what we offer and, of course, is written to parents, not children. In the final chapter, we will cover a broad variety of wonderful tools that The Restored Church of God makes available.

Building Relationships

We have covered a host of different things you must teach your children to give them the hope of leading successful lives. However, the most important things that your children will do—that they *must* learn when young—involve relationships with other people, and what some would call developing their “people skills.”

Your children will encounter *all kinds* of people, and they must know how to co-exist with them. If your children cannot get along with other human beings, they are doomed to a life of terrible loneliness and misery. Of course, you must first equip yourself with the basic understanding of how to maintain good human relations, no matter the circumstances, and no matter how difficult certain people are. You will then know how to teach and advise them about all the different kinds of situations in which they could find themselves.

Building Family Relationships

To properly set the stage for all the things you have now learned that you must teach your children, it is best to start by introducing what is probably the most critical, overarching understanding of what it means to be a parent. This point is not actually something you teach your children, but rather it explains a way of life that presents an endless number of *opportunities* to teach them all that they must learn—and it leads to being able to build good relationships of almost every kind. This practice will pave the way for your children

to be able to get along with almost anyone, and in the most trying of circumstances.

There was once a time, and not long ago, when families looked forward to and enjoyed doing things together on a regular basis. Families and lives were very different from those of today. Before radio, television, movies, computers, telephones (and now even sophisticated cell-phones) and the endless variety of shallow magazines available today, people had much more time for other things. Activities, recreation and many kinds of interesting pursuits were enjoyed—and enjoyed together, as a family. This included learning and playing more board-games, card games, lawn games and outdoor activities. It also included picnics, hiking, camping, fishing, sightseeing, and the enjoyment of the wonders of nature as a family.

Also, families once talked much more around the dinner table, and usually for long periods of time. This was because people generally had the patience to eat more slowly (which made digestion of food better) since the conversation was stimulating. (How many families do not even eat together anymore, or do so only rarely?)

These kinds of extended conversations were made possible because people were generally living much more interesting lives, which meant that they were reading more books—and this served to keep their fund of knowledge growing and their minds continually expanding. This made the up-coming prospect of family conversation (and it applied to *all* conversations) interesting to the point of fascinating. Of course, the idea of the whole family just sitting and reading books, as was also commonly done in the past, seems terribly old-fashioned, and would be much more difficult in the “rat-race world” of modern society.

Tragically, today, both parents and children, particularly teenagers, have largely come to see trying to do most of the above family-oriented things as each party intruding on the others' life and schedule. This means that parents are *losing* a vast number of settings and opportunities to teach their children—and today's children are paying a terrible price, making *them* the biggest losers!

Establish in your mind that you are going to swim as hard as you possibly can against the current, no matter the price that you must pay to do it! Think of your children as counting on you—TRUSTING YOU!—to teach them all the things that they must know, including basic knowledge of people and human relationships of every kind, to have any hope of successfully coping with all the unexpected things that life will throw at them. Ultimately, life is almost entirely about one's ability or inability to get along with other human beings. Yet, schools do not offer classes

teaching this vital understanding. The world's false brand of Christianity has also failed to *truly* teach these things.

Of course, your children were born with absolutely no idea of all that they need to know about people until they are taught—by you! This means doing many kinds of things together as a family, which creates a variety of interesting settings that you can use as teaching tools. The balance of this chapter will address different types of relationships inside and outside the family.

Parents, Not Peers or Pals

Another point of understanding has to do with a vital distinction in your role as parent and your offspring's role as children. Remember that you are the parent and they are the children. It is not your job to be merely a "buddy," "playmate" or "friend." Many others of their own age will serve this purpose. Your task is to be their TEACHER—their MENTOR—the first and most important authority figure in their lives. While this does not mean you remain distant, impersonal, harsh or one in whom they cannot confide or ask questions as they would to a friend—because you are some kind of a stodgy, old professor figure—it does mean that you must never forget that you produced them instead of the other way around.

The Fifth Commandment—"Honor your father and mother"—was written to *your children* and it is to be expressed *toward you*, not the other way around. The command is not "parents honor your children" (of course, you should respect them as independent human beings made in the image of God). Your children should never lose sight of the fact that you hold a very high "office" in their world. Remind them of this when you think they have forgotten it.

While your role is not to be merely "pals" with your children, remember that without a strong parent-child bond, built on the right foundation, your children will turn to physical possessions and pleasures, sometimes illicit ones, for comfort. They will also have difficulty forming strong bonds in future relationships, and this includes both marriage and relationships with their *own* children.

