

A Devotional Bible Study



Wise Parenting

Scott Gilchrist

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*Bringing clear, Christ-centered
Bible teaching to the marketplace.*

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“Unless the Lord builds the house,
they labor in vain who build it.”

Psalm 127:1

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Foreword

In our age of relativism and tolerance, it is refreshing to pick up a book on the subject of child rearing that clearly addresses the most important issues of life from a Biblical perspective. Scott's approach to this crucial subject is: "What does the Scripture say?"

With over 20 years of experience as a parent of 5 children himself, Scott gives valuable insight into the way children mature. His teaching is packed with Biblical principles and practical illustrations that will enable you as a parent to know what God's Word says and how to apply it as you raise your children.

This Bible Study is a valuable tool for everyone who is expecting children or has children or grandchildren. My wife and I have personally been encouraged and motivated by Scott's teaching on this subject over the years and continue to see the fruit of the Biblical truths applied in the lives of our own kids.

In our culture today, we need the truth of God's Word as we seek to raise our children for Jesus Christ. Your adventure through this study will equip you for the task He has called you to as a parent.

Tom Aylward
Associate Pastor
Southwest Bible Church

Lesson One



The Adventure of Being a Parent

I will never forget the excitement and joy that my wife, Kristi, and I experienced as we brought our first child, Katie, home from the hospital. We were extremely happy as we packed our little baby into the snug space behind the back seat of our old Volkswagen bug and prepared to drive home on that icy January day.

As we embarked on this new adventure of being parents, we were filled with wonder and awe. It seemed so unreal. I had driven Kristi to the hospital a couple of days earlier as a young married man. Now I was returning home a FATHER! I had never been a father! Kristi had never been a mother. We were completely new to these roles.

In the hospital, there had been doctors and nurses to instruct and guide us through the first couple of days after Katie's birth. Now as we left the safe enclosure of the hospital, we were on our own and we sensed the awesome responsibility that was ours. It seemed like an adventure just to drive home! At home, there were no nurses to tell us when to feed the baby, what to expect, how often to change her diapers, etc. Now *we* were in charge, and we were completely inexperienced.

If you are a parent, I'm sure you can relate to how we felt as we embarked on this new adventure. Even with months of anticipation and preparation, when we become parents there is a moment in time when we are suddenly struck with the significance of the event. We instinctively know that a life has begun which is eternal, and this realization causes us to reflect on the important issues in life.

God designed the family in such a way that we parents have a significant influence on our children. In fact, as parents and even grandparents, our impact goes far beyond one generation. It is clear in Scripture that God wants parents to "tell to the generations to come the praises of the Lord, and His

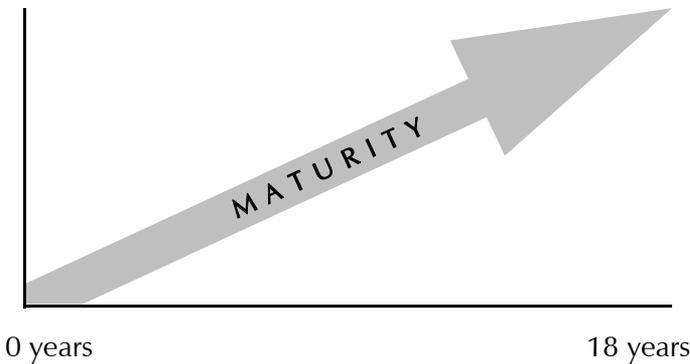
strength and His wondrous works that He has done.” (Psalm 78:4) It is right for us to sense the awesome privilege and responsibility it is to be parents.

God has entrusted our children to us. The Bible tells us they are a gift from the Lord. With this gift comes an awesome responsibility before God—to raise them in such a way that they come to know Him as their Savior and love Him wholeheartedly. Loving God means fearing and obeying Him and living wisely, according to His Word. It means growing into maturity in Christ, being able to discern right from wrong and choosing to do what is right.

A new baby **is** a wonder! We marvel at the tiny, helpless miracle of life. And as the days go by, we study that little person and enjoy every little grimace and gurgle. We eagerly anticipate each step of development—each added pound, the first smile, lifting that little head, rolling over—and we are so overjoyed and proud of each little accomplishment. In fact, we are right there coaxing them along, aren’t we? We talk to them, play with them, and coach them as they learn to crawl or take their first step. We are intensely involved in their normal growth and in fact would be concerned if the normal signs of growth did not happen.

Just as we are concerned for the normal physical growth of our children, we should be concerned and involved in their proper growth in other areas as well. They are to be growing toward maturity in every way, not just physically. As a child grows in years and physical stature, he should be growing in his ability to act responsibly and make good decisions—to live wisely. By the time he has reached adulthood physically, he should be able to function successfully as an adult. It is sad and troubling when children grow physically to the age of adulthood but are still immature, making foolish choices and acting irresponsibly.

In talking with parents over the years I have frequently used the diagram below to illustrate the concept of maturity. We often think of the physical growth of a child as a continuum from birth to adulthood and we can think of other aspects of a child's growth in this way as well.



As this graph illustrates, maturity happens little by little, one step at a time. When we plot a child's proper growth toward maturity, it is obvious that a 6-year-old will be more mature than a 3-year-old, but he won't have the maturity to make the kinds of decisions required of a 12-year-old or a 15-year-old. We should begin to work toward the goal of maturity with our children as soon as they are born and our goal should be to bring them to maturity as soon as possible!

In this Bible study, we'll be taking a look at what God has to say to parents. We will examine what the Scriptures say to us on this crucial subject of raising our children. Let me encourage you to devote serious time and thought to this study and make it a high priority. Fulfilling our God-given obligations and responsibilities with the children He has entrusted to us is far too important to be treated lightly!

Day One

Read Psalm 127. What important truths do you see about children?

In these Scriptures what principle do you see about how God wants His truth transmitted?

