**Parenting in a Rebellious Age**

*Raising Children Without Letting the World Disciple Them*

Series 1-10

By Paul Tackett

VerseQuest Ministries




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**Parenting in a Rebellious Age**
*Raising Children Without Letting the World Disciple Them*

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**Parenting in a Rebellious Age**

**Raising Children Without Letting the World Disciple Them**

**Introduction**

There is a battle taking place in homes all across this country, and a great many parents do not even realize that somebody has declared war. Nobody is necessarily kicking down the front door, climbing through the bedroom window, or standing in the driveway announcing his intention to corrupt the children. No, the modern world has developed a much more convenient arrangement. It comes through the television, the smartphone, the classroom, the entertainment industry, the advertising business, the gaming console, and the opinions of other children who are themselves being instructed by the same influences. It arrives smiling, wearing fashionable clothing, offering entertainment, promising acceptance, and explaining that everything your parents taught you is hopelessly outdated. And the remarkable thing is that parents frequently pay for the privilege of bringing these influences into their own homes. They purchase the devices, finance the subscriptions, provide the internet connection, and then wonder where their children acquired ideas that nobody in the family ever taught them. **The world does not have to take your children out of your house to begin taking your convictions out of their hearts.** It only needs access to their attention, enough repetition to establish familiarity, and parents who have mistaken physical presence for spiritual supervision.

Now, this is not being written by somebody who has never had to raise children and imagines that parenting consists of quoting three Proverbs, issuing four commandments, and enjoying eighteen uninterrupted years of perfect obedience. My wife and I are raising a son and a daughter, and I can tell you that parenting in this generation requires considerable attention, patience, prayer, wisdom, and occasionally the ability to recognize that a perfectly ordinary conversation has somehow turned into negotiations over a pair of shoes that costs more than a week's groceries. We have good children, and I thank the Lord for them. They are intelligent, disciplined, creative, and capable of remarkable accomplishments. They work hard in school, develop their talents, and continue growing in their understanding of responsibility. There is nothing more encouraging than seeing a child voluntarily open the Bible, ask a sincere question about Scripture, or demonstrate integrity when nobody has demanded a performance. But good children still require parenting. Academic ability does not eliminate temptation. Respectful behavior does not remove the need for instruction. A child who excels in the classroom is still learning how to navigate friendships, disappointment, changing expectations, personal convictions, and a world that seems determined to change its standards before the ink has dried on yesterday's announcement.

One of the greatest mistakes parents can make is assuming that because their children are well-behaved, everything concerning their spiritual development is automatically settled. A child may possess exceptional intelligence while lacking the experience necessary to recognize manipulation. A young person may earn outstanding grades while struggling to understand why certain friendships are unhealthy. A son may demonstrate remarkable discipline in school while needing guidance concerning money, entertainment, and self-government. A daughter may possess tremendous artistic or literary talent while encountering social pressures that have absolutely nothing to do with her actual character or ability. These are not necessarily signs of rebellion. They are part of growing up in a fallen world. Proverbs 22:6 declares, "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it." Training does not become unnecessary because the student is gifted. In fact, exceptional ability can create additional responsibilities. **A brilliant child still needs wisdom, a talented child still needs humility, and an obedient child still needs to understand why obedience matters.** Parents who confuse outward accomplishment with inward maturity may discover that they have carefully developed the child's abilities while neglecting the child's judgment.

The central issue is authority. Who is going to establish the moral foundation of the home? Who will explain what is right and wrong? Who will teach children the difference between freedom and rebellion, confidence and arrogance, modesty and shame, affection and manipulation, genuine friendship and purchased acceptance? Who will explain why honesty matters when a lie would be convenient, why purity matters when temptation becomes attractive, and why God's word remains authoritative when the surrounding culture disagrees with it? Deuteronomy 6:6–7 commands, "And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children." Moses was addressing Israel under the Mosaic covenant, and Christians must not confuse Israel's national obligations with salvation under grace. Nevertheless, the principle of deliberate parental instruction is unmistakable. God's truth was to occupy the hearts of the parents and then be taught diligently to the children. The responsibility was not assigned to the surrounding nations, the fashionable philosophers, or the latest popular personalities. **God never intended the home to become a place where parents provide the groceries while strangers provide the convictions.**

The Apostle Paul brings that responsibility directly into the Christian household in Ephesians 6:4: "And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." There is enough instruction in that single verse to correct a considerable amount of modern foolishness. Fathers are commanded to bring their children up, which requires active involvement rather than occasional supervision. They are commanded to provide nurture and admonition, which involves care, correction,

instruction, and spiritual responsibility. But they are also forbidden to provoke their children to wrath. That means biblical authority cannot be separated from biblical conduct. Some parents have surrendered authority because the culture convinced them that correction is cruelty. Others have become so intoxicated with authority that they treat every innocent mistake as an opportunity to demonstrate who owns the house. Neither approach is biblical. A father who refuses to discipline his children because he wants to remain popular has abandoned part of his responsibility. A father who humiliates his children because he enjoys exercising power has corrupted that responsibility. **God did not command parents to raise little dictators, and He certainly did not authorize parents to become dictators themselves.** The household requires leadership governed by truth, affection, fairness, and self-control.

There is also the matter of example, and here the Bible has a particularly uncomfortable way of removing the excuses from adults before they have finished lecturing their children. Proverbs 20:7 declares, "The just man walketh in his integrity: his children are blessed after him." Notice that the verse concerns the man's walk, not merely his religious vocabulary. Children are watching how father handles disappointment, how mother speaks about people she dislikes, how the parents treat one another, and whether the family practices Christianity outside the church building. A man may preach against dishonesty while instructing his children to participate in convenient little deceptions. A woman may speak about kindness while allowing bitterness to govern her conversation. Parents can demand self-control while throwing fits that would embarrass a kindergarten classroom. Then they wonder why their children begin demonstrating the same habits. Well, somebody has been teaching them, and the teacher has been remarkably consistent. James 1:22 commands believers to be doers of the word rather than hearers only. **The Christianity your children watch you practice on Tuesday afternoon may influence them more deeply than the Christianity they hear you describe on Sunday morning.** They are reading a living example every day, and they notice when the pages contradict the Book.

But parenting is not merely a matter of establishing rules and correcting violations. A child can obey every instruction in the house and still believe that nobody understands what is happening in his life. Parents can provide excellent educational opportunities, comfortable surroundings, organized schedules, and regular church attendance while neglecting the personal attention through which trust develops. Proverbs 23:26 declares, "My son, give me thine heart, and let thine eyes observe my ways." That is more than a demand for mechanical obedience. The father desires his son's heart and directs his attention toward an example worthy of following. Parents must learn to listen without turning every conversation into an interrogation. A daughter should be able to discuss disappointment without receiving an immediate lecture about how foolish her concerns are. A son should

be able to admit a mistake without wondering whether the entire household is about to become a courtroom. Correction remains necessary, but so do patience, encouragement, affection, and understanding. James 1:19 commands believers to be "swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath." Some parents could transform the atmosphere of their homes considerably by practicing those three instructions before delivering another speech. **You can win every argument with your children and still lose the confidence that would have brought them to you when they needed your counsel most.**

Modern technology introduces another challenge that previous generations encountered in considerably different forms. A smartphone is not merely a telephone. A gaming console is not necessarily just a game. These devices can become classrooms, entertainment centers, marketplaces, and social environments involving people the parents have never met. The answer is not to declare every screen wicked or pretend that useful technology has no place in Christian life. Computers can assist education, creative work, communication, and the distribution of biblical teaching. Yet parents must recognize that technology capable of delivering great benefits can also deliver extraordinary corruption. Psalm 101:3 declares, "I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes." First Corinthians 6:12 provides another searching principle: "I will not be brought under the power of any." Children need guidance concerning inappropriate content, online friendships, privacy, excessive entertainment, and the difference between using a device and being controlled by it. And parents had better examine their own habits before becoming too impressed with their lectures. **It takes a special kind of blindness to complain that children never put down their phones while delivering the complaint with one eye permanently fastened to your own.**

Then comes the financial education provided by peer pressure, and that particular school seems to be operating seven days a week. Every generation has experienced the desire to fit in, but modern advertising and social environments can turn ordinary childhood interests into expensive demands. A particular clothing brand becomes essential. A game suddenly determines whether somebody belongs. A child discovers that three classmates possess an expensive item and returns home announcing that everybody in the civilized world owns one. Parents must understand that children can experience genuine disappointment or exclusion when they cannot participate in certain activities. Those concerns should not be dismissed with contempt. Nevertheless, the family budget must not become a revolving account established for the purpose of purchasing social acceptance. Philippians 4:11 records Paul's declaration that he had learned contentment in whatsoever state he was. First Timothy 6:6 declares, "But godliness with contentment is great gain." Children should learn gratitude, stewardship, patience, generosity, and the difference between wanting something and needing it. They may enjoy appropriate

possessions without making possessions their identity. **If a child's peace depends upon owning everything his classmates possess, the family will eventually discover that the classmates have become the purchasing department and the parents have been reduced to financing the operation.**

Education deserves serious attention as well. Christian parents should never confuse intellectual excellence with spiritual compromise, nor should they imagine that ignorance demonstrates superior godliness. Proverbs 4:7 declares, "Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding." Daniel and his companions received substantial education while maintaining their convictions before God. Daniel 1:8 declares that Daniel purposed in his heart not to defile himself, while the same chapter records the extraordinary knowledge and ability God gave those young men. They learned in Babylon without surrendering their allegiance to Babylon's gods. Christian parents should encourage their children to develop legitimate gifts in mathematics, writing, art, music, history, science, and every worthwhile field for which they possess ability. At the same time, they must remain involved in what their children are learning. A public school, private school, Christian school, or homeschooling arrangement does not automatically produce righteousness merely because the parents selected it. The responsibility to teach biblical discernment remains. **A child can graduate with a perfect academic record and still possess an empty understanding of the most important questions in life. Education teaches what a person may know; wisdom teaches what a person ought to do with what he knows.**

As children approach adolescence, parents must also prepare them for changes that the surrounding culture may address before the family has said a word. Questions concerning physical development, modesty, personal boundaries, sexuality, relationships, and identity deserve truthful, age-appropriate instruction. Genesis 1:27 establishes that God created mankind in His image, male and female. Psalm 139 celebrates the wonder of God's workmanship. First Thessalonians 4:3 commands sanctification and abstinence from fornication. These truths should be taught without turning ordinary bodily development into something shameful or making children afraid to ask sincere questions. Silence is not protection when the world is already supplying explanations. Neither is premature exposure to adult material a substitute for wisdom. Parents must teach children to recognize inappropriate conduct, establish personal boundaries, and report troubling experiences without fear of automatic blame. They should know that no adult possesses permission to exploit them and that biblical authority never requires cooperation with wickedness. **Purity is not ignorance, modesty is not humiliation, and protecting a child does not mean pretending that danger disappears when nobody discusses it.** Truth

delivered with wisdom provides stronger protection than silence maintained through embarrassment.

Yet all these responsibilities lead to a matter greater than education, discipline, technology, finances, or social development. **You cannot get saved for your children, and they cannot borrow your Christianity.** A child may attend church throughout childhood, memorize Scripture, possess excellent manners, and demonstrate remarkable respect while remaining personally unconverted. John 3:3 records the Lord Jesus Christ declaring, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Nicodemus possessed religion, learning, and social standing, but none of those qualifications replaced the necessity of spiritual regeneration. Ephesians 2:8–9 establishes salvation by grace through faith, not works. The gospel concerns the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ for sinners, as declared in 1 Corinthians 15:3–4. Parents can explain that gospel, teach the Scriptures, answer questions, and pray faithfully. They cannot exercise faith for another person or manufacture regeneration through discipline. Second Timothy 3:15 reminds Timothy that he had known the holy Scriptures from childhood, which were able to make him wise unto salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. Christian parenting must point children toward the Saviour, not merely train them to imitate the religious behavior of adults.

And finally, parents must remember that the objective of all this instruction is not perpetual childhood. There comes a day when sons and daughters must make decisions without father standing in the doorway or mother reviewing every detail. First Corinthians 13:11 recognizes the difference between childhood and maturity. Ecclesiastes 12:1 commands, "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth." Proverbs 3:5–6 establishes trust in the LORD rather than dependence upon human understanding. Children should gradually learn to manage responsibilities, handle money, evaluate friendships, complete work, accept consequences, recover from mistakes, and exercise biblical judgment. A seven-year-old requires supervision that a seventeen-year-old should increasingly be prepared to live without. Some parents are so determined to protect their children that they never allow them to develop the skills necessary for independent responsibility. Others surrender supervision far too early and call negligence freedom. Both errors miss the purpose of training. **The goal is not to raise children who obey only when you are watching. It is to raise young people who understand why righteousness matters when nobody is watching.** Parents must prepare the next generation for the responsibilities that will arrive when childhood has passed.

These ten studies will therefore confront both the world that seeks to influence our children and the parents who are responsible for preparing them. We will examine who is really

raising them, the example they observe at home, the proper exercise of authority, the importance of maintaining their confidence, the dangers surrounding digital influence, the financial foolishness of peer pressure, the difference between knowledge and wisdom, the protection of innocence, the necessity of personal salvation, and the final responsibility of preparing young people for adulthood. Some of these subjects will require strong correction. Others will require patience, humility, and an honest acknowledgment that even faithful parents are still learning. Parenting is not a competition in which the family with the most impressive children receives the largest trophy. Neither is it an excuse for religious boasting. Psalm 127:3 declares, "Lo, children are an heritage of the LORD: and the fruit of the womb is his reward." An heritage carries responsibility. Children are not trophies to display, prisoners to control, or personal property to keep dependent forever. They are human beings entrusted to parents for care, instruction, protection, correction, and preparation. The responsibility is enormous, but it is also one of the greatest privileges a father and mother can receive.

There is no promise that faithful parenting will eliminate every difficulty, prevent every disappointment, or guarantee that every child will make righteous decisions throughout life. Children possess individual wills, and parents are not God. But the absence of guaranteed results does not cancel the responsibility to obey Scripture. Ephesians 6:4 still commands fathers to bring children up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Proverbs still commends wisdom and warns against foolishness. The New Testament still commands believers not to be conformed to this world but to be transformed through the renewing of the mind. Parents must therefore reject both despair and complacency. The surrounding culture may change its fashions, technologies, entertainment, and opinions faster than any family can follow, but God's word does not require an annual revision to remain authoritative. **We are not raising children for the approval of the present generation. We are preparing them to live faithfully before God in whatever generation they must face.** That requires more than sheltering them from the world. It requires teaching them to recognize the world, examine its claims, resist its wickedness, and understand the difference between legitimate opportunities and spiritual compromise.

So this series begins with a question that every Christian parent ought to consider seriously: When your children are grown, what will remain of the instruction you have given them? Will they remember only the rules, restrictions, lectures, and arguments? Will they possess impressive academic accomplishments but little biblical discernment? Will they know how to operate every electronic device while lacking the wisdom to govern their own appetites? Will they understand how to earn money but never learn contentment? Will they know how to appear religious without understanding salvation through faith in Jesus Christ? Or will they remember parents who loved them enough to teach the truth, correct

wrongdoing, answer questions, demonstrate genuine faith, and prepare them for the responsibilities of adulthood? The world will continue attempting to influence the next generation. It has no intention of asking Christian parents for permission. But fathers and mothers do not have to surrender the privilege God has entrusted to them. Open the Scriptures. Teach diligently. Live consistently. Correct wisely. Love faithfully. Prepare patiently. And never forget what is ultimately at stake. **The world may want to disciple your children, but God gave them to you to raise. Do not spend their childhood financing the world's influence and then spend their adulthood wondering why they no longer recognize your convictions. Raise them to know the truth, believe the gospel, walk in wisdom, and stand when you are no longer there to hold their hand.**

**1 of 10 — Parenting in a Rebellious Age — Who Is Really Raising Your Children?**

Key Passage — Deuteronomy 6:6–7 (KJV): “And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: 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.”

There is a preacher in your house, and you may not know his name. He does not necessarily wear a suit, carry a Bible, or stand behind a pulpit. Sometimes he comes dressed as a cartoon character. Sometimes he arrives through a video game, a television program, a classroom conversation, or a little glowing screen that fits in a child's pocket. He may be a classmate, a musician, a celebrity, or some stranger broadcasting nonsense from the other side of the country. But make no mistake about it: somebody is preaching to your children. Somebody is teaching them what matters, what deserves admiration, what should be laughed at, what should be considered normal, and what ought to be rejected. The question is not whether your children are receiving instruction. The question is who has captured their attention long enough to become their instructor. A child does not have to attend a formal class to receive an education in rebellion. Sometimes all he needs is an internet connection and parents who assume that silence means everything is fine.

God never intended the home to become a boardinghouse where parents provide meals, clothing, transportation, and spending money while strangers furnish the convictions. Yet that is precisely what happens when fathers and mothers surrender the daily instruction of their children to whatever happens to be fashionable, entertaining, or socially acceptable. Parents work, pay bills, attend church, provide opportunities, and sincerely believe they are doing their duty. Meanwhile, the child spends hours absorbing lessons about authority,

morality, marriage, money, sexuality, religion, and personal identity from people who may not believe a word of Scripture. Then one afternoon the child repeats something that sounds as though it came directly from a college professor who has spent forty years trying to explain God out of existence. The parents stand there astonished, wondering where such an idea originated. Well, somebody planted it. Children do not develop convictions in a vacuum. If the home leaves a vacancy in the child's understanding, the world will be delighted to fill it. The devil has never complained about having too many opportunities to influence an unattended mind.

The answer, however, is not to turn the house into a prison, treat every teacher as an enemy, or raise children who are terrified of ordinary life. Biblical parenting requires something far more demanding than merely shouting no at everything unfamiliar. It requires faithful instruction, personal example, appropriate correction, genuine affection, watchfulness, and the wisdom to prepare children for responsibilities they must eventually carry without parental supervision. God did not command parents to manufacture obedient robots who perform religious ceremonies on demand. Neither did He authorize parents to abandon their responsibility because the culture has become difficult. The Scriptures present a pattern in which fathers and mothers actively shape the moral instruction of their households while recognizing that every child possesses a will and must eventually answer personally to God. There is a great difference between raising a child who knows how to behave when his father enters the room and raising one who understands why he ought to do right when nobody is looking. One produces temporary compliance. The other prepares the conscience for the responsibilities of adulthood.

**1. The First Classroom Is the Home, and God Never Closed It**

When Moses addressed Israel in Deuteronomy 6, he was not delivering an inspirational speech about improving family relationships. He was instructing a covenant people concerning the commandments of the LORD as they prepared to enter the land promised to their fathers. Deuteronomy 6:4 declares, “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD.” The following verse commands love for the LORD with all the heart, soul, and might. Then comes the order concerning children. Notice the sequence. God first establishes His authority, then demands the devotion of His people, and then commands parents to teach their children. The instruction was not detached from obedience to God. It was part of Israel's responsibility under the law. Christians must not pretend that the Church has inherited Israel's national covenant or that observing Moses' commandments secures salvation. Nevertheless, the passage reveals a principle that has lost none of its force: parents are responsible for teaching God's truth within their own households.

The wording of Deuteronomy 6:6 deserves attention before anybody starts distributing orders to the children. God says, “And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart.” Whose heart? The parent's heart. Before the words were to be taught diligently to the children, they were to be received by the adults. There is the first difficulty. A father cannot faithfully instruct his children in reverence for God's word while treating that word as a decorative object occupying a shelf. A mother cannot expect her children to value truth if they consistently observe her abandoning truth whenever obedience becomes inconvenient. Children are excellent observers, even when they are not particularly interested in becoming obedient students. They may forget the sermon, but they remember the shouting match in the kitchen. They may struggle to recite a chapter, but they can remember every contradiction they have witnessed. God did not tell Israel to begin with a religious performance. He commanded His people to begin with the heart.

Then Moses describes the ordinary circumstances in which instruction was to occur: sitting in the house, walking by the way, lying down, and rising up. That covers a considerable portion of the day without requiring a single computer application, expensive curriculum, or professional consultant. The responsibility was woven into daily living. Israelite parents were to make God's commandments familiar through continual instruction, not reserve them for an occasional religious ceremony. The references to the hand, the eyes, the posts of the house, and the gates further emphasize how thoroughly God's words were to occupy Israel's life. The Christian household is not placed under those ceremonial and covenantal requirements, but the practical lesson remains unmistakable. Biblical instruction cannot be confined to a church service while every other hour belongs to the world. A father who never discusses Scripture with his children should not imagine that a forty-minute lesson once a week will accomplish everything he has neglected. God gave children parents, not merely passengers who happen to share the same address.

**2. Children Are an Heritage, Not Household Decorations**

Psalm 127:3 states, “Lo, children are an heritage of the LORD: and the fruit of the womb is his reward.” That is a remarkable declaration in a society increasingly inclined to describe children primarily in terms of inconvenience, expense, interruption, and lost personal freedom. The Psalm does not deny the labor involved in raising a family. Indeed, its opening declaration warns that unless the LORD builds the house, the builders labor in vain. But it establishes the proper understanding of children. They are not accidental accessories added to an adult lifestyle. They are an heritage of the LORD. An heritage carries responsibility because it is something entrusted to another. Parents are stewards of lives they did not create by their own independent power. They may possess legal authority and daily responsibility, but they do not own the souls of their sons and daughters. A child is not

an extension of a parent's ego, a trophy for public display, or an investment expected to produce admiration from the neighbors.

That truth ought to correct a considerable amount of foolishness on both sides of modern parenting. One parent treats the child as an unbearable inconvenience and resents the ordinary sacrifices required by family life. Another turns the child into the center of the universe until the entire household revolves around the latest demand of a small person who has not yet learned to tie his shoes. Neither arrangement represents biblical wisdom. Love requires sacrifice, but sacrifice does not require surrendering authority. Children deserve care, attention, instruction, affection, and protection. They do not deserve unlimited power over everybody else in the house. A six-year-old may have strong opinions about bedtime, vegetables, entertainment, and expensive toys, but strong opinions do not constitute qualifications for household leadership. The Bible says, “Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right” (Ephesians 6:1). It does not say, “Parents, obtain permission from your children before making decisions.” Somebody must accept responsibility for leading the family, and God has already identified who that somebody is.

Understanding children as an heritage also changes the way parents measure success. Academic achievement is valuable. Artistic ability, musical talent, athletic accomplishments, and intellectual development are blessings worth cultivating. A child who works diligently, earns excellent grades, and develops extraordinary ability deserves appropriate encouragement. Proverbs 22:29 asks, “Seest thou a man diligent in his business? he shall stand before kings; he shall not stand before mean men.” Diligence matters. But a perfect report card cannot substitute for honesty, and exceptional intelligence does not excuse contempt toward others. Parents must beware of producing children who can calculate complicated equations but cannot apologize when they have done wrong. The goal is neither mediocrity nor religious suspicion of achievement. It is the proper ordering of priorities. Encourage excellence without worshipping accomplishment. Reward diligence without making affection dependent upon performance. A brilliant child still needs instruction in humility, and a struggling student is no less precious because the awards ceremony passed him by.

