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## **For the Love of the Family Ministries**

**Missionaries to America's Forgotten Mission Field, the Family  
Seven Principles In Training Godly Children**

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### **Seven Principles In Training Godly Children**

The following article by Pastor David Sorenson is based on his book TRAINING YOUR CHILDREN TO TURN OUT RIGHT. Churches can order this excellent book from Northstar Ministries, 1820 W. Morgan St., Duluth, MN 55811, 218-726-0209, [www.northstarministries.com](http://www.northstarministries.com), [dhs.northstar@charter.net](mailto:dhs.northstar@charter.net). This article was sent out by Way Of Life Literature, January 26, 2010 (Fundamental Baptist Information Service, P.O. Box 610368, Port Huron, MI 48061, 866-295-4143, [fbns@wayoflife.org](mailto:fbns@wayoflife.org);

#### **I. THE IMPORTANCE OF THE WORD OF GOD**

If there is a basic truth that is universal in training children to be godly, it is the necessity of building a foundation of the Word of God in their lives. This is true for any born-again Christian and that includes the children of God's people. I fear that Christian parents come to rely on Christian media, Sunday School teachers, church youth programs, and Christian schools to see their youth turn out right. All of these are potentially good and can be a great help; however, the foundation for godly living is often missing in the lives of the children and youth of God's people. That foundation is a daily absorption of the Word of God.

A young person from a Christian home can go to a Christian school or be home-schooled with a

godly curriculum, be faithful to Sunday School and church programs, go to church camp, and be carnal, rebellious, and worldly. Or more frequently, they are just lukewarm and go with the flow, but there are not true spiritual convictions in their hearts. The reason is as simple as it is singular. They are not in the Word of God on a daily basis.

It makes little difference if one is a young person or a seasoned adult. Apart from daily consumption of the Word of God, any believer will be carnal and more worldly than godly. God said to Joshua, millennia ago:

“This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success” (Joshua 1:8).

That premise and promise has never been abrogated. When a young person, or anyone for that matter, saturates his mind with the Word of God so that it soaks down into his heart, it will modify his behavior.

That is why the Psalmist wrote long ago, “Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee” (Psalm 119:11). The idea here is not so much rote memorization of Scripture as it is filling one’s mind with God’s Word to such a degree that it soaks down into the heart. When that has happened, we will not sin against God. The will has been changed.

As a pastor, I watch children from Christian homes who are in Christian schools or are home schooled. Their parents make sure they are at every service and youth function of the church. And yet, these same kids are rebellious, carnal, and have a worldly attitude. Why? Because they are not in the Word in a meaningful way. It’s as simple as that.

Here are five practical tips by which Christian parents can direct their children into meaningful Bible reading.

1. Start early. When our children were small, we had them read from the Bible as soon as they could barely read. It was short, but they started late in their kindergarten year.
2. Plan their reading. The Bible is a complex book, even for adults. When our children were small, we had them read in 1 John because of its simple vocabulary and syntax. We had them read at first just a verse or two a day. As they progressed through grade school, the daily reading assignment grew to a chapter a day and by the time they were in junior high school, we had our girls reading four chapters a day. That is the basic amount to read the Bible through in a year. But the greater point is that we planned their reading for them.
3. Provide positive incentives. When our girls were small, we prepared a chart which was on the refrigerator and as they did their requisite daily Bible reading, they received a star on their chart each day. When they had faithfully filled their chart for several weeks or a month, we planned a special reward for them.

4. Enforce the policy. We made sure that our girls did their daily Bible reading as assigned. A refrain oft heard at the breakfast table was “Did you do your Bible reading this morning?” Though they eventually grew out of the charts and stars on the refrigerator, we still checked up on them throughout their adolescent years.

5. Just do it because it is right. As the girls grew out of the stage where they needed little incentives, we shifted to the philosophy of doing your Bible reading just because it was right. As we developed the principle of righteousness in the meantime, it was easy to mesh the practice of daily Bible reading with the principle of righteousness. Indeed, it is right to be in God’s Word each day.