- Psalm 71:17-18
- Psalm 78:1-7
- Psalm 145:4
- Proverbs 4:1-4
- Deuteronomy 4:9
- Deuteronomy 11:19
- Joel 1:1-3

Day Two

In thinking about the privilege and responsibility of having children and your goals for your children, compare and contrast the descriptions in these parallel Scriptures.

Psalm 1 and Jeremiah 17:5-8

Blessed man

*Psalm 1:1 does not walk in
the counsel of the wicked*

Evil (cursed) man

Day Three

Read Proverbs 3. Make a list of all the benefits of wisdom in these verses.

Example:

v. 2 add days and years of life; add peace

Day Four

David, as he neared the end of his reign, gave a charge to his son, Solomon. What do you learn regarding David's desire for his son from this charge in I Chronicles 22:11-13 and 19? Also see I Chronicles 28:9.

How does David's prayer for his son, Solomon, further reflect the desire of his heart for Solomon? I Chronicles 29:19

Day Five

The New Testament writers, inspired by the Holy Spirit, reveal their heart for their “children in the faith.” Read these verses and record what the writer desires for his spiritual children. How would this apply to your children?

- Romans 16:19
- I Cor. 14:20
- Galatians 4:19
- Ephesians 1:17-19
- Ephesians 3:14-19
- Ephesians 4:13-15
- Philippians 1:9-11
- Colossians 1:28, 29
- I Timothy 1:5
- II Timothy 3:15

- Hebrews 5:14
- II John 4, III John 3, 4



Things to think about:

Has your thinking regarding parenting changed in any way as you have studied God's Word this week? If so, how?

Have your goals for your children or for yourself as a parent changed in any way? If so, how?

As you think about these things, why not stop right now and thank the Lord for your children, each by name? Praise Him for His goodness to you and for entrusting each of these children to you.

If you are not yet a parent, thank Him that He is the sovereign God of all of creation and the giver of life. Ask Him how you can apply the truths you are learning about parenting in your life today and, should He bless you with children, in raising your children.

Lesson Two



*Knowing the Way:
The Bible Speaks
to Parents*

The awesome privilege and responsibility of parenting should cause us to come before God, the creator and author of life, in awe and worship. We should humbly turn to His Word for instruction and guidance.

In this chapter we are going to look at **five truths** from God's Word that are foundational in our understanding of our task as parents.

I Although children are created in God's image, they are born with a sin nature. In the opening chapters of the Bible we learn that Adam and Eve were created by a wise and holy God in His own image. Being created "in the image of God" means that man was created as a spiritual, rational being, with an eternal soul and a nature that was perfect. In other words, he was a true reflection of God's holy character.

But Adam and Eve sinned by disobeying God and sin entered the world. Ever since then all children are children of Adam, born into Adam's race, and therefore are sinners. The Bible tells us all children have foolishness bound up in their hearts. (Proverbs 22:15)

Don't misunderstand this. The Bible is not saying that children aren't intelligent. I often remind parents that their children are very smart, but they are not *wise*. In fact, they are foolish! They have an amazing capacity to learn, but wisdom is far from them.

This truth about the nature of our children has far-reaching implications for us as parents. How we fulfill our responsibility as parents really matters, because a child has a soul. He is an eternal being. You may choose to "spoil" your pet and there are no eternal consequences. But it is a very grave and serious thing if you "blow it" with your child. In fact, Christ issued a solemn warning to anyone who would cause a little one to stumble. (Matthew 18:6; Mark 9:42; Luke 17:2)

Because a child is born as a sinner, sinning comes naturally. We don't have to teach a child how to sin—he will be selfish and disobedient on his own. Therefore he needs to be *taught* what is right and wrong and *trained* to do what is right. Knowing this very important truth from God's Word, we should not be surprised when our children misbehave. We should see it for what it is—sin—and not rationalize or make excuses.

2 We learn from Scripture that God loves our children even more than we do and wants the best for them. He created them for Himself and He gave His Son to die for them.

This, too, has far-reaching implications. God wants us to raise our children in such a way that they will come to know His salvation and live in obedience to Him. He wants them to love Him with all their heart, soul, mind and strength.

3 It is also clear from Scripture that God places the responsibility for our children squarely on us parents from their earliest days and on. This is not a responsibility we can delegate to the church or school or society. Our children are really not ours—they are a trust from God. And we parents are responsible before God for being careful stewards of what He has entrusted to our care.

4 God has given specific instructions to parents in His Word. The Bible speaks with clarity and authority to us parents and we should examine it, obey it, cling to it and reject everything that is contrary to it. We need to obey what God says rather than psychologists, parenting magazines, surveys, so-called “experts” or even family members who may not submit to the authority of Scripture. God is the expert and He has given us exactly what we need to know in His Word.

5 If we follow God's instructions, we can pray for and expect our children to come to know Jesus Christ as their Savior. We can expect them to grow into mature adults who love and obey God and live wisely, according to His Word.

Knowing these five foundational truths from God's Word, we can approach our responsibility as parents with confidence. When we know God's Word and obey it, we are doing the very best thing of all for our children, for now and for eternity.

Day One

God's Word tells us that man is uniquely created by God in His image. How is this truth expressed in each of these Scriptures? Think about the implication of this truth in regard to your children.

Genesis 1:26-31, 5:1, Psalm 8

Psalm 139:13-16

Even though every person is created in the image of God, ever since Adam sinned (Genesis 3), man has not been reflecting the glory of God. How do these verses describe the condition of every human being **at birth**?

- Job 25:4
- Psalm 51:5
- Psalm 58:3
- Proverbs 22:15
- Jeremiah 4:22
- Romans 5:12-19

What implications do these truths have for you as a parent?

Day Two

What do these verses tell you about the extent of God's love for your children?

- John 3:16
- John 10:10,11
- John 10:15
- Romans 5:6-8
- Romans 8:32
- I John 4:9,10

How does knowing the extent of God's love for your children impact your parenting?

