

**Bible Study on The Christian Home – Handout 6
Developing a Christian Home Environment**

Grace Bible Chapel

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

What is the responsibility of parents to their children?... continued...

The majority of families in our society, even those with a mother and father, have their children being trained by day care centers, and public school systems. When the children are at home, they are being trained by the television, and the internet. The majority of the children’s interactions are not with their parents, but with their peers because they have cell devices, telephones, and computers. In other words, the education process is immersed in the attitudes, tones, expressions, ideas, and values of the society and the children’s immersion in these influences are the basis of their education. In most cases, the parents themselves are part of the same attitude, and therefore consider their responsibility merely to make sure their children have the same opportunities that all the other kids have. Merely providing a comfortable home, a place to go to school, and the latest electronics to keep from disadvantage with the rest of their peers, may be the current American dream, but is not providing what children really require.

This mindset does not recognize the condition of the sinful heart of every child, the decadence of society, and the clear commands of God to rear the children in the instruction of the Lord. A child being reared in such a manner in our society is truly a child being reared in a generation that does not know their own self, nor the God who made them. For any discerning parent interested in the truth of God, they must recognize this is not obedience to God, nor is it love to the children, but a sure formula for disaster.

- The training of Children.
 - The key to having children that are a blessing is found in their training (Prov 22:6). There has been much discussion about what this verse means when it states **“in the way he should go.”** Some say this refers to his own individual makeup (bent or personality), and others applying appropriate training for his age. Both of these are true, even in depravity each child has a personality, but ultimately under the general theme **“the way he should go”** is training in the ways of truth – God’s ways. That is what the Bible is about. This verse is a statement of fact, or cause and effect. If you train your child in the ways of God, when he is old he will continue in those ways. It does not guarantee salvation. It does place them in the sphere of truth where salvation is found, and provides proper training that will have a lasting effect on the kind of person they will become.
 - The most complete and detailed passage in the Bible concerning the responsibility of parents to train their children is found in Deuteronomy 6. This was God’s command for His people Israel, and the principles have not changed. This describes from an instructional setting what is required to combat the child’s proclivity to darkness, and natural disregard for anything righteous.
 - The first thing we see it is commanded (Deut 6:1). It is not an option. A failure to follow this command has grave and terrible consequences, and is in direct disobedience to God.
 - Secondly, we see the development of **“fear”** in relation to God (Deut 6:2). This fear issues forth in obedience **“keep His statutes and commandments.”** “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom” (Prov 9:10), which means it is the essential for starting out on the proper pathway of life. The word **“fear”** has “awesome” at its root, and means that God should be so large to the person that He cannot be neglected. It is the idea of a reverence that effects life’s decisions.
 - Thirdly, we see a promise in this second verse (Deut 6:2) **“that your days may be prolonged”** and continued well-being (Deut 6:3). This is teaching as God is in control, the very lifespan of our little one is in His power, and is determined in accordance with our obedience to Him in training our child. This promise also coincides with the fifth commandment **“honor your father and mother that your days may be prolonged in the land which the Lord your God gives you”** (Ex 20:12).