**3. Parental Authority Is a Commandment, Not a Popularity Contest**

Ephesians 6:4 addresses fathers directly: “And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.” Here the Apostle Paul is writing to believers under the present dispensation of grace, not establishing a new version of Israel's national covenant. The preceding verses command children to obey their parents and honor father and mother. Then the responsibility turns toward the father. Notice that Paul does not tell the father to entertain his children until they eventually

develop an interest in righteousness. He commands him to bring them up. That expression involves action, leadership, and sustained responsibility. The father is not permitted to resign his office because his employment is demanding or because his children are difficult. Providing financially is important, but bringing home a paycheck does not complete the biblical assignment. A man can pay the mortgage, purchase every electronic device on the market, and still leave the spiritual management of his household unattended.

Mothers are not spectators in this responsibility. Proverbs 1:8 declares, “My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother.” Scripture recognizes meaningful instruction from both parents. In 2 Timothy 1:5, Paul recalls the unfeigned faith associated with Timothy's grandmother Lois and his mother Eunice. Later he reminds Timothy that from a child he had known the holy scriptures. The biblical household is not a competition in which the father claims all authority while the mother performs all the work. Parents ought to labor together, communicate clearly, and avoid contradicting one another merely to gain the child's approval. Children are quite capable of discovering divisions between adults and exploiting them with the determination of a seasoned politician. One parent says no, the other says yes, and suddenly the child has learned more about negotiating authority than about submitting to it. Unity does not require identical personalities. It requires a shared commitment to doing what is right.

Yet parental authority must never become an excuse for cruelty. Paul places a warning directly beside his command: “provoke not your children to wrath.” Colossians 3:21 adds, “Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged.” A parent who constantly humiliates, belittles, threatens, or corrects in uncontrolled rage is not demonstrating spiritual strength. He is disobeying Scripture while pretending to defend it. There is a difference between firm discipline and the satisfaction of winning an argument against somebody half your size. A child may require consequences, but the purpose of correction is instruction, not revenge. A parent who enjoys making a child afraid has misunderstood the assignment. Hebrews 12:11 acknowledges that chastening is grievous rather than joyous for the present, yet afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto those exercised thereby. Correction is supposed to produce fruit, not merely noise. If the only evidence of parental authority is that everybody becomes frightened when father walks through the door, something is seriously wrong with the atmosphere of that home.

**4. When Parents Stop Teaching, the World Does Not Stop Preaching**

The world has never suffered from a shortage of volunteer instructors. It is perfectly willing to educate children about pleasure, rebellion, wealth, popularity, authority, and moral

independence without charging the parents a tuition fee. In fact, some of its most effective classrooms are advertised as entertainment. A child watches enough programs in which fathers are idiots, mothers are fools, authority is ridiculous, and disobedience is portrayed as heroic, and those repeated messages begin furnishing assumptions about ordinary life. That does not mean every cartoon contains a satanic manifesto or every video game is a recruiting station for wickedness. It means parents must exercise judgment concerning repeated influences. Psalm 101:3 declares, “I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes.” The Psalmist's determination deserves serious consideration when a family decides what will occupy its attention. A screen does not become harmless merely because it is expensive, popular, or advertised as suitable for children.

Modern technology has multiplied opportunities for good and evil alike. Computers can provide valuable educational instruction, access to biblical materials, communication with family members, and development of useful skills. They can also deliver pornography, cruelty, gambling promotions, deceptive teaching, and endless hours of foolishness. First Corinthians 6:12 provides a principle that ought to sober every household: “All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any.” Paul is addressing Christian liberty in a context involving bodily conduct, not writing a manual about electronic devices. Nevertheless, his refusal to be brought under the power of anything provides an appropriate warning against enslavement to otherwise permitted activities. When a child cannot complete ordinary responsibilities without continually checking a device, parents ought to recognize that something has gained too much influence. A machine designed to serve the household has begun giving orders to it.

The same principle concerns friendships, entertainment, and the desire to belong. Proverbs 13:20 states, “He that walketh with wise men shall be wise: but a companion of fools shall be destroyed.” First Corinthians 15:33 warns, “Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners.” In its immediate context, Paul is confronting error concerning the resurrection, demonstrating how corrupt teaching affects conduct. The principle extends naturally to the importance of associations. Children need friendships, opportunities to develop social skills, and experience dealing with people from different backgrounds. But parents who know nothing about the influences shaping those friendships are practicing negligence rather than liberty. Ask questions. Learn the names. Become acquainted with the activities. Pay attention to the subjects that suddenly dominate conversation. A parent does not need to interrogate every guest like a military prisoner, but neither should the family home operate as an unsupervised international airport where anything may enter without inspection. Love pays attention because love understands that influence has consequences.

**5. A School Can Teach Your Child Mathematics Without Becoming His Moral Authority**

Education presents one of the most significant responsibilities confronting Christian parents. Schools teach reading, writing, mathematics, history, science, literature, and numerous valuable disciplines. Many teachers labor faithfully, care deeply about their students, and deserve genuine respect. There is no biblical virtue in raising an ignorant child simply because his parents are suspicious of educational institutions. Yet education inevitably involves more than memorizing information. Every course communicates assumptions about truth, human nature, authority, purpose, and right conduct. Colossians 2:8 warns believers, “Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.” Paul is confronting teaching that would draw believers away from the sufficiency of Christ. Parents should recognize the broader danger of allowing human philosophies to become unquestioned authorities over their children's understanding. A textbook may contain useful information without being qualified to determine the family's theology.

Daniel provides a striking example of young men receiving substantial instruction in a foreign environment without surrendering their allegiance to God. Daniel 1 describes the king of Babylon selecting certain children of Israel who were skillful in wisdom, cunning in knowledge, and understanding science. These young men were to be taught the learning and tongue of the Chaldeans. Daniel did not become incapable of learning merely because he lived among unbelievers. Yet Daniel 1:8 records, “But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank.” The historical situation concerns Jewish captives in Babylon, not Christian children attending a modern school, and the dietary circumstances must not be carelessly transferred into Church Age commandments. But Daniel illustrates something essential: receiving knowledge from an institution does not require surrendering personal convictions to that institution. The young man could learn the language of Babylon without adopting every practice of Babylon. That distinction remains worth teaching.

Parents should therefore remain actively involved in education without creating unnecessary hostility toward every teacher or institution. Examine the curriculum. Read assignments. Discuss unfamiliar ideas. Ask children what they learned and why they believe it. Teach them how to distinguish an established fact from an unsupported assertion, a scientific observation from a philosophical conclusion, and respectful disagreement from foolish argument. First Thessalonians 5:21 commands, “Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.” Within Paul's instructions to the Thessalonian believers, that command requires discernment rather than uncritical acceptance. Children need this ability long before they encounter adulthood. Parents who answer every difficult

question with “because I said so” may secure temporary obedience while leaving the child intellectually unprepared. There are occasions when a child must obey before understanding every reason, but there should also be time for explanation. A young person who has learned to examine claims through Scripture and sound reasoning is better prepared than one who has been taught merely to fear every unfamiliar sentence.

**6. Protection Without Preparation Produces Dependence, Not Discernment**

Proverbs 22:6 declares, “Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.” This is one of the most familiar verses in Christian parenting and one of the most frequently handled carelessly. The Book of Proverbs contains divine wisdom expressed through observations, commands, comparisons, and general principles governing life. This verse teaches the enduring significance of proper training. It does not establish a mechanical guarantee that every child raised in a Christian home must eventually become a saved, obedient adult. Such an interpretation ignores personal responsibility and turns a proverb into an unconditional promise that Scripture does not make. Training matters tremendously, but a child remains a person with a will rather than a device programmed to produce a guaranteed result. Parents who faithfully teach their children should neither become arrogant when those children prosper nor assume every later failure proves that the parents must have committed some hidden offense.

The word “train” demands more than constant restriction. A soldier is not prepared for battle by spending his entire life locked inside a barracks. A carpenter does not learn his trade by having every tool removed whenever he approaches the workbench. Training involves instruction, demonstration, correction, supervised practice, and increasing responsibility. Children must learn why honesty matters, why diligence deserves cultivation, why sexual purity is important, why debts ought to be handled responsibly, and why obedience to God takes precedence over public applause. Parents should teach them to recognize temptation before it becomes a catastrophe. Proverbs 4:23 commands, “Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.” The original instruction concerns wisdom and the guarding of the inner life. Its application to family instruction is substantial. Parents cannot guard the child's heart by simply standing between the child and every possible difficulty. They must help the child learn to guard it through wisdom.

There is a dangerous difference between protecting children and controlling them so completely that they never develop judgment. A young child requires close supervision. An older child should gradually receive responsibilities appropriate to maturity, demonstrated character, and understanding. The objective is not to abandon oversight because somebody reaches a particular birthday, nor to refuse growth because the parent fears losing control. A child might begin by handling small amounts of money, completing

assignments independently, making responsible decisions about activities, and learning to settle ordinary disagreements without demanding parental intervention. Parents remain available for guidance and correction while permitting the child to practice wisdom. Hebrews 5:14 describes those who "by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil." The immediate subject concerns spiritual maturity and discernment, but the importance of exercised judgment is obvious. If parents make every decision indefinitely, they should not be surprised when their children struggle to make decisions after leaving home. The purpose of training is not perpetual dependency. It is prepared responsibility.

**7. You Can Teach Christianity, but You Cannot Manufacture the New Birth**

Second Timothy 3:15 contains one of the most encouraging statements in Scripture for believing parents: "And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." Timothy had received biblical instruction from childhood. Paul had already acknowledged the genuine faith associated with Timothy's mother and grandmother. Notice, however, what the Scriptures were able to accomplish. They could make Timothy wise unto salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. The verse does not teach that possessing religious parents automatically saves a child. Nor does it teach that memorizing biblical information guarantees regeneration. A child may know the names of the twelve apostles, identify the books of the Bible, explain the difference between Israel and the Church, and answer every question in Sunday school while remaining personally unsaved. Religious knowledge is valuable, but salvation is not earned through examinations. God has never established an academic honors program through which sinners graduate into eternal life.

Ephesians 2:8–9 declares, "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast." That is the gospel foundation Christian parents must never obscure. Children need to understand their condition as sinners, the death of Jesus Christ for sins, His burial, His resurrection, and salvation received through faith in Him. First Corinthians 15:3–4 identifies the gospel concerning Christ's death, burial, and resurrection according to the Scriptures. Parents can faithfully explain these truths, answer questions, encourage Bible reading, and pray for their children. They cannot believe on Christ in another person's place. They cannot secure regeneration through parental pressure, religious ceremony, baptism, church attendance, or an impressive family reputation. Nor should they manipulate children into making professions merely to satisfy adult expectations. A child repeating a prayer under pressure is not evidence that the Holy Spirit has performed the new birth. The object is not to obtain a religious statistic for the family album. It is to make the gospel plain.

This also means that genuine spiritual development should be encouraged rather than staged for public admiration. When a child voluntarily opens the Bible, asks a thoughtful question, expresses concern about right and wrong, or demonstrates a desire to understand Scripture, parents ought to receive those moments with gratitude. Answer honestly. If the question is difficult, study the passage carefully. Do not humiliate a child for asking something unexpected, and do not manufacture a supernatural interpretation for every ordinary childhood experience. The Lord Jesus Christ rebuked religious hypocrisy because outward appearances can conceal inward corruption. Matthew 23:27 describes those who appeared beautiful outwardly while being inwardly full of dead men's bones and uncleanness. That warning was directed toward the scribes and Pharisees in its historical setting, but the danger of religious pretense is unmistakable. Parents should never teach children that looking spiritual before an audience matters more than walking honestly before God. The goal is not a household full of impressive little performers. It is a household where God's word is taught truthfully, the gospel is understood clearly, and sincerity matters more than applause.

**Conclusion — Take Back the Responsibility God Never Told You to Surrender**

The greatest danger facing Christian families is not merely that the world has become louder, more sophisticated, or more aggressive in marketing its ideas to children. It is that parents may become so accustomed to surrendering their responsibilities that they cease to recognize the surrender. They provide the devices, approve the entertainment, finance the activities, arrange the schedules, and then wonder why the child's affections increasingly revolve around influences outside the home. Not every popular interest is sinful, and not every disagreement represents rebellion. Children develop tastes, personalities, talents, and interests that may differ considerably from those of their parents. That is part of growing up. But parents must distinguish ordinary development from the gradual replacement of biblical principles with worldly assumptions. Romans 12:2 commands believers, “And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind.” The mind must be instructed. Convictions must be examined. The family must do more than react to the latest emergency. It must deliberately cultivate truth before the emergency arrives.

There is also encouragement for parents who recognize they have neglected part of their responsibility. The answer is not to indulge in endless regret while accomplishing nothing. Begin doing what is right. Open the Scriptures. Speak with your children. Learn what occupies their attention. Establish reasonable boundaries. Correct wrongdoing without surrendering affection. Encourage honest questions. Show an interest in their studies, friendships, accomplishments, and difficulties. Demonstrate that obedience to God is not

merely something required of children while adults enjoy special exemptions. James 1:22 warns, “But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.” Parents who discover inconsistencies in their conduct should correct them rather than defend them through pride. Those with young children must begin early; those with older children must faithfully use the opportunities still available. No parent possesses absolute control over another soul, and no family can guarantee an outcome through perfect procedures. But the absence of a guarantee never cancels a commandment. Faithfulness remains the responsibility even when the results cannot be controlled.

So the question remains: who is really raising your children? Is it the father who opens the Bible and demonstrates obedience, or the stranger who commands their attention through a screen? Is it the mother who patiently teaches truth and reinforces godly conduct, or the passing crowd whose approval changes with every fashion? Is the home developing children who can distinguish right from wrong, or merely producing young people who know how to repeat the opinions of whichever personality happens to be popular this week? The answer will not be determined by how loudly parents declare themselves Christians. It will be revealed through the instruction they provide, the example they establish, the discipline they administer, the affection they demonstrate, and the opportunities they use. Deuteronomy 6 placed God's words in the parent's heart before placing their instruction in the child's daily life. Ephesians 6 commands fathers to bring children up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Those responsibilities have not been canceled by smartphones, changing fashions, or the opinions of modern society. If parents surrender the instruction of their children, they should not be astonished when strangers begin supplying the convictions. The world has plenty of teachers, but God gave those children a father and a mother. The responsibility begins at home.

**2 of 10 — Parenting in a Rebellious Age — Your Children Are Reading a Bible They See Walking Around the House**

Key Passage — Proverbs 20:7 (KJV): “The just man walketh in his integrity: his children are blessed after him.”

There is a Bible in your house that your children are reading every single day, and it may not be the one sitting on the coffee table. It has two legs, two arms, a mouth, a temper, a checkbook, a television remote, and an opinion about nearly everything. It gets out of bed in the morning, complains about the weather, talks about the neighbors, reacts to the news, handles disappointments, and occasionally demonstrates whether the Christianity

being preached on Sunday has survived until Monday afternoon. That Bible is you. Now, before somebody starts polishing his halo and announcing that he is setting a wonderful example, consider something. Children are not nearly as foolish as adults sometimes suppose. They can detect contradictions long before they understand the theological vocabulary necessary to describe them. A father can deliver a magnificent lecture about controlling one's tongue and then spend twenty minutes demonstrating that the sermon apparently applied to everybody except the preacher. The children heard both messages. Guess which one they remember?

A mother can teach kindness while speaking with contempt about everyone who inconveniences her. A father can preach honesty while instructing his child to tell somebody on the telephone that he is not home. Parents can demand respect while treating each other like enemies who happen to share a mortgage. They can insist upon church attendance, Bible reading, and prayer while demonstrating through their conduct that these activities have little influence over their daily decisions. Then, when a child begins imitating the behavior, everybody acts astonished. Where did he learn to speak that way? Where did she acquire that attitude? Why does the child believe that an excuse is an acceptable substitute for the truth? Sometimes the answer is sitting at the dinner table asking the questions. Children may not obey every instruction they receive, but they are remarkably skilled at reproducing habits they have observed. A parent can hide a contradiction from the congregation. Hiding it from somebody who lives in the next bedroom is considerably more difficult.

This is why biblical parenting requires more than establishing rules, arranging religious activities, and maintaining a respectable family reputation. Proverbs 20:7 does not merely describe a man who talks about righteousness. It says, “The just man walketh in his integrity.” Walking involves movement, direction, consistency, and conduct carried through ordinary life. The verse then connects that integrity with the blessing experienced by his children. This is wisdom literature, not a mechanical guarantee that godly parents will produce children incapable of rebellion. A child remains personally responsible before God. Nevertheless, the principle is unmistakable: the manner in which a parent lives profoundly affects the household entrusted to him. Fathers and mothers cannot manufacture salvation, but they can demonstrate what genuine faith looks like when it leaves the church building. The Christianity displayed in the kitchen, the automobile, the grocery store, and the living room is not a secondary curriculum. It is one of the most influential lessons children will ever receive.

**1. Before God's Word Reaches Their Ears, It Must Occupy Your Heart**

Deuteronomy 6:6 declares, “And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart.” Notice where the commandment begins. It does not begin with the child. It begins with the adult who is responsible for teaching the child. Moses was addressing Israel under the covenant established through the law, reminding the nation of its obligation to love and obey the LORD as it prepared to possess the promised land. Deuteronomy 6:4 had already declared, “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD.” The commandments were not recreational religious material. They governed Israel's covenant responsibilities. Christians today must not confuse Israel's national obligations with salvation under grace, but the practical order of instruction remains powerful. God's words were first to occupy the parent's heart. Only afterward does verse 7 command diligent teaching to the children. A parent who attempts to reverse that order has mistaken religious administration for spiritual leadership.

The distinction matters because there is a tremendous difference between knowing the correct religious vocabulary and living according to the truth being spoken. A father may be able to explain dispensational distinctions, identify doctrinal errors, and defend the King James Bible against every critic within a hundred miles. Wonderful. But if he cannot control his temper when somebody spills a drink, his children have just received a practical lesson that contradicts his theoretical brilliance. A mother may know dozens of passages concerning grace, mercy, and forgiveness, yet hold a grudge long enough to qualify it for historical preservation. The problem is not insufficient information. The problem is disobedience to information already possessed. James 1:22 commands, “But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.” Religious knowledge that never reaches the conduct is like a beautiful clock with no working mechanism. Everybody can admire the face, but it never tells the right time.

Deuteronomy 6:7 continues by commanding Israelite parents to teach God's words diligently while sitting in the house, walking by the way, lying down, and rising up. Those ordinary activities reveal that biblical instruction was intended to accompany daily living. The passage was not establishing a Christian requirement to reproduce every feature of Israel's law. It was demonstrating how thoroughly the LORD expected His commandments to influence family life. Christian parents should recognize the same necessity for consistency. Children ought to encounter biblical truth in conversations about honesty, friendship, money, entertainment, responsibility, and disagreements. The family should not have to suspend Christianity during ordinary business hours and resume it when the devotional books appear. A home where Scripture is discussed but continually contradicted by conduct teaches children something dangerous: apparently God has jurisdiction over religious ceremonies but very little authority over actual living. That is not instruction in godliness. It is instruction in compartmentalized hypocrisy.

**2. The Just Man Does Not Merely Talk Right; He Walks Right**

Proverbs 20:7 says, “The just man walketh in his integrity: his children are blessed after him.” The word “walketh” is essential. Scripture does not commend the man for occasionally delivering an impressive speech about integrity. It identifies integrity through his walk. That involves the decisions he makes when obedience becomes expensive, inconvenient, or personally embarrassing. Consider the father who receives too much change at a store. Does he return it? What happens when an employee makes a mistake in his favor? Does he correct the error or celebrate what he considers a financial blessing? What about the business agreement that can be quietly broken because nobody retained the paperwork? Children are receiving instruction during these circumstances. They are learning whether honesty is an absolute responsibility or a flexible arrangement determined by convenience. A parent who steals twenty dollars through dishonesty and then spends an hour lecturing his child about taking a candy bar has constructed a rather impressive monument to absurdity.

Integrity also governs what happens when a person gives his word. Psalm 15:4 describes the man who “sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not.” In its setting, the Psalm describes the righteous character appropriate to one dwelling in fellowship with the LORD. It establishes a searching standard concerning faithfulness. A father promises to attend a school event. A mother agrees to spend time helping with a project. A parent commits to handling a responsibility and then discovers something more entertaining competing for attention. Circumstances sometimes make promises impossible to fulfill, and children must learn that legitimate emergencies occur. But habitual carelessness teaches them that commitments are disposable whenever something better appears. Ecclesiastes 5:5 warns, “Better is it that thou shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldest vow and not pay.” The immediate context concerns vows made before God, but the warning against careless promises carries obvious practical force. A parent's word should possess enough weight that children do not need a lawyer to determine whether it means anything.

The blessing associated with integrity should never be twisted into a guarantee of automatic salvation or flawless children. The righteous walk of a father cannot replace the personal faith required of his son or daughter. Romans 10:13 declares, “For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.” That invitation concerns individual salvation through Christ, not inherited religious status. Nevertheless, faithful parents provide an advantage that cannot be measured merely in dollars. Children raised around honesty have seen honesty practiced. Children accustomed to promises being kept have witnessed faithfulness. Children who observe adults refusing dishonest gain have learned that righteousness possesses value beyond immediate profit. Such examples furnish a

foundation for understanding biblical commands. The father may never leave behind an impressive estate, and the family name may never appear on a university building. But a good name is worth more than a collection of expensive possessions obtained through crooked dealings. Proverbs 22:1 declares, “A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches.”

**3. The Gospel You Demonstrate Must Agree With the Gospel You Defend**

Philippians 4:9 contains a remarkable instruction from the Apostle Paul: “Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.” Paul was addressing believers in Philippi, not establishing himself as a substitute for the Lord Jesus Christ. His confidence rested upon his faithful example as a servant of Christ. Notice the four expressions: learned, received, heard, and seen. The Philippians had received instruction, but they had also witnessed conduct. Paul was not satisfied with giving them religious information while living in contradiction to it. His teaching and example belonged together. This provides a searching question for every Christian parent. Could you reasonably tell your children to practice the Christianity they have seen in you? Would that instruction produce greater faithfulness, humility, honesty, patience, and obedience? Or would the children need to distinguish carefully between what you say and what you actually do?