Day Three

God has entrusted children to *parents*. What do these Scriptures tell us about God's intention for us in our role as parents?

- Deuteronomy 4:9
- Deuteronomy 6:4-9
- Deuteronomy 6:20-24
- Deuteronomy 11:18-21
- Joshua 4:6-7; 21-24

What are parents, specifically fathers, commanded to do in Ephesians 6:4?

In James 2:21, Abraham is called "our father" because he was the father of the Jewish nation—he is a prototype of a father. What is the commandment given to Abraham in Genesis 18:19 regarding his family?

From your study today, has your view of your responsibility as a parent changed? In what way?

Day Four

What do each of these Scriptures say about God's Word, the Bible? How do these traits make God's Word the ideal instruction book for parents?

- Psalm 119:24
- Psalm 119:38
- Psalm 119:86
- Psalm 119: 89,160
- Psalm 119:93
- Psalm 119:98-99
- Psalm 119:130
- Psalm 119:114
- Psalm 119:138, 144, 172
- Psalm 119:140

- Psalm 119:142, 160
- Psalm 119:151
- Psalm 119:165
- Romans 15:4
- II Timothy 3:16, 17

Read Genesis 3. On what issue did Satan tempt Eve? What tactic did he use?

How could Satan use this argument with you regarding what God's Word says about raising your children?

Day Five

Make a list of all the sources of input in your life regarding the upbringing of your children. Think about the influences of family, your education, the culture, the media and others. Be specific!



Things to think about:

As you continue to study the Bible, evaluate these other sources of input that you have just listed:

- Do they reinforce or contradict the principles of Scripture?
- Do they encourage you in following God's Word or confuse you as you determine to obey God's Word?
- Have they produced children who love and obey God and live wisely according to His Word?

When we are faced with conflicting input about raising children, we can go directly to His Word for His perspective. Stop right now and thank God for His desire and willingness to supply you with His wisdom through His Word. Ask God to help you learn to use His Word to evaluate and filter the input! Ask Him to give you His wisdom. (James 1:5)

Lesson Three



The Way of Love

In the last chapter, we looked at five foundational truths from God's Word. In this chapter, we are going to look at some of the specific instructions God has given us in His Word about raising our children. It is crucial that we carefully examine and obey what God has said in His Word.

And here is the truth of it: most of what Scripture has to say about parents and children is not about providing for their physical needs, or their education, or their socialization, or increasing their self-esteem. Rather, the predominate theme throughout the Scripture, both in the Old Testament and the New Testament, is *discipline*. Obeying God's Word in disciplining our children is the key to bringing children to maturity and wisdom.

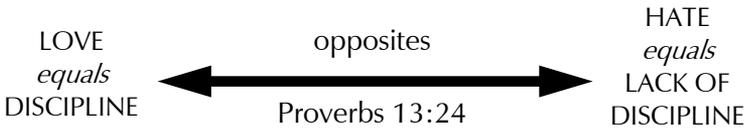
Biblical discipline is *training to correct and mold our children*. To discipline them is to enforce obedience and teach them how to conduct themselves and behave. In obedience to God's Word, we are to train and correct and mold them, to remove foolishness from them and to teach them to live in righteousness.

But first we must have a clear understanding of Biblical discipline and how it is related to our love for our children. Many Christian parents fail to discipline their children due to wrong thinking in this matter. I believe this faulty thinking is rooted in a misunderstanding of God's love.

Scripture tells us that God loves us unconditionally and gave His Son for us and that there is nothing that we can do to merit His gracious love. Some well-meaning Christians wrongly assume that because God loves us unconditionally, He doesn't care how we live. They carry this thinking over to their parenting responsibilities, believing that it is the "loving thing" to let their children do whatever they please. In the name of Christian love and patience, they do not correct their children or enforce obedience. They allow their chil-

positive action. Biblical discipline is for the good of our children and flows from our love for them. We can picture the Biblical truth of love and discipline this way:

A BIBLICAL VIEW OF GOD'S LOVE



Discipline is not the opposite of love.
The opposite of love is HATE.

We need to be very clear that when we talk about Biblical discipline of our children, we are **not** talking about the sporadic, out-of-control abuse of children that we see all too often in our culture today. Tragically, where there is a lack of Biblical perspective and permissive parenting is the norm, child abuse is rampant. This is not discipline at all. Rather, Biblical discipline flows from love.

Scripture tells us that just as God's discipline assures us that we belong to Him, so our firm, loving, consistent discipline of our children increases their understanding of our love for them and their security in our love.

God has placed parents in the role of authority in the home and He wants children to obey their parents. Discipline is God's method for bringing children to obedience and, thereby, maturity and wisdom.

Do you love your children? Discipline them! Discipline them diligently.

Day One

From these Scriptures, what is God's method of removing foolishness from the heart of a child?

- Proverbs 3:11-12
- Proverbs 13:24
- Proverbs 19:18
- Proverbs 22:6
- Proverbs 22:15
- Proverbs 29:15
- Proverbs 29:17

In these verses, what words for "discipline" are used interchangeably?

Day Two

Write out Proverbs 3:1-12. What fundamental truths do you learn about discipline from this Scripture?

Day Three

Write out Hebrews 12:1-13. What fundamental truths do you learn about discipline from this Scripture?

According to Hebrews 12:1-13 and Proverbs 3:11-12, why does God discipline His children?

Taking Proverbs 13:24 together with Hebrews 12:1-13 and Proverbs 3:11-12, from what is our discipline of our children to flow?

Day Four

What do you see in each of these Scriptures about God's discipline of His children? Be sure to note the positive benefits of God's discipline.