## **II. THE PRINCIPLE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS**

A second profound principle in the Christian life, and certainly so for training Christian youth, is that of righteousness. The Bible fairly overflows with the concept of and references to righteousness. There are approximately 1,300 references to righteousness in the Bible in its various forms and implications. That is approximately one per chapter. Our Lord is referred to as “Jesus Christ the Righteous” in 1 John 2:1. In Psalm 11:7, we read, “For the righteous LORD loveth righteousness; his countenance doth behold the upright.” Notice that the Lord Himself is righteous. He loves righteousness and He watches over the upright.

Very much more could be stated on this point, but if one would be Christ-like, he or she must develop the principle and practice of righteousness in daily living. Simply put, that is doing what is right as a matter of principle, as a matter of practice, and as a conviction of life. Developing the principle of righteousness has profound implications. Any deed, statement, or attitude can be reduced to the simple question, “Is it right?” If a given matter is not right, that settles it. I will not do so. If it is right, I will do so. Simple isn’t it?

For example, notice the classic admonition in Ephesians 6:1, “Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right.” The precept is for children to obey their parents. But there is a more basic reason--it is right. The self discipline to do what is right is the essence of Christian character. Youth trained to do right regardless will find obedience to authority to come easily. It parallels walking in the Spirit. And, it is the essence of being Christ-like.

Consider four ways to instill the concept and practice of righteousness into the warp and woof of the character of our children.

1. Teach righteousness as a precept. Over the years as our children were growing up, we often and regularly taught them “We always do what is right.” Did they (or we) always do what was right? No. But they began to be predisposed to that conviction. In our daily devotions at the breakfast table, we would frequently go to one of the many references to righteousness in the Bible and make it the topic of our devotions for that day. Children by their very nature tend to do what they want to do and not what they ought to do. When the refrain of “I don’t want to” or its corollary “but I want to.....” cropped up, it became a time to teach doing as we ought to do (i.e., doing what was right) rather than doing what we wanted. The philosophy of the world, the flesh, and the devil is to do what we want.

Being Christ-like is doing what is right or its corollary, doing as I ought. Teach children to do as they ought rather than what they want.

2. Apply the principle of righteousness. There are endless applications to the principle of righteousness. Obedience to parents is paramount--for this is right. Smoking is not right. Rock music is not right. Telling the truth is right. Reading one's Bible daily is right. A bad attitude is not right. Stealing is not right. Virtually any child can understand the basic principle of right and wrong. Relating basic standards of conduct to the simple matter of doing what is right greatly simplifies a child's understanding of what is expected. More than that, the entire matter of conduct and attitude is tied directly to the basic biblical precept of doing what is right.

3. Teach righteousness by example. It is axiomatic that as much is caught as is taught. Our talk talks, and our walk talks; but our walk talks louder than our talk talks. Truly, what we do speaks louder than what we say. Inconsistency on the part of a parent will do more to breed rebellion than virtually any other one matter. Conversely, a consistent example will do more to re-enforce what we say than just about anything else. If we teach our kids it is not right to watch coarse TV program but do so ourselves, we unravel much of what we have tried to teach otherwise. If we teach our kids it is right to be faithful to the things of God, but then we skip church when an ideal weekend for camping or golfing presents itself, we neutralize our own counsel. A consistent example of right living is a powerful instrument in training our children to do the same.

4. Teach righteousness early and long. As soon as children are old enough to understand speech, begin to instill the principle of right. Continue it on through their adolescent years. Though neither we as parents or our children will ever be altogether righteous in this present world, nevertheless, teaching it as a principle and a practice is a powerful truth. Decades ago, Dr. Bob Jones, Sr. penned these words:

“Do right till the stars fall, Do right till the last call, Do right though no one stands with you. Do right when you're all alone. Do right though it's never known. Do right since you love the Lord, Do right, do right!”

That philosophy is both scriptural and powerful. It is essential to developing godly Christian young people.