Paul expressed the same principle in 1 Corinthians 11:1: “Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.” There is the qualification that prevents human example from becoming idolatry. Follow the servant insofar as his conduct follows the Saviour. No parent possesses independent spiritual authority above Scripture. A father who demands unquestioning imitation while disobeying God's word has forgotten the qualification. A mother who wants her daughter to reproduce her convictions must ensure those convictions actually agree with the Bible. Children should respect their parents, but parents must never teach them that family tradition possesses greater authority than the written word of God. The objective is not to produce smaller copies of father and mother, complete with every prejudice, temperamental weakness, and peculiar personal preference. The objective is to direct children toward Christ and teach them to examine life through Scripture. The parent is a guide, not the destination.

This becomes especially important when children begin developing convictions independently. An eleven-year-old who opens the Bible without being ordered to do so, asks thoughtful questions, and begins comparing what he hears with what Scripture says is demonstrating something worth encouraging. Parents should not become threatened because a child asks why the family believes a particular doctrine or follows a particular practice. First Thessalonians 5:21 commands, “Prove all things; hold fast that which is

good." The immediate context concerns spiritual discernment among believers, but the importance of testing claims by truth is plain. Explain the Scriptures carefully. Admit when a question requires further study. Refuse the temptation to invent an answer merely because parental pride dislikes uncertainty. A child who discovers that father can say, "I need to study that passage more carefully," may learn a valuable lesson in intellectual honesty. Christianity does not become stronger when adults pretend to know everything. It becomes more credible when truth matters more than maintaining an appearance of infallibility.

**4. Your Children Are Learning About Marriage by Watching Yours**

Ephesians 5:25 commands, "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it." That is not a decorative verse for a wedding program. It is a commandment placed upon Christian husbands concerning sacrificial love. Paul is addressing marriage within the broader instruction concerning believers' relationships, using Christ's love for the Church as the standard for the husband's conduct. The comparison is not permission for a husband to imagine himself divine or demand worshipful submission. Christ gave Himself. The standard is sacrificial responsibility, not selfish domination. A daughter watching her father treat her mother with patience, kindness, affection, and honor receives practical instruction concerning the character of a godly husband. A son observing the same conduct learns how a man ought to use strength and authority. The father who quotes verses concerning submission while ignoring commandments concerning love is reading only the portion of the passage that flatters his flesh.

Colossians 3:19 provides another direct instruction: "Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them." Bitterness is not an acceptable substitute for spiritual leadership. Neither is sarcasm that continually humiliates one's spouse, public criticism disguised as humor, or the habit of turning every disagreement into a contest for supremacy. First Peter 3:7 instructs husbands to dwell with their wives according to knowledge, giving honor unto the wife. Mothers likewise bear responsibility for their conduct, speech, and treatment of their husbands. Proverbs 31:26 describes the virtuous woman: "She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue is the law of kindness." Children watching their parents converse are learning whether disagreement requires cruelty and whether affection survives disappointment. Marriage does not mean the absence of differing opinions. It means those differences must be handled without abandoning righteousness. A household where every disagreement sounds like a courtroom prosecution is teaching children the wrong curriculum.

Parents must also understand that children should not become referees in adult disagreements. A husband and wife may occasionally speak sharply, misunderstand one another, or make poor decisions. Those failures should be addressed honestly, not used as opportunities to recruit the children into opposing camps. A father should not attempt to secure the children's loyalty by degrading their mother. A mother should not purchase sympathy by continually portraying their father as incompetent or contemptible. Such conduct places children under burdens they were never intended to carry. Ephesians 4:32 commands believers to be “kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.” That instruction applies inside marriage as surely as it applies anywhere else. When children observe their parents admitting wrongdoing, forgiving offenses, and restoring fellowship, they receive a practical demonstration of biblical reconciliation. A peaceful marriage is not one in which nobody ever disagrees. It is one in which disagreement does not become an excuse to stop obeying God.

**5. Let Them See You Pray Before They Hear You Lecture About Prayer**

Second Timothy 1:5 records Paul's remembrance of “the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice.” The word “unfeigned” is worth noticing. It describes genuine faith rather than something pretended for public appearance. Paul later reminds Timothy that he had known the holy Scriptures from childhood, which were able to make him wise unto salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. Those passages do not teach that Timothy inherited regeneration from his mother or grandmother. Salvation remains personal, and Ephesians 2:8–9 establishes salvation by grace through faith rather than works. Nevertheless, Timothy's childhood instruction was significant. The Scriptures were familiar to him, and sincere faith had been demonstrated within his family. What a testimony! The women responsible for his early instruction were remembered not for theatrical religious performances, but for faith that was genuine. A parent's private faithfulness may produce an influence extending far beyond the years of childhood.

Children ought to know that prayer is more than a ceremonial activity performed before meals or when somebody becomes sick. They should observe parents turning to the Lord in ordinary circumstances, expressing thanksgiving, seeking wisdom, confessing wrongdoing, and acknowledging their dependence upon Him. Philippians 4:6 commands, “Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.” A father confronted with a difficult decision can explain why he is praying about it. A mother facing uncertainty can demonstrate confidence in God's care without pretending that every circumstance will immediately become

pleasant. Prayer must not become a stage performance designed to impress the children. Matthew 6:5 warns against hypocrites who love to pray publicly to be seen of men. The principle is straightforward: prayer is directed toward God, not toward an audience. Children should encounter genuine dependence upon the Lord rather than a religious production organized for their benefit.

Personal Bible reading deserves the same attention. A parent who continually tells children to study Scripture while never demonstrating personal interest in the Bible has weakened the instruction through inconsistency. Second Timothy 2:15 commands, “Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.” Paul addresses Timothy as a minister with responsibilities concerning sound doctrine, but the importance of careful handling of Scripture is not restricted to ministers alone. Parents should read, compare passages, ask questions, and continue learning. Family devotions can provide opportunities for instruction, but they should not become exhausting ceremonies through which children learn to associate the Bible with endless speeches and irritated adults. A thoughtful discussion of a passage may accomplish more than an hour of religious lecturing delivered to children who stopped listening forty minutes earlier. The purpose is understanding, not endurance training. The Bible is the word of God, not a household punishment device.

**6. The Parent Who Cannot Admit Wrong Is Teaching Pride by Example**

One of the most damaging ideas circulating among adults is that acknowledging wrongdoing before a child somehow destroys parental authority. Nothing could be further from biblical truth. Proverbs 28:13 declares, “He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.” The verse does not provide an exemption for fathers, mothers, pastors, teachers, or anybody else who happens to possess authority. When a parent sins, the responsibility to acknowledge and forsake that sin remains. A father who loses his temper unjustly should not spend the next three days inventing explanations that make the child responsible for his behavior. A mother who makes an accusation without evidence should not preserve her pride by refusing to correct the record. Authority does not transform falsehood into truth. The parent who refuses to apologize because he fears looking weak has already demonstrated weakness by allowing pride to govern his conduct.

Consider the distinction between correction and hypocrisy. A child speaks disrespectfully, and the parent responds with uncontrolled rage. The child's disrespect was wrong. The parent's wrath was also wrong. One offense does not sanctify the other. James 1:19–20 commands believers to be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath, and explains, “For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.” That final statement is devastating

to the theory that angry explosions automatically produce righteous children. They do not. An adult can correct firmly without screaming, threaten appropriate consequences without humiliation, and require obedience without conducting a personal campaign against the child's dignity. Ephesians 6:4 specifically warns fathers against provoking children to wrath. Colossians 3:21 adds the danger of discouragement. These commands do not abolish discipline. They establish limits upon the manner in which authority is exercised. Biblical correction is not permission for the flesh to put on a preacher's coat and call its temper holiness.

When parents acknowledge wrongdoing, they demonstrate the very accountability they are attempting to cultivate. A father can tell his son that he was right to require obedience but wrong in the manner he expressed his anger. A mother can explain to her daughter that the rule remains necessary even though an unjust accusation requires an apology. Such honesty does not surrender authority. It separates legitimate authority from personal pride. Matthew 7:3–5 warns against the hypocrisy of attempting to remove a mote from another person's eye while ignoring a beam in one's own. The immediate context concerns hypocritical judgment, not the elimination of moral discernment. Jesus concludes by instructing the hypocrite first to remove the beam, so that he may see clearly to remove the mote. Notice that correcting another person remains appropriate after dealing honestly with one's own sin. Parents should learn that order. Examine yourself, correct your wrongdoing, and then fulfill your responsibility. A parent who admits a mistake has not lowered the standard. He has demonstrated that the standard applies to everybody.

**7. Your Example Must Survive Outside the Church Building**

There is a peculiar species of religion that functions splendidly inside a church building and collapses as soon as the parking lot comes into view. The same father who sang enthusiastically about Christian love may spend the drive home insulting other motorists. The mother who listened attentively to a sermon about kindness may begin criticizing half the congregation before the family reaches the restaurant. Children notice the transformation. They discover that certain vocabulary, expressions, and attitudes belong to Sunday morning, while another set governs the remaining six days. Romans 12:17 instructs believers to “Provide things honest in the sight of all men.” First Peter 2:12 likewise addresses the importance of honest conduct among unbelievers. Christianity was never intended to operate as a costume reserved for religious occasions. The Christian parent should demonstrate integrity in business, courtesy in public, respect toward others, and faithfulness in ordinary obligations. The gospel does not lose its authority when the church doors close.

This consistency matters especially in the way parents speak about other people. Children hear how adults discuss coworkers, relatives, teachers, church members, neighbors, and those with whom they disagree. Ephesians 4:29 commands, “Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.” That verse does not require Christians to abandon discernment or refuse to expose error. Paul himself confronted false teaching with unmistakable clarity. But biblical correction is different from gossip, cruelty, and the satisfaction of destroying somebody's reputation. A father who teaches his children to defend sound doctrine while enjoying malicious conversation has mixed truth with fleshly pleasure. A mother who warns against gossip while distributing everybody else's private business has contradicted her own instruction. Children must learn that courage does not require meanness, and kindness does not require surrendering convictions. Truth can be spoken plainly without making cruelty a family tradition.

Ultimately, the example parents establish must prepare children to live responsibly when parental supervision is absent. A child cannot remain forever dependent upon a father to identify every dishonest opportunity or a mother to explain every improper influence. The conscience must be instructed through Scripture, exercised through wise decisions, and strengthened through consistent practice. Hebrews 5:14 describes those “who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.” The immediate passage concerns spiritual maturity, but the principle of exercised discernment provides valuable instruction for parents. Give children appropriate responsibility. Teach them to handle money honestly, complete their work diligently, speak respectfully, and make decisions based upon truth rather than popularity. Allow them to observe your own decisions when obedience requires sacrifice. The objective is not to produce children who merely behave because somebody is watching. It is to prepare young people who understand that God remains worthy of obedience when the audience disappears.

**Conclusion — The Most Convincing Sermon May Never Be Preached From a Pulpit**

Christian parents face tremendous pressures in an age of competing influences, rapidly changing technology, and a culture that frequently treats biblical convictions as relics of an unenlightened past. But the most serious danger does not always arrive from outside the house. Sometimes it comes through the contradiction between what parents profess and what children observe. A family may possess shelves filled with Bibles, excellent teaching materials, and an impressive collection of religious resources while failing to practice the ordinary commandments concerning honesty, kindness, patience, forgiveness, and self-control. None of those resources is worthless, but their presence cannot excuse a life that contradicts their instruction. Titus 2:7 commands, “In all things shewing thyself a pattern of

good works: in doctrine shewing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity." Paul originally addressed Titus concerning his responsibilities in teaching believers, yet the value of an observable pattern applies directly to parental example. Children need more than correct answers. They need to see biblical truth functioning in ordinary human conduct.

That does not mean parents must create an illusion of perfection. No father and no mother lives without sin, and even sincere believers struggle against the flesh. Galatians 5:17 declares, "For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other." The Christian life involves real spiritual conflict, and parents must not pretend otherwise. What matters is whether that conflict produces honest obedience, confession, correction, and dependence upon the Lord rather than excuses for continuing in sin. A parent who fails should acknowledge the failure, seek God's forgiveness, make necessary restitution, and return to faithful conduct. First John 1:9 declares, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." The believer's standing before God rests upon Christ, not flawless parental performance. Yet grace must never become an excuse for hypocrisy. The same grace that saves the sinner teaches the believer to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, as Titus 2:11–12 plainly declares.

So consider the Bible your children are reading when they watch you live. What does it say about truth when money becomes involved? What does it teach about marriage when disagreements arise? What does it demonstrate about prayer when difficulties come? What does it reveal about forgiveness when someone has caused an offense? What does it communicate about the authority of Scripture when obedience becomes inconvenient? Your children may forget individual lectures, and they may not remember every family devotion or Sunday sermon. But they will carry memories of how their parents lived, what they valued, how they treated others, and whether their profession of faith governed their conduct. Proverbs 20:7 still declares, "The just man walketh in his integrity: his children are blessed after him." Parents cannot believe on Christ for their children, cannot force spiritual regeneration, and cannot guarantee every future decision those children will make. But they can walk faithfully before them. Your children are reading a Bible that walks around the house every day. Make certain the life they are reading does not spend six days contradicting the Book you open on Sunday.

**3 of 10 — Parenting in a Rebellious Age — The Difference Between Raising Children and Raising Little Dictators**

Key Passage — Proverbs 29:15 (KJV): “The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame.”

There is a peculiar form of government operating in some modern households, and it would make an ancient Babylonian monarch blush. The king is four feet tall, cannot spell responsibility, has never paid an electric bill, and becomes furious when somebody informs him that ice cream is not a constitutional right. His subjects are two exhausted adults who provide the food, purchase the clothing, finance the entertainment, and occasionally ask permission to make decisions in the house they own. The arrangement is remarkable. A child throws a fit, and the parents negotiate. He refuses an instruction, and the adults explain themselves for the seventh time. He threatens to become unhappy, and suddenly everybody begins behaving as though a national emergency has been declared. Somewhere along the way, parental authority was exchanged for parental appeasement, and the resulting confusion was advertised as enlightened child-rearing. But God never established the family as a miniature democracy in which the least experienced member possesses the deciding vote. Children are to be loved, protected, instructed, and corrected. They are not qualified to govern the household simply because they can scream louder than everybody else.

The opposite extreme is no better, and Scripture does not excuse it merely because the parent happens to possess a Bible. There are homes where authority has become another word for intimidation, where correction means humiliation, and where a father's temper is treated as though it were the voice of God coming down from Mount Sinai. A child spills something, makes an innocent mistake, asks an inconvenient question, or struggles to understand an instruction, and suddenly the parent launches an investigation that would exhaust the patience of a criminal court. Everything becomes a confrontation. Every disagreement becomes rebellion. Every childhood weakness becomes an opportunity for a demonstration of adult power. That is not biblical discipline. It is fleshly anger wearing a religious uniform. Ephesians 6:4 commands fathers not to provoke their children to wrath, and Colossians 3:21 warns against discouraging them. The same God who commands children to obey their parents commands parents to govern themselves. Parental authority is not a license to indulge the flesh simply because the flesh happens to be older, taller, and responsible for the mortgage.

The Scriptures establish a better order. Proverbs 29:15 declares that the rod and reproof give wisdom, while a child left to himself brings shame. Proverbs 22:15 acknowledges the foolishness bound in the heart of a child. Ephesians 6 commands obedience from children and responsible instruction from fathers. Hebrews 12 explains that correction ought to produce the peaceable fruit of righteousness. These passages do not describe a household

where children rule through manipulation or where parents rule through terror. They reveal the importance of authority exercised for the benefit of those entrusted to it. The purpose of discipline is not to produce a child who trembles whenever father clears his throat, nor one who believes every personal desire deserves immediate satisfaction. It is to develop wisdom, responsibility, obedience, respect, and the ability to govern one's conduct according to truth. Children need boundaries because they are still learning. They need affection because they are human beings. They need correction because foolishness does not become wisdom simply by celebrating another birthday.

**1. God Gave Children Parents, Not Personal Servants**

Proverbs 29:15 begins with two words that ought to arrest the attention of every parent: “The rod and reproof.” Notice that the passage joins authority with instruction. Reproof involves identifying what is wrong and correcting it. The rod represents the seriousness of parental discipline and the authority responsible for administering it. The immediate context belongs to the wisdom literature given through Israel, where parents were instructed concerning the moral development of their children. These Proverbs are not a transfer of Israel's national covenant promises to the Church, nor do they establish salvation through family discipline. They communicate practical wisdom concerning the consequences of foolishness and the necessity of correction. The final statement is particularly revealing: “but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame.” A child abandoned to his own impulses does not automatically develop wisdom. He develops habits according to whatever desires happen to dominate him. Neglect is not an educational philosophy. It is the surrender of responsibility.

Consider what happens when ordinary childhood desires become the governing authority of the home. A child wants a particular toy, electronic device, fashionable outfit, or expensive game because somebody at school possesses one. The parents explain why it cannot be purchased. The child becomes angry. Instead of allowing the child to experience disappointment and learn contentment, the adults surrender because they would rather spend money than exercise patience. Congratulations. The child has just discovered an effective method of obtaining what he wants. Repeat the experiment often enough, and the household develops a system in which emotional outbursts function like currency. Proverbs 13:24 places parental love and correction together, demonstrating that biblical affection cannot be separated from responsible discipline. Parents who refuse every difficult confrontation are not necessarily loving their children more. Sometimes they are loving their own comfort more. A child who discovers that rebellion produces rewards has learned a lesson the parents never intended to teach.

Parental leadership does not mean disregarding a child's preferences, interests, or legitimate concerns. There is nothing wrong with asking children what they would enjoy eating, where they would like to visit, or which worthwhile activity interests them. Such conversations help develop judgment and consideration for others. But a preference must never be confused with an entitlement, and participation in a family discussion must not become a claim to final authority. First Corinthians 13:11 reminds us that childhood is a distinct stage of development: “When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child.” Paul uses the comparison in his discussion of spiritual maturity, but the distinction between childhood and adulthood remains obvious. Children are learning what adults are responsible to teach. A sensible parent listens carefully without surrendering the responsibility to decide. Children may contribute their opinions to family decisions without becoming the household's chief executive officers. The family needs leadership, not a permanent election campaign.

**2. Foolishness in the Heart Requires More Than a Friendly Suggestion**

Proverbs 22:15 declares, “Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him.” That statement is considerably less flattering than the modern doctrine that children are naturally wise and merely need adults to recognize their superior understanding. Scripture identifies foolishness as something bound within the child's heart. This does not mean every mistake is deliberate rebellion or that children are uniquely wicked compared with adults. Romans 3:23 declares, “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.” Adults possess the same fallen nature, often with considerably more practice in defending its behavior. But children lack the experience, knowledge, and developed judgment necessary to govern every desire responsibly. They must be taught. They must learn that wanting something does not establish a right to possess it, and feeling strongly about something does not prove that the feeling is correct. The heart requires instruction, not unconditional endorsement.

The rod passages must also be handled with the seriousness Scripture deserves. They belong to ancient wisdom instruction in which the rod served as an instrument and symbol of correction. They establish the necessity of discipline; they do not authorize cruelty, injury, uncontrolled anger, or the humiliation of children. A parent who uses Proverbs to excuse frightening or harming a child has neglected the commands governing parental conduct. Ephesians 6:4 and Colossians 3:21 remain part of the same Bible. Correction can be administered through clear instruction, appropriate consequences, restitution, loss of privileges, and consistent accountability without turning the household into a place of fear. The essential biblical issue is whether wrongdoing receives meaningful correction that teaches wisdom. Some parents have confused the seriousness of discipline with the

severity of punishment. Those are not identical. A consequence should serve the child's instruction, not provide the parent an opportunity to discharge frustration. If your method of correction requires you to abandon self-control, the first person who needs correcting is you.

Foolishness must also be distinguished from immaturity, ignorance, and ordinary mistakes. A five-year-old who forgets an instruction is not automatically staging a rebellion against divine authority. A twelve-year-old struggling with a difficult assignment is not necessarily lazy. A child who asks why a rule exists may be seeking understanding rather than challenging the throne. Proverbs 18:13 warns, “He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him.” Parents should remember that instruction before issuing judgments. Determine what actually happened. Listen carefully. Explain the difference between an accident, carelessness, dishonesty, and deliberate disobedience. These distinctions matter because biblical justice does not treat every offense as though it possesses identical guilt. A parent who responds to every situation with the same anger eventually teaches children that fairness is irrelevant. Wise correction begins by understanding the matter and proceeds toward an appropriate response. That requires more judgment than simply getting loud enough to end the conversation.

**3. Children Are Commanded to Obey, Not Merely to Agree**

Ephesians 6:1 begins with a command that does not require a committee meeting to interpret: “Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right.” Paul is addressing Christian households under the present dispensation of grace. The command appears within his instructions concerning believers' relationships and follows his teaching about walking in the Spirit. Children are not told to obey only when they find the instructions agreeable, convenient, entertaining, or consistent with the opinions of their friends. Obedience is presented as right. That word establishes a moral responsibility rather than a personal preference. A child may dislike bedtime, chores, restrictions on entertainment, or being required to complete schoolwork before enjoying recreation. Dislike does not automatically cancel the command. Parents should provide reasonable explanations, but obedience cannot always depend upon winning a debate with someone who has already decided that the only acceptable explanation is permission to do whatever he wants.

Paul immediately connects obedience with honor: “Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise;)” (Ephesians 6:2). The command originated in the law given to Israel, and Paul cites it in his instruction to Christian families. This does not place believers back under the Mosaic covenant as a means of justification. It demonstrates that honoring parents remains a righteous responsibility. Honor involves more than reluctantly performing an assigned task while muttering insults under one's

breath. It concerns the disposition with which authority is regarded. A child who completes a chore while treating his mother with contempt has obeyed the outward instruction while violating the spirit of honor. Parents must therefore teach respectful speech, honest communication, and consideration for others. But they must model the same conduct themselves. Adults cannot demand that children speak respectfully while continually addressing them with ridicule. The command to honor parents is not permission for parents to behave dishonorably.

The words “in the Lord” must not be ignored. Parental authority is genuine, but it is not absolute authority above God. Acts 5:29 establishes the principle that “We ought to obey God rather than men.” Children should obey legitimate parental instructions, but no parent possesses authority to command sin, conceal abuse, or participate in wickedness. A child must never be taught that honoring father or mother requires silently enduring mistreatment or keeping dangerous secrets. Biblical obedience does not eliminate the distinction between righteousness and wrongdoing. This protects the family from two opposite errors: children claiming that every inconvenience violates their freedom, and parents claiming that their authority excuses whatever they choose to demand. Neither position agrees with Scripture. God establishes order while retaining supreme authority over everyone within that order. The father answers to God. The mother answers to God. The children answer to God. Nobody receives a private exemption simply because of his position at the dinner table.