- Job 5:17
- Psalm 119:71
- Psalm 119:75
- Psalm 94:12
- Proverbs 6:23
- Proverbs 12:1
- Proverbs 13:1
- Proverbs 13:18
- Proverbs 15:5
- Proverbs 15:10
- Proverbs 15:32
- Proverbs 19:20
- Proverbs 19:27
- Proverbs 23:12
- Revelation 3:19

Day Five

In Deuteronomy 8:1-6, we read a summary of God's gracious dealings with Israel in the wilderness. Read and meditate on this passage and make a list of the descriptions of how the Lord showed His love and care for His people. How does discipline fit into this picture? How is it described?



Things to think about:

How have you seen God's discipline in your life? How was His love shown through this discipline?

List some specific areas where you have been neglecting to love (discipline) your children.

Pray, asking God to help you better love your children.

Lesson Four



*The Way He
Should Go*

God's Word tells us to "train up a child in the way he should go and even when he is old, he will not depart from it." (Proverbs 22:6) This is probably the most quoted verse in Scripture concerning parenting. But it is often misunderstood and misapplied. Even some well-meaning Christian leaders have stated that the term "way" in this verse means a child's particular inclination or even "personality bent." They have advocated studying your child's personality and then training him according to that. This effectively strips the verse of its true meaning. In the Old Testament when "way" is used, it is almost always full of moral implications—there is a right way and a wrong way. Let's look at a few verses which use exactly the same word—"way."

Proverbs 16:25 "There is a **way** which seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death."

Proverbs 3:6 "In all your **ways**, acknowledge Him and He will make your paths straight."

Genesis 18:19a "For I have chosen him (Abraham), in order that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the **way** of the Lord by doing righteousness and justice."

Genesis 6:12 "And God looked on the earth, and behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted their **way** upon the earth."

Psalms 1:6 "For the Lord knows the **way** of the righteous, but the **way** of the wicked will perish."

Psalms 32:8a "I will instruct you and teach you in the **way** which you should go."

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

Clearly, God is not talking about personality bents or traits in these verses. To change the meaning to something other

than God intended is to miss the point. God's Word says parents are to impose God's **way** on their children, to see to it that their children live in a **way** that is pleasing to God.

What is God's **way** for our children? "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right." (Ephesians 6:1) "Children, be obedient to your parents in all things, for this is well-pleasing to the Lord." (Colossians 3:20) Parents are to be the authority in their children's lives and children are to live in obedience to their parents.

Here is how this works: A one-year-old cannot understand that it is wrong for him to take something that belongs to someone else, but he can surely learn to obey his parent's "no-no" when he reaches for something he should not have. Soon he will understand that some things belong to him and some things do not.

At 3 or 4 years of age, he does not know how much sleep he needs. But he can certainly learn to obediently lie quietly in bed until he falls asleep. He will not know all the rules of etiquette, but he can learn to obey dad and mom when they say he is not to throw food or interrupt adult conversations.

At age 8, he probably will not understand why a certain television program is not good for him, but he can certainly obey his parents when they tell him not to watch it. He is learning to live righteously by learning to obey his parents in all things.

How does a child learn to be obedient? By consistent application of loving, firm discipline. The Scripture tells us that the rod of discipline, firmly and consistently applied, is what is necessary to train a child in wisdom.

Discipline is not simply the rod, and application of the rod is not necessarily discipline, but Biblical discipline will always involve and include the rod.

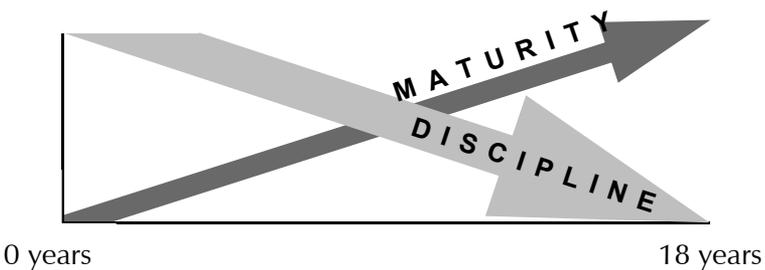
“He who spares his rod hates his son, but he who loves him disciplines him diligently.” Proverbs 13:24

“Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child; the rod of discipline will remove it far from him.” Proverbs 22:15

“Do not hold back discipline from the child, although you beat him with the rod, he will not die. You shall beat him with the rod, and deliver his soul from Sheol.” Proverbs 23:13, 14

“The rod and reproof give wisdom, but a child who gets his own way brings shame to his mother.” Proverbs 29:15

The Scripture says, “Train up a child in the way he should go and even when he is old, he will not depart from it.” (Proverbs 22:6) If we are diligent to train our children in obedience, they will grow in their ability to discern right and wrong and will continue to walk in the way they should go even as we decrease the amount of discipline.



Discipline will look like this on our graph as the child grows in maturity. One who has been trained in this way will seek his parent’s wise counsel, but by the time he is an adult (and that could be much younger than 18 or 21), his parents will be watching with joy as he consistently makes wise decisions.

But in order for this to happen, we parents need to ourselves be obedient to God's Word. We need to be committed to disciplining our children even in the face of opposition, because the world, our own flesh and Satan himself will tell us it is harsh and unloving. Or that discipline is coercive and negative and inhibits children. You will hear over and over that violence (the rod) begets violence. You will hear that discipline causes a child to resent, or even hate his parents.

All of these arguments are contrary to God's Word and we must reject them if we are to be obedient to Him and train our children to love and obey Him.

Day One

Read Proverbs 22:6. If we are to understand God's instructions on raising our children, it is crucial that we see what the Scripture means by "the way he should go."

Following is a list of *some* of the instances where the term "the way" is used in Scripture. Look up the references and write enough of the verse to understand its meaning in the context of the sentence.

- Genesis 6:12 *all flesh had corrupted their way upon the earth.*
- Genesis 18:19
- Exodus 18:20
- Deuteronomy 1:33
- Deuteronomy 5:33
- Deuteronomy 8:2
- Deuteronomy 9:12, 16
- Judges 2:17, 22
- II Samuel 22:31, 33
- I Kings 2:4

Day Two

Continue your word study of the term “the way.” Look up the references and write enough of the verse to understand its meaning in the context of the sentence.