It should be obvious by now that you can never allow yourself, under any circumstance, to become an "absentee parent." While you have your own life to live, and you must never allow yourself to be a slave to your child's every whim, beck and call, you must be present and accounted for in the fullest sense throughout their lives.

Sadly today, the most "successful" families seem to be those who wish to turn their children's youngest years over to a nanny or other

kind of caregiver. This means that such nannies or others who operate day-care centers often become the ones who see your children speak, walk or do other things for the first time. How incredibly sad for the parents who must hear these things in reports from others, when they could have been there themselves.

Give Your Children Parents Who Are Happily Married

Earlier in the book, you read statistics reflecting what happens when children are products of divorce. The picture is stark—and ugly. However, many other children are products of parents who remain married, but who are miserable, and who make no effort to keep this from their children.

Another of the greatest gifts you can give your children is to reflect a picture of complete parental unity mixed with true, radiant happiness. These will be picked up and emulated by little minds, who will feel secure in the loving arms of two people who not only care about each other but who will be seen by the children as naturally caring about them as well.

The earliest nurturing of children is done primarily by the mother. This means that it is the father's primary responsibility at the beginning to *support her* during this period. As the children grow, when overall leadership of the family becomes vital, it will be more important for the mother to somewhat modify her role to support the father's lead and decision-making with the children. But it should also be noted that children who had fathers who were *actively involved* with them in the first two months of life seemed to handle stress better when they arrived at school age.

Clearly visible parental *unity* will breed family loyalty in the child who is privileged to witness this increasingly rare commodity in the home. Also recognize that *happy* couples are almost invariably the ones who produce happy children.

Force yourself to always PRACTICE and REFLECT both!

Fathers and Sons

No book bringing God's perspective to childrearing would be complete without talking about the special bonds between fathers and mothers with both their sons and daughters.

Much could be said about how little boys look up to their fathers as virtual heroes in their lives—"My dad can beat up your dad," "My dad's better than your dad," etc. All men are familiar with these feel-

ings from childhood. The Proverbs state that “the glory of children are their fathers” (17:6).

Fathers, strive to always *be* a hero to your son(s). Be sure that he can always look up to your example. Remember at all times that what your son is seeing in you is largely what he will become in adulthood. It has been shown that positive father role models produce sons who are both generally more sound in thinking and better at overall problem-solving. An example of strength and maturity displayed by you will reappear later in your sons.

Recall that Paul wrote, “Fathers PROVOKE NOT your children to anger lest they be *discouraged*” (Col. 3:21), and also “fathers, PROVOKE NOT your children to *wrath*: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord” (Eph. 6:4).

These passages contain a great deal to consider, and more than can be fully explained here. However, depending upon the temperament and strength of your son, you will find that he will respond to provocation, harshness, abuse or excessive discipline with either “discouragement” (the weaker or more timid son) or “wrath” (the stronger, more emotional or more naturally self-willed son). Be careful to practice God’s balance of “nurturing” (loving instruction) and “admonition” (discipline).

Be sure to set a masculine example for your sons. They are watching more closely than you realize! Remember, Solomon wrote, “The glory of young men is their strength” (Prov. 20:29). Reflecting a masculine example includes demonstrating a certain amount of strength that your son will want to emulate.

Also, remember to treat older and younger sons in the same fashion. Do not let yourself be like the patriarch Isaac, who favored his son Esau, while his wife Rebekah favored Jacob. This resulted in unnecessary rivalry and bitterness between these brothers. This single episode, recorded in the book of Genesis, ultimately had a profound impact on the entire course of human history. Making the same mistake with your children will have no less effect, if only in the lives of your sons. Fathers (and mothers), be careful of unconsciously building a rivalry between sons. You could be sentencing them to a spirit of competition that will last a lifetime.

Be careful, however, that you also do not ever show favoritism to sons above daughters.

Fathers and Daughters

Many studies have demonstrated the enormous importance of building and maintaining a good father-daughter relationship—and there are many reasons for this.

Will Your Son Become Effeminate?

We have seen that modern television has become a powerful tool that can be misused. Certainly one of the worst ways this happens is the desensitizing of almost the entire Western culture toward male effeminacy and homosexuality. This unregulated media climate, encouraging sexually deviant and shocking situations for public display, has evolved slowly and incrementally in America over the past few decades.