**4. Fathers Must Govern the Home Without Becoming Tyrants**

Ephesians 6:4 delivers a command that ought to silence a considerable amount of parental boasting: “And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.” Paul does not congratulate fathers merely for being the strongest members of the household. He places responsibility upon them. They are commanded to bring children up, which requires involvement, instruction, care, correction, and sustained leadership. A father who delegates every difficult conversation to his wife while reserving his personal authority for occasional explosions has misunderstood his assignment. Providing financially is important, but the responsibility of fatherhood cannot be completed by depositing money into a bank account. First Timothy 5:8 condemns failure to provide for one's own household, yet provision includes more than purchasing groceries. Children need instruction from the man who has been entrusted with responsibility for them. A father should be known for his presence, judgment, integrity, and faithfulness, not merely the sound of his vehicle arriving in the driveway.

The command against provoking children to wrath deserves careful examination. Fathers can provoke through injustice, favoritism, humiliation, inconsistent expectations,

impossible standards, broken promises, and discipline governed by personal irritation rather than righteousness. One day a particular behavior is acceptable; the next day the identical behavior produces a furious response because father had a difficult afternoon. A child cannot learn stable expectations when the rules change according to adult temperament. James 1:20 declares, “For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.” That verse destroys the theory that uncontrolled rage is a particularly effective instrument of spiritual leadership. An angry father may secure immediate silence, but silence is not necessarily repentance. Fear can produce outward compliance while bitterness develops underneath. The objective is not to make children afraid of parental moods. It is to establish predictable standards through consistent, loving authority. A father who cannot govern himself should be cautious about boasting of his ability to govern others.

Colossians 3:21 adds, “Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged.” That final phrase exposes another danger. Some children are not openly rebellious; they are simply exhausted by never being able to satisfy an unreasonable parent. Their efforts are overlooked, achievements dismissed, mistakes magnified, and weaknesses repeatedly mentioned. Nothing is ever good enough. An excellent report card becomes an opportunity to ask why one grade was not higher. A sincere attempt to help becomes a lecture concerning everything that was done incorrectly. Correction has its place, but continual faultfinding can discourage a child until effort itself seems pointless. Proverbs 15:1 reminds us, “A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger.” Fathers must learn that strength does not require harshness. The ability to speak calmly when irritated is a greater demonstration of self-government than the ability to frighten a child into silence. Authority that cannot survive without intimidation is considerably weaker than it imagines.

**5. The Purpose of Chastening Is Righteousness, Not Revenge**

Hebrews 12:9 asks, “Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live?” The immediate context concerns God's chastening of those whom He receives as sons. The writer compares earthly parental correction with the superior wisdom and holiness of God's dealings. The comparison must be handled accurately. Human parents are fallible; God is not. Human parents sometimes misunderstand circumstances, administer inappropriate consequences, or allow selfish motives to interfere with judgment. God acts in perfect righteousness. Verse 10 makes the distinction unmistakable, explaining that earthly fathers corrected their children for a few days according to their judgment, but God acts “for our profit, that we might be partakers of his

holiness." The passage does not elevate every parental decision into divine perfection. It places human correction beneath the example of God's righteous purpose.

Hebrews 12:11 continues, "Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby." Notice the destination: the peaceable fruit of righteousness. The object is not revenge, humiliation, intimidation, or satisfaction for the offended parent's pride. Biblical correction looks beyond the immediate unpleasantness toward the good it is intended to produce. This requires parents to choose consequences thoughtfully. If a child damages something through carelessness, learning to repair or replace it may teach responsibility. If privileges are abused, temporary restrictions may teach stewardship. If dishonesty occurs, the child must learn to tell the truth and make appropriate restitution. Consequences should be proportionate, clearly explained, and connected to the wrongdoing whenever practical. A parent who invents increasingly severe punishments because he remains angry is no longer concentrating upon instruction. He is allowing the offense to become a personal contest.

Parents must also distinguish correction from the false idea that suffering itself produces holiness. Pain does not automatically make anybody righteous. Hebrews identifies the fruit of chastening in relation to those exercised by it. Instruction, understanding, and a right response matter. A child who has no idea why a consequence was imposed has learned little beyond the fact that an adult possesses power. A child who understands the wrongdoing, recognizes its consequences, and learns a better course has received meaningful correction. This is why parents should explain expectations before violations occur whenever possible. Correction should involve truth rather than mystery. The Bible does not require mothers and fathers to imitate a thunderstorm every time someone disobeys. The best discipline is not measured by how miserable a parent can make a child, but by whether the child learns to forsake foolishness and practice what is right. The harvest of righteous correction should be wisdom, not resentment.

**6. Consistent Boundaries Teach Responsibility Before Consequences Become Expensive**

Children need to learn that actions possess consequences long before adulthood introduces consequences that cannot be reversed with a conversation at the kitchen table. Proverbs 25:28 declares, "He that hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down, and without walls." The comparison is striking. In the ancient world, a city without defensive walls stood exposed to every invading force. A person without self-government is similarly vulnerable to uncontrolled desires. Parental discipline should help children develop the ability to govern their conduct rather than remain dependent upon constant

external supervision. Young children require close direction. As they mature, reasonable responsibilities should increase. They can learn to manage assignments, complete chores, handle money, respect schedules, care for possessions, and accept correction without collapsing into hostility. These responsibilities are not interruptions to childhood. They are part of preparation for adulthood. A home that teaches no responsibility is preparing its children to discover life's consequences through considerably more expensive lessons.

Consistency requires parents to establish expectations that are reasonable, understandable, and appropriate to the child's maturity. A household does not need four hundred regulations covering every movement of human existence. It needs clear standards grounded in righteousness, respect, safety, honesty, and responsibility. Children should know which matters are nonnegotiable and which allow reasonable choice. Parents must also avoid confusing personal preferences with divine commandments. Scripture forbids lying and stealing. It does not specify which harmless hobby every child must enjoy or which color shirt demonstrates spiritual maturity. Romans 14:5 states, “Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind,” within Paul's discussion of disputed observances among believers. That passage does not abolish parental authority, but it reminds us that matters of personal judgment should not automatically be elevated to the level of revealed doctrine. Parents should distinguish God's commandments from household preferences. Otherwise, children may grow up believing that the Bible and father's favorite opinions carry identical authority.

Consistency also means consequences must not depend upon which child happens to be involved. Favoritism poisons family relationships. One child receives severe correction while another escapes because he is younger, more entertaining, more talented, or more skilled at providing excuses. Genesis 37 records the destructive atmosphere surrounding Jacob's preferential treatment of Joseph. The circumstances involve the patriarchal family through whom God was working His purposes for Israel, but the consequences of visible favoritism remain instructive. Parents ought to examine whether expectations are applied fairly while accounting for differences in age and understanding. Equality does not require treating a six-year-old exactly like a sixteen-year-old, but justice requires avoiding arbitrary preferences. Proverbs 11:1 declares, “A false balance is abomination to the LORD: but a just weight is his delight.” The immediate subject concerns dishonest measurement, yet the principle of fair judgment deserves consideration in every household. Children should learn that right and wrong are not determined by which sibling the parent happens to favor.

**7. The Final Goal Is Self-Government Under God, Not Lifelong Dependence Upon Parents**

The responsibility of Christian parenting extends beyond achieving temporary obedience. Parents are preparing children to become adults who must exercise judgment, accept consequences, and answer personally to God. Consider the warning provided through Eli and his sons in 1 Samuel. The priest possessed religious office and responsibility, yet his sons behaved wickedly. First Samuel 3:13 records God's judgment concerning Eli's household, “because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not.” This passage concerns a particular priestly household in Israel, with serious consequences connected to its religious responsibilities. It must not be converted into a guarantee that every disobedient child proves parental negligence. Nevertheless, Eli's failure demonstrates that knowledge of religious truth does not excuse the refusal to address known wickedness. A parent who recognizes deliberate wrongdoing but continually refuses appropriate correction is not exercising grace. He is permitting sin to establish itself without resistance.

At the same time, children cannot be forced into genuine spiritual life through an impressive system of household regulations. Ephesians 2:8–9 declares, “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.” A father cannot discipline a child into regeneration. A mother cannot establish salvation by enforcing church attendance. Parents can teach the Scriptures, explain the gospel, encourage prayer, require appropriate conduct, and demonstrate godliness, but the new birth remains the work of God received through faith in Jesus Christ. Second Timothy 3:15 identifies the holy Scriptures as able to make one wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. Christian parenting must therefore distinguish outward behavior from inward salvation. A polite child is not necessarily saved, and a saved child still requires correction. The household should cultivate both biblical instruction and responsible conduct without confusing either one with the finished work of Calvary.

The Spirit-filled life also provides the proper understanding of self-government. Galatians 5:22–23 identifies the fruit of the Spirit, including temperance. The Apostle Paul is instructing believers concerning the conflict between the flesh and the Spirit, not describing a technique by which parental discipline produces regeneration. Nevertheless, temperance reveals the importance of governing one's desires under God's authority. Parents should progressively teach children to make responsible decisions without requiring constant supervision. They should learn why lying is wrong before somebody catches them lying, why honesty matters when money is involved, why diligence is necessary when nobody distributes rewards, and why holiness remains important when friends encourage compromise. The objective is not to keep a twenty-year-old permanently functioning under the judgment of a six-year-old. It is to prepare maturing sons and

daughters for the responsibilities God places before them. A parent has not completed the work of training merely because the child obeys while being watched. The greater test comes when the child must choose without the parent standing beside him.

**Conclusion — Raise Children Who Respect Authority Without Fearing Righteousness**

There is no biblical virtue in raising a household of little dictators who control adults through demands, anger, and manipulation. Neither is there virtue in producing frightened children who obey outwardly because their parents have made ordinary family life unbearable. One error abandons authority; the other abuses it. Both misunderstand the purpose of parenting. Proverbs 29:15 teaches the value of correction and warns against leaving children to themselves. Ephesians 6:1 commands children to obey their parents in the Lord. Ephesians 6:4 commands fathers to provide nurture and admonition without provoking wrath. Colossians 3:21 warns against discouragement. Hebrews 12 identifies the peaceable fruit of righteousness as the desirable outcome of chastening. Together these passages establish a responsibility that requires both firmness and restraint. Parents must possess enough courage to say no and enough humility to acknowledge when they themselves are wrong. They must correct rebellion without treating ordinary childhood as rebellion and provide affection without turning every desire into an entitlement.

The world will continue offering competing ideas about parental authority. Some will insist that children should govern themselves before they possess the maturity necessary to recognize danger. Others will defend harsh methods that confuse domination with spiritual strength. Neither extreme deserves Christian allegiance. God's word supplies the necessary principles. Children are to be instructed, loved, corrected, protected, and prepared. Fathers and mothers are to exercise authority with wisdom, consistency, patience, and accountability before God. Psalm 103:13 declares, “Like as a father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear him.” That comparison reminds us that fatherhood includes compassion, not merely commandment. Godly authority is never improved by cruelty, and biblical affection is not strengthened by surrendering discipline. Children need to know that their parents will protect them, listen to them, teach them, and refuse to cooperate with behavior that will harm them. The same hands that establish boundaries should be ready to provide comfort, guidance, and help.

So the responsibility rests where God placed it. Fathers, lead your households without becoming tyrants. Mothers, reinforce righteousness without allowing affection to become indulgence. Teach your children that obedience matters, truth matters, consequences matter, and other people possess rights that their desires cannot overrule. Explain your expectations. Practice what you teach. Correct wrongdoing fairly. Refuse humiliation, manipulation, favoritism, and uncontrolled anger. Encourage repentance, restitution,

diligence, honesty, and growing responsibility. Above all, point children toward the Lord Jesus Christ rather than allowing outward behavior to become a substitute for genuine faith. The world has no shortage of adults who have never learned to govern their appetites, control their tongues, accept responsibility, or acknowledge wrongdoing. Christian parents should not knowingly contribute to that tragedy. A home without boundaries will eventually be ruled by foolishness, and a home without affection will eventually be burdened by fear. Biblical parenting rejects both. God did not give children parents so the children could rule the house, and He did not give parents authority so they could terrorize the children. He gave parents the responsibility to raise them in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

**4 of 10 — Parenting in a Rebellious Age — You Can Win Every Argument and Still Lose Your Child's Heart**

Key Passage — Proverbs 23:26 (KJV): "My son, give me thine heart, and let thine eyes observe my ways."

There is a father somewhere who has never lost an argument with his children, and he is mighty proud of that accomplishment. Every disagreement ends with his declaration. Every question receives his verdict. Every objection is dismissed, every conversation becomes a courtroom, and every child knows that the safest response is to keep his mouth shut. The father considers himself an excellent disciplinarian because nobody dares challenge his authority. There is just one little problem. His children have stopped telling him anything that matters. They obey his instructions, complete their responsibilities, attend church, maintain respectable appearances, and quietly count the years until they can leave. The father has won every argument and lost the very relationship through which much of his instruction should have been received. He possesses the obedience of their hands but has little knowledge of their hearts. He can command their presence at the dinner table, but he cannot compel their confidence. And the tragedy is that he may never realize what has happened until the children are grown and the house becomes painfully quiet.

Christian parents can make a similar mistake while sincerely believing they are doing everything correctly. They provide a comfortable home, purchase good clothing, arrange educational opportunities, pay for extracurricular activities, establish church attendance, and maintain standards of conduct. There is nothing wrong with these things. Children need provision, instruction, protection, and boundaries. First Timothy 5:8 makes the responsibility of providing for one's household unmistakably serious. Yet a parent can provide everything money purchases while neglecting something money cannot

manufacture. A child may have a beautiful bedroom and nobody who regularly sits down to hear what is happening in his life. A daughter may receive excellent grades and expensive art supplies while wondering whether her parents know anything about what she is creating. A son may perform magnificently in school while secretly believing that his accomplishments are the only reason anyone notices him. The parents are busy preparing a successful childhood while overlooking the actual child living through it. A furnished bedroom is not the same thing as a furnished heart, and a full calendar is not proof of a close family.

Proverbs 23:26 provides a searching statement: “My son, give me thine heart, and let thine eyes observe my ways.” Those words occur within the wisdom instruction of Proverbs, where a father repeatedly addresses his son concerning righteousness, wisdom, temptation, and the consequences of foolishness. The surrounding verses warn against destructive appetites and immoral associations. The appeal for the son's heart is therefore not an invitation to abandon moral instruction. It is part of that instruction. The father desires more than mechanical compliance; he wants the son's inward attention directed toward wisdom. This is the central issue confronting Christian parents. Authority must be maintained, but authority alone cannot manufacture affection, trust, or sincere conviction. A child must be taught to obey, yet the parent ought also to cultivate a relationship in which truth can be discussed openly. The purpose is not to become a child's favorite entertainer or surrender parenthood for popularity. It is to establish a household where correction and affection belong together, where difficult questions can be asked, and where children know that their parents care about more than winning the next disagreement.

**1. God Said, “Give Me Thine Heart,” Not Merely Your Outward Performance**

Proverbs 23:26 deserves careful examination because its language reaches beneath outward behavior. The father says, “My son, give me thine heart.” He does not merely demand an impressive report card, flawless manners, or unquestioning performance before an audience. In the Book of Proverbs, the heart repeatedly represents the inward seat of thoughts, desires, understanding, and moral decisions. Proverbs 4:23 commands, “Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.” The instruction originally belongs to the wisdom given within Israel, and it should not be confused with the Church's salvation through faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ. Nevertheless, the practical truth remains. Conduct grows from inward convictions. A parent who concentrates exclusively upon visible behavior may overlook the very place where the child's beliefs, fears, temptations, and decisions are developing. You can regulate bedtime with a clock, but you cannot regulate the affections of the heart with a stopwatch.

Notice also the second part of Proverbs 23:26: “and let thine eyes observe my ways.” The father connects the son's heart with the father's example. That is a considerable responsibility. If a father desires his son's attention and trust, his own ways should deserve careful observation. A father who constantly lies, manipulates, loses his temper, and breaks promises should not be astonished when his children become reluctant to confide in him. Proverbs 20:7 declares, “The just man walketh in his integrity: his children are blessed after him.” Integrity is demonstrated through conduct, not merely announced through religious vocabulary. Children learn whether their parents tell the truth when truth becomes inconvenient. They observe whether mother and father practice the forgiveness they recommend to others. A child may not understand every doctrine his parents discuss, but he understands whether their word can be trusted. A parent who wants a child's confidence must stop treating personal integrity as an optional decoration.

There is also a difference between receiving a child's heart and attempting to possess it as private property. The biblical father calls his son toward wisdom, not toward permanent emotional dependence upon himself. Parents are stewards, not owners of another human soul. A child must eventually develop personal judgment and answer individually before God. Romans 14:12 declares, “So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.” Paul addresses the responsibility of believers before their Lord, but the principle of personal accountability exposes the foolishness of attempting to exercise permanent control over another person's conscience. Children must be prepared to stand upon truth rather than merely repeat parental opinions. That preparation begins with trust. A wise father wants his son to bring him difficult questions because he has demonstrated that questions will receive thoughtful answers. A wise mother wants her daughter to seek counsel because she has established a reputation for honesty, patience, and love. Confidence is cultivated through faithful conduct, not extracted through threats.

**2. There Is a Difference Between Listening and Conducting an Interrogation**

Proverbs 20:5 declares, “Counsel in the heart of man is like deep water; but a man of understanding will draw it out.” That is an extraordinary comparison. Deep water is not always visible from the surface. Its contents cannot be discovered merely by standing on the bank and shouting at it. Understanding requires patience, attention, and the willingness to draw out what lies beneath. The proverb concerns the ability of a discerning person to discover counsel within another's heart, and its application to parenting is especially valuable. Children do not always possess the vocabulary, courage, or experience necessary to explain what they are thinking. Sometimes a question about school conceals a deeper concern about friendship. Sometimes unusual silence follows an embarrassing experience. Sometimes irritation is connected to something that has not yet been

explained. A parent who immediately delivers a verdict may never discover what actually happened. You cannot draw water from a deep well by throwing stones into it.

James 1:19 commands, “Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath.” James is addressing believers concerning their response to God's word, temptation, conduct, and the righteousness expected of those who profess faith. The following verse explains that man's wrath does not work God's righteousness. The instruction certainly has practical force within the home. Some parents are swift to accuse, swift to lecture, swift to interrupt, and remarkably slow to hear. The child begins describing an incident, and before the second sentence has escaped his mouth, the parent has identified the offense, assigned the blame, announced the punishment, and scheduled the execution. Then the parent wonders why nobody wants to talk. Listening does not mean believing every explanation or excusing wrongdoing. It means establishing the facts before passing judgment. Proverbs 18:13 states, “He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him.” That verse applies to fathers and mothers too, regardless of their impressive qualifications for being in charge.

A wise parent learns the difference between genuine conversation and a disciplinary hearing disguised as friendly interest. If every discussion becomes an investigation, children eventually learn to provide the shortest answers necessary to escape. Ask about their interests without treating those interests as ridiculous. Let them explain a drawing, a book, a school project, or a game they enjoy. The subject may not be particularly fascinating to an adult, but the child discussing it matters tremendously. Listening to something small today may establish the confidence necessary for discussing something serious tomorrow. Ecclesiastes 3:7 reminds us that there is “a time to keep silence, and a time to speak.” The passage concerns the varying seasons and circumstances of human life, but the wisdom applies beautifully to conversation. Parents do not need to fill every silence with instruction. Sometimes the most valuable thing a father can do is listen carefully enough to understand what his child is actually saying.

**3. Parental Authority Must Correct Sin Without Crushing Confidence**

Ephesians 6:4 commands, “And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.” This is direct instruction to Christian fathers under the present dispensation of grace. Paul has already commanded children to obey their parents in the Lord, so the warning against provoking them cannot reasonably be interpreted as permission for children to rule the household. The father must maintain authority. But notice how the Holy Spirit places a restraint upon the exercise of that authority. Fathers are forbidden to provoke children to wrath. Colossians 3:21 adds, “Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged.” That final phrase

ought to trouble any man who believes that the louder he becomes, the more spiritual his leadership must be. A discouraged child may still obey outwardly. He may simply abandon the hope that his father will ever understand him.

Correction becomes destructive when parents confuse a child's wrongdoing with the child's entire identity. A son tells a lie. He must be corrected for lying. That does not authorize his father to announce that he is worthless, dishonest in everything, or destined for failure. A daughter neglects a responsibility. She must learn diligence. That does not justify telling her that she never does anything correctly. Proverbs 12:18 warns, “There is that speaketh like the piercings of a sword: but the tongue of the wise is health.” Words can correct without unnecessarily wounding. Discipline should identify the wrongdoing, explain its seriousness, establish appropriate consequences, and teach the right course. It should not become an opportunity for an angry adult to unload every accumulated frustration from the previous six months. If correction leaves the child understanding his offense, it has taught something. If it leaves him believing he is hopeless, the parent has added another wrong to the first.

Parents should also recognize that admitting their own wrongdoing does not destroy legitimate authority. Suppose a father falsely accuses his child, discovers the truth, and realizes he acted unjustly. He should acknowledge the mistake. Proverbs 28:13 declares, “He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.” The verse does not contain an exemption for adults holding parental office. A mother who speaks harshly should acknowledge the harshness. A father who makes a promise and carelessly breaks it should take responsibility. The child should never be required to pretend an injustice did not occur merely to protect parental pride. Matthew 7:5 instructs the hypocrite to remove the beam from his own eye before addressing the mote in another's. The passage does not prohibit correction; it condemns hypocritical correction. Parents who practice repentance demonstrate that God's commandments apply equally to those giving instructions and those receiving them. That example can strengthen respect rather than diminish it.

**4. Children Need More Than Provision; They Need Personal Affection**

First Thessalonians 2:7 provides a striking picture of tender care: “But we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children.” The Apostle Paul was describing the conduct of himself and his fellow laborers among the Thessalonian believers. He was not writing a technical manual on family relationships. Yet the comparison is meaningful because Paul chose the affectionate care of a nursing mother to illustrate the tenderness with which spiritual servants had treated those entrusted to their ministry. Verse 8 continues by expressing their willingness to impart not only the gospel of God but also their

own souls because the believers were dear unto them. Think about that. Paul understood the difference between delivering information and giving genuine personal attention. His love was not exhausted by preaching correct doctrine. He cared for the people receiving it. Christian parents should recognize the force of that example. Providing instruction without affection is not the complete picture of faithful care.

The same chapter supplies the corresponding picture of fatherly responsibility. First Thessalonians 2:11 declares, “As ye know how we exhorted and comforted and charged every one of you, as a father doth his children.” Notice the combination. Paul exhorted, comforted, and charged. His illustration of fatherhood includes instruction and accountability, but it also includes comfort. Some fathers appear to have misplaced that particular word between the dictionary and the garage. They can instruct, correct, command, organize, and supervise, but affectionate encouragement seems to require specialized equipment they do not possess. Scripture offers no such excuse. A father should know how to comfort a disappointed child, encourage a struggling son, and express affection toward a daughter without embarrassment. Strength and tenderness are not enemies. Paul used both maternal and paternal care to describe faithful ministry. A Christian household should not require children to search outside the family for every expression of understanding and encouragement.

