

Training Children

- I. At the outset, it needs to be understood that training precedes teaching. Before a child develops critical language and reasoning skills, training should be well underway.
- A. train: III. 5. To treat or manipulate so as to bring to the proper or desired form; *spec.* in Gardening, to manage (a plant or a branch) so as to cause it to grow in some desired form or direction... 6. To subject to discipline and instruction for the purpose of forming character and developing the powers of, or of making proficient in some occupation...
1. O.E.D. cites **PRO 22:6** as an example of this definition.
 2. Training a sapling is wiser than trying to train a seventeen-year-old oak tree. Don't let the season of hope slip by. **PRO 19:18.**
 3. Training is *manipulating*. The parent is supposed to be the manipulator. While being sensitive to a child's needs and hurts, beware that you are not being manipulated.
 4. Don't wait until your child can intelligently dialogue and reason before you begin to train that child in acceptable behavior by positive and negative enforcement. **PRO 13:24.**
 - a. chasten: trans. To inflict disciplinary or corrective punishment on; to visit with affliction for the purpose of moral improvement; to correct, discipline, chastise.
 - b. betimes: At an early time, period, or season; early in the year; early in life.
 - c. Physical chastening with the rod is not the only method of corrective punishment but it is effective, necessary and godly. God Himself said He would chasten His own Son with the rod if He committed iniquity. **2SAM 7:14.**
 - d. Don't try to be wiser and holier than God.
- B. Training children is inevitable. You will train your children one way or the other to think their will is absolute or governed. You will train them by your good example or your poor example. You will train them in preparation for real life, or for a fantasy life of self-centeredness, consequence-free decisions and benefits without merit.
- C. Positively reward good behavior, never bad behavior, since you will strengthen whatever you feed. **1PE 2:13-14.**
- II. Children are to be raised by parents in trust for God Who desires a godly seed. **MAL 2:15; PSA 144:11-12.**
- A. Godliness is profitable in all things in this life (**1TI 4:8**), including childhood development.
- B. It teaches charity and boundaries by "love thy neighbour as thyself" (**GAL 5:14 c/w ROM 13:10**) and so maximizes positive human relations.
- C. Remember that you are not only preparing a child to engage the world, you are preparing a child for an encounter with God through Jesus Christ, since all judgment is in His hands. **JOH 5:22-23; ACT 17:31; 2CO 5:10.**
- III. The proper training of children is necessary owing to their nature. **PRO 22:15.**
- A. Do not expect a child to develop properly on its own. **PRO 17:25; 29:15.**
- B. Children are like old photo film negatives that need to be developed. They will not attain to their proper image without someone properly processing them.
- C. You don't need to train children to become fools since they are pre-programmed to folly but bad training will expedite that.
- D. Personality differences in children will make training specialized but be consistent.

- IV. Both parents are responsible to train the child properly. **PRO 22:6 c/w PRO 1:8; EPH 6:1.**
- A. Parents should present a united front in this warfare. Children cannot please God and obey their *parents* in the Lord (**EPH 6:1**) when the parents have opposing directives.
 - B. Contradictions between parents confuse a child and he will quickly learn to pit one parent against another and exploit the situation to his own advantage.
 - C. The primary responsibility and leadership role belongs to the father.
DEU 6:6-7; ISA 38:19; EPH 6:4.
 1. This is a great burden and undertaking since it requires positive leadership often in spite of personal weakness and in the face of opposition from the world and sometimes within the household.
 2. An effective father needs to think maturely and to discipline himself: making duty dominant over self-interests.
- V. **PRO 22:6** brings up some searching issues about training.
- A. Again, parents WILL train their children one way or another.
 1. Parents need to honestly evaluate what they are training children to become.
 2. Are they training children to be self-willed, disrespectful, unrestrained, shiftless, manipulative, undisciplined, complaining, irresponsible, covetous, entitlement-minded burdens who are ill-prepared for the real world or for God?
 3. Or, are they training children for God to be respectful, submissive, honorable, self-restrained, disciplined, productive members of society who have learned early at home that there are reasonable expectations and boundaries that must be respected?
 4. The latter is *the way that they should go* because it is what God expects of people in general.
 - B. *The way a child should go* is not determined by popular opinion, methinks, feelings, unbiblical wisdom nor any other substitute for Scripture's commandments, precepts and principles. **PSA 119:128.**
 1. A faithful pastor's teaching and example from Scripture should be heeded.
HEB 13:17; 1TI 4:12.
 2. A faithful pastor already met God's test for successful parenting. **1TI 3:4-5.**
 - C. Who is training whom? I have seen many cases where the children are doing the training, manipulating parents who are afraid they will lose the child's love or by wearing out a parent to the point of the parent's submission to the child's whims.
 1. Loving parents have two things working in their favor relative to their child's love: the natural bond between parent and child, and the added incentive that comes from sensing tender care and security.
 2. Children who have to be chastened also are concerned about losing their parents' love for them. They long for restoration and assurance post-chastening.
 - D. The successful training of children is very dependent upon the parents' presuppositions about their children.
 1. Here is an "A - Z" list of unhealthy presuppositions about children.
 - a. Children will develop well in a chaotic, disorderly home.
 - b. Children will naturally develop good character without guidance.
 - c. Children's development is thwarted by imposed boundaries and limitations.
 - d. Children's development is not thwarted by being smothered with stuff.
 - e. Children's psyches will be irreparably damaged by "No!" and spankings.
 - f. Children's psyches are so fragile that any parental error could ruin them.
 - g. Children need to be always sheltered from discomfort or disappointment.