- II Chronicles 6:16, 27
- Job 23:10
- Psalm 1:6
- Psalm 18:30
- Psalm 25:8, 12
- Psalm 27:11
- Psalm 32:8

- Psalm 37:5, 23, 34
- Psalm 49:13
- Psalm 86:11
- Psalm 101:6
- Psalm 119:1, 14, 27, 29, 30, 32

Day Three

Continue your word study of the term “the way.”

- Psalm 139:24
- Psalm 143:8
- Proverbs 1:15
- Proverbs 2:8, 12, 20,
- Proverbs 3:23
- Proverbs 4:11, 14, 19
- Proverbs 6:23
- Proverbs 9:6
- Proverbs 10:29
- Proverbs 12:15, 26
- Proverbs 13:6, 15
- Proverbs 14:12
- Proverbs 15:9

Day Four

Continue your word study of the term “the way.”

- Proverbs 16:25
- Proverbs 21:2
- Proverbs 22:6
- Proverbs 23:19
- Proverbs 29:27
- Isaiah 30:21
- Isaiah 48:17
- Jeremiah 5:4
- Jeremiah 7:23
- Jeremiah 21:8
- Jeremiah 23:22
- Jeremiah 26:3
- Jonah 3:8
- Malachi 2:8

Day Five

Continue your word study of the term “the way.” Although the New Testament uses a different term, the meaning is consistent throughout the Scripture. (There is a right way and a wrong way.)

- Matthew 7:13, 14
- Matthew 21:32
- Mark 12:14
- Luke 1:79
- Luke 20:21
- John 14:4-6
- Acts 16:17
- Acts 18:25, 26
- James 5:19, 20
- II Peter 2:2, 15, 21
- Jude 11

It is clear that there is a lot of moral “freight” in these verses! There is a right way and a wrong way, a way of life and a way of death.

Some well-meaning Christian leaders have attempted to strip away the moral context of the term “way” in Proverbs 22:6. They have placed much emphasis on “way” meaning the child’s particular inclination or even “personality bent.” The overwhelming usage of this term in the Scripture is loaded with moral value. There is a right way and a wrong way. Do not miss this important truth!



Things to think about:

How about you? Are you willing to obey the Lord in training your children in “the way they should go?”

What, if any, changes do you need to make in the discipline of your children?

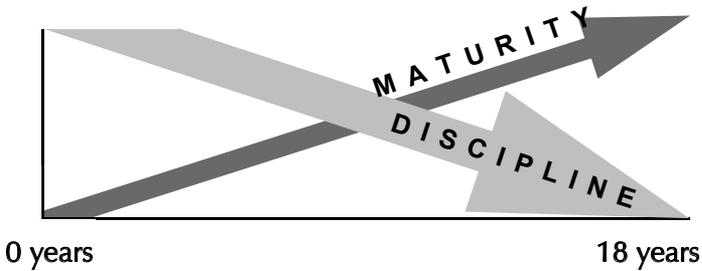
Lesson Five



The Way to Maturity

Life is made up of choices, judgments and decisions. We want to raise children who are able to make right choices, judgments, and decisions. In other words, we want them to come to maturity. In Hebrews 5:14, maturity is defined for us. A mature person is one who because of practice has his senses trained to discern good and evil.

When children are born they do not know how to discern right and wrong and make wise decisions. They are foolish. In order to learn to be wise, able to discern good and evil, they must be disciplined. They must have their senses **trained** through **practice**. Maturity doesn't just happen—it is learned through practice and training. Discipline is God's method for bringing children to maturity and wisdom.



Our drawing illustrates how a child's maturity should increase over the years until there is a time when he is consistently making wise decisions and living in obedience to God's Word. The level of maturity gradually increases from year to year and in a corresponding way, the amount of discipline can decrease year by year.

Let's look now at some **practical applications** of what we have been seeing from God's Word regarding discipline.

1) **Begin early.** God's Word says, "Discipline your child while there is hope." (Proverbs 19:18) It is much easier to teach a little one to obey you than to discipline an older child who is in the habit of getting his own way. The early months are crucial. From the very first day, beware of falling into the habit of doing things to please the child rather than doing things the way you desire. If you are not careful in these early weeks and months, you will be training your child to fuss to get whatever he wants, whenever he wants it. Remember that you are the parents and it is important to establish your authority right from the beginning. If you do, it will be much easier all the way along.

A key age is when the child begins to crawl or somehow get around. His universe greatly expands and he will be exploring, reaching for everything he can get to. Remember, the issue is obedience. You want him to learn to obey your word when you say "no-no". Whatever the point of challenge is, remember that the issue is obedience, not the vase or the outlet or the hot coffee or the glasses. Who is in charge, you or your child? Will this home be run by the parents or an infant, child or teen?

2) **Be consistent!** Be consistent between issues. If you regularly choose to let your child "call the shots," then it is far more likely that you will have a battle on your hands when you want him to obey you on a certain issue. If your child has been the "ruler" all day and now you are expecting obedience, don't be surprised if he challenges you!

Be consistent between parents. If one parent says "no" to something, then the other parent must enforce that as well. Grandparents, too, should cooperate in enforcing the standards set by the parents.

Be consistent between situations and circumstances. If something is wrong, then it is always wrong. Be careful about making exceptions, especially when children are young. For example, even if the street is not busy, make him hold your hand so that when you are on a busy street, it will not be an issue. Establish routines. For example, if you always have your children pick up their toys at nap time, then it will not be a confrontation point. Do not discipline his bad behavior one time and then ignore it or laugh about it the next time. How unfair and confusing to a child!

3) **Remember that obedience is the issue.** Don't forget this! You will be tempted to think, "Is it really so wrong for Johnny to _____?" That question misses the point. The correct question is, "Is it wrong for Johnny to **disobey** his parents?" And the answer is "Yes!"