Affection must also be expressed in ways children can recognize rather than merely assumed because parents provide necessities. A father may work long hours to support his family, and that sacrifice deserves appreciation. But a child may still need an evening of undivided attention. A mother may manage an exhausting schedule of school responsibilities, household needs, and appointments, yet her son may still want her to hear about something that happened during the day. These moments cannot always be manufactured through expensive vacations or elaborate family activities. Often they arise in ordinary conversations, shared work, meals, walks, and time spent together. Proverbs 17:17 declares, “A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.” The verse concerns faithful relationships generally, but its emphasis upon steadfast love is worthy of application. Children should not have to earn every expression of parental warmth through achievement. They ought to know that failure may require correction without requiring the withdrawal of love.

**5. Stop Turning Brothers and Sisters Into Competitors for Your Approval**

Favoritism has a miserable history in Scripture, and Genesis 37 provides a powerful warning. Verse 3 records, “Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age: and he made him a coat of many colours.” The following verse explains that Joseph's brethren saw their father's preference, hated Joseph, and could not

speak peaceably unto him. The account belongs to the history of Jacob's family and the providential events through which God preserved the sons of Israel. It should not be reduced to a simplistic explanation of every sibling disagreement. Nevertheless, the passage plainly reveals how visible favoritism contributed to bitter family relationships. Parents who consistently elevate one child above another should not be surprised when resentment develops. A child's talents, academic accomplishments, personality, or interests must never become the measure by which his value within the family is determined.

Consider how easily comparison enters ordinary conversation. One child excels academically while another possesses artistic talent. One enjoys athletics while another prefers reading. One is naturally outgoing while another is quiet and thoughtful. Instead of appreciating their differences, a parent begins asking why the second child cannot perform like the first. The academically gifted child becomes the standard against which everybody else must be measured. Or the athletic child receives constant admiration while the quieter child's accomplishments disappear beneath the family refrigerator magnets. First Corinthians 12:18 declares, “But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him.” Paul is discussing the different members and functions within Christ's body, not describing biological siblings. Yet his teaching corrects the foolish assumption that identical abilities determine equal worth. Different gifts serve different purposes. Parents should cultivate each child's abilities without manufacturing a contest for family affection. The home is not supposed to become a permanent awards ceremony with one contestant receiving every trophy.

This principle also applies when children struggle. A son may work diligently and still find mathematics difficult. A daughter may possess remarkable creativity while needing additional help with organization. Another child may develop certain skills more slowly than a sibling. Parents should insist upon honest effort and responsible conduct without pretending that every child possesses identical abilities. Proverbs 22:29 commends diligence in one's business, but diligence cannot reasonably be measured by demanding the same outcome from every individual. Encourage excellence where excellence can be cultivated. Praise honest effort when the result is imperfect. Correct laziness without confusing difficulty with laziness. Most importantly, refuse to make parental approval depend entirely upon performance. A child should understand that accomplishments are appreciated but do not purchase love. When children believe they must defeat their own brothers and sisters to earn affection, the family has stopped being a place of belonging and started operating like a competition nobody volunteered to enter.

**6. When Your Child Fails, Will He Come Home or Start Looking for Somewhere to Hide?**

Every child will eventually make mistakes, encounter temptation, experience disappointment, or face circumstances he does not know how to handle. The crucial question is whether he believes his parents can be approached honestly. Some children become secretive because they are deliberately concealing sin. Others become reluctant to speak because previous attempts at honesty were met with ridicule, uncontrolled anger, or unnecessary humiliation. Parents must distinguish these situations instead of assuming that silence always proves rebellion. Proverbs 20:5 again reminds us that counsel in the heart is like deep water requiring understanding to draw it out. A parent who wants honesty should not punish the mere act of telling the truth. Wrongdoing may still require consequences, but truthful confession should be recognized as better than continued deception. If a child receives the same furious reaction whether he lies or voluntarily admits his mistake, the parent has created an unfortunate incentive for concealment.

Galatians 6:1 instructs believers, “Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.” Paul addresses the restoration of a fellow believer, but his instructions reveal something important about the spirit in which correction should occur. The objective is restoration. The required manner is meekness. The person correcting must remember his own vulnerability to temptation. Parents ought to bring that humility into the household. When a child admits wrongdoing, do not treat the confession as an invitation to deliver every insult you have been saving for a rainy day. Establish the truth, explain the offense, require appropriate accountability, and help the child understand how to avoid repeating it. The parent who corrects wisely teaches responsibility. The parent who delights in humiliation may teach concealment instead. Correction should point toward righteousness, not turn a child's failure into permanent family entertainment.

There are also matters far more serious than an ordinary broken rule. A child may encounter bullying, threatening behavior, inappropriate messages, coercion, or abuse. Parents must establish beyond doubt that such matters can be reported without automatic blame or ridicule. A frightened child should never believe that protecting the family reputation matters more than telling the truth. Proverbs 31:8 commands, “Open thy mouth for the dumb in the cause of all such as are appointed to destruction.” The immediate setting concerns righteous judgment and speaking for those who cannot defend themselves, but the responsibility to protect the vulnerable deserves serious attention. Parents must listen carefully, take danger seriously, and act appropriately to protect their children. Biblical authority does not require children to keep harmful secrets or remain silent when somebody abuses power. A home committed to righteousness should be the first place where a child expects truth to be heard and wrongdoing to be confronted. Protection and accountability belong together.

**7. Keep the Door of Conversation Open While Your Children Are Growing Up**

Children do not remain the same age, and wise parents recognize that their methods of communication must develop as their sons and daughters mature. An instruction appropriate for a young child may require further explanation when that child approaches adolescence. First Corinthians 13:11 distinguishes childhood from maturity: “When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things.” Paul uses the comparison while discussing the contrast between partial and fuller knowledge, but the reality of maturation is unmistakable. Children gradually acquire greater understanding, responsibilities, and capacity for judgment. Parents should not treat every question from an older child as an act of insubordination. Some questions arise because the child is beginning to examine convictions rather than merely repeat instructions. That process should be guided through Scripture and sound reasoning, not crushed because it requires additional patience from an adult.

This becomes particularly important concerning spiritual instruction. Second Timothy 3:15 reminds Timothy that from childhood he had known the holy Scriptures, which were able to make him wise unto salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. The passage does not teach inherited salvation or religious conformity as a substitute for regeneration. Parents can teach the Bible faithfully, explain the gospel, answer doctrinal questions, and provide a godly example. They cannot believe on Christ in another person's place. Ephesians 2:8–9 establishes salvation by grace through faith, not through parental effort or religious performance. When children begin asking sincere questions about salvation, prayer, Scripture, or their own spiritual condition, those questions deserve serious answers. Do not manufacture a profession merely to reassure the adults. Do not mock honest uncertainty. Open the Bible and explain what God has said. Children need convictions anchored in Scripture rather than sustained entirely by their parents' presence. A borrowed conviction may survive Sunday school, but it will be tested when the child must stand without the person who taught it.

Maintaining communication through adolescence also requires recognizing that personal interests, friendships, and responsibilities change. A parent may not understand every new game, fashion, technological development, or social concern. That does not justify surrendering judgment, but neither does it require treating every unfamiliar subject as evidence that civilization has finally collapsed. Ecclesiastes 7:10 warns, “Say not thou, What is the cause that the former days were better than these? for thou dost not enquire wisely concerning this.” The verse rebukes unwise nostalgia, not the recognition that genuine wickedness exists. Parents should examine matters carefully rather than condemn

everything new or approve everything popular. Ask questions. Investigate concerns. Establish biblical boundaries. Allow appropriate independence as maturity develops. Above all, preserve enough mutual confidence that serious conversations remain possible. A parent cannot guarantee that an older child will always accept counsel, but consistent truthfulness, affection, fairness, and patience give that counsel a better opportunity to be heard.

**Conclusion — Do Not Sacrifice the Relationship Upon the Altar of Being Right**

There is a dangerous satisfaction in winning an argument when winning becomes more important than righteousness. A father may establish that he possesses the authority to make a decision while failing to consider whether his manner was wise. A mother may prove that her child behaved incorrectly while overlooking an opportunity to understand a deeper concern. Parents must not surrender truth merely to preserve pleasant feelings, but neither should they confuse stubbornness with faithfulness. James 3:17 describes the wisdom from above as “first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.” That is a searching standard. Biblical wisdom remains pure; it does not compromise righteousness. Yet it is also peaceable, gentle, merciful, impartial, and sincere. A parent who possesses the correct answer but delivers it through cruelty has not demonstrated the full character of godly wisdom. The truth deserves better representatives than uncontrolled tempers and wounded pride.

The responsibilities of parenting are demanding precisely because they involve more than maintaining household order. Children require instruction, discipline, affection, encouragement, protection, and personal attention. They need parents who can say no without becoming cruel and say yes without abandoning discernment. They need correction that identifies wrongdoing without declaring the offender worthless. They need the assurance that difficult questions can be asked, failures can be admitted, and disappointments can be discussed. First Thessalonians 2:11 provides that beautiful combination of fatherly care: exhortation, comfort, and solemn instruction. None of those responsibilities should devour the others. A household filled with affection but lacking boundaries becomes disorderly. A household filled with boundaries but lacking affection becomes oppressive. The Bible does not command parents to choose between truth and love. Ephesians 4:15 speaks of “speaking the truth in love.” That principle belongs in the family as surely as it belongs in the assembly of believers. Truth without love can become needlessly harsh, while affection without truth can become destructive indulgence.

So consider what your children experience when they approach you. Do they expect patience or ridicule? Do they anticipate a reasonable conversation or another

demonstration of parental superiority? Are they comfortable sharing their accomplishments even when those accomplishments seem ordinary? Do they believe they can confess a mistake without being personally degraded? Have you established a home where their questions are taken seriously and their growing responsibilities are recognized? Proverbs 23:26 still declares, “My son, give me thine heart, and let thine eyes observe my ways.” Those words should remind every parent that the heart matters. The goal is not merely children who know how to follow the rules while their parents are watching. It is young people who understand righteousness, appreciate wise counsel, recognize genuine love, and increasingly develop convictions that endure beyond childhood. Parents cannot guarantee that every relationship will remain close or every adult child will choose wisely. They can, however, faithfully cultivate trust while they possess the opportunity. You may win every argument, enforce every rule, and prove yourself right a thousand times. But if your children learn that telling you the truth is more dangerous than hiding it, you have won a very expensive victory. A wise parent would rather raise a child who can come home with the truth than one who has learned to survive by keeping his heart locked away.

**5 of 10 — Parenting in a Rebellious Age — The Stranger in Your Child’s Bedroom Has a Screen and an Internet Connection**

Key Passage — Psalm 101:3 (KJV): “I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes: I hate the work of them that turn aside; it shall not cleave to me.”

There was a time when parents could look toward the front door and have a fairly reasonable understanding of who was entering their house. Visitors knocked. Friends introduced themselves. Strangers generally had to explain their business before gaining access to the family. Today, a complete stranger can enter a child's bedroom without opening a window, touching a doorknob, or setting foot on the property. He comes through a screen. He may be a video game personality, a social media entertainer, an online acquaintance, a professional advertiser, or somebody whose real identity nobody in the household knows. He may speak to the child for hours, establish familiarity, introduce ideas, shape opinions, and influence behavior while the parents sit comfortably in another room congratulating themselves because their child is safely at home. Safely at home? Physically, perhaps. But the mind is somewhere else entirely. The modern parent can lock every door in the house while leaving the child's attention wide open to strangers.

Now, before somebody decides the answer is to throw every computer into the nearest river and declare electricity a work of the devil, we ought to exercise enough biblical sense

to distinguish a tool from the wickedness that can be committed through it. A computer can assist a child with mathematics, writing, research, art, music, and countless educational pursuits. The same internet connection that delivers foolishness can provide access to Scripture, sound Bible teaching, useful information, and opportunities to develop valuable abilities. Technology is not automatically sinful because it did not exist when grandfather was twelve years old. Neither is it automatically innocent because somebody printed the words educational entertainment on the packaging. A hammer can build a house or break a window. The moral responsibility belongs to the person using it. Nevertheless, parents who would never knowingly invite a corrupting influence into their living room sometimes hand that influence to their children in a beautifully packaged electronic device and call it a birthday present.

The question is not whether modern technology should exist in the Christian household. The question is whether the household exercises biblical judgment concerning its use. Psalm 101:3 provides a searching standard: “I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes.” David was expressing his determination concerning righteousness, wickedness, and the conduct appropriate to his household and royal administration. The Psalm was not written as a prophecy concerning smartphones, nor should its original setting be discarded to manufacture one. Yet its moral principle is unmistakable. The things deliberately placed before the eyes deserve careful consideration. Proverbs 4:23 commands the guarding of the heart. Proverbs 13:20 warns about the influence of companions. First Corinthians 6:12 warns against being brought under the power of anything. Philippians 4:8 directs Christian thought toward what is true, honest, just, pure, and worthy of praise. These passages expose the modern absurdity of parents carefully examining what enters their children's stomachs while giving practically no consideration to what enters their minds.

**1. David Guarded What Entered His House, and Parents Ought to Notice**

Psalm 101 begins with David declaring, “I will sing of mercy and judgment: unto thee, O LORD, will I sing.” Verse 2 continues, “I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way,” and concludes with this remarkable determination: “I will walk within my house with a perfect heart.” Then comes the declaration concerning what he would place before his eyes. Notice the progression. David addresses his conduct, his household, and his deliberate separation from wickedness. The Psalm concerns the righteous intentions of Israel's king, including his determination to oppose deceitful and wicked conduct among those associated with his administration. Christians should not pretend that David was issuing regulations for digital devices under the present dispensation of grace. Nevertheless, the principle concerning what a man willingly admits into his attention and household remains

perfectly applicable. The eyes are not disconnected from the moral life. What receives repeated attention can influence what occupies the heart.

The expression “I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes” also identifies deliberate responsibility. David does not say that he can prevent every unpleasant sight from entering his field of vision. He speaks of what he will set before himself. There is an enormous difference between encountering something unexpectedly and deliberately entertaining it. A child may accidentally encounter inappropriate material while conducting an innocent search. That circumstance requires guidance and protection, not automatic condemnation. But repeatedly seeking corrupt material, enjoying it, defending it, and arranging opportunities to consume it involve personal choices. Parents must teach that distinction. The Bible does not command Christians to live blindfolded, and righteousness is not measured by pretending evil does not exist. It does, however, require discernment concerning what a person chooses to enjoy. A thing does not become suitable for Christian consumption merely because somebody has managed to squeeze it onto a screen smaller than a sandwich.

That responsibility begins with the parents who purchase the devices, establish access, and determine reasonable household expectations. Children should not be expected to possess adult judgment simply because they can operate technology more efficiently than their parents. A ten-year-old may understand the settings of a gaming console better than his father understands the television remote, but technical ability is not moral maturity. Proverbs 1:8 declares, “My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother.” Both parents possess responsibilities concerning instruction and supervision. They should know which applications are installed, which games are being played, what kinds of communication are permitted, and whether appropriate restrictions are functioning. Such oversight should be explained honestly rather than conducted as a campaign of suspicion. The objective is not to prove that every child is secretly wicked. It is to recognize that developing judgment requires guidance until experience, wisdom, and maturity have been established.

**2. The Algorithm Is Not Your Child's Friend, and It Does Not Love Him**

Proverbs 4:23 commands, “Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.” In its immediate setting, a father is instructing his son concerning wisdom, wickedness, speech, conduct, and the direction of his life. The command to keep the heart appears among instructions to attend carefully to righteous teaching and avoid the paths of evil. This is not a verse about computer programming, but it certainly establishes the importance of guarding inward influences. Modern digital platforms are capable of observing patterns of behavior and arranging content according to what attracts attention.

A child watches a particular subject, responds to a video, or repeatedly selects a certain kind of entertainment. The system learns from those actions and may recommend similar material. None of this requires a mysterious conspiracy. It is often ordinary commercial engineering designed to encourage continued use. The spiritual question is whether what captures attention deserves to possess it.

That distinction becomes important because popularity and profitability are not reliable measurements of righteousness. An outrageous video may attract attention precisely because it is outrageous. A foolish personality may become famous because controversy produces reactions. An advertisement may manufacture dissatisfaction by convincing a child that happiness depends upon obtaining a product he did not know existed yesterday. The system may become increasingly effective at presenting material a particular user is likely to watch, but it cannot love that user's soul. It does not possess parental affection, biblical wisdom, or responsibility before God for the child's instruction. Its commercial success may depend upon keeping the child engaged, not upon helping him become righteous. What an arrangement! A machine studies a child's preferences, feeds those preferences, and then presents the resulting appetite as evidence that more of the same should be supplied. An algorithm can learn what keeps your child watching without having the slightest concern about what that watching is teaching.

Parents must therefore explain why digital recommendations should be examined rather than automatically trusted. A video receiving millions of views may still contain foolishness. A fashionable opinion may still contradict Scripture. A confident speaker may possess very little knowledge, and a polished presentation can make nonsense appear remarkably intelligent. First Thessalonians 5:21 commands believers, “Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.” Paul is instructing the Thessalonian Christians concerning spiritual discernment, but the necessity of examining claims is plainly relevant to what families encounter online. Teach children to ask who is speaking, what is being asserted, what evidence supports the claim, and whether the message agrees with biblical truth. Do not merely announce that everything unfamiliar is dangerous. Demonstrate how to evaluate it. Children who learn to test what they hear are better equipped than children who only know how to turn away whenever a parent enters the room.

**3. A Digital Friendship Is Still an Influence, and a Username Is Not a Character Reference**

Proverbs 13:20 declares, “He that walketh with wise men shall be wise: but a companion of fools shall be destroyed.” That proverb was written long before online gaming communities, group messages, and social media platforms existed. Yet the moral principle concerning companionship has not expired. People influence one another through repeated

association, shared conversations, common interests, and developing loyalties. Physical proximity is not the only means through which companionship operates. A child who communicates with the same group of online acquaintances every evening may receive considerable influence from those relationships. Some online friendships are harmless and may involve schoolmates, relatives, or people sharing wholesome interests. Others involve individuals whose identities, intentions, ages, and conduct remain unknown. Parents must distinguish between legitimate social interaction and careless exposure to strangers. A pleasant username accompanied by a cartoon picture does not establish that the person behind it is trustworthy.

Online gaming deserves particular attention because the game itself may be entirely different from the environment surrounding it. A child may enjoy a harmless competition involving strategy, construction, sports, or imaginative challenges while encountering inappropriate language, bullying, deceptive invitations, or conversations that have nothing to do with the game. Parents who examine only the pictures on the packaging may overlook the communication features operating behind the scenes. Voice chat, private messages, invitations to other platforms, and conversations with unknown participants deserve deliberate supervision. First Corinthians 15:33 warns, “Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners.” Paul speaks within his correction of false teaching concerning the resurrection, where corrupt associations and beliefs threaten proper conduct. The principle exposes the folly of assuming that repeated communication has no moral influence. A child does not need to share a school building with somebody to be affected by that person's language, attitudes, and counsel.

Children should also receive straightforward instruction concerning digital safety. They need to understand why private addresses, school locations, passwords, photographs, financial information, and family details should not be disclosed to strangers. They should know that people online can misrepresent their identities and that requests for secrecy, private photographs, money, or movement to hidden conversations demand immediate caution. Most importantly, children must know they can report uncomfortable or threatening interactions without automatically receiving blame for having encountered them. Proverbs 18:13 warns against answering a matter before hearing it. Parents should listen, preserve relevant evidence where appropriate, block dangerous contact, and take necessary protective action. A child who encounters manipulation or exploitation needs protection, not humiliation. Biblical authority should make the home a place where wickedness can be exposed rather than a place where fear of parental anger encourages secrecy. Protecting children requires more than telling them never to speak with strangers. It requires helping them recognize danger and seek help when danger appears.

**4. What Enters Through the Eyes Can Become a Permanent Guest in the Thoughts**

Philippians 4:8 provides one of the clearest standards concerning Christian thought: “Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.” Paul is addressing believers in Philippi, having instructed them concerning prayer, thanksgiving, contentment, unity, and the peace of God. The verse directs Christian attention toward things consistent with righteousness and spiritual health. It does not establish a prohibition against every fictional story, challenging historical subject, or depiction of evil. Scripture itself records murder, adultery, deception, warfare, and rebellion. But the Bible exposes such things truthfully rather than commanding believers to enjoy wickedness for entertainment. There is a considerable difference between understanding that sin exists and delighting in its presentation. Parents must teach children to recognize the distinction.

Consider the material now available through ordinary entertainment platforms. Sexualized imagery, pornography, degrading humor, cruelty, blasphemy, and the celebration of rebellion can be encountered without entering a theater or visiting an adult establishment. Some material arrives through searches; other material appears through recommendations, advertisements, messages, or links shared by acquaintances. Parents should not assume that an age rating or advertising label guarantees suitability. Nor should they treat every animated character, fantasy setting, or imaginary conflict as inherently wicked. The question is what the entertainment actually presents and how it presents it. Does it encourage admiration for evil? Does it ridicule righteousness? Does it make sexual immorality attractive? Does it habitually present cruelty as harmless amusement? Psalm 101:3 speaks of refusing to set a wicked thing before the eyes. The issue is not whether the entertainment has excellent graphics. The issue is whether its moral contents deserve a place in the child's imagination.

This requires more than simply banning certain titles without explaining the reasons. As children mature, they need biblical standards that can be applied to material their parents have never encountered. Psalm 119:9 asks, “Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word.” The Psalm concerns the importance of ordering one's conduct according to God's word. Parents should use Scripture to explain purity, modesty, speech, righteousness, and the difference between temptation and willful participation in sin. If a child accidentally encounters inappropriate content, respond with appropriate instruction and necessary protection rather than treating exposure itself as proof of guilt. If the child deliberately seeks corrupt material, address the wrongdoing

clearly and provide suitable accountability. The aim is not to produce ignorance about evil but sound judgment concerning it. Children should understand why some things ought to be refused, even when no parent is standing nearby to inspect the screen.

**5. A Device That Cannot Be Put Down Has Become More Than a Convenience**

First Corinthians 6:12 contains a statement worth placing above every charging station in the house: “All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any.” Paul is addressing Christian liberty and the proper use of the body, proceeding to confront fornication and the believer's responsibility to glorify God. He is not declaring that sinful conduct becomes lawful through personal preference. Neither is he discussing electronic entertainment. But his refusal to be brought under the power of anything supplies a powerful principle concerning habits that begin exercising control over the individual. A useful activity can become excessive. A harmless amusement can consume hours that belong to greater responsibilities. Something that began as recreation can gradually become an appetite demanding continual satisfaction. The question is not merely whether an activity is permitted. It is whether that activity has begun governing the person who uses it.