### **III. THE PRINCIPLE OF DISCIPLINE**

Hudson Taylor once said, “An undisciplined person will never amount to anything in God's work.” In fact, an undisciplined person will likely never amount to much in any area of life. There is a great need for self-discipline. Self-discipline is compelling myself to do what I ought to do. It is closely related to the broader principle of righteousness. The former follows from the latter. Righteousness is doing as I ought to do. Self-discipline is compelling myself to do as I ought. In fact, a simple definition of Christian character is the self-discipline to do what is right.

The problem every child has is that he or she is born with a sinful human nature. That sinful nature

operates on the basis of the lusts of the flesh. The flesh is a reference to our old sinful nature and its basic modus operandi is “lust.” In its garden variety sense, that simply means desires or wants. Our children are born with a sinful nature that is characterized by self-interest, self-desire, and self-gratification. As a result all children are by nature selfish, lazy, and self-directed. The old nature lives for entertainment of self.

In 1 Corinthians 9:25, the Bible says, “And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things.” Part of the fruit of the Spirit is “temperance” (Galatians 5:23). The English word temperance essentially means to be self-disciplined. In the greater scope of building character, it is impelling ourselves to do as we ought to do rather than what we want to do. If a child will develop strength of Christian character, his or her life will be built around doing as he ought to do rather than doing as he wants to do.

There are a number of spiritual virtues which are closely related to be disciplined in life. Let us consider several of them.

**Diligence.** The word diligence is found in both the Old and New Testaments. The thought is to be careful to do what ought to be done. In fact, the literal sense is “to hasten the matter.” It is the antithesis of procrastination. It is closely related to being punctual. All of this goes back to the more basic concept of compelling ourselves to do as we ought to do which is self-discipline.

**Faithfulness.** Whether it is being faithful to church services, faithful to daily Bible reading and prayer, or faithful in Christian service, self-discipline is just beneath the surface. I may not “feel” like getting up early to read the Bible in the morning, but self-discipline will impel me to do so. I may not “want” to go to a meeting of the church, but self-discipline compels me to do as I ought. I may be tempted to slack off in a given area of Christian service, but the self-discipline to do what is right will prod me to be faithful in that service. Shallow Christians do what they want to do. Mature Christians do what they ought to do.

**Education.** Discipline is also a major factor in the process of education. Little Johnny may not feel like doing his school work. But if he has been taught to be self-disciplined in life, he will do it anyway. It is more fun to stare out the window and watch what is going on out there than paying attention. It is more fun to tease and make faces than concentrate on the lesson at hand. A child who has been taught to be self-disciplined will not find it difficult to focus on what he ought to be doing rather than on what he wants or feels like doing.

**Organization.** Self-discipline is the key to organization. Essentially, being organized is thinking ahead. The reason people are unorganized is that they live in the present and do not think about what is coming next until it happens. It is easier to enjoy the moment than to exercise our minds in trying to think. This consigns many to a state of perpetual disorganization.

All of these come back to the basic principle of self-discipline. But self-discipline is rooted in the even more basic principle of righteousness which is doing as we ought. Our new nature has been created in righteousness and true holiness. Hence, a life disciplined to do what is right is synchronous

with the new nature. Parents, you will do yourself and your children a great favor by instilling in them self-discipline of life. It is a great positive.

#### **IV. THE PRINCIPLE OF OBEDIENCE**

One of the most basic commands in the Bible for children is found in Ephesians 6:4. “Children obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.” Few things are more basic than that. But whether a child obeys his or her parents is largely up to the parents. A disobedient child reflects parents who have not trained their child to obey. One of the axiomatic rules in our home was “We always obey.” If my dog is unruly, disobedient and undisciplined, who is at fault, the dog or me? Training a dog takes a great deal of time and patience. Training a child takes even more. We positively demanded that our children obey us. If they did not obey, there were immediate and consistent consequences. Every time. Every single time.

There are several principles to be remembered when enforcing rules.

First, rules must be immediately enforced.