4) **Do not try to reason with your young child** or give him reasons or explanations of why he should obey you. Remember that the issue is obedience. If you explain and give him reasons to do what you tell him, you are reinforcing the misconception that he only needs to obey what he can understand. You want him to learn to obey your word. As he gets older, you may offer reasons after he has obeyed, to help him develop his ability to discern good and evil. "I did not let you watch that television program because"

5) **Use the word "no" carefully, only when you mean it and are prepared to enforce it.** Remember this important principle in dealing with your children: "Say what you mean and mean what you say." If you are ready to put your child to bed, don't say, "Are you ready to go to bed?" Say in a cheerful, yet firm voice, "It's bedtime." When you want the toys picked up, don't say, "Would you like to put the toys away?" Say, "Put the toys away, please," or "You may play for 10 more minutes and then I'm going to have you put the toys away." Then do it! At mealtime, don't ask "Are you ready to

eat?" or "Are you hungry?" Say, "Come to the table, please. It is time to eat." By operating this way, you aren't being heavy-handed. You are simply using ordinary events of the day to reinforce the habit of obedience in their lives.

6) **Be careful not to reward manipulative behaviors** like fussing, crying, whining, nagging, pouting or others. If you are tempted to give in to your child who is whining or nagging, remind yourself that some day he or she will be an employee or spouse or co-worker or friend, etc. Consider how the behavior would look in those contexts!

7) **Realize that children will test you** and challenge your authority from time to time. Do not be discouraged by this. Use these opportunities to teach your child to be obedient.

8) **Be careful and wise in speaking about children in their presence.** Don't say that Johnnie is a little monster, or brat, or tyrant, or refer to him as a "terrible two" or "terrible teen." Do not make light of bad behavior by talking or joking about it.

Never tear a child down verbally or nag or yell. These practices are damaging and can fall into the category of abuse.

If you begin to discipline your children early and do so with consistency, diligence and wisdom, your children will respect you and obey you for the most part and you will find that the need for discipline is very infrequent. You will enjoy watching your children grow to maturity in the Lord.

Day One

Write out the definition of maturity found in Hebrews 5:14.

What do you think “have their senses trained” means?

From these verses, what instruction does God's Word have specifically for children?

- Proverbs 6:20; 23:22
- Ephesians 6:1-3
- Colossians 3:20

Day Two

What does each of these Scriptures tell you about bringing your children to maturity and how can you apply each one with your children? Try to be specific.

- Proverbs 13:24
- Proverbs 19:18
- Proverbs 22:6
- Proverbs 22:15
- Proverbs 23:13-14
- Proverbs 29:15
- Proverbs 29:17
- Ephesians 6:4

Day Three

Read I Samuel 1-4. This is an interesting account of two families whose lives are interwoven. This account is instructive for us as parents.

What was the vow that Hannah made to the Lord if He would bless her with a child?

How old was Samuel when she fulfilled her vow? (I Samuel 1:23-24)

From these four chapters, what can we learn about the character and maturity of Samuel at a young age and as an adult? Cite verses.

From what we have seen in the Scriptures, how and when was the character and maturity of Samuel developed?

How did God use Samuel in the history of the nation of Israel?

Now, let's take a look at the sons of Eli. What office were they filling according to I Samuel 1:3?

What is the assessment of these men given in I Samuel 2:12 and 2:17?

What did Eli do about his son's wickedness? I Samuel 2:22-29

What did he fail to do according to I Samuel 3:13?

What were the consequences for the house of Eli, as well as Israel?

From what we have seen in the Scriptures, how and when did the wickedness of the sons of Eli come about?

What have you learned from this account?



Things to think about:

On the next few pages we are going to look at how some negative behaviors mentioned in Scripture are manifested in children at different ages. Be specific. Think about how the behavior will look at different ages and stages if it is not disciplined.

	<u>Galatians 5:20</u> <i>Outbursts of anger</i>
Infant	<i>Screaming when put down.</i>
Crawler	
Toddler/ Preschool	
Elementary School	
Middle School/ Jr. High	
Teen	
Young Adult	

Romans 1:30

Disobedient to parents

Infant	
Crawler	
Toddler/ Preschool	
Elementary School	
Middle School/ Jr. High	
Teen	
Young Adult	

Romans 1:30

Inventors of evil

Infant

Crawler

Toddler/
Preschool

Elementary
School

Middle
School/ Jr.
High

Teen

Young Adult

Romans 1:29

Greed, envy

Infant	
Crawler	
Toddler/ Preschool	
Elementary School	
Middle School/ Jr. High	
Teen	
Young Adult	

Think about your own path to maturity. At what age were you consistently making wise decisions? Looking back, how would you have benefited from being mature at an earlier age?

Where are your children on the path to maturity? At the rate they are now maturing, will they be prepared for the decisions and pressures they will face in adolescence? Teen years? Early adulthood and beyond? If not, what steps can you take to increase the rate of maturation?

Day Four

Let's take a closer look at Hebrews 12.

Whom does the Lord discipline?

How does verse 7 describe children who are without discipline?

From verses 7 and 8, of what does God's discipline give evidence?

From verse 9, what attitude does discipline produce in children?

From verse 10, why does God discipline us?

What is the "fruit" of God's discipline of us?

Day Five

Read Psalm 89. In verses 19-37, God declares all that He will do for His servant, David. List all of His promises to David and his descendants.

In verses 30-32, how does God say He will deal with their sins? Does this violate His love? How do you know?

Can you think of some instances from Scripture where God “took His children to the woodshed?” How did His discipline of their sin demonstrate His love for them?

Lesson Six



Leading the Way

We have seen that in both the Old Testament and the New Testament, most of what the Scripture says about raising our children focuses on discipline. Discipline is God's method for bringing children to maturity and wisdom. As parents, we are God's representatives in our children's lives. When we teach them to obey us as parents, we are actually helping them learn how to walk in obedience to God.