This is where parents must examine the practical effects of excessive screen use. Does the child neglect school assignments because another round of a game seems more important? Does ordinary family conversation become an interruption to constant entertainment? Are sleep, physical activity, reading, household responsibilities, and personal Bible study regularly displaced? Does the child become unusually angry whenever access is interrupted? A single protest does not establish addiction, and enthusiasm for a favorite activity is not automatically rebellion. Children can become deeply interested in games, sports, books, art, or music without surrendering self-control. But recurring inability to stop, neglected obligations, and hostility toward reasonable boundaries deserve attention. Proverbs 25:28 declares, “He that hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down, and without walls.” A person who cannot govern his appetites has surrendered an important part of his defense against foolishness.

Healthy boundaries should therefore be established before constant disputes make the subject more difficult. Parents can determine appropriate periods for entertainment, protect sleep, maintain schoolwork expectations, and establish times when devices are set aside for meals, conversations, worship, and other responsibilities. Such rules should reflect the child's age, maturity, needs, and legitimate interests. A teenager completing research or communicating about an assignment is not necessarily engaged in the same activity as a younger child watching entertainment for hours. Wisdom distinguishes use from misuse. Ecclesiastes 3:1 declares, “To every thing there is a season, and a time to

every purpose under the heaven." The historical and literary setting concerns the various appointed circumstances of life, not a detailed schedule for electronic devices. Nevertheless, the principle of proper time and purpose is fitting. Recreation has its place, but it must not swallow every other responsibility. When entertainment becomes impossible to interrupt, somebody has confused a privilege with a master.

**6. Parents Who Cannot Put Down Their Own Phones Have a Serious Credibility Problem**

There is another stranger at the dinner table, and sometimes he is sitting directly in the parent's hand. A father instructs his children to stop staring at screens while he checks his messages for the fifteenth time during supper. A mother complains that nobody communicates anymore while responding to every notification that appears upon her device. Parents announce that children are too interested in technology, then spend the evening absorbed in arguments with strangers on the internet. The children are not required to possess advanced theological training to recognize the contradiction. Romans 2:21 asks, "Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself?" Paul is confronting Jewish religious confidence and hypocrisy, not delivering a lecture on modern parenting. Nevertheless, the principle is devastatingly clear. A person who teaches others ought to examine whether he practices the instruction. It is difficult to convince a child that the phone must not govern his life when the phone appears to be governing yours.

Parents must also consider the example they establish through their online behavior. A father who spends hours trading insults with strangers is teaching something about the use of speech. A mother who constantly compares her possessions, appearance, or family with polished images displayed online is demonstrating something about contentment. Adults who share unverified accusations, indulge in gossip, mock other people, or become consumed by arguments are not innocent merely because their children are occupied elsewhere. Ephesians 4:29 commands, "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers." That instruction applies to typed words as surely as spoken ones. Proverbs 15:1 declares, "A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger." A Christian's conduct does not become exempt from biblical standards because the discussion takes place behind a keyboard. Parents should demonstrate discernment, courtesy, honesty, and restraint in the digital environment they expect their children to navigate.

Children also require something better than the mere removal of electronic devices. Parents must offer genuine attention and meaningful opportunities to develop worthwhile interests. Shared reading, physical activity, outdoor recreation, music, art, practical

projects, conversation, family meals, and time spent serving others can establish habits that do not revolve around constant entertainment. Deuteronomy 6:7 commanded Israelite parents to teach God's words in the ordinary movements of daily life, while sitting, walking, lying down, and rising up. That covenant instruction belongs to Israel under the law, but the importance of faithful family instruction remains applicable. Modern technology can assist parents in these responsibilities, but it cannot replace their presence. A father who puts down his device to listen attentively to his son may accomplish something more valuable than winning another online argument. A mother who takes an interest in her daughter's creative work may cultivate a relationship no digital entertainment can reproduce. Children need parents who are present, not merely adults occupying the same building.

**7. Teach Discernment Before the Day Your Children Must Stand Without You**

The ultimate objective of parental supervision is not to control every electronic interaction until the child reaches adulthood and suddenly receives unrestricted access without preparation. That is not training. That is postponement. Proverbs 22:6 declares, “Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.” The proverb teaches the enduring importance of proper instruction, not an unconditional guarantee that faithful parents can manufacture every future decision of another human being. Training involves more than restriction. It includes explanation, supervised experience, appropriate responsibility, correction, and the development of sound judgment. A young child may require strict limitations and closely supervised access. An older child who demonstrates maturity can gradually receive greater responsibility while remaining accountable. The purpose is to prepare the child to recognize danger and refuse wrongdoing without requiring a parent to stand beside him for the remainder of his natural life.

Spiritual discernment requires personal understanding of Scripture. Second Timothy 3:15 reminds Timothy that from childhood he had known the holy Scriptures, “which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.” Timothy's mother and grandmother provided an important example of sincere faith, but their convictions could not substitute for Timothy's own responsibility before God. Salvation remains by grace through faith in Jesus Christ, as Ephesians 2:8–9 plainly declares. The new birth cannot be produced through parental restrictions or electronic monitoring. Likewise, spiritual maturity requires more than learning how to avoid being caught. Parents must teach their children why righteousness matters, why certain influences are dangerous, and how to evaluate conflicting claims through God's word. Hebrews 5:14 describes mature discernment exercised through use. The Christian child should progressively learn to distinguish truth from falsehood, wholesome recreation from corrupt entertainment, and

legitimate friendship from manipulation. The conscience must be instructed, not merely surrounded by electronic fences.

This also means recognizing technology's legitimate value as children develop their talents and responsibilities. A child interested in writing can use digital resources to study language and develop original work. A young artist can learn useful creative skills, examine techniques, and share appropriate accomplishments. Students can research subjects, communicate with teachers, and develop abilities that may serve them throughout adulthood. Christians can use technology to distribute Scripture, encourage believers, and accomplish worthwhile ministry. None of these benefits requires pretending that the dangers are imaginary. Philippians 4:8 does not command believers to abandon useful instruments. It commands them to direct their thinking toward what is righteous and worthy of approval. Parents should teach children to approach technology as a servant rather than a source of identity, moral authority, or constant gratification. The goal is not to raise children who are helpless without parental restrictions, but young people who understand why some doors should remain closed even when they possess the key.

**Conclusion — Do Not Hand the World the Keys and Then Complain About the Occupants**

The stranger in your child's bedroom may not be physically present, but the influence entering through a digital device can be considerable. That influence may educate, encourage, entertain, deceive, corrupt, manipulate, or exploit, depending upon the people involved, the material presented, and the manner in which it is received. Parents who assume that everything digital is dangerous have failed to exercise proper discernment. Parents who assume that everything digital is harmless because children enjoy it have committed the opposite error. The Bible provides a more substantial foundation than either panic or indifference. Psalm 101:3 establishes deliberate separation from wickedness. Proverbs 4:23 emphasizes guarding the heart. Proverbs 13:20 exposes the influence of companionship. First Corinthians 6:12 warns against surrendering self-government. Philippians 4:8 directs Christian thought toward righteousness. These truths require parents to exercise oversight without becoming suspicious tyrants and to provide freedom without abandoning responsibility. The world does not need to become the chief instructor of a Christian household merely because its technology is convenient.

Begin with the responsibilities that belong to the home. Learn what the devices can do. Understand the communication features, review the entertainment being consumed, establish sensible privacy protections, and determine age-appropriate expectations. Explain why certain material is unacceptable instead of treating biblical standards as arbitrary parental preferences. Encourage children to report threatening or inappropriate

interactions, and respond with protection rather than humiliation. Establish reasonable boundaries concerning time, content, communication, and household responsibilities. Examine your own habits with the same seriousness you apply to theirs. Parents should also continue learning because technological developments will not stop while adults catch up. James 1:22 commands, “But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.” It accomplishes little to deliver an impressive lecture about digital dangers while refusing the ordinary work of supervision, conversation, and faithful example. The answer to careless technology use is not louder complaining about the world. It is wiser governing of the household.

One day your children will make decisions without asking permission. They will encounter influences you never personally examined, technologies you never used, and people whose intentions you cannot investigate beforehand. That reality should not produce despair. It should establish the importance of faithful instruction today. Teach them the Scriptures. Encourage personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Cultivate honesty, wisdom, self-control, and the courage to refuse wrongdoing. Demonstrate that technology can be useful without becoming indispensable and enjoyable without becoming a master. Remind them that popularity is not righteousness, that entertainment is not automatically harmless, and that every confident voice deserves examination before receiving trust. David declared, “I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes.” Christian parents should possess enough conviction to apply that principle to their own conduct before teaching their children to practice it. You may lock the front door, install the finest security system, and know exactly who walks onto your property. But if you surrender the supervision of your children's digital lives, you may be guarding the house while strangers are furnishing the minds of the people living inside it. The screen is only a tool. Make certain it never becomes the parent.

**6 of 10 — Parenting in a Rebellious Age — Everybody Else Has One: When Peer Pressure Becomes the Family Budget**

Key Passage — Romans 12:2 (KJV): “And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.”

There is a financial crisis developing in certain Christian households, and apparently it begins every Monday morning when the children return to school. By Tuesday, somebody has discovered a new pair of shoes that costs approximately what grandfather once paid

for a used automobile. By Wednesday, a particular electronic game has become essential to human survival. Thursday brings an announcement that the clothing purchased three weeks earlier is now hopelessly outdated, and by Friday the family is informed that everybody in the entire school possesses something except the poor, neglected child standing before his parents. Everybody! Not three friends, not six classmates, but apparently every living creature within the school district. The parents are expected to respond with immediate financial cooperation. Never mind the mortgage, groceries, electric bill, or the fact that money does not reproduce itself in the checking account. The child has spoken. The classmates have voted. The advertisers have issued their recommendations. Now mother and father are supposed to open their wallets and demonstrate their commitment to modern civilization.

Every generation has experienced some form of this foolishness, although the merchandise changes faster than the seasons. Yesterday it was a particular jacket, bicycle, or pair of athletic shoes. Today it may be a smartphone, gaming system, digital subscription, designer clothing, expensive accessories, or the latest product being advertised by an entertainer whose primary qualification is persuading people to spend money. Children want to belong. They notice what their friends possess, listen to conversations about popular interests, and sometimes feel genuinely excluded when they cannot participate. That desire for acceptance is not automatically sinful. The problem begins when acceptance is purchased at the expense of judgment, contentment, and family responsibility. Parents must distinguish ordinary childhood interests from covetousness and genuine social difficulties from manufactured emergencies. A child may sincerely enjoy something popular without worshipping it. But when the family's financial decisions become governed by the purchasing habits of classmates, somebody has allowed the school cafeteria to become the household's financial planning department.

The Apostle Paul provides a standard that reaches considerably deeper than clothing brands and electronic entertainment. Romans 12:2 commands believers not to be conformed to this world but to be transformed through the renewing of the mind. That command concerns the Christian's response to the mercies of God and the responsibility to present his body as a living sacrifice. It was not written as a prohibition against fashionable shoes or enjoyable recreation. Nevertheless, it exposes the spiritual danger of allowing worldly expectations to determine personal convictions and conduct. Proverbs 13:20 warns concerning companions. First Corinthians 15:33 identifies the corrupting influence of evil communications. Philippians 4 teaches contentment under changing circumstances, while 1 Timothy 6 confronts the deadly deception associated with covetousness and the love of money. These passages establish the foundation for raising children who can enjoy legitimate blessings without allowing possessions to become their

masters. The object is not to raise children who own nothing fashionable, but children who understand that their worth is not determined by what somebody else happens to own.

**1. The World Does Not Need Your Permission to Establish Its Fashions**

Romans 12:2 begins with an unmistakable command: “And be not conformed to this world.” Paul is writing to believers who have been justified by faith and instructed concerning their position in Christ. Romans 12 follows eleven chapters of substantial doctrinal teaching concerning sin, justification, sanctification, Israel, and the righteousness of God. Paul begins the chapter by beseeching believers through the mercies of God to present their bodies as living sacrifices. The command against conformity follows immediately. Salvation is not obtained by refusing fashionable merchandise, and eternal life is not maintained through carefully selected clothing. Ephesians 2:8–9 establishes salvation by grace through faith, not works. But the believer who has received salvation is commanded to live differently from the world. The distinction concerns the governing authority of the life. Christians are not to surrender their minds, convictions, and conduct to the changing standards of an ungodly system.

The world does not ordinarily announce its influence by presenting a formal declaration of war against the Christian household. Much of its influence arrives through ordinary desires, advertisements, entertainment, and social expectations. A child sees a product repeatedly, hears classmates praising it, watches personalities promoting it, and eventually begins believing that possession of the item is necessary for acceptance. The product itself may be perfectly harmless. The spiritual difficulty appears when somebody else's possessions become the standard by which the child judges his own happiness. Proverbs 27:20 declares, “Hell and destruction are never full; so the eyes of man are never satisfied.” There is a considerable amount of biblical wisdom in that comparison. Human appetite possesses an extraordinary ability to discover another desire immediately after the previous desire has been satisfied. The world can sell a child yesterday's happiness at today's price and convince him tomorrow that he needs something else.

Romans 12:2 continues, “but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind.” That is the positive command. Christianity is not merely a collection of prohibitions. The believer's thinking must be brought into agreement with God's truth. Parents should therefore teach children to examine the reasons behind their desires. Why is this particular item important? Is it useful, enjoyable, necessary, or merely fashionable? Does the desire arise from genuine interest or from fear of being different? Will the purchase interfere with more important responsibilities? Such questions do not require condemning every popular product. A Christian child can enjoy ordinary clothing, technology, sports, art, and recreation without violating Scripture. The issue is whether the possession remains a

useful blessing or becomes an authority over the heart. A renewed mind learns to distinguish value from popularity. The world asks what everybody else is doing. Scripture asks whether what is being done is right.

**2. When Friends Become the Purchasing Department of the Household**

Proverbs 13:20 declares, “He that walketh with wise men shall be wise: but a companion of fools shall be destroyed.” This statement belongs to the wisdom literature of Israel and identifies the moral importance of companionship. The passage does not teach that every unbelieving acquaintance must be treated as an enemy or that Christian children should avoid ordinary social interaction. It warns that repeated association influences conduct and judgment. Children are especially affected by the opinions of people they admire. A friend praises a certain game, and the game becomes interesting. Several classmates wear a particular brand, and suddenly the brand appears essential. A group begins ridiculing anyone without the latest device, and children may feel pressure to join the crowd or risk becoming its next target. The merchandise is only part of the issue. Beneath the purchase lies the question of whose approval has become important enough to govern decisions.

First Corinthians 15:33 provides another warning: “Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners.” Paul is addressing the Corinthian believers concerning the resurrection and the destructive consequences of false teaching. His warning identifies the relationship between corrupt influence and conduct. It should not be reduced to a claim that possessing ordinary friendships outside the church is inherently wicked. Nevertheless, parents must recognize that conversations influence expectations. A child who continually hears classmates measure personal worth through possessions may begin adopting the same standard. The solution is not to forbid every friendship or announce that all schoolchildren are corrupting agents of Satan. That would be a magnificent method of teaching children to distrust parental judgment. Instead, examine the character of the friendships. Are these companions honest, respectful, considerate, and responsible? Do they encourage good conduct, or does belonging require dishonesty, cruelty, rebellion, or continual spending?

Parents should take an interest in these friendships before a difficulty develops. Learn the names of the children. Invite appropriate friends into the home. Listen when your son describes his classmates or your daughter discusses what happened at school. Sometimes a popular game or shared interest provides a harmless opportunity for friendship. At other times, a group may deliberately exclude those who do not purchase particular merchandise. These situations require discernment rather than automatic condemnation. Proverbs 18:13 warns, “He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him.” A parent should understand the circumstances before

delivering judgment. The objective is to teach children that friendship rests upon character rather than merchandise. A companion who requires you to purchase his approval is not offering friendship. He is operating a business, and you have become the customer.

**3. Covetousness Can Wear Expensive Shoes and Still Be Covetousness**

First Timothy 6:6 declares, “But godliness with contentment is great gain.” Paul was instructing Timothy concerning false teaching, corrupt motives, the dangers associated with wealth, and the proper conduct of a servant of God. Earlier in the chapter, he condemns those who suppose that gain is godliness. The warning is not that possessing money automatically makes a person wicked. The warning concerns the corruption of spiritual priorities through the pursuit of material gain. Verse 7 continues, “For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out.” That statement destroys a considerable amount of worldly boasting. The wealthy man enters life with nothing and eventually leaves every possession behind. His expensive clothing will not accompany him into eternity. Neither will his collection of fashionable devices. Children need to understand that possessions are temporary instruments, not eternal measurements of personal importance.

The same passage warns in verse 10, “For the love of money is the root of all evil.” Notice the wording. Paul identifies the love of money, not the mere possession of money. This distinction matters because some parents inadvertently teach children that wealth itself is sinful while constantly complaining that they do not possess enough of it. Scripture does not condemn honest prosperity. First Timothy 6:17 acknowledges those who are rich in this world and commands them not to become highminded or trust in uncertain riches. The problem concerns pride, misplaced trust, and covetousness. A child may possess inexpensive clothing and be consumed with envy, while another child may own something costly without treating it as an idol. The price tag alone cannot reveal the condition of the heart. Covetousness is not cured by having less money, because a poor man can worship a possession he has never owned.

The tenth commandment in Exodus 20:17 forbade Israel to covet what belonged to another. That command was delivered under the Mosaic covenant and must not be confused with the means of salvation under grace. Yet the New Testament also condemns covetousness. Colossians 3:5 identifies covetousness as idolatry, exposing the spiritual seriousness of allowing desire to become devotion. A child who sees another student's expensive shoes and thinks they are attractive has not necessarily committed covetousness. But if jealousy develops into resentment, contempt, obsession, or a willingness to disobey in order to obtain them, the matter has changed. Parents must teach children to enjoy legitimate blessings without making possessions the foundation of

happiness. Ecclesiastes 5:10 declares, “He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he that loveth abundance with increase: this is also vanity.” The appetite that demands satisfaction through possessions will eventually discover that yesterday's acquisition has already lost its excitement.

**4. Paul Learned Contentment Without Owning the Latest Merchandise**

Philippians 4:11 contains a remarkable confession from the Apostle Paul: “Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.” The context concerns the Philippians' care for Paul and their renewed opportunity to contribute toward his necessities. Paul was grateful for their generosity, but his contentment did not depend upon their ability to supply every material desire. Notice that he says he learned contentment. It was not described as an automatic characteristic of the natural man. Philippians 4:12 explains that he knew how to be abased and how to abound, how to be full and how to be hungry. His circumstances changed, but his confidence in Christ remained. This is a tremendous lesson for parents who are raising children in a culture determined to convince them that happiness must be purchased repeatedly. Contentment is learned through biblical understanding and practiced through changing circumstances.

Philippians 4:13 follows immediately: “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.” That verse has been stretched across more ridiculous merchandise than almost any passage in Scripture. It has been used to suggest that Christ guarantees athletic victories, business promotions, financial prosperity, and practically anything else somebody desires to accomplish. But the context concerns Paul's ability to endure changing material circumstances through Christ's strength. He could abound without becoming arrogant and suffer need without surrendering faithfulness. He was not promising the Philippians that they could purchase every attractive thing displayed in the marketplace. Christian parents should teach children the actual lesson. Christ strengthens His people for faithful living, including circumstances when the desired possession is unavailable. Philippians 4:13 is not a heavenly credit card authorizing purchases beyond the family budget. It is a declaration of strength in Christ when circumstances are abundant or difficult.

Contentment does not require parents to deny children every enjoyable possession. First Timothy 6:17 reminds believers that God “giveth us richly all things to enjoy.” That statement appears within a warning against trusting riches and demonstrates that lawful enjoyment and spiritual contentment are compatible. A family may purchase a popular game, fashionable clothing, or a desirable electronic device when the expense is appropriate and the use is wholesome. There is no virtue in deliberately selecting ugly

clothing or inferior merchandise merely to prove that worldly fashions possess no authority. Nor should parents make children feel guilty whenever they receive something pleasant. The issue is gratitude. Teach children to appreciate what they have, care for possessions responsibly, and recognize that receiving something desirable is a blessing rather than an entitlement. Proverbs 15:16 declares, “Better is little with the fear of the LORD than great treasure and trouble therewith.” A grateful child with modest possessions is better equipped for life than a child surrounded by expensive merchandise who remains perpetually dissatisfied.

**5. The Family Budget Is Not an Emergency Fund for Popularity**

Proverbs 22:7 declares, “The rich ruleth over the poor, and the borrower is servant to the lender.” This is a statement of practical wisdom concerning financial relationships and the consequences of indebtedness. It does not teach that every lawful borrowing arrangement is automatically sinful, but it exposes the serious responsibility attached to financial obligations. Parents who continually purchase unnecessary merchandise through borrowed money merely to satisfy social pressure are teaching a dangerous lesson. A child requests a costly item, the family cannot reasonably afford it, and instead of explaining the situation, the adults create another financial obligation. The child receives the merchandise and learns nothing about stewardship. Meanwhile, the household continues paying for a decision made because a group of classmates possessed something fashionable. There is something profoundly foolish about allowing children who do not pay the bills to establish financial obligations for adults who do.

Financial instruction should begin before children assume that money appears mysteriously whenever a purchase becomes desirable. Proverbs 21:20 declares, “There is treasure to be desired and oil in the dwelling of the wise; but a foolish man spendeth it up.” Wisdom recognizes the value of preserving resources rather than consuming everything immediately. Parents can teach this principle through ordinary household conversations. Explain the difference between necessities and wants. Discuss saving, delayed purchases, responsible spending, and the importance of living within available means. A child who desires an expensive game may be encouraged to save toward it, contribute through appropriate responsibilities, or wait for a birthday or another suitable occasion. These arrangements should reflect age and family circumstances. Children should not be burdened with adult financial anxiety or made responsible for the household's survival. But they can learn that money possesses limits and that patience is often preferable to impulsive spending.

Parents must also examine their own financial behavior. It is difficult to lecture children about unnecessary purchases while constantly buying things to impress neighbors,

relatives, or strangers. A father who needs a newer vehicle because another man purchased one may be demonstrating the same covetousness he condemns in his son. A mother who purchases clothing primarily to compete with others may be teaching her daughter that appearance determines worth. Romans 12:2 applies to adults before they attempt to apply it to their children. The household should not operate according to one financial standard for the parents and another for the children. First Timothy 6:8 declares, “And having food and raiment let us be therewith content.” This does not prohibit improving one's circumstances through honest labor, but it establishes the importance of contentment. Parents who practice financial discipline provide a more convincing lesson than those who continually surrender to their own appetites while demanding restraint from everyone younger than themselves.