For example, what has become known as “cross-dressing” was first introduced in comedic-type settings decades ago as harmless fun. Much of the American public quickly accepted such acts, and even began to laugh at them. But is this type of behavior really harmless or fun? And should we accept the “Popular Culture’s” view about male and female roles and conduct?

The God who created you speaks very plainly through His Word on this matter. Notice Deuteronomy 22:5: “The woman shall not wear that which pertains unto a man, neither shall a man put on a woman’s garment: for all that do so are abomination unto the LORD your God.”

As Creator, God understood thousands of years ago that there would come a time when rebellious mankind would blur the roles between men and women. This role reversal is not natural (Rom. 1:26)! Your children can easily become victims of this state of confusion—if you do not continually guard against it!

The Newman Study, conducted in 1976, discovered that “it is not unusual for parents to shield, tolerate, and rationalize the boy’s cross-dressing for years.” Parents who expect their children to become Christian men and women should *never* tolerate such acts—even in very young children! Such matters need to be taken *very* seriously!

According to a Saghir and Robins’ survey of homosexuals: “Among boys destined to become adult male homosexuals, the prevalence of polysymptomatic effeminacy is very high. About two-thirds (67%) of the male homosexuals, but only 3% of the male heterosexuals, described themselves as having been girl-like during childhood” (p.18).

In another study, the parents of 55 effeminate boys were asked to describe their son’s behavior. They reported the following responses:

- Feminine dressing - 50
- Aversion to boys’ games - 50

- Desire to be female - 43
- Girl playmate preference - 42
- Doll playing - 41
- Feminine gesturing - 40
- Wearing lipstick or other makeup - 34

Saghir and Robins' defines a "sissy" boy as: "One who shows a persistent aversion to playing with other boys or to being involved in boys' games and activities. He prefers being with girls and enjoys doing housework and playing with 'girly' dolls. He is often teased by other boys and by his siblings about his 'girl-like' behavior. He frequently becomes an unhappy and isolated child unable to belong in the company of boys or to participate fully in the activities of girls. His yearnings are not those of the boy next door but of the girl on the other side of the street. He feels awkward playing ball but is at home jumping rope. He dreads the gym hour but feels at ease cleaning or helping mother with her cooking."

Another study, called the Thompson study, compared 127 homosexual men with 123 heterosexual "controls." There were 46 items on the questionnaire. On 32 items, homosexuals differed significantly from heterosexuals. Beginning with the item on which there was the highest level of difference, homosexuals responded to the questions as follows:

- a. played baseball *never or sometimes*
- b. played competitive group games, *never or sometimes*
- c. spent time with father *very little*
- d. physical make as a child, *frail, clumsy or uncoordinated*
- e. felt accepted by father *mildly or no*
- f. played with boys before adolescence *sometimes*
- g. mother insisted on being center of child's attention *often or always*

A mother who carelessly shelters her son from adversity and rough play is directly contributing to the possible surrender of his masculinity to the effeminate architects of the Western World's upside-down society.

Fathers must be actively involved in the rearing of their children! This includes spending the time and expending the effort to teach their boys to conduct themselves as boys, and grow into masculine, balanced men!

The importance of a strong male role model for young boys cannot be overstated. For young boys to reach true and full manhood, they must see *examples* of true and full manhood.

It has been said that girls tend to marry men who are most like their fathers. This makes being a good father more crucial than meets the eye. It is not unusual for *abused* girls to marry *abusive* men. The daughters of warm, kind, patient, wise and loving fathers generally look for the same qualities in prospective mates. And this would naturally be the kind of man fathers want their daughters to look up to. (Of course, this is also true for their sons, in reverse.) Not only do girls who have not had a close relationship with a father potentially have great difficulty in marriage, they also struggle with being comfortable in relationships with—and even being in the presence of—all men throughout the course of their lives.

Recall that Paul's instruction to fathers had to do with their "children," not just their *sons*. It is absolutely paramount that fathers not be harsh, mean, overly sharp or abusive to daughters. Fathers must never forget that daughters are more delicate and usually somewhat more tenderhearted than boys. Few things are more painful to observe than a huge man roaring or railing at a little, fragile girl who has made a simple, innocent mistake. Be sure that you never name-call or over-react with your daughter. While it is not always visible, the result can be devastating. A warm father-daughter relationship has been demonstrated to produce the qualities of achievement, creativity and independence in adult women.