As a pastor, I have visited in thousands of home. I have witnessed the following scenario played out numerous times. The details may vary, but the basic incident was always similar. Mom would say to Junior, “It’s time to go to bed.” (Or some other parental directive) Junior ignored his mother and continued to watch the TV. She continued her conversation with me. After a few moments, she would say. “Junior I told you to go and get ready for bed.” He replied, “Awe, I don’t want to.” Mom let that go by. A few moments later, Mom became a little hot about the matter. She raised the volume of her voice and said, “I TOLD YOU TO GET READY FOR BED.” Junior, replied, “But Mom, I WANT to watch my program.” Mom tolerated that counter for a few more moments. She then announced, “THIS IS THE LAST TIME I AM GOING TO TELL YOU. GO AND GET READY FOR BED!” Junior, by now himself getting exasperated at being shouted at, shouts back, “I TOLD YOU, I DON’T WANT TO!” Finally, Mom shouts, “I AM WARNING YOU. MARCH RIGHT NOW, OR I AM GOING TO WHIP YOU!”

The real culprit was not Junior. He knew from considerable experience that Mom could be ignored. Mom was too lazy to get up and deal with the situation. She, in fact, was in her own way contributing to the delinquency of Junior.

Secondly, the basic rules of the home must be consistently enforced.

If it is wrong to do something on Monday, you had better deal with it on Tuesday and Wednesday the same way. Consistency is a valuable jewel in the crown of parental leadership. Incidentally, inconsistency is a major factor in provoking adolescent rebellion later in life.

Finally, family rules need to be fairly and wisely enforced.

Parents need the wisdom of Solomon. We need to be just and fair in dealing with our children.

Though this section may seem authoritarian and unbending, there are times when children forget, or in their childish immaturity make mistakes.

There are several broad principles for developing obedience. One is positive re-enforcement. Perhaps the greatest positive re-enforcement is the matter of love. We need to let our children know that we love them. Then, a form of positive re-enforcement is to always teach the rules or policies ahead of time. Another helpful means of positive re-enforcement is the use of incentives to achieve desired behavior. Finally, it is absolutely critical that we provided positive re-enforcement by our example. The other side of the coin in developing obedience is negative re-enforcement. A simple principle in punishing children is that the punishment must always exceed the pleasure or enjoyment of the wrong doing. Perhaps, the most basic form of punishment, particularly for smaller children, is the matter of spanking. Much could be said, but let us consider several simple basics thereof.

1. Establish ahead of time the basis for spanking your children. At our house, it was made clear ahead of time that if our girls violated rules in three particular areas, there would be an automatic spanking. (Those three areas were direct disobedience, lying, and disrespect to a parent.)
2. Establish standard implements for administering spankings. There have been numerous implements used over the centuries ranging from switches to belts. We often used paint-stirring paddles.
3. Establish a standard place to administer spankings. We never spanked our children publicly for a variety of reasons. However, at home, we chose a neutral room--that was the bathroom. There on the toilet was the waiting paint-stirring stick.
4. Establish standard spanking policies. Depending on the age of the children and the nature of the offense, we had guidelines for how many swats they might receive.
5. Always stay under control. Never spank in anger or in a fit of lost temper. We always endeavored to be cool, calm, and collected.
6. Spank soon after the offense. Though we refrained from spanking in public, we would try to deal with a matter as soon as was practically possible thereafter.
7. Do not reject your children. Love them. In the aftermath of a spanking, we would always hug our children and tell them we loved them. It also was a time for retrospection as to why they had been spanked. But we always sought to conclude such unhappy times with a hug and kiss.

## **V. THE PRINCIPLE OF SEPARATION**

We touch upon what for some is a controversial point, which is separation from the world. I learned long ago that the biblical principle of separation is exceedingly practical. But that truth did not come into clear focus until I was a father and rearing children. The Bible is clear. We read in 2 Corinthians 6:17, "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the

unclean thing; and I will receive you.” God said “And be not conformed to this world” in Romans 12:2. He further commanded, “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world” (1 John 2:15-16).

Separation from the world and the things which are in the world is not legalism as is often alleged. It is obedience to God and, as mentioned, exceedingly practical. The further we can keep our children from the influences of the world, the better it will be for them.