- Fourthly, we see **“the Lord is one”** (Deut 6:4). This is not referring to the Trinity. It is referring to Jehovah God is the only true God. He is the one and only God to follow and obey. This is further clarified in the statement of Deut 6:5 **“you shall love the Lord with all your heart.”** The idea is that you shall put Him first. You will listen and obey God above everything else. For the parent today the same is true. All divergent messages from any other source that contradict what God says must be disregarded. To truly love the Lord, includes listening to Him, and by faith and love put into practice obeying Him completely.
- Fifthly, we see that His commands **“shall be on our heart”** (Deut 6:6). That is they should be so important to us, that we bear them inside of us where we make decisions. His commands should influence every choice we make. At every fork in the road, we take His way.
- Sixthly, we now move to the commission of training our children according to this foundation. He says **“you shall teach them diligently to your sons”** (Deut 6:7). The Word of God uses sons as a metaphor for all children, daughters as well. This diligence of teaching is elaborated in great detail in verses 7 through 9. It means this is not casual teaching, occasional teaching, or sketchy teaching, but all the time, in every manner conceivable, thoroughly, completely, continuously, and always in a real life context because he describes as you are going about daily business. The children’s education must be applied practically to all of life.
- Seventhly, He warns about being influenced by prosperity and other gods (Deut 6:10-19) so that we forget the diligence that He has commanded. This is a great distracter in our society. People are so busy trying to keep up a high standard that it takes precedence over all other priorities – the children are often neglected. These things can become the other gods, and the children though they have material blessings, actually suffer in the greater priority of spirituality.
- Eighthly, He commands to give your children thorough explanations of who God is and what God has done (Deut 6:20-25). This explanation has with it a complete focus on God as the deliverer, and worthy recipient of all worship. Honor, in other words, belongs rightfully to Him alone. This all relates to building the mindset of the children to reverence God in their lives.
- Practically, for us today, we take this general format to the New Testament and the further revelation of God and place the emphasis on Christ and our great salvation. Further, it means we make every opportunity to teach our children about God that we can possibly attain. It means we are diligent to teach at home. We are diligent to place them in an environment of proper education. And, in a church environment where the Word is accurately taught, and Christ is honored.
- It also means practically that our children must view God as important in our lives. There can be no such thing as do as I say, but not as I do. They must know that God is the most important person, and His truth the most important issue to their parents. Parents have the greatest influence, and that is why they must be personally involved with instruction and by example.
- The rearing of children.
 - Rearing takes a little different connotation than training. It broadens what we do with our children. The passage that addresses the broad balance so important in child development is Ephesians 6:4 **“Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.”** This passage is addressed to “Fathers” it also applies to mothers. He addresses it to fathers as the responsible head of the home, and perhaps as the one most often to be over-forceful, but it applies to both parents as it is a principle of God’s wisdom.
 - He begins with the negative **“do not provoke your children to anger”** (Eph 6:4). What this verse does not mean is that you should not discipline. That will be handled on the other side of the scale. What it does mean is that the discipline should be appropriate to the situation. Parents should not show favoritism, be unreasonable, irrational, inconsistent, or in any other manner abuse their children by exasperating demands, discipline, or expectations. Children should not be frustrated, resentful, or embittered because of their parents overreaction, unjust, or bazaar actions to them.
 - In order to not exasperate we must make sure: 1) We should always demonstrate and express our desire for their well-being, and our love to them. They should never feel as though they are resented. 2) The rules and expectations must be fair, and clearly communicated. 3) They must be allowed to make mistakes as long as they are judged innocent mistakes. 4) We should look beyond what they did, to their attitude. If they failed, was it intentional? Our response, depending on attitude, should be seasoned with love and mercy. 5) Parents should create an

atmosphere whereby children will know they can speak to parents without being scolded, ridiculed, or demeaned.

- Parents should deal with their children in the same fashion the Lord deals with us in patience, grace, and love, but never indulging sin, or allowing unbecoming behavior to go unchecked (Heb 12:4-11).
- Parents also provoke their children by not correcting them, not setting boundaries, and not enforcing practical rules. Being negligent takes many forms and is provoking to wrath.
- The remaining portion of the passage “**but, bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord**” (Eph 6:4b) addresses what we might think of as the positive side of the pendulum. Both sides of the equation are difficult, and require faith in God to do what He tells us to do. We have already addressed “**training**” from the standpoint of pointing them to God, and filling their minds with good things, under Deut 6. The discipline and instruction mentioned here falls back against the backdrop of the sinful nature of our children, and the attention they need as sinners.
 - Discipline is necessary because of the sin nature “**a child who gets his own way brings shame to his mother**” (Prov 29:15). Children must be corrected. A child who “**who gets his own way**” is exercising their sinful nature in natural rebellion not only against the parent, but most importantly against God. Nothing could be more cruel to a child than to let them get away with repeated sinful behavior. By doing so the parents are allowing the forces of the child’s sin nature to take greater and greater control of their life. A parent who thinks they are being kind or generous to their child by allowing them to “**get their own way**” may as well be feeding gradual amounts of poison to the child. Such leniency may be well intentioned, but nothing could be more ruinous to the child. Such a child will even shame their mother.
 - The word **discipline** – *paideia* - means a form of education or training that includes correction, chastening, chastisement. This is the same word used in Hebrews 12:5 “**My son do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor faint when you are reprovved by Him.**” This verse alone shows in context the concept of action against the one being disciplined is more than mere words – it is action that is forceful enough that fainting is a possibility. Hebrews 12: 6 states “**for those whom the Lord loves He disciplines and scourges every son.**” The word scourge is a word for being struck with a whip and means to punish severely. This is God setting the perfect example. In the same context of Hebrews 12:11 “**all discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful but sorrowful**” again showing the aggressive and offensive nature of discipline, but at the same time its necessity as God Himself who is perfect in all His actions deems it necessary for sinful man because of love. That necessity must be understood against the backdrop of the problem of man’s sinful nature, and sinful actions that must be dealt with according to their magnitude. Only appropriate remedy will suffice.
 - The word **instruction** – *nouthesia* – means rebuke, warning, or admonition. It is only used 3 times in the New Testament, and is translated “**warning**” in Titus 3:10 and could well be translated “**warning**” in this passage and its other location in 1 Corinthians 10:11. It is obviously more than merely teaching facts or information, but providing instruction with energy and specifics related to wrong actions and wrong decisions.
 - There can be no effective atmosphere for teaching on any subject in a setting where disobedience, chaos and rebellion are present. In order for there to be training in righteousness, there must be a calm, peaceful atmosphere where minds and hearts are prepared to accept data and to think. The parent must be convicted to insist on creating that atmosphere of peace through the means of discipline commanded by God – it is the only manner that will effectively work.
- The method of discipline and (or better stated “with”) instruction (Proverbs 22:15; 29:15).
 - The use of the spanking (rod) is commanded by God. He doesn’t tell us to have our children take time outs, sit in the corner, or go to bed early. The promise is made that it (the rod, Prov 29:15) “**gives wisdom.**” This is God’s chosen method, and fits the situation of the terrible condition of all children born in sin and naturally rebelling against God. In Proverbs 22:15 it is the rod that removes “**foolishness**” (as we saw in the previous study a term for sinful rebellion) “**far from him.**” This is a glorious promise from God. We have been given a method God promises will effectively work to curb the effects of sin. No other method has such a guarantee.
 - As a commandment, spanking is the essential. Anything that seeks to take its place is an act of disobedience by the parent. The issue in child rearing is not the child, but the parent. Parents must believe and obey God. Christ stated, “**if you love Me, you will keep My**