- h. Children do not need attention and affection, only rules and orders.
 - i. Children are unwanted obstacles to personal goals and desires.
 - j. Children are the property of the State to be molded to its preferences.
 - k. Children do not need to respect the State in its lawful authority.
 - l. Children won't notice or be affected by bad parental examples.
 - m. Children are all born with immutable personalities which cannot be molded.
 - n. Children will not be adversely affected by ungodly entertainment.
 - o. Children will naturally make good choices about food, clothes and pleasure.
 - p. Children will naturally make good choices about friends.
 - q. Children are pets to be pampered.
 - r. Children must be harshly disciplined for every infraction.
 - s. Children always need negative reinforcement.
 - t. Children always need positive reinforcement.
 - u. Children do not need praise or, conversely, need constant praise.
 - v. Children don't need dad around.
 - w. Children's interests are foremost in the home.
 - x. Children's interests should be given no consideration in the home.
 - y. Children should be spared doctrinal teaching and preaching.
 - z. Children don't need God, His knowledge, His fear, His Bible or His church.
2. None of the above presuppositions accord with Scripture. It is imperative that a Biblical presuppositional view of children be cultivated, as well as a Biblical model of parenting.

VI. By virtue of the principle of **PRO 22:6**, parents are to shape the lives of their children.

A. Much of a child's personality and value system is molded before the age of nine, which emphasizes the importance of getting things started early on the right track.

- 1. A good example of early training is in the area of child discipline by chastening. **PRO 13:24.**
- 2. betimes: At an early time, period, or season; early in the year; early in life.
- 3. Do not delude yourselves into thinking that you can verbally train very little children or reason them out of bad or dangerous behavior. That is contrary to common sense and Scripture which declares little children void of discernment. **ISA 7:16.**
 - a. Associating pain with dangerous behavior or misbehavior is the best way to help them know what is wrong.
 - b. Repeat the word "no" during the punishment which reinforces to the child what that word means.
 - c. Over time, verbal rebuke can then be effective in warning about a wrong or a danger.
 - d. The association of an emphatic "No!" with painful consequence may well be the salvation of a child from an imminent danger when you cannot grab him.
- 4. Adult screaming and frustration are bad substitutes for prompt, measured chastening by the rod beginning early in life.
 - a. Screaming and frustration produce a disrespect in the mind of the child because he perceives your inability to control him or yourself.
 - b. Children will test your leadership to see if it is worthy of respect.
 - c. Children respect strength and courage as is evident in the characters they select as heroes.
 - d. Children will test to see if the rules hold.

- e. Children feel more secure in an environment where the rights of others and their rights are protected.
- 4. Parents who do not heed this will one day regret it. Late starters have their work cut out for them but "...be wise in thy latter end" (**PRO 19:20**). Don't do nothing.
- B. Parents are to create an atmosphere conducive to children having good values and behavior.
 - 1. This creation of this atmosphere must begin at home.
 - a. Children cannot be expected to have good values in venues outside of the home if they have not been trained to do so in the home.
 - b. Public behavior usually exposes what has been going on in the home.
 - c. Example: Scripture does not specifically say, "Children shall not be defined by screaming at the top of their lungs when they feel like it indoors." But is permitting screaming in your home training a child in the way in which he should go? **PRO 17:1; 1TH 4:11; 2TH 3:12; 1PE 3:4.**
 - d. Hint: Teach children the difference between indoor and outdoor behavior.
 - 2. Let the prevailing tone of family life be that of nurturing, cherishing love which leaves no doubt in a child's mind that parents have the child's best interests at heart. **1TH 2:7-8.**
 - 3. Human development and performance is best where faith, hope and love are the bywords, not unbelief, morbid fear, hatred or hopelessness. **1CO 13:13 c/w 1JO 4:18.**
 - 4. Sometimes love will be tough and not be perceived for what it is. **PSA 141:5 c/w 2CO 2:4.**
 - 5. "As a child I remember asking my father questions like 'why won't you let me do things that other kids do ... why are you so hard on me ... so strict ... why do you *always* say **no**?' My father's response – 'If I didn't care about you, I wouldn't say **no** and I would allow you to do anything you wanted. Don't worry about me saying **no**, start worrying when I quit saying **no**, stop **disciplining** you, and start allowing you to do anything you want to do, because that means I no longer care about you and no longer love you.'"

(Bro. Shane Martin, *Letter to Children of Christian Parents*, 8-19-09)