Also, showing the right kind of fatherly affection with girls when growing up will not only teach your daughter to be affectionate, it will make her much more likely to wait until marriage to display affection, and this includes intimate affection, only proper *within* marriage. Girls who do not feel affection and tenderness from fathers are almost invariably driven to seek it too early and outside marriage. And there will be no shortage of boys who are only too willing to satisfy your daughter's unfulfilled "need."

Remember, fathers, just as you hold a very special place in your heart for your little girl, she holds an equally special place in her heart for her dad. Strive to never shatter, betray, neglect or disappoint your little girl's view of the most important man in the first third of her life—you!

Mothers and Daughters

Although applied in somewhat different ways, as with fathers and their sons, mothers and daughters also have a unique relationship.

Your daughter will learn more about TRUE WOMANHOOD—about how to be a good wife and a good mother—from you than from any-

one else in her life. Paul wrote to Titus that the older women should “teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands...” (2:4-5).

Think of this list as all the things that you as a mother should be teaching your daughters. After all, they are the ones who will be teaching your granddaughters, and you will be amazed later at how you may hear your voice coming from your grown daughters.

Mothers, teach your daughters all the aspects of *true* femininity, a quality now almost entirely lost today. Paul’s instruction speaks more to this than meets the eye. Many women today are “mannish” to the point of being outright masculine. This is often because they value a career *outside* the home in which they must compete and strive to succeed in what has generally been called “a man’s world,” instead of being content to obey God in the career *He* has given them as a “keeper at home.” If you are working outside the home, and ignoring Paul’s instruction, you are setting your daughter up to want to do the same. (It is interesting that large numbers of mothers have been returning home from the work-a-day world to be “stay-at-home” moms once again. It has been estimated that 85 percent of all mothers are now back in the home, either full or part-time, with husbands again bringing home most of the income.)

Be sure to take a very keen interest in your daughter’s activities, and this includes involving her in all the elements of homemaking that so many women today seem to shun—cooking, sewing, decorating, house cleaning and so much more. Be sure your daughter understands that these things are important—and that the world around her no longer values them, because it is confused, misguided and cut off from God. She must know and understand *why* she is different.

Mothers and Sons

Every mother understands the extraordinary relationship she has with her sons, beginning from the moment they are born. Similarly—and both sides of this relationship directly parallel fathers and daughters—sons usually retain a very special soft spot in their heart for their mother throughout life, and this even continues after their mother’s death.

Mothers, recognize that you have a great deal to teach your sons about how to select a mate. (Take time to read Proverbs 31, and notice who wrote it.) Like daughters marrying men similar to their fathers, sons often unconsciously look for women similar to their mothers. Be sure that what your son is looking for is a reflection of a *wonderful*

example to him, instead of for something less, because *you* have been something less.

Sons are often so devoted to their mothers that they try to remake their wives into a clone of her. Mothers, be sure to teach your son to love and appreciate the woman he marries for what she is, not for what he expects her to be, after he “remakes” her. Teach him the most important qualities that he should be looking for in the woman who will become the mother of his children. (Of course, this works in the same way with fathers and daughters.)

Grandparents and Extended Family

Extended families of the past were usually much larger than those of today. Yet, they were much less complicated, because divorce was much less frequent. This meant that children generally had two parents and four grandparents, with no half-brothers or half-sisters and no step-siblings, and with most of the other extended family members living in close proximity.

This meant that nieces, nephews, aunts, uncles and cousins were once almost routinely involved in a child's developing years. While it will take some effort, it is worth the time to nurture your children's relationships with aunts, uncles, cousins and as many other members of your extended family as possible. This will enrich your children—as well as the extended family members!—in a host of ways.

Apart from parents, your children's grandparents—the patriarch and matriarch of the entire family—should stand as the centerpieces of the extended family. While this ideal may be more difficult to attain than in generations past, it is crucial that you try as hard as possible to continually expose your children to your own parents.

Grandparents are a veritable treasure trove—a gold mine—of experience, and they are a living link to the family's past. They are generally filled with stories about ancestors and important world events of the past, which children may only read about, but which *they* have experienced. Grandfatherly and grandmotherly *listening*, followed by *advice*, is often a treasure that a child will carry with him for the rest of his life.

Grandparents are also often able to teach hobbies and crafts from the past that are being lost today to a whole generation of young people who know nothing of them. I remember looking forward with anticipation and excitement to the fun I would experience with all my grandparents.

