

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)

VII. Consider how critical home life is to the proper training of children.

- A. Family is the first form of society and government to which children are normally exposed.
- B. Parents are the first educators of children. What is or is not learned in the home has great implications for a child's development and adult life.
 - 1. Home is where a child should first learn of God, His love, His will.
 - 2. Home is where a child should first learn language skills.
 - 3. Home is where a child should first learn basic health and hygiene.
 - 4. Home is where a child should first learn of submission to authority: by the example his parents set and by the boundaries his parents impose upon him. God Himself in the incarnation was subject to His earthly parents. **LUK 2:51**.
 - 5. Home is where a child should first learn that his will is not preeminent.
 - 6. Home is where a child should first learn of discipline, i.e., the need to restrict and focus ambition.
 - 7. Home is where a child should first learn of the painful consequences of lawbreaking.
 - 8. Home is where a child should first learn responsibility: being responsible for assigned tasks and accepting responsibility for incompleteness and disobedience.

9. Home is where a child should first learn cooperation and social skills.
 10. Home is where a child should first learn of nurturing and giving.
 11. Home is where a child should first learn economics.
 12. Home is where a child should first learn dietary nutrition.
 13. Home is where a child should first learn about physical exercise.
 14. Home is where a child should first learn about sex (from parents, not the television or internet).
 15. Home is where a child should first learn of work and merit-based reward.
 16. Home is where a child will first learn to prioritize. But what?
 17. Home is where a child WILL learn. The question is “What?”
- C. *Piety* (habitual reverence to God, devotion to religious duties; faithfulness to the duties owed to parents and relatives) begins at home (**1TI 5:4**). Parents must train by example and command the value of Scripture, true religion and family honor.
- D. *Provision* begins at home (**1TI 5:8**). Parents must train by example and command a work ethic that prioritizes family need over self-indulgence, sloth or unrighteous claims by others on the fruits of one’s labor.
- E. Abraham is the prototypical man of faith. **ROM 4:3**.
1. He was singled out for blessing because of faithfulness in family matters, including the *commanding of children*. **GEN 18:19**.
 2. By contrast, his nephew, Lot, was a terrible example of a parent. **2PE 2:6-8 c/w GEN 13:8-13; 19:8, 12-14, 30-36**.
 3. The difference between Abraham and Lot (who were both children of God) is the God-blessed life v. the God-blasted life. Don’t be a Lot.
- F. Many personal and societal ills can be traced back to some form of dysfunction in the home: spousal abuse, child abuse, self-indulgent parents, absentee fathers, disconnected fathers or mothers, lack of natural affection, unsubmitive wives, sexual impurity in a parent, rejection of God and religion, lack of child restraint, lack of instilled respect and reverence for authority, etc.
1. Research and experience show that sodomy, lesbianism and dysphoric tendencies can develop as a backlash to poor parental role models.
 2. Child abuse can be the result of the lack of timely, measured discipline of children which sets up powder-keg reactions from a parent when children are out of control.
 3. Lack of respect for leadership or submission to authority in public arenas (school, workplace, before the law) starts with the lack of the same in the home.
 4. Lack of self-discipline in adult life is often the continuation of a behavior developed and tolerated in the home.
 5. Unrestrained behavior in public can be because of the same in the home.
 6. Healthy family life = healthy public life and healthy adult life.
- G. A married couple's relationship will teach either fidelity or futility to children.
1. If Dad and Mom can be faithful to God and each other in how they relate, the prospect of positive interaction with others is seen as an attainable goal by children.
 2. If Dad and Mom just can't seem to get along and home life is one of dark clouds and acrimony, positive interaction with others may seem unattainable to children.
- H. Consider Eli and David.
1. Eli was God's priest to Israel. But Eli did not restrain his own appetites, nor did he restrain his sons which corrupted the priesthood. **1SAM 2:24; 3:13; 4:18**.
 2. David was a good king. But David's lack of Vitamin “N” (No!) bred trouble in his children and trouble for Israel. **1KI 1:6**.
- I. Against the over-permissiveness of Eli and David is the parent who insists on absolute

rigidity without consideration to a child's basic need to be heard out or allowed to do something which may not be profitable but not injurious.

1. Parents should not provoke children to wrath by inconsiderate mastery. **EPH 6:4.**
2. **EPH 6:4** contrasts provoking children to wrath and bringing them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.
 - a. The nurture and admonition of the Lord will of necessity show both the goodness and the severity of God. **ROM 11:22.**
 - b. A healthy, balanced knowledge of God's dealings with His own children is valuable to training a child. God is love (**1JO 4:16**) and that love includes rebuke and chastening. **REV 3:19.**
3. provoke: To incite or urge (a person or animal) to some act or to do something; to stimulate to action; to excite, rouse, stir up, spur on.
4. nurture: Breeding, upbringing, training, education (received or possessed by one).
 - b. Moral training or discipline. [O.E.D. cites **EPH 6:4** here].
5. admonition: The action of admonishing (putting in mind of duties); authoritative counsel; warning, implied reproof.
6. Common sense tells you that children who are tyrannically beaten into compliance or are as demeaned as Jonathan was by Saul are likely going to react defensively, angrily. **1SAM 20:30-34.**
 - a. Such parenting may be the sin of "Without natural affection..." (**2TI 3:3**).
 - b. God's children are precious to Him. **ISA 43:4; MAL 3:17.**
 - c. Parents should *cherish* (hold dear, treat with tenderness and affection) their children. **1TH 2:7-8.**
7. Parents may provoke their children to wrath by *not* bringing them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. A child learns from the school of hard knocks the realities his parents should have taught him and ends up bitter and hateful.
8. Parents may provoke their children to wrath by being not themselves regulated by the nurture and admonition of the Lord, and this breeds frustrated anger. NOTE: children will note, inventory and be ready to chamber every bit of "double-standard" ammunition you provide them.
9. For some children, bringing them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord is the very thing that provokes them to wrath, not because the model is wrong but rather the child thinks he is God Whose will is sovereign.
 - a. Do not fall for this form of idolatry, and administer the antidote early. **PRO 13:24.**
 - b. Per **MAL 3:17**, sparing is for *obedient* children, not defiant ones.
 - c. Further, "...let not thy soul spare for his crying" (**PRO 19:18**).
 - d. For the sake of our salvation, God did not spare His only begotten Son, and even made Him to learn obedience by the things He suffered. **ROM 8:32; HEB 5:8.**
 - e. Beware of the error of results-directed reasoning. **NUM 20:7-12.**
 - (1) Parents may reject Scripture's commands and end up with a compliant child. But this is like betting you can make it through a minefield without following a detailed map of where the mines are.
 - (2) If results determine the method then electro-shock therapy, drugs or brain surgery might be proper ways to produce a compliant child.