commandments” (John 14:15). All parents are accountable to God. David was a poor parent (see 1st Kings 1:6 neglecting the discipline of his children). His results: Amnon who raped his sister, Absalom who murdered Amnon, and attempted to steal the kingdom, and Adonijah who attempted to usurp the throne. The priest Eli was a poor parent who suffered the early death of both his sons as a result of his disobedience. **“A child who gets his own way (sinful way) brings shame to his mother”** (Prov 29:15). This is a truth from God, and is a sure promise.

- The goal of the Christian parent is far different than that of the secular parent. The Christian parent should be walking in the light. Christians rear their children for God’s glory. They rear their children to know God. This requires the development of an atmosphere already discussed, and crucially important is the enforcement of discipline God’s way that will remove their children’s sin and rebellion far from them (Prov 22:15). The secular parent teaches their children how to manipulate the system, and be politically correct, while their heart is raging with selfishness (Prov 19:3) and continued rebellion against God. It is only by following God’s deliberate method that parents can expect a good end (Prov 22:6).
- Parents must recognize the authority they have comes from God Himself (Eph 6:4). It is His commission. Children are to be reared for His glory. Parents are His representatives with a stewardship over the children He has provided. Such understanding should enforce conviction to help us overcome many harsh pressures. The society frowns on Christian discipline – so will we obey God or men? The child may act as though he hates you – child rearing can never be based on your popularity. Parents must not allow the children to manipulate them. Children are very crafty to know exactly how to play their parents. You can never face child rearing with the attitude of allowing emotions, or selfishness to rule you. The fact is being a parent is often inconvenient. You must trust God and do precisely what He commands. He knows what is best and will protect and honor you (1 Sam 2:30) **“those who honor Me, I will honor.”** Often you will receive no appreciation, and will think you are all alone, but if you are doing what God commands you will be ultimately blessed. Child rearing is walking by faith.
- Discipline must be done proficiently. It must begin early (Proverbs 19:18). The more problems are allowed to go on the harder and more difficult is the correction. Callousness grows from bad habits that begin early – dealing with them soon will make the journey much easier. How does God deal with us His children? In Psalm 32:8-9 we get a clear snapshot. He states **“He counsels with His eye upon us,”** and then says **“don’t be like the horse or mule that have no understanding whose trappings include bit and bridle to keep them in check.”** The idea is to develop children that can be managed with the looking of the eye, rather than restraints. The parent must establish “the point of tolerance for disobedience.” This point must be developed early. This point of tolerance must be kept proficiently, and consistently. If it is not, then soon you will have such a difficult child that it basically requires physically constraining them to control them.
- The parent must learn to recognize disobedience. It is always an act of rebellious will. A child who acts from ignorance or inability should never be punished or reprimanded – that is not disobedience. Lying must be dealt with severely. Temper tantrums must never be allowed to become a standard for getting the way. Deliberate disobedience is a child not responding when the parent says no, or is told to do something. Such behavior must be dealt with immediately and consistently. Threats should never be made. God Himself speaks once, and so should every parent as God’s representative. This requires a lot of discipline from the parent at the beginning, but then if consistently and proficiently done peace reigns later.
- The parent must discipline with passion (Proverbs 23:13; 24). The spanking must be of the degree that sufficient pain is inflicted corresponding to the rebellious action. This should never be abusive, but it must never be merely going through the motion without making a sincere impression on the one being disciplined. In Hebrews 12:6 the word **“scourges”** is used referring to how God disciplines His children. Sin requires serious measures, and if left unchecked the actions will be far worse than any controlled spanking. Spanking must be administered in love, and with explanation – it is **discipline with instruction**. It must never be done in anger, bullying, or unjustly because the parent is frazzled.
- The parent must act using discipline no matter how personally difficult, inconvenient, or pressured. Parents love to rationalize why they do not perform discipline. Keep in mind It is always an act of faith and obedience to God, and an act of love to the child (Proverbs 13:24).