There is another unseen side to the importance of your children having a strong relationship with grandparents. Solomon wrote,

“Children’s children are the CROWN of old men” (Prov. 17:6). It is vital that grandparents feel loved, appreciated and honored by their grandchildren.

Understand. The Proverbs also instruct grandfathers (or grandmothers) that “A good man leaves an inheritance to his children’s children” (13:22). Would grandparents look forward to fulfilling this obligation if their grandchildren had been neglectful or disrespectful? Of course not. This instruction to *your parents* is based on the assumption that *your children’s* conduct and honor toward them *merits* such inheritance!

As with so many other “old paths” of the past, where respect for the elderly and authority figures was maintained, grandparents are now often only given “a lick and a promise” attention from their grandchildren or are completely pushed aside by them. If you permit your children to do this to *your* parents, then you are not only violating the Fifth Commandment yourself, but are teaching your children to do the same to *you* later, when they give you grandchildren!

Another point: One of my grandfathers was absentee all during my life, with the only time I met him being once at age eight. He had divorced my grandmother long before I was born. She remarried a man who became an absolutely wonderful step-grandfather, a man we always called “Bobbie.” This man was proof that one does not have to be a biological “grandfather” to effectively love and influence children. The message here is to make the best of the circumstances you have without complaining.

One final point is important here: Children who spend a lot of time with their grandparents tend to become comfortable in the presence of *all* older people. So few young people today have any time for the elderly, who are now more often merely the objects of derision and disrespectful name-calling. Properly teaching your children to respect their grandparents carries the wonderful side-benefit of making them comfortable in the presence of those who present a vast “Fort Knox” wealth of experience to draw upon—for those wise enough to “enter the vault” on a regular basis.

Require Siblings to Get Along

One of the greatest frustrations of parents is that their children continually fight—and over almost every kind of issue and possession. What is often referred to as “sibling rivalry” is nothing more than raw human nature—vanity, jealousy, lust and greed—allowed to remain unchecked in your children. This pattern usually begins at a very early age, and has to be addressed when it first appears. Many parents are

worn out by the constant fighting, bickering and yelling between children in the household. Tragically, most parents have no idea what to do about it, let alone what causes it.

Teach your children from the very earliest age the importance of getting along with brothers and sisters. This naturally begins with the firstborn, who may see a little brother or sister as competition sent to take away part of his world—including toys, other possessions and attention from parents who once had more time for *him*.

Explaining that the greatest happiness comes from *sharing*—from GIVING to others—is teaching your children one of the most important principles they will learn throughout their lives. Human nature is selfish, greedy and grasping, and is only interested in receiving, not giving—unless you *train* this out of your children's thinking. Your children must know that if they do not share, things will be taken away from them so they (at least temporarily) do not have to worry about sharing. If this does not work, isolate your child for a time, reminding him or her that it is critical that one be able to get along with others in *every* circumstance, and that sharing can also mean going without (through giving) if someone else is in need.

Another part of this principle is teaching your children to be considerate of other people. Christianity is practicing the “give” way of life instead of the “get” way. Actively teach your children to consider the needs and feelings of others. This practice starts with brothers and sisters, but extends to all the other people they will come in contact with. Be sure your children have heard this principle repeated so often that it becomes virtually second nature to them.

Explain How to Choose Friends

The previous point introduces an important and related topic, that of how your children choose friends and associates. Again, since “evil companions corrupt good conduct”—and some translations substitute “conduct” or “behavior” for “*manners*” in Paul's explanation—the wrong choice of friends, or even casual acquaintances, can ultimately destroy your children's character. This can potentially ruin their reputation, and possibly lead them into actions that could send their life down the drain.

Notice the overall principle contained in this Proverb: “Make no friendship with an angry man; and with a furious man you shall not go: lest you learn his ways, and get a snare to your soul” (22:24-25).

Consider all that this exhortation from Solomon—but actually directly from the mind of God—means to your children. It has been

said, “Put a good boy with a bad boy and you will wind up with two bad boys every time!” This may be more true in this generation than in any previous age, simply because the young people surrounding your children today exert every conceivable kind of wrong influence on them.

Now consider the following point in light of all that you have read thus far: It has probably become painfully apparent to you that there are far fewer children and teenagers today who would be able to be appropriate friends to a young person who is striving to obey and represent God—and, of course, this should be *your* child! But you must teach your children to accept this reality, which this world forces upon them.

Have no doubt that your children’s friends will influence them, and will potentially *change* them. Although there can be wonderful exceptions to this rule, today it is usually not for the better. You must be actively involved—and very diligent in monitoring—your children’s selection of companions. And recognize that who your children want to be around may be a statement about what is *already* occurring under the surface of their character of which you may not be aware. By the time you discover what is happening, your children could be further down the road of wrong conduct and wrong companions than you think, and much more difficult, or even impossible, to guide back to right thinking. I have seen many situations in which a parent’s battle to protect his or her child had been lost before the parent even knew that a shot had been fired.

Finally, recognize that your child could also suddenly become attracted to a friend of the opposite sex and could quickly fast-forward to a decision to want to marry this person (at a later date)—and you were unaware that anything was happening. When the dangers of fornication and religious differences are factored in, this is a recipe for disaster. If this occurs, absolutely require your child to end the relationship *immediately!*

Teach your children to look for friends who exhibit as many as possible of the kinds of things that you are teaching them. Of course, they must understand that no human being is perfect, and that little flaws must be overlooked and forgiven. Be sure, however, that you personally meet their friends, and that these friends spend a certain amount of time *in your home*.

Constantly be aware of who your children are spending time with. Too much is at stake to do less. This means actively teaching them *how* to select friends, including what can be at stake if they make the *wrong* decision(s).

In conclusion, the best guidance you can give your children in selecting friends is to teach them to look for people demonstrating the kinds of qualities described in this book's earlier chapters.

Explain How to Deal with Difficult People

Life sometimes involves interacting with difficult people. Inevitably, everyone will have to deal with such individuals. This can be complicated when those individuals are in positions of authority. Your children must be equipped to handle these situations.

For instance, explain to your children how to deal with people who lose their temper. Make them aware of passages such as the following: "A soft answer *turns away* wrath: but grievous words stir up anger" (Prov. 15:1), and that "by long forbearing is a prince persuaded, and a soft tongue breaks the *bone*" (25:15). The meaning here is that bones are the hardest part of the body, and that patient, calm, measured responses ultimately lead to the best results in diffusing even the hardest mindsets.

Your children will encounter a great many rude, angry, impatient and even hostile people over the course of a lifetime. Some will be absolutely belligerent and almost impossible to deal with. And these will often appear at times when it is least expected. Everyone can deal with people who are pleasant, courteous, thoughtful and patient. These are never the people who test our character and attitude. The test comes when facing *wrong* attitudes in people. Your children must know what to do, and this means you must teach them.

Try to constantly emphasize the value of being diplomatic in moments of tension, friction and difficulty. Help your children to understand and practice Christ's words: "Blessed are the peacemakers..." (Matt. 5:9). There are ways to defuse tension and alleviate difficulty. Teach your children to listen and not react suddenly, to use kindness, to apologize when necessary, to share, to not be defensive, among others. These are skills of diplomatic human relations that you can and must instill in them.

Most children today are tactless—and, if you are not careful, *your* children will grow up to be the very people that you are training them to deal with. Your children will naturally absorb the conduct and tendencies of these children of the modern society. Careful training, coupled with presenting a good example of public relations for your child to copy, will instill the ability to be diplomatic in all but the most impossible circumstances.

Now for some important final instruction about the BIG PICTURE.

The Big Picture

Malachi 4 describes a prophecy that God would raise up a unique man to fulfill an extraordinary office. Notice: “Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD: and he shall *turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers*, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse [Hebrew: “utter destruction”]” (vs. 5-6).

This man is also mentioned by Jesus in the New Testament and described as one who would “come, and restore all things” (Matt. 17:11) to the Church of God.

God will keep His promise to send a special servant to fulfill this prophecy at the end of the age. He will use one man to teach a host of true doctrines of the Bible that have become lost through the ages even to His Church. Among these teachings, in fulfillment of Malachi’s prophecy, he will explain to God’s people how to rebuild the family unit—and this applies to all others who would hear this instruction.

This man will be led by God to establish and oversee what will become an immense globe-girdling Work teaching Christ’s doctrines as received by the original apostles directly from Him. *Train Your Children God’s Way* is an early look at the principles this man will teach.

Tools Provided for You

While this book is the starting point to properly training your children, it is by no means all you will need in the years that lie ahead. As your

children pass through different stages of their development, you will need additional aid in thoroughly teaching them God's Way. You will find that we have tools designed for children of all ages—from tiny children through the age beginning adulthood.