**6. Do Not Mock a Child Who Is Hurting Because He Does Not Fit In**

There is another side to this issue that requires serious attention. A child may return home disappointed because classmates excluded him from a conversation, activity, or friendship group. Perhaps the children were discussing a game he does not own. Perhaps he was ridiculed because his clothing lacked a fashionable label. Perhaps somebody deliberately embarrassed him because his family could not afford what others possessed. Parents must not automatically dismiss these experiences with a sarcastic lecture about how everybody should simply stop caring what others think. Proverbs 17:17 declares, “A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.” The desire for genuine friendship is not a moral defect. Children need companionship, encouragement, and opportunities to develop healthy relationships. Being excluded can be painful, especially when the child does not yet possess the maturity to understand the foolishness behind the exclusion. Compassion is not surrendering biblical standards. It is recognizing the actual difficulty before providing instruction.

James 2:1 warns believers against respect of persons, and the following verses expose the disgrace of honoring a wealthy visitor while humiliating a poor man. The immediate setting concerns partiality within the assembly of believers, not a modern classroom argument over fashionable merchandise. Nevertheless, the moral principle is directly relevant. People ought not be valued according to their clothing, wealth, or outward appearance. Children should be taught never to ridicule classmates because they possess less, dress differently, or cannot participate in expensive activities. They must also learn that being treated unfairly does not authorize becoming cruel in return. Romans 12:17 commands, “Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men.” A Christian child should neither purchase acceptance through compromise nor answer

rejection through arrogance. The answer to being despised for having less is not to learn how to despise everyone who has more. Both attitudes are forms of pride.

Wise parents should help children navigate these situations practically. Listen carefully enough to determine whether the difficulty involves ordinary differences in interests, occasional disappointment, persistent exclusion, or deliberate bullying. When necessary, communicate with teachers or other responsible adults rather than expecting a child to solve every serious problem alone. Encourage friendships built upon shared interests, kindness, honesty, and mutual respect. Sometimes purchasing an affordable, appropriate item may help a child participate in wholesome activities, and there is no biblical commandment requiring parents to refuse it simply because it is popular. At other times, the better lesson is explaining why an expensive or inappropriate purchase cannot be justified. The important distinction is motive and judgment. Parents should not purchase every demand to prevent disappointment, but neither should they manufacture needless hardship to prove their independence from society. Children need guidance that combines biblical conviction with understanding. A firm answer can still be delivered with affection.

**7. Raise Children Who Know How to Give, Not Merely How to Acquire**

Second Corinthians 9:7 declares, “Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.” Paul is instructing the Corinthian believers concerning their participation in a collection intended to assist needy saints. The passage concerns Christian generosity under grace, not a compulsory financial requirement imposed upon children to purchase divine favor. Nevertheless, the principle provides a powerful contrast to the selfishness encouraged by constant consumerism. The world continually asks what a person can obtain. Biblical generosity teaches believers to consider what they can give. Parents can introduce this principle through age-appropriate opportunities to help others, share resources, support worthwhile needs, and recognize the circumstances of people less fortunate. Children should learn that money is useful not merely because it purchases personal pleasures, but because it can serve purposes beyond themselves.

This instruction becomes especially meaningful when children begin managing their own money. Whether the funds come through gifts, an allowance, appropriate work, or savings, children can learn to distinguish spending, saving, and giving. They can consider whether a purchase will provide lasting usefulness or merely a brief moment of excitement. They can discover that some desires become less important after a reasonable period of waiting. They can learn to care for possessions rather than treating every item as disposable when a newer version appears. Luke 16:10 declares, “He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much.” Jesus speaks within His teaching concerning stewardship,

faithfulness, and the proper relationship to unrighteous mammon. The principle deserves attention within family instruction. A child who learns to handle a small amount responsibly is developing habits that will matter when larger financial obligations arrive. Stewardship begins long before a person possesses enough money to make impressive mistakes.

Christian generosity must also be joined with humility. A child should not be encouraged to believe that wearing inexpensive clothing makes him spiritually superior to classmates with more costly possessions. Romans 12:3 warns against thinking more highly of oneself than one ought to think. Pride can appear in designer clothing, but it can also appear in the person who congratulates himself for refusing designer clothing. The goal is not to raise children who boast about how different they are. It is to cultivate convictions strong enough that differences do not threaten them. Teach children to appreciate the blessings of others without envy and enjoy their own blessings without arrogance. Encourage them to recognize genuine friendship, exercise honest judgment, and refuse the temptation to measure themselves by material possessions. A child who learns to be grateful when receiving, generous when possessing, and content when lacking has gained something far more valuable than the latest fashion. He has begun learning how to govern his appetites rather than allowing his appetites to govern him.

**Conclusion — Your Child's Worth Was Never Printed on a Price Tag**

The world will continue changing its fashions, products, entertainment, and standards of popularity. What seems essential to children this year may be forgotten before the next school term begins. Advertisers will continue discovering effective ways to create desire, and peer groups will continue establishing expectations concerning what is fashionable and desirable. None of this should astonish Christian parents. Human nature has not been transformed merely because the merchandise has become electronic and the advertising more sophisticated. Ecclesiastes 1:9 declares, “There is no new thing under the sun.” The historical setting concerns the recurring patterns of life and the vanity examined throughout Ecclesiastes, but the observation is appropriate when considering the ancient problem of covetousness wearing modern clothing. Children will encounter pressure to conform. Parents cannot prevent every such encounter, nor should they attempt to remove children from all ordinary social experiences. Their responsibility is to teach the discernment necessary to recognize when a harmless preference is becoming an unrighteous demand.

That instruction requires more than repeating the word no whenever a child requests something popular. Parents should listen, investigate, explain, and exercise judgment. Sometimes the answer will be yes because the item is wholesome, affordable, useful, and

appropriate. Sometimes the answer will be no because the expense is unreasonable, the activity is unsuitable, or the desire is being driven by envy. Sometimes the answer will be not yet, because waiting provides an opportunity to develop patience and financial responsibility. In every circumstance, children should learn that parental decisions are governed by principles rather than irritation, pride, or a desire to appear stricter than other families. Philippians 4 teaches contentment through Christ. First Timothy 6 warns against the love of money. Romans 12 commands a renewed mind rather than conformity to the world. These teachings provide something more enduring than another temporary restriction. They establish the moral foundation through which children can eventually make responsible decisions without constant supervision.

So when the familiar announcement arrives that everybody else possesses the latest expensive necessity, parents ought to remember who has been entrusted with the responsibility of leading the household. Listen to the child. Understand the desire. Consider the circumstances. Examine the financial implications. Determine whether the purchase is appropriate, and teach the biblical principles involved. Do not mock genuine disappointment, but do not reward manipulation. Do not condemn every fashionable possession, but do not surrender the family budget to the opinions of classmates. Above all, demonstrate through your own conduct that money is a servant rather than a master and that contentment is possible without continual acquisition. Luke 12:15 records the Lord Jesus Christ warning, “Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.” That truth deserves a permanent place in the Christian household. Your children may not own everything their classmates possess, and they do not need to. The greatest thing you can give them is not enough money to purchase everybody's approval, but enough biblical wisdom to understand that their worth was never for sale in the first place.

**7 of 10 — Parenting in a Rebellious Age — Straight A’s, Empty Heads, and the Education of a Child’s Conscience**

Key Passage — Proverbs 1:7 (KJV): “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction.”

There is a remarkable educational achievement taking place in modern society. We have managed to produce people who can calculate the distance between planets, explain the chemical composition of substances, operate sophisticated machinery, and discuss subjects most of their grandparents never encountered, yet some cannot distinguish a man

from his appetites, freedom from rebellion, or intelligence from wisdom. A student may graduate with honors, possess a collection of certificates, receive scholarships, and demonstrate extraordinary academic ability while remaining almost completely ignorant of the most important questions concerning life, death, eternity, righteousness, and personal responsibility before God. He can solve equations that would give his father a headache, but he cannot explain why lying is wrong when telling the truth becomes inconvenient. He knows how to pass an examination, but he has never examined his own conscience. An educated mind without moral discernment is like a powerful engine without a steering wheel. It can travel astonishing distances while heading directly toward destruction. The tragedy is not that education has become too advanced, but that knowledge is increasingly mistaken for wisdom.

Now, before somebody concludes that education is wicked and Christians should remain ignorant to preserve their holiness, that foolishness deserves immediate correction. The Bible does not glorify stupidity. Daniel was educated. Moses was learned in the wisdom of the Egyptians. Solomon possessed extraordinary understanding. Luke was identified as a physician. Paul demonstrated considerable knowledge of Scripture, history, law, and human affairs. Proverbs repeatedly commands the pursuit of wisdom, knowledge, and understanding. There is nothing particularly spiritual about refusing to learn mathematics, neglecting grammar, despising science, or producing children who cannot explain what they believe. A Christian child should be encouraged to study diligently, develop intellectual ability, investigate difficult subjects, and cultivate whatever legitimate gifts God has provided. A brilliant young mathematician should not be discouraged because his parents are frightened of complicated equations. A gifted writer should be encouraged to write. A talented artist should be given opportunities to develop her ability. The problem is not learning too much. It is learning everything except how to distinguish truth from error.

Christian parents therefore confront a responsibility that reaches considerably beyond helping children obtain excellent report cards. They must encourage academic diligence without making academic accomplishment the family religion. They must respect teachers without treating educational institutions as infallible authorities. They must recognize that a child can receive valuable instruction in an environment where some philosophical assumptions contradict Scripture. They must also understand that schooling takes place within different circumstances, and no particular educational arrangement automatically produces godliness. A child may attend a public school, private school, Christian school, or receive education at home and still require the same fundamental instruction concerning truth, character, obedience, and salvation. Proverbs 1:7 establishes the foundation: “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge.” That is where genuine wisdom begins. The objective is not to raise children who can merely repeat the correct

answers, but children who know how to determine whether the answers are correct in the first place.

**1. The Fear of the Lord Comes Before the Honor Roll**

Proverbs 1:7 declares, “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction.” Notice the order. The passage does not begin with academic credentials, intellectual achievement, or public recognition. It begins with the fear of the LORD. The Book of Proverbs belongs to the wisdom literature given within Israel, with Solomon prominently identified in its opening verse. Its instruction concerns righteousness, judgment, equity, discretion, and the development of wisdom. These truths must not be confused with the Church's salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. A person does not obtain eternal life by becoming sufficiently educated or demonstrating an impressive quantity of religious knowledge. Nevertheless, the verse establishes a fundamental reality concerning wisdom: God is the proper starting point. An individual who rejects the authority of the Creator has abandoned the foundation necessary for understanding his ultimate responsibility. He may accumulate information, but information alone cannot supply righteousness.

The fear of the LORD is not an invitation to live in irrational terror or imagine God as an unpredictable tyrant waiting to destroy somebody for an innocent mistake. Scripture connects godly fear with reverence, obedience, wisdom, and the recognition of divine authority. Proverbs 8:13 declares, “The fear of the LORD is to hate evil: pride, and arrogancy, and the evil way, and the froward mouth, do I hate.” There is the practical expression of that fear. It involves a moral judgment concerning wickedness. A student may know the scientific properties of alcohol while remaining ignorant of the consequences of drunkenness. He may understand how electronic communication operates while using it to spread lies. He may master financial calculations while employing that ability to cheat others. Knowledge describes what a person can accomplish. Wisdom concerns whether that accomplishment ought to be pursued. An intelligent thief is still a thief, only one who may be considerably more efficient at his profession.

The final portion of Proverbs 1:7 identifies the fool as one who despises wisdom and instruction. That exposes another modern misunderstanding. A person is not necessarily foolish because he struggles academically, and he is not necessarily wise because he possesses exceptional intelligence. Foolishness in Proverbs frequently concerns the rejection of correction and moral instruction. Proverbs 12:1 states, “Whoso loveth instruction loveth knowledge: but he that hateth reproof is brutish.” A child who works diligently, accepts correction, and seeks understanding may demonstrate greater wisdom than a naturally gifted student who becomes arrogant and refuses instruction. Parents

should therefore celebrate accomplishments without confusing them with character. A perfect examination score deserves appropriate encouragement, but it does not excuse dishonesty, pride, cruelty, or disrespect. A report card can tell parents what a child has learned to answer. It cannot tell them what that child has learned to love.

**2. Get Wisdom, Get Understanding, and Stop Treating Ignorance as Holiness**

Proverbs 4:5 commands, “Get wisdom, get understanding: forget it not; neither decline from the words of my mouth.” Verse 7 continues, “Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding.” These are not casual suggestions. The father is urgently instructing his son to pursue wisdom and preserve righteous teaching. The expression “with all thy getting” is particularly striking. Whatever else a person acquires, understanding must not be neglected. Christian parents ought to apply that principle to education without despising the legitimate subjects their children study. Reading develops the ability to examine written claims. Mathematics teaches careful reasoning and accuracy. History provides knowledge of human affairs and consequences. Science investigates the created order. Language enables clear communication. These disciplines are not enemies of biblical faith merely because unbelievers also study them. The problem arises when any discipline is used to promote conclusions that contradict God's revealed truth.

There is a peculiar religious pride that sometimes disguises itself as separation from the world. A man refuses to read carefully, examine evidence, or learn anything outside the subjects he already understands, then announces that his ignorance demonstrates superior faith. It demonstrates no such thing. Proverbs 18:15 declares, “The heart of the prudent getteth knowledge; and the ear of the wise seeketh knowledge.” The prudent man seeks understanding rather than congratulating himself for possessing none. Christians should not fear legitimate investigation. They should fear falsehood, careless reasoning, and the surrender of judgment to impressive titles. A teacher may possess advanced credentials and still make an erroneous statement. A parent may lack formal credentials and still possess sound biblical understanding. Neither academic accomplishment nor its absence guarantees truth. The Christian child should learn to appreciate genuine expertise while remembering that human beings remain capable of error. A diploma is evidence that someone completed a course of study. It is not evidence that the person has become incapable of foolishness.

Diligence must accompany the pursuit of knowledge. Proverbs 22:29 asks, “Seest thou a man diligent in his business? he shall stand before kings; he shall not stand before mean men.” The proverb commends skillful, faithful work rather than laziness dressed up as spirituality. Colossians 3:23 instructs believers, “And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to

the Lord, and not unto men." Paul addresses servants within their responsibilities, but the principle of wholehearted service offers practical instruction concerning legitimate labor. A Christian student should not excuse careless assignments by announcing that eternal matters are more important than homework. Of course eternity is more important, but that does not transform laziness into holiness. If a child has been entrusted with an assignment, he should complete it honestly and diligently. Excellence is not idolatry unless it becomes an object of misplaced devotion. Parents should cultivate both intellectual ability and responsibility, teaching children that faithful labor matters even when nobody is distributing certificates.

**3. Daniel Went to Babylon's School Without Surrendering to Babylon's God**

Daniel 1 provides one of Scripture's most remarkable accounts of young men receiving an education within a system that did not share their convictions. Nebuchadnezzar had brought captives from Judah into Babylon, and certain young men were selected for service in the king's palace. Daniel 1:4 describes them as "skilful in all wisdom, and cunning in knowledge, and understanding science." They were to be taught "the learning and the tongue of the Chaldeans." Notice what Scripture actually says. These young men were not selected because they were incapable of learning. They already possessed considerable ability. Their education would prepare them for responsibilities within a foreign government. The historical setting concerns Jewish captives during the Babylonian captivity, not Christian children attending a modern classroom. Nevertheless, the account demonstrates that substantial intellectual development and faithfulness to God are not necessarily enemies. Daniel could learn in Babylon without accepting Babylon's gods.

The decisive statement appears in Daniel 1:8: "But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank." Observe the distinction. Daniel did not refuse to learn the language of the Chaldeans. He did not announce that understanding Babylonian administration would contaminate his intelligence. But when a matter arose that involved defilement, he had already determined to remain faithful. The passage concerns the particular obligations of Jewish captives under the law, and Christians must not transform Daniel's dietary situation into a Church Age requirement for salvation or spiritual standing. Yet his settled conviction provides a powerful example. He distinguished between acquiring knowledge and participating in wrongdoing. He was respectful in requesting an alternative, but he did not abandon his purpose. Daniel did not have to become stupid to remain separated, and he did not have to become worldly to become educated.

Daniel 1:17 records, "As for these four children, God gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom: and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams." Verse 20

explains that when the king examined them, he found them ten times better than the magicians and astrologers within his realm. These were particular blessings and circumstances in God's dealings with Daniel and his companions, not a universal promise that Christian students will automatically outperform every unbeliever on standardized examinations. Parents should never misuse the passage to guarantee academic honors. The lesson is richer than that. Daniel and his companions developed substantial learning while maintaining loyalty to God. They did not confuse the abilities of their Babylonian instructors with the authority of Babylonian religion. Christian parents should prepare children to make similar distinctions. Education can be received gratefully without surrendering conscience. The important question is not merely whether a child can succeed in an unfamiliar environment, but whether success will require him to abandon what he knows is right.

**4. Not Every Teacher Is an Enemy, and Not Every Textbook Is Scripture**

Colossians 2:8 warns, “Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.” Paul is addressing believers concerning their completeness in Christ and the danger of teachings that would draw them away from Him. The following verses emphasize the fulness of the Godhead bodily in Christ and the believer's completeness in Him. The warning therefore concerns deceptive teaching that stands contrary to Christ, not the wholesale rejection of thinking, investigation, or education. The word “beware” demands alertness. It does not command deliberate ignorance. Parents should teach children to examine philosophical claims, recognize unsupported assumptions, and distinguish legitimate information from conclusions that contradict Scripture. A student does not have to accept every worldview presented in a classroom simply because the statement appears in an expensive textbook.

Consider the practical differences between educational subjects and philosophical interpretations. A mathematics instructor may teach accurate calculations while possessing religious beliefs contrary to Scripture. A history lesson may accurately describe an event while offering an interpretation that deserves further examination. A science lesson may explain observable processes while a broader philosophical discussion introduces assumptions concerning ultimate origins or purpose. Parents should examine the actual claims rather than automatically declaring every subject corrupt. First Thessalonians 5:21 commands, “Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.” The immediate context concerns discernment among believers, including prophetic utterances, but its insistence upon careful examination is plainly instructive. Children should learn to ask what is being asserted, what evidence supports it, whether alternative explanations have been considered, and whether a religious or philosophical conclusion

has been presented as an unquestionable fact. A Christian does not need to burn the mathematics book because the teacher is an unbeliever, and he does not need to surrender his Bible because the teacher knows mathematics.

This also requires parents to distinguish respectful disagreement from arrogance. A child who challenges every classroom statement merely to demonstrate his religious superiority has not necessarily learned discernment. He may have learned pride. First Peter 3:15 commands believers to be ready to give an answer concerning their hope "with meekness and fear." The immediate setting concerns Christian suffering and testimony, but the principle of respectful explanation is valuable. Teach children to ask thoughtful questions, examine assignments, speak courteously, and recognize the difference between a teacher presenting course material and requiring personal agreement with a worldview. Serious concerns should be discussed through appropriate channels, with attention to what was actually said or assigned. A parent who storms into a school armed with rumors may accomplish little except teaching the child that outrage is an acceptable substitute for investigation. Biblical courage does not require foolish conduct. Truth is strong enough to be examined without theatrical assistance.

**5. The School May Teach the Lesson, but Parents Must Examine the Instruction**

Deuteronomy 6:6–7 commanded Israelite parents to keep God's words in their hearts and teach them diligently to their children. The passage belongs to Israel under the Mosaic covenant, yet its emphasis upon parental responsibility remains profoundly instructive. Parents cannot delegate every responsibility for a child's understanding simply because somebody else provides formal education. A school may teach grammar, history, mathematics, and numerous other subjects, but parents remain responsible for the instruction and guidance entrusted to the home. That responsibility does not require treating teachers as adversaries. Many educators work diligently, recognize individual abilities, encourage students, and provide excellent instruction. Such service deserves appreciation. Nevertheless, a parent should know what the child is studying, what questions are arising, and what influences are shaping his understanding. Paying tuition does not mean purchasing permission to stop parenting, and sending a child to school does not transfer the family conscience to the principal's office.

Different educational arrangements present different advantages and difficulties. Public schools may provide valuable academic programs and opportunities while presenting beliefs or practices parents must carefully evaluate. Private schools vary considerably in curriculum, administration, discipline, and philosophical commitments. Schools identifying as Christian should still be examined according to Scripture rather than trusted automatically because of a religious label. Homeschooling allows considerable parental

involvement, but it also requires diligence, suitable resources, and adequate academic preparation. No educational arrangement is an automatic guarantee of spiritual maturity. A child can receive worldly instruction at home through careless entertainment, while another may maintain biblical convictions despite encountering opposing ideas in a classroom. Proverbs 14:15 declares, “The simple believeth every word: but the prudent man looketh well to his going.” Parents should apply that wisdom to their educational decisions. Investigate actual circumstances rather than relying upon slogans, assumptions, or the latest frightening story circulating among acquaintances.

Practical involvement means more than asking whether homework has been completed. Parents should read assignments when appropriate, discuss unfamiliar ideas, examine reading materials, and ask children to explain what they have learned. If a child brings home an assertion concerning morality, history, religion, or human nature, the family has an opportunity to examine it carefully. Some claims may be accurate. Others may require correction. Still others may concern questions where parents need additional information before reaching a conclusion. Proverbs 18:13 warns, “He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him.” That applies to school controversies as much as household disagreements. Parents should communicate respectfully with teachers, address genuine concerns directly, and avoid turning ordinary academic differences into unnecessary battles. The objective is not to make children suspicious of learning. It is to demonstrate that knowledge should be examined thoughtfully and that Scripture possesses authority over the believer's moral and spiritual convictions.

**6. Encourage Exceptional Ability Without Turning Your Child Into a Family Trophy**

First Corinthians 4:7 asks, “For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?” Paul is confronting pride and divisions among the Corinthian believers, reminding them that what they possess should not become grounds for boasting. That principle deserves attention whenever parents discuss their children's abilities. Some children demonstrate extraordinary academic talent. Others possess remarkable artistic creativity, musical skill, athletic ability, mechanical understanding, or an unusual gift for language. These differences should be appreciated and cultivated. A child who consistently earns excellent grades through diligence deserves encouragement. A gifted writer should be given opportunities to develop her craft. But accomplishments must never transform the child into a trophy through which adults seek admiration. The purpose of raising a brilliant child is not to provide the parents with a more impressive biography.

Parents must also avoid measuring every child according to identical accomplishments. First Corinthians 12:18 declares, “But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him.” Paul is explaining the diversity of members and functions within the body of Christ, not establishing a detailed educational program for siblings. Nevertheless, his instruction exposes the foolishness of assuming that differing abilities indicate differing human worth. One child may excel in mathematics while another demonstrates exceptional talent in writing or visual art. One may enjoy athletics while another prefers music, history, or practical construction. Children should be encouraged to develop their legitimate abilities without being humiliated because they do not resemble a brother, sister, or celebrated classmate. Diligence matters, but diligence does not guarantee identical results. A parent who constantly compares children may eventually destroy the very confidence necessary for responsible effort. The family should cultivate gifts, not manufacture rivalries.