Sometimes parents say to me, "I have tried spanking my child and it doesn't work." That is like a husband saying he has tried being faithful to his wife. Faithfulness in marriage has to be 100% or it is not faithfulness! The same is true in the discipline of children. Discipline is not something that we try for a while. We must be committed to it for the long term and like many things that God asks us to do, we must do it by faith and trust Him for the results.

If we fail to obey God's Word in this matter of discipline, we actually set an example for our children of disobedience to God. On the other hand, by disciplining our children according to Scripture we demonstrate our obedience of God's Word to our children. And that is vital because children **do** learn by our example. I believe that Christianity is "more caught than taught." The way we live communicates loudly to our children.

Many times, Christian parents verbally *instruct* their children, but the instruction is ineffective or even useless, because what the child actually sees is disregard or even willful disobedience of God's Word modeled in his parents' lives, possibly in this very matter. Children are quick to notice if our "walk does not match our talk." They are quick to spot phoniness or hypocrisy in our lives. They will see by the daily choices we make if we really believe God's Word. They will notice if we take the easy way out, rather than doing what God has instructed. They will observe and draw conclusions if we compromise God's Word in certain situations or settings.

Deuteronomy 6 is a chapter that is rich with instructions for parents. It speaks of what Jesus stated was the foremost commandment—loving God with all our heart, soul and might—and clearly links this command to our responsibilities as parents. We are exhorted to teach our children to love God wholeheartedly as a natural outflow of our lives. We are to use the opportunities that present themselves in our normal life activities—playing together, working together, and going places together—as a springboard for talking about the Lord.

There are also several warnings for us in Deuteronomy 6. If we are to succeed in raising our children to fear the Lord, we must particularly watch ourselves in these areas.

1) **Prosperity**—(Deuteronomy 6:10-12) This warning is certainly applicable for us today—because by any standard, all of us are rich. Why is prosperity dangerous? Because it is easy to forget that all we have comes from the Lord. We are prone to take credit for the prosperity that we enjoy and to forget the Lord. It is so easy to get our heart wrapped up, even entangled, in the pursuit of money and the things money can buy rather than having it wrapped up with God.

2) **Idolatry**—We are to teach our children that our God is a jealous God. Deuteronomy 6:14-15 says, “You shall not follow other gods, any of the gods of the peoples who surround you, for the Lord your God in the midst of you is a jealous God.”

Israel was surrounded by false worship and so are we today. There are people all around us who worship and serve gods other than the one and only true God—sometimes formally and sometimes more informally. In other words, some go each Sunday and participate in worship that is false because they are worshipping a god of their own making, rather than the God of the Bible. Others “worship” false gods by their lifestyles and priorities and values.

One of the best things we can communicate to our children is that the allegiance of their heart is to be given to the one and only true God. He alone deserves their love, devotion and service. He is a jealous God. He is not content to be on our list of “interests.” He wants our wholehearted, undistracted devotion.

3) Grumbling against God—“You shall not put the Lord your God to the test, as you tested Him at Massah.” (Deut. 6:15) At Massah, the Israelites tested God by quarreling and grumbling against Moses, God’s representative to them. In reality, they were quarreling and grumbling against God. In our homes we should not test the Lord by quarreling with God or grumbling against Him. We should not question what God is doing in our lives, or question His love, and we also should not tolerate quarreling and grumbling in our homes.

The exhortations and warnings in Deuteronomy 6 challenge us as parents to model real, genuine Christianity. If our love for the Lord and obedience to His Word is genuine and heartfelt, our children will sense it and it will be contagious. Real learning takes place when our diligent teaching is backed-up by our actions, conversations and priorities. We should be so absorbed with God that our children begin to see it early on and our verbal instruction merely reinforces the reality they have seen in the way we live.

Day One

Read Deuteronomy 5:29-6:25 with Mark 12:28-34. What is the main issue in life? What is God's purpose for your children?

From Deuteronomy 6, what are we to teach our children?

How are we to do it?

Reread Deuteronomy 6 and list all the benefits that are promised for those who are obedient to God's Word.

From these Scriptures, how is our love of God linked to our obedience to His Word?

- John 14:15, 21-24
- I John 5:3
- II John 6

Day Two

Read each of these verses in Deuteronomy. What does it mean to fear the Lord and what are the benefits for those who fear God?

- Deuteronomy 5:29
- Deuteronomy 6:2, 3
- Deuteronomy 6:13
- Deuteronomy 6:24
- Deuteronomy 8:6
- Deuteronomy 10:12, 13
- Deuteronomy 10:20, 21
- Deuteronomy 13:4
- Deuteronomy 31:12, 13

Time after time in Proverbs, the father teaches the son to *fear the Lord*. What do these verses tell us about the fear of the Lord?

- Proverbs 1:7
- Proverbs 3:7
- Proverbs 8:13
- Proverbs 9:10
- Proverbs 15:33
- Proverbs 16:6

From the Psalms, what do you see regarding the fear the Lord?

- Psalm 19:9
- Psalm 25:14
- Psalm 31:19

- Psalm 33:8
- Psalm 34:7
- Psalm 34:9
- Psalm 34:11
- Psalm 36:1
- Psalm 85:9
- Psalm 103:11, 13, 17
- Psalm 111:5
- Psalm 111:10
- Psalm 115:11
- Psalm 115:13
- Psalm 145:19
- Psalm 147:11

Day Three

Reread Deuteronomy 6. From Deuteronomy 6:10-12, what is the danger inherent in prosperity?

Read and meditate on each of these Scriptures. Record what each one says on this subject.

- Luke 12:13-34
- I Timothy 6:6-11
- I Timothy 6:17-19

How can prosperity lead to spiritual dullness?

How could cultivating a heart of gratitude to the Lord help us to keep the proper perspective on our material possessions?

What are some ways you can model a lifestyle of *giving* rather than *getting* for your children? Be very specific and practical.