The truth is, the devil has a target painted on the back of our children and he will do everything in his power to trying and snare them. He has two powerful allies: (1) the old nature and (2) the world. The farther we can keep out children from the deceitful enticements of the world, the less of an opportunity the devil has to reach them. God cried out, “O that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children for ever!” (Deuteronomy 5:29).

Obedience to the biblical command of separating from the world is exceedingly practical. It will help keep them from being enticed by the excitements, entertainments, and allures of the world.

Think of a little girl. Her open countenance and innocence are seemingly pure and wholesome. However, allow the bacteria of the world and its philosophy to begin to work in that sweet child, and before long that little girl may become a spiritually sour, rebellious young woman. We have all seen it. In their preschool and elementary years, they were so cute, so innocent, so wholesome. However, when they reached their adolescent years, they became rebellious, sour, and sometimes incorrigible. That innocent, open countenance became hard and defiant. Their clothing and hair styles became the uniform of whatever the latest fad of rebellion was. Plus, they may actually be doing the stuff that they look like. What happened? The devil, along with his allies in the world and the carnal old nature within, snagged another young person. And the children in Christian homes certainly are not immune.

There are numerous enticements of the world. But let us touch briefly upon several means by which the devil snares the kids in Christian homes.

1. Perhaps more than anything else, the devil uses the power of music to get his hooks into young people. We do not have the space to elaborate at length about the perils of music. But suffice it to say that the world’s music is a primary device of the devil in getting hold of young people, and that certainly includes children in Christian homes. In the years our children were growing up, they simply were not allowed to listen to rock music or any other form of the world’s music. We did not allow them to have a radio, stereo or other type of playback device in their rooms. Technology has changed over the years, but the principle is the same. We currently have a foster daughter in our home, and she is not allowed to play any music on her iPod which is not approved. More Christian young people have been drawn into the world by way of the world’s music than probably any other one means. It is powerful. One of the best things you as a parent can do is control the music to which your children listen. You will never regret that decision.

2. Another powerful device of the devil is television and the proliferation of videos (regardless of the media or technical format). Television and the Hollywood are the quintessence of the world's system. Be extremely careful at what you allow your children to watch. The glamour and entertainment values of the world can quickly draw a child in a Christian home away from the Word of God and the things of God. The devil knows that and he works relentlessly to attract young eyes to the display screen.

3. The Internet is a modern phenomena unknown when my girls were growing up, but it is a reality in virtually every American home today. The Internet can range from extremely useful and helpful as an educational and even spiritual resource to extremely wicked and vile. One can find wonderful spiritual help on the Internet. And, one can find the vilest of pornography and filth there. The up and coming generation is adept at exploiting the latest technologies and websites. We presently have a teen foster child living in our home. We have set down several rules for her use of the Internet. First, she can only go online with the family laptop in the living or dining room where it is open for all to see what she is doing. Second, we require her to give us all her passwords so that if necessary we can monitor what she is up to online. Third, she has been instructed that she cannot visit chat rooms of any variety, nor can she have a My space page. From time to time, we add other popular websites to the off-limits list. I occasionally check the browser history of that computer to monitor what sites are being visited. Our system may not be fool proof, but we are reasonably confident that we have the situation under control. Some parents use filters and they can be very helpful, especially for boys using the Internet. Pornography is just a click away and most kids know how to find it.

You will never regret keeping a very short leash on the usage of the internet by your children. Separation from the world is scriptural and it is exceedingly practical in keeping our kids away from the snare of the devil. It is not legalism! It is obedience to God. You will never regret keeping a substantial distance between your children and the things in the world.

## **VI. PARENTAL PRACTICES**

Over the years, I have come to the firm conviction that the issues of life are fundamentally spiritual. That is, crucial issues of life such as family, marriage, children, and basic happiness are spiritual in nature. It follows, therefore, that core spiritual principles must be established in parents if their children are going to turn out right.

Let us consider several basic spiritual practices on the part of Christian parents which are important to the training of our children. It is axiomatic that we cannot train someone else in something we do not understand ourselves. If we would train our children to be spiritual, godly young adults, these practices must first be developed in the parents.