Academic accomplishment must also remain subordinate to honesty and character. A student who receives an excellent grade through cheating has not demonstrated excellence. He has demonstrated dishonesty with attractive paperwork. Proverbs 11:1 declares, “A false balance is abomination to the LORD: but a just weight is his delight.” The immediate subject concerns dishonest measurement, but the condemnation of fraud applies naturally to cheating, plagiarism, and falsified assignments. Parents should praise honest labor even when the result is imperfect and correct dishonesty even when the result appears impressive. Children must learn to accept responsibility for mistakes, acknowledge when they do not understand something, and persevere through difficult work. Proverbs 16:18 warns, “Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall.” Intelligence without humility can become a dangerous possession. A brilliant child needs instruction in character just as surely as an academically struggling child needs encouragement in learning. Neither is exempt from righteousness.

**7. The Scriptures Must Educate the Conscience, Not Merely Decorate the Bookshelf**

Second Timothy 3:14 begins with Paul's instruction to Timothy: “But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them.” The next verse reminds him that from childhood he had known the holy Scriptures, “which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.” This passage is particularly significant because Paul connects Timothy's early instruction with the Scriptures and their testimony concerning salvation. Timothy's mother and grandmother had exercised important spiritual influence, as 2 Timothy 1:5 indicates. Yet their faith could not regenerate Timothy in his place. Salvation remains personal and is received through faith in Jesus Christ. Ephesians 2:8–9 establishes that

salvation is by grace through faith, not works. Academic achievement, religious upbringing, and biblical memorization cannot substitute for the new birth. A child may be exceptionally educated and remain spiritually lost. That distinction must never be obscured.

Second Timothy 3:16 continues, “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.” Notice the comprehensive usefulness of Scripture. Doctrine establishes what God has revealed. Reproof exposes error. Correction addresses what is wrong. Instruction in righteousness teaches the proper course of conduct. Verse 17 explains the intended result: “That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.” Paul is writing to Timothy concerning his ministry responsibilities, especially in a time of false teaching and increasing wickedness. The passage establishes the divine origin and sufficiency of Scripture for its appointed work. Parents should therefore make biblical instruction more than an occasional ceremony. Children need to understand what Scripture actually says, why passages must be examined in their proper setting, and how biblical truth governs conduct. A Bible that is never opened cannot instruct a conscience merely because it occupies a respectable position on the furniture.

This instruction must prepare children to think rather than merely memorize religious phrases. Second Timothy 2:15 commands Timothy to study, showing himself approved unto God as a workman who rightly divides the word of truth. Israel and the Church must not be confused. Salvation by grace must not be replaced with religious performance. Biblical history must be distinguished from commandments directed to the present-day believer. Parents who teach children to examine Scripture carefully provide a foundation for genuine discernment. When a child asks why something is wrong, open the passage and explain it. When a popular opinion contradicts Scripture, demonstrate the difference. When a religious teacher makes an impressive claim, compare it with the written word of God. Acts 17:11 commends the Bereans because they searched the Scriptures daily to determine whether the things they heard were so. That is the kind of thoughtful examination Christian children need. The goal is not merely knowing religious answers, but recognizing the authority by which those answers are established.

**Conclusion — Raise Children Who Can Think Without Borrowing the World's Conscience**

The modern world possesses extraordinary educational resources, remarkable technologies, and opportunities for intellectual development that previous generations could scarcely have imagined. Christian parents should not automatically despise these advantages. They should exercise wisdom concerning their use. A child who develops exceptional ability in mathematics, science, writing, art, music, or another worthwhile

pursuit has opportunities to accomplish meaningful work. Such ability should be encouraged through diligence, humility, and responsible stewardship. Yet parents must remember that academic achievement cannot establish moral righteousness or spiritual regeneration. Proverbs 1:7 still declares, “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge.” That statement has not become obsolete because a classroom possesses computers or a student receives an impressive scholarship. The foundation remains unchanged. Knowledge should be pursued, but wisdom must govern its use. The child who knows how to answer every examination but cannot recognize a lie has received an incomplete education, regardless of how impressive the report card appears.

Parents must therefore remain actively involved in the development of both intellect and conscience. Encourage children to read widely, study diligently, ask thoughtful questions, and cultivate their abilities. Teach them to appreciate faithful instructors without treating human authority as infallible. Examine educational materials carefully, respond to genuine concerns responsibly, and refuse the temptation to turn every unfamiliar idea into an emergency. Demonstrate that truth can withstand honest examination. Above all, make the Scriptures familiar through faithful instruction and personal example. Proverbs 4:7 commands, “Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding.” That command deserves a place alongside every academic ambition. The objective is not to raise children who fear education, despise expertise, or withdraw from every difficult question. It is to prepare young people who can recognize the difference between knowledge and wisdom, human opinion and divine revelation, intellectual ability and moral character.

One day the child will leave the familiar classroom, and the report cards will become memories. The teacher will no longer assign every responsibility. The parents will no longer supervise every conversation. New questions will arise, unfamiliar ideas will be presented, and decisions will carry consequences that cannot be corrected through an additional homework assignment. What will that young person possess when the familiar authorities are absent? Will he merely repeat what somebody else has taught him, or will he know how to examine the matter? Will she surrender her convictions to the most confident speaker in the room, or will she recognize the authority of God's word? Daniel developed extraordinary ability without surrendering his loyalty to God. Timothy received the Scriptures from childhood and was instructed to continue in the truth he had learned. Christian parents should labor toward the same objective: children who are educated, capable, diligent, discerning, and grounded in biblical truth. Raise them to earn excellent grades when they can, but teach them that the highest score on an examination is worthless if they have never learned to examine their own ways. The world can teach them how to make a living. Make certain they also learn from Scripture how to live.

**8 of 10 — Parenting in a Rebellious Age — The World Wants Their Innocence Before They Understand What They Are Losing**

Key Passage — Genesis 1:27 (KJV): “So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.”

There was a time when parents could reasonably expect certain conversations to arrive gradually as their children approached adolescence. A father might explain the responsibilities of manhood to his son. A mother might help her daughter understand the changes accompanying maturity. Questions about marriage, modesty, personal conduct, and the relationship between men and women could be addressed as understanding developed. Today, however, the world has developed an extraordinary impatience with childhood. A child who still struggles to remember his multiplication tables may encounter conversations about adult relationships that he is not prepared to understand. A young girl learning to navigate ordinary friendships may find herself confronted by entertainment that presents sexual attention as a measure of personal worth. Advertisements, digital platforms, popular entertainment, and conversations among classmates can introduce subjects that once belonged to later stages of life. Apparently, the modern world has decided that children should learn everything about adult behavior before they have mastered the responsibilities of childhood. The tragedy is not that children are growing up. It is that the world increasingly refuses to let them grow up in the proper order.

Christian parents face a responsibility that cannot be discharged by pretending these influences do not exist. A father cannot protect his son merely by refusing to discuss difficult subjects, and a mother cannot preserve her daughter's innocence by assuming that silence will somehow prevent exposure. Children ask questions because they are learning. Their bodies change because they are growing. They notice differences between boys and girls, encounter unfamiliar ideas, and eventually become curious about matters they do not yet understand. None of those ordinary developments constitutes sin. The danger arises when the explanations come primarily from people who neither know the child nor accept the authority of Scripture. A stranger on the internet may possess an impressive audience while demonstrating the moral judgment of a barnyard animal. A popular entertainer may influence millions while having no responsibility for the consequences of the ideas being promoted. Parents who surrender these conversations to the surrounding culture should not be astonished when their children begin repeating conclusions the family never taught.

The answer is not to make children frightened of their own bodies, ashamed of legitimate questions, or suspicious of everyone outside the household. Neither is the answer to expose young minds prematurely to subjects they are not equipped to understand. Biblical

parenting requires truth, timing, discretion, and the courage to address difficult matters without surrendering moral standards. Genesis 1:27 establishes the dignity of mankind as created in God's image. Psalm 139 celebrates God's knowledge and workmanship in human formation. Proverbs 4:23 commands the guarding of the heart. First Corinthians 6:18–20 confronts sexual immorality and establishes the Christian's responsibility to glorify God in the body. First Thessalonians 4:3–5 commands sanctification rather than fleshly lust. These passages provide the foundation for instruction that is neither careless nor cruel. Children need to understand that their bodies are not shameful, their boundaries deserve respect, and their conduct matters before God. Innocence is not preserved by keeping children ignorant of danger. It is protected by teaching truth before falsehood becomes their instructor.

**1. God Created the Body, and He Did Not Make a Mistake**

Genesis 1:27 declares, “So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.” The passage belongs to the creation account, before the entrance of sin in Genesis 3, before the establishment of Israel, and before the revelation of the Church through the Apostle Paul's ministry. It establishes a foundational truth concerning humanity. Man did not invent himself. Human existence is not presented as a meaningless accident without purpose or accountability. God created mankind in His image, and the verse specifically identifies male and female within that creation. The distinction did not originate with Moses, the Jewish priesthood, the Christian Church, or some social arrangement invented centuries afterward. It appears in the opening chapter of Scripture. Parents should teach their children this truth without making the subject an occasion for embarrassment, cruelty, or needless controversy. God's creation is not something Christians should be ashamed to discuss.

Psalm 139:13–14 adds a remarkable declaration concerning God's knowledge of human formation: “For thou hast possessed my reins: thou hast covered me in my mother's womb. I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well.” David was expressing worshipful recognition of God's intimate knowledge and creative workmanship. The Psalm is not a medical textbook, nor does it provide a detailed description of every biological process. Its emphasis concerns the LORD's knowledge and the wonder of His works. That truth should shape how Christian parents speak to children about their bodies. Growing taller, developing physically, experiencing the changes associated with puberty, and recognizing differences between males and females are not shameful events. They belong to ordinary human development. God did not create the human body and then require Christian parents to behave as though

discussing it were an act of rebellion. Reverence for the Creator ought to produce dignity rather than embarrassment.

The dignity of creation also establishes the proper understanding of personal worth. Children should never be taught that their value depends upon physical attractiveness, fashionable clothing, athletic ability, or the attention they receive from others. Psalm 139:16 speaks of God's knowledge of David before his formation was complete. That passage does not promise that every person will possess identical physical characteristics, abilities, or circumstances. It does demonstrate that human existence is known to God and worthy of reverent consideration. A child whose body develops differently from classmates should not be ridiculed. A young person struggling with questions about appearance deserves truthful guidance rather than humiliation. Parents should reinforce the distinction between the goodness of God's creation and the corruption introduced through sin. The body itself is not the enemy. Sin is the enemy. A Christian household should never confuse modesty with disgust or purity with the idea that ordinary physical development is somehow wicked.

**2. The Conversation Parents Refuse to Have Will Eventually Be Conducted by Somebody Else**

Deuteronomy 6:7 commanded Israelite parents to teach God's words diligently while sitting in the house, walking by the way, lying down, and rising up. The passage belongs to Israel under the Mosaic covenant, and Christians must not confuse Israel's national obligations with salvation by grace through faith. Nevertheless, its emphasis upon deliberate family instruction remains unmistakable. Parents were not instructed to remain silent about important matters until their children learned them from strangers. The responsibility was continuous and practical. That principle becomes particularly important concerning the changes accompanying adolescence. A child should not have to depend upon classmates, entertainment, or anonymous internet searches to understand ordinary bodily development. Fathers and mothers ought to provide accurate, age-appropriate explanations before confusion creates unnecessary fear. The conversation should not require a ceremonial announcement, a spotlight, and enough nervousness to resemble a congressional investigation. It requires honesty, discretion, and parental responsibility.

There is a difference between explaining something truthfully and exposing children to material beyond their maturity. An elementary-aged child may need simple instruction concerning bodily privacy, personal boundaries, and the fact that boys and girls develop differently. An older child approaching puberty needs clearer explanations about physical changes, hygiene, growing responsibilities, and the moral questions increasingly encountered through friendships and entertainment. Adolescents require further biblical

instruction concerning sexual conduct, personal responsibility, marriage, and the consequences of sinful choices. These conversations should develop as the child's understanding develops. Proverbs 22:6 declares, “Train up a child in the way he should go.” Training requires judgment about what the child is prepared to understand. A father who unloads every complicated adult subject upon a frightened ten-year-old has not demonstrated superior courage. He has confused information with wisdom. The right truth delivered at the wrong time, in the wrong manner, can become a burden rather than instruction.

Parents should also make it clear that sincere questions are welcome. A child who asks about puberty, appearance, personal boundaries, or something heard at school should not automatically receive an angry interrogation. Proverbs 18:13 warns, “He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him.” Determine what the child actually wants to know before delivering an elaborate explanation. Answer honestly without providing unnecessary detail. Where the question concerns moral conduct, explain the relevant Scripture. Where it concerns ordinary physical development, provide accurate information without pretending the Bible supplies medical facts it does not address. Where the child has encountered inappropriate material, explain why it was unsuitable without making the child ashamed for asking. Silence can leave confusion untouched, while excessive explanation can introduce matters the child was not seeking. Wisdom requires discernment. Parents do not need to answer every conceivable question in one afternoon. They need to establish themselves as trustworthy instructors who will continue answering questions as their children mature.

**3. Modesty Is Biblical, but Shame Is Not a Substitute for Holiness**

Proverbs 4:23 commands, “Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.” The surrounding verses concern wisdom, righteous speech, the direction of the eyes, and the careful ordering of one's path. The instruction does not reduce holiness to a dress code. It reaches into the inward life from which conduct develops. Christian parents should therefore teach modesty as part of a larger responsibility concerning purity, humility, self-respect, and consideration for others. First Timothy 2:9 instructs women to adorn themselves “in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety,” within Paul's teaching concerning godliness and conduct. The passage concerns adult believers and must be handled in its setting. It does not authorize parents to invent arbitrary measurements and announce that God has personally dictated every acceptable sleeve, hemline, or fashion. Modesty deserves biblical instruction, but man-made regulations must never be promoted as though they were inspired Scripture.

The same responsibility applies to boys. A young man should be taught that self-control, respectful speech, honorable conduct, and sexual purity are his responsibilities before God. He cannot blame another person's clothing for his decision to entertain lust or behave wickedly. Matthew 5:28 records the Lord Jesus Christ confronting the deliberate lustful look, exposing sin in the heart rather than permitting a man to transfer all responsibility to somebody else. The historical setting belongs to Christ's teaching concerning righteousness, and its moral force remains unmistakable. Parents should never place the entire burden of purity upon daughters while teaching sons that their conduct is governed by uncontrollable appetites. That is not biblical manhood. It is an excuse for refusing personal responsibility. If a young man cannot govern his eyes, the answer is not to make every girl responsible for his eyesight. He needs instruction in self-control. Both sons and daughters should learn dignity, modesty, and respect.

Modesty must also be distinguished from humiliation. A mother should not continually criticize her daughter's developing body until the girl begins believing something is wrong with her simply because she is growing. A father should not embarrass his son over ordinary physical changes or treat questions concerning maturity as evidence of wickedness. Colossians 3:21 commands, “Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged.” The verse belongs to Paul's instructions concerning Christian households and establishes a serious restraint upon parental conduct. Children should learn appropriate clothing standards and respectful behavior without being publicly degraded. Parents can explain that different situations require different forms of dress and that certain styles may be unsuitable without treating the body itself as dirty. The purpose of biblical modesty is not to produce lifelong embarrassment. It is to cultivate honorable conduct. A child who learns to respect his own body and the boundaries of others possesses a stronger foundation than one who merely fears another angry lecture about appearances.

**4. Protecting Innocence Includes Teaching Children That Wicked People Do Not Possess Rights Over Their Bodies**

Scripture does not treat the exploitation of the vulnerable as a small matter. Matthew 18:6 records the Lord Jesus Christ warning concerning those who offend the little ones who believe in Him. The immediate context concerns humble believers and the seriousness of causing them to stumble, not a modern legal definition of every form of child abuse. Nevertheless, the Lord's severe warning demonstrates that leading vulnerable people into spiritual ruin is no trivial offense. Parents should never use religious language to excuse exploitation, intimidation, or the abuse of authority. A child has the right to bodily safety and appropriate personal boundaries. No adult should demand inappropriate physical

contact, private images, or secrecy concerning harmful conduct. The responsibility for exploitation belongs to the person committing it, not to the child targeted by it. A child does not become guilty of another person's wickedness simply because the wickedness was directed toward that child.

Parents must communicate these principles in language suitable for the child's age. Young children should know the difference between ordinary affection and contact that violates appropriate boundaries. They should understand that they may refuse unwanted affection, even when somebody claims that family relationships require it. They should know that private areas of the body deserve protection and that requests involving inappropriate touching, photographs, or secrecy must be reported to a trustworthy adult. Older children need additional instruction concerning online manipulation, threatening messages, coercion, and attempts to obtain private information or images. Proverbs 27:12 declares, “A prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself; but the simple pass on, and are punished.” The proverb emphasizes foresight and wise avoidance of danger. Teaching children to recognize danger is not encouraging rebellion against legitimate authority. It is preparing them to recognize when someone is abusing authority. No biblical commandment requires a child to cooperate with wrongdoing.

The household must also be a place where troubling experiences can be reported without fear of immediate accusation. If a child describes inappropriate conduct, parents should listen carefully, take the account seriously, protect the child, and seek appropriate assistance. Serious concerns involving exploitation or abuse require prompt protective action and, where appropriate, involvement of qualified professionals and lawful authorities. Parents should not demand that a child keep such matters secret to preserve a family's reputation, a church's image, or an adult's position. Ephesians 5:11 commands believers to “have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.” The passage concerns the Christian's separation from and exposure of wickedness, and the principle condemns the protection of evil through concealment. Forgiveness must never be twisted into permission for continued abuse. Respect for authority does not require surrendering safety. A home that teaches children to report danger has not undermined biblical authority. It has demonstrated that authority exists to protect the innocent rather than shelter the guilty.

**5. The World Can Introduce Adult Corruption Through a Child's Entertainment**

Psalm 101:3 declares, “I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes.” David was expressing his determination concerning righteous conduct within his household and royal administration. He was not describing smartphones, online advertisements, or modern entertainment. Yet the practical force of his determination deserves serious consideration.

Parents today can provide a child with a device that delivers educational material, wholesome recreation, biblical teaching, and useful communication. The same device may also provide access to pornography, sexualized entertainment, deceptive personalities, and inappropriate conversations. The technology itself is not the moral standard. The contents and their influence must be examined. A child may encounter adult material through advertisements, social media recommendations, shared messages, or supposedly harmless entertainment. Parents should therefore understand the devices, review age-appropriate settings, and supervise access according to maturity. A screen does not become a qualified moral instructor simply because it arrives in a colorful package with parental controls printed on the box.

Companionship also matters. Proverbs 13:20 declares, “He that walketh with wise men shall be wise: but a companion of fools shall be destroyed.” Children naturally develop friendships and desire acceptance. Those relationships can encourage kindness, diligence, honesty, and worthwhile interests. They can also introduce vulgarity, inappropriate conversations, peer pressure, and the belief that sexual experience determines social importance. First Corinthians 15:33 warns, “Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners.” Paul gives that warning while confronting corrupt doctrine concerning the resurrection, demonstrating the connection between belief and conduct. Parents should apply the principle thoughtfully rather than declaring every classmate an enemy. Ask what children are hearing. Understand what is being discussed among their friends. Help them distinguish curiosity from pressure, friendship from manipulation, and harmless conversation from invitations to wrongdoing. The goal is not isolation from society. It is the development of convictions strong enough to survive ordinary social pressure.

Children should also understand that not everything popular deserves attention. A particular song, program, online personality, or social trend may be celebrated by classmates while presenting material unsuitable for young minds. Philippians 4:8 instructs believers to think upon things that are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, and of good report. That standard reaches beyond merely avoiding obviously scandalous material. It concerns the deliberate direction of the mind. Parents should discuss why certain entertainment is inappropriate instead of relying entirely upon unexplained prohibitions. Children eventually encounter material their parents have never personally reviewed. They need biblical principles that can guide their judgment. At the same time, parents should distinguish an accidental encounter from deliberate wrongdoing. A child who unexpectedly sees inappropriate material requires guidance, not automatic condemnation. A child who intentionally seeks corrupt entertainment needs correction and instruction. The objective is not to make children afraid of every screen. It is to teach them that what enters the mind deserves more examination than what enters the shopping cart.

**6. Biblical Purity Is a Commandment, Not a Religious Performance**

First Thessalonians 4:3 declares, “For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication.” Paul is addressing believers under the present dispensation of grace, instructing them concerning conduct that pleases God. The command is not a condition for earning salvation. Ephesians 2:8–9 establishes that salvation is by grace through faith, not works. First Thessalonians concerns the proper conduct of those who belong to the Lord. Verse 4 continues, “That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour.” Verse 5 contrasts this with the lust of concupiscence among those who know not God. The biblical standard does not disappear because society changes its vocabulary or entertainment becomes more explicit. Sexual purity remains a serious responsibility. Yet that responsibility must be taught accurately. Ordinary physical development is not fornication. Legitimate curiosity is not automatically lust. Sin must be identified according to Scripture rather than according to parental embarrassment.

First Corinthians 6:18 commands, “Flee fornication.” Paul continues by explaining the seriousness of sexual sin and the believer's responsibility concerning the body. Verse 19 asks, “What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?” Verse 20 concludes, “For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.” These words address saved people whose bodies belong to the Lord because of redemption. They should not be carelessly applied to every child as though physical birth automatically guarantees spiritual regeneration. Christian parents must explain the gospel clearly while teaching proper conduct. Children need to understand that their bodies should be treated with dignity and that sexual behavior carries moral responsibilities. The body is not a disposable amusement, and purity is not an outdated superstition invented by people who never learned how to enjoy themselves.

Scripture also establishes marriage as the proper relationship for sexual union. Genesis 2:24 declares, “Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.” The passage belongs to the creation account, before Israel's covenant and before the establishment of the Church. First Corinthians 7:2 subsequently instructs believers concerning marriage and the avoidance of fornication. Parents should teach these truths without turning every conversation about marriage into a frightening lecture. Young people need to understand affection, commitment, respect, fidelity, and the seriousness of intimate relationships. They should also observe appropriate conduct within their parents' marriage. A father who jokes continually about immorality while demanding purity from his children is contradicting his own instruction. A

mother who treats faithfulness as optional whenever circumstances become difficult undermines the example she ought to provide. Biblical purity is not a costume children wear to satisfy religious adults. It is part of the righteousness they must learn to appreciate and practice.

**7. Prepare Young People