Day Four

Read Deuteronomy 4:24, 5:9 and 6:13-15. What does it mean that God is a jealous God?

What insight do these verses give about the jealousy of God?

- Psalm 83:18
- Psalm 86:10
- Isaiah 42:8
- Isaiah 44:6-8
- Isaiah 45:21-22
- Isaiah 48:11

What are some things that could keep God from having first place in our lives?

What are some things that could keep God from having first place in our children's lives?

How could our actions betray our words in this matter of putting God first? Are there loyalties or activities in your life that crowd into first place? Remember, children learn by our example!

Day Five

Read Deuteronomy 6:16 with Exodus 17:1-7 and I Corinthians 10:1-13. How did the children of Israel test the Lord at Massah?

Why is all grumbling and complaining ultimately against the Lord?

What other sins are listed in I Corinthians 10:1-13?

What do the following admonitions say regarding grumbling and complaining?

- Philippians 2:14-16
- James 5:7-11
- I Peter 4:7-11

How do toddlers grumble and complain?

How do older children grumble and complain? Is it always with words?

Do your children grumble and complain?

Do you grumble and complain about those God has placed in your life? Do you complain about your spouse? Boss? Relatives? Your lot in life? Your children's teachers? Coaches? Referees?

How can you teach your children by example in this area? Be specific.



Things to think about:

What does loving God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength mean?

How is fearing God related to loving God?

How is obedience to God related to loving God?

Lesson Seven



The Way of Prayer

We have looked at our responsibility as parents to obey God's Word in the discipline of our children. And we have seen that we are to be examples to our children by modeling a life of love and obedience to God. In addition, it is essential that we pray for our children. The Scripture says "Unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain who build it" (Psalms 127:1), and so we should go to God in prayer for our children.

While prayer for our children is right and proper, it is not to be a "substitute" for obedience to God's Word in our parenting. Sometimes, Christian parents pray diligently for their children while they themselves are willfully disobeying God's Word in the matter of discipline. Or perhaps, they pray for their children when they themselves are not modeling a life of genuine love for God. To ask God to bless while willfully disobeying Him is presuming on His grace.

If we are honest, we know that none of us are going to obey God's Word perfectly in raising our children. There will be times when we fail to discipline our children according to God's Word. There will be times when our obedience of God's Word is less than perfect so that the example we set for our children is not what it should be. All of us will sin and fail many times. If we are abiding in His Word, the Holy Spirit will show us our sin and empower us to walk in a manner pleasing to the Lord. Even though our children see us sin, they will sense our desire to please Him.

When we consider the awesome responsibility that God has entrusted to us as parents we must all plead God's mercy and we ought to go humbly before Him daily on behalf of our children. But our dependence on God in prayer for our children should never replace diligent obedience to His Word.

Day One

If you were hiring someone for a job, what would be the most important **character traits** that you would look for in that individual?

Using these Scriptures as a basis, think about the character traits that you as a parent would like to see in your children. Think about how you can use these passages as you pray for your children.

- Romans 12:1-3; 9-21
- Galatians 5:22
- Ephesians 4:1-3, 32; 5:9, 10
- Colossians 3:12-17
- James 3:17-18

Day Two

In the Scripture, God often teaches us by using negative examples. Look at these Scriptures that describe behaviors that are the opposite of what God wants for our children and list them.

- Romans 1:28-32
- Galatians 5:19-21
- II Timothy 3:1-7

Which behavior is specifically mentioned in reference to children?

Do these Scriptures motivate you to pray? If so, how?

Day Three

In thinking about the attitudes and behaviors that we want our children to develop, a very profitable project is to “sort” the Proverbs according to character traits. As you read the Proverbs, record proverbs that pertain to specific character traits. As you come across a new character trait, begin a new category. This is an ongoing project that you will find extremely beneficial for years to come. For example:

honesty Prov. 4:24 Put away from you a deceitful mouth, and put devious lips far from you.

Prov. 6:12-13 A worthless person, a wicked man is the one who walks with a false mouth, who winks with his eyes, who signals with his feet, who points with his fingers.

hard-work, diligence

humility

self-control

Day Four

Write out the prayer in Ephesians 1:15-19a and consider it as a model for you to pray for your children.

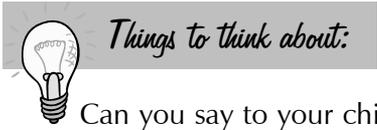
Write out the prayer in Philippians 4:8-9 and consider it as a model for you to pray for your children.

Write out the prayer in Colossians 1:9-12 and consider it as a model for you to pray for your children.

Day Five

Read II Thessalonians 3:7-9. Because Paul was practicing personal discipline in his life and was doing what was right, what was he qualified to do?

Read I Corinthians 4:16, 17 with I Corinthians 11:1. From these verses, what qualified Paul to urge the Corinthians to imitate his life?



Things to think about:

Can you say to your children, “Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ?” (I Corinthians 11:1) What steps can you take to become a better example for your children?

How could these verses be the basis of your prayers as a parent?

Dear Friend,

Twenty years have passed since Kristi and I brought our first child home from the hospital and began the adventure of parenting. Since then God has blessed us with four more children. Each one is a unique person created by God for His glory and it has been a joy to watch each of them grow and develop.

More than ever, I am so thankful that God has given instructions to parents in His Word. His principles for raising children are clear and simple—but that does not necessarily mean that they are easy to apply. As in every other area of life, we must submit our will to His. We must do it God's way, not our way.

It is my prayer that this Bible study has challenged you to know what God's Word says and to be diligent to obey Him. When we obey Him we can meet the challenges of parenting with confidence, knowing that His Word is absolutely reliable.

There is no more important responsibility in our lives than the training of our children in the Lord and obedience to His Word is the sure path of blessing in our families. I am confident that God will richly bless you, as you are obedient to apply God's truth with your children.

Scott Gilchrist
Bible Teacher
Downtown Bible Class