1. The practice of godliness. As much is caught as is taught. Do our kids see godly parents? The Apostle Paul wrote, "For bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come" (1 Timothy 4:8). We live in an age where athletics are exalted from middle school on through professional sports. A significant section of the daily newspaper is reserved for sports news. The same is true for the evening news.

Athletics and sports are almost a religion in the modern culture. God says that such exercise is limited in its benefits, but godliness is profitable unto all things. Godliness produces benefits for not only this life, but also rewards which will last for eternity. I would submit that we as parents need to set an example of godliness and then seek to train our children in the same. Over the years, I have heard Christian parents plead, "But Junior is a good kid." Ironically, most parents will say the same thing, even those in the world whose kids are in criminal trouble. The question rather is, "Are they godly?" It seems we have raised a generation of young people who are good kids, but not godly. Godliness will not only preclude the problems of sin and the world, it will develop into our children the qualities that God has intended for His people. Yet, the training of godliness begins with Mom and Dad. We must lead from example and practice.

2. The practice of faithfulness. One of the simplest practices of the Christian life is that of faithfulness in day-to-day Christian living that translates into being faithful to the things of God. Or put another way, it means being in church every time the door is open. Jesus said, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life" (Revelation 2:10). The Apostle wrote, "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching" (Hebrews 10:25). The policy in my home, in my parent's home, and in my grandparent's home was simple. Any time the church door was open, we were there. Jesus said, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness" (Matthew 6:33). Inconsistency on the part of Christian parents, particularly regarding faithfulness to the things of God, is a major factor in Christian young people rebelling or drifting off into the world. I have watched this pattern for forty years. Christian parents who are inconsistent in faithfulness have a far higher dropout rate amongst their kids than those parents who saw to it their family never missed. I have watched Christian men who otherwise are good men and basically living for the Lord suddenly set aside faithfulness when deer hunting or fishing season opened. They usually reaped a bitter harvest later as their kids kicked over the traces when they got out of high school. I have watched men in the ministry who were unfaithful to services when on vacation. Their kids took note thereof. Sadly, more often than not, they reaped a bitter harvest later because of their inconsistency and unfaithfulness. A variant of the foregoing matter is that of allowing kids to stay home from church to do school work. Over the years I have known more parents than I care to admit who let their kids stay home on Wednesday or Sunday nights to do school work. "They had too much homework to do." Priorities do not conflict. School work is important, but the things of God are more important. Christian parent, you will never regret being completely consistent in the matter of faithfulness. However, those who compromise on this issue will later wonder what went wrong when their kids head off into the world.

3. The practice of devotions. Deuteronomy 6:7 says, "And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up." The clear instruction here is that we as parents are to teach our children the things of God. One of the most effective ways to do so is to establish a time each day when we sit down and directly teach our children. This is what I refer to as family devotions. Every family's schedule will be different, but we found doing so at the breakfast table to work well.

Let us consider several pointers for establishing simple, but ongoing family devotions. Have a purpose. Over the years we focused primarily on two areas in our family devotions. One was to explain the matter of salvation to our children. They needed to understand the need for it, what Christ did for us on the cross, and the way to be saved. When our children were young and before they were saved, we often focused our daily devotions on this crucial topic. The other major matter we focused on was Christian and godly character. Because righteousness of practice is at the heart of Christian character, all throughout their formative years, we repeatedly discussed the principle of righteousness, the practice thereof, and verses which illustrated these.

Have a plan. One route to success for a family devotion time is to have a simple operational plan which does not require a great deal of preparation. One method we have used over the years, particularly in teaching godliness and righteousness, is to take one chapter of Proverbs a day according to the days of the month. For example, if the day of the month is the 29th, I would go to Proverbs 29, and accordingly. There I would seek out a verse or two which stood out and go over them briefly. Once we had gone through Proverbs, we might then go to Psalms and look for an appropriate verse in a three chapter sequence. For example, if the day of the month was the 15th, I might peruse Psalm 45-47 for a verse to dwell upon. (There are 150 Psalms and seeking a good verse over three chapters was simple and always worked.) Of course, we might go elsewhere to deal with specific problems. Having a well marked Bible wherein verses which have blessed us or otherwise stood out were underlined made it very easy to conduct family devotions this way. That underlining came during personal Bible reading times. We then had a season of prayer where various members of the family took turns praying.