To this end, The Restored Church of God has produced an enormous number of tools specifically designed to help you in your quest to be informed parents producing happy, successful children. Here is a brief summary of all that is available to you, with more continually on the way.

Books and Booklets

First, we have several booklets that will help you with your marriage (and they can be used to help you teach your children about marriage), which in turn strengthens your childrearing. These are *You Can Build a Happy Marriage* and *The Purpose of Marriage – Ever Obsolete?* One additional booklet, *Understanding Divorce and Remarriage*, will be helpful for those who may be struggling as single parents, and who also may be wondering about *God's* view of this subject.

In addition, we have two other larger books, *Sex – Its Unknown Dimension* and *Dating and Courtship – God's Way*, that will be particularly helpful to you as your children get older and need more specific instruction in these areas. The first book will not only be important in teaching your children, but also in your own marriage. Referenced earlier in Chapter Five, the second book is also filled with absolutely vital information and principles that will be most important in guiding your children through the teen years on their way to the age of marriage.

Our book *The Ten Commandments – “Nailed to the Cross” or Required for Salvation?* is also most important in educating your children to the wonderful wisdom and genius of God, reflected in how He created these basic but marvelous spiritual laws for our—and YOUR CHILDREN'S—protection!

Related Literature

We also offer scores of helpful *articles* and literature on a host of topics, several of them related to *Train Your Children God's Way*.

One of these articles, which would be helpful in educating your children to another harmful habit, is “The Truth About Smoking.” While this book has not addressed this problem directly, you should at least understand that smoking has once again become a growing problem among millions of young people today.

Another article that is vital in the process of teaching children the difference between fully enjoying various of life's pleasures in balance and falling into worldliness is "Worldliness – What Is It?" Then you should consider studying our equally vital article, "*You Can Live the Abundant Life!*" This will assist you in helping your children understand that Christianity is not the negative religion of "Thou shalt nots" that so many have come to believe it is. This article will in turn lead you to our extraordinary book, *Tomorrow's Wonderful World – An Inside View!* And this book will especially help you to inspire your children to look ahead to being part of a future beyond their wildest dreams.

As your children reach adulthood, approaching the time that they will want to consider baptism and conversion, our article "Are You Being Called?" will be most important for them to study. You may wish to study it to inform yourself in advance of this process that your children will undergo if you have properly fulfilled your duty.

A Special Magazine

We also have a marvelous magazine, *Ambassador Youth*, produced exclusively for teenagers. This wonderful, bi-monthly publication is loaded with clear, strong articles covering a host of important topics relevant to teenagers, as well as many other helpful tips and other information, including a regular Bible Study section geared to teens. (All previous issues can be found on the part of our website under the name *Ambassador Youth*.) This magazine is simply the best of its kind in the world, and every teenager should read every issue!

Bible Lessons

We also have seven levels of *The Children's Bible Lessons* for pre-teens, children in kindergarten through sixth grade. You will find that this is far and away the best course of its kind in the world—and it teaches the truths of the Bible instead of the traditions of men taught in the Sunday School classes of this world's denominations. In addition, we produce *Children's Coloring Books* in the seasons of God's annual Spring and Fall Holy Days for young children.

The Story of the Bible Series

We have also produced an entire series of longer, beautifully illustrated volumes, *The Story of the Bible*, that are wonderful teaching tools for

parents reading to younger children, or for elementary school children and teenagers who wish to read them on their own.

These volumes (seven) are written in a way that is interesting to everyone, including small children through adulthood. Many thousands of adults also enjoy them on a regular basis.

World's Largest Religious Websites

All of these marvelous—and FREE—publications can be found on our websites, and many of them are sent automatically to all members of The Restored Church of God. We hope that all fathers and mothers will take the time to explore and familiarize themselves with this vast array of most helpful material. You will be glad you did—and so will your children!

As you may already be aware, The Restored Church of God has the largest religious websites—of *any* religion—in the world today. There are other related and very important and helpful materials that can be found on them. I encourage you to take some time to peruse all the areas of these sites so you can grasp all that is available to you in your determination to become successful parents.

What Will You Do?

Consider for a moment this analogy. No one would ever think of putting someone who is anything less than highly trained in front of a ticking bomb in the hope that he could defuse it. That person would have to be taught, and properly educated to understand how to avoid a potentially life-threatening situation. Think! This world has put a generation of parents in front of a ticking bomb—their children, and the generation surrounding them—with no proper training and no education, and thus with *no hope* of defusing the bomb. But you are different. You *have* now been taught not only how to diffuse the bomb, but also how to transform it (your children) into something beautiful and productive.

Knowledge is of absolutely no VALUE unless it is put to use. You have been given truly vital knowledge, available nowhere else. But you must now take it off the pages of this book (and the other publications recommended) and PUT IT INTO PRACTICE!

Let me reiterate what you read at the beginning of the book. God has given you a tremendously important stewardship: to rear innocent little children—born as so many blank sheets of paper waiting for you to “write” upon—into mature, God-fearing, successful adults. This will not happen overnight.

Your children are not machines—they are not robots. They cannot be programmed to do exactly what you want, when you want. They are free moral agents. In the end, after all your efforts are complete, *they* will make the final decision of whether to walk in the path you lay out for them or not, whether they will obey God or not. Your job is to best *prepare* them to make the RIGHT DECISION!

It will take much patience, perseverance and wisdom to complete your children's coursework. It will also take much faith to apply God's childrearing principles on a consistent basis. But if you stay the course and refuse to give up, God's Way will yield amazing results. This means using and reviewing this book and the other tools described earlier as textbooks, directly assisting your children's coursework enroute to graduation into adulthood.

If God has called you out of this world (John 6:44; Rev. 18:4), then He has sanctified—set apart—your children for a purpose: So that He can one day call them into His truth. Notice: “For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else were your children unclean; *but now are they holy*” (I Cor. 7:14).

This means that your children have been set apart by God—that they are “holy”—just as you are, *if* you are faithfully serving and obeying God.

Further, if God is calling you, you are being judged *now*—“judgment must begin at the house of God” (I Pet. 4:17). Part of that judgment involves how well you manage each of your stewardships, including the most important one—rearing your children. I repeat a final time for emphasis: Your goal is to rear responsible, happy children whom God can one day convert into the Body of Christ, the Church of God—and later bring into His own divine Family.

Will you make the task easy for Him? Or will you make it difficult?

The Greatest Leaders

Before entering any major endeavor, prudent people want to know what is at stake. They want to know what it *means* if they succeed or what it *means* if they fail in their effort. In other words, what are the CONSEQUENCES—either way?

Consider! Invariably, the most successful people, the most effective role models for others, the wisest parents, the best husbands and wives, and THE GREATEST LEADERS, were all exposed to *great teachers* who taught them in their formative years.

Not everyone can be a leader now, in this life, but everyone should be striving to qualify for future leadership—FUTURE RULERSHIP. Without strong leadership from you as parents—which is centered in your ability to be effective teachers—your children have little chance to be anything but *followers*, and probably poor ones at that if you have not done your part *at all*.

When properly understood, your children are actually also in training from an early age to become future members of the coming, world-ruling Kingdom or Family of God, soon to appear as a SUPER-GOVERNMENT led by Jesus Christ, ruling with all the saints of past ages over the cities throughout the nations of Earth. Christ has been carefully preparing His team of co-rulers for 6,000 years, beginning with what was offered to Adam and Eve. If God has called you, you already know that *you* are in training for this rulership. But so are your children—NOW!

As parents, you possess immense power. You have the authority—now coupled with a tremendous amount of REVEALED SPIRITUAL KNOWLEDGE—to give your children the maximum opportunity to discover their strengths, to achieve right goals, to learn about the true God and to build *His* righteous character, to develop their extraordinary HUMAN POTENTIAL, and to lead lives filled with success, productivity, and service to others, which will lead to the SUPREME HAPPINESS and JOY that all long for.

You are urged a final time to seek God and ask Him for the crucial wisdom and constant guidance that you need. Then go fulfill your potential as parents by helping your children fulfill theirs—to become future SONS OF GOD.

They are counting on you!

Other Books by David C. Pack

- The Awesome Potential of Man
- Tomorrow's Wonderful World – An Inside View!
- Saturday or Sunday – Which Is the Sabbath?
- America and Britain in Prophecy
- The True Jesus Christ – Unknown to Christianity
- Where Is the True Church? – and Its Incredible History!
- Dating and Courtship – God's Way
- The Trinity – Is God Three-In-One?
- The Bible's Difficult Scriptures Explained!
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