Keep it simple. One of the great hindrances to family devotions is that most people do not have a long term method of sustaining a day-after-day and year-after-year devotional plan. The plan mentioned above is simple and eminently Scriptural. It is virtually inexhaustible. Most parents are very busy with the affairs of life and don't have time to prepare extensive family devotions. Pre-planned devotional guides cost money and usually run out after a month or two. However you do it, have a simple plan of teaching your children the things of God. God has given that charge to the parents in general and to the father in particular.

4. The Practice of Love. Throughout this material there has been an emphasis upon righteousness, separation from the world, faithfulness, and consistency. However, the home ought to be an aquarium of love. We need to tell our children we love them and express it to them in discreet physical affection and by buying gifts for them. Without a question, love will cover a multitude of sins. Love your kids!

## **VII. TRAIN THEM TO WALK IN THE SPIRIT**

Our children were born with a sinful human nature. In the Bible, it is called the "flesh" and it is corrupt. Our old nature is the seat of all sin, corruption, and evil. And our children certainly possess such a sinful nature. When they are born again, God creates within them a new nature, called the new man and also in some cases called the "spirit." The latter, of course, is born of the Spirit of God. At any given day or hour, we will either live (i.e., walk) in the flesh or in the spirit.

When Christian young people walk in the flesh, they are no different in principle than their unsaved counterparts in the world. And, it is when they walk in the flesh that sin appears whether a temper tantrum when they are young, to overt rebellion when they are older, to gross sin in their adolescent years.

The solution to sin and rebellion in the lives of our children is to train them to walk in the spirit. The Apostle Paul wrote, “This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh” (Galatians 5:16). As we train our children to live their lives in the new nature rather than the old nature, a powerful defense against the wiles of the devil, the lust of the flesh, and the temptations of the world will form.

Here are seven tips toward walking in the new nature (walking in the spirit).

1. Insure that your children have a new nature. A child cannot walk in the new man if he does not possess it. This means assuring they have been truly born again.

2. Strengthening the new nature within comes in large measure from the Word of God. If our children are in the Word every single day, they will very likely walk in the Spirit and not in the lusts of the flesh. As noted in an earlier section, one of the most important practices we will ever teach our children is that of being in the Word, daily, yea, day and night.

3. Carefully lay the foundation of righteousness in the lives of your children. The new nature has been created in righteousness and holiness (Ephesians 4:24). As we inculcate the principle and habit of doing what is right as a practice of life, it is synchronous with and parallel to walking in the spirit. The one will strengthen the other.

4. Insist on a disciplined life. The essence of Christian character is the self-discipline to do what is right. The new nature operates on the principle of doing as I ought to do whereas the old nature operates on the basis of doing as I want to do. A life attuned to doing as I ought to do will find it easy to walk in the Spirit. One accustomed to living life based on doing what I want, will struggle with the new nature. A self-discipline to do as I ought (i.e., do what is right) is a fertile seed bed for walking in the Spirit.

5. Train your children to put off the old nature and put on the new each day. The Apostle Paul wrote in Ephesians 4:22-24, “That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.” The analogy is of putting off dirty clothing and putting on clean clothing in its place. We must deal with our old nature on a daily basis. Each day, we need to make a conscious decision to put off the old nature and put on the new. We need to train our children to do the same.

6. A corollary truth is of crucifying our old nature. We need to train our children to pause and pray each day and ask the Holy Spirit to help them to crucify their old nature. We need to do so and so do they.

7. Keep the temptations of the world as far from your children as possible. The principle of separation will be of an immense help for your children as they learn to walk in the Spirit and not in the flesh. The world constantly appeals to the old nature. But the new nature operates on a different channel. The farther away we can keep the world from our children, the greater potential they will have to overcome the old nature and walk in the new.

And so, dear Christian parent, seek to develop these seven principles in training your children. You will not regret having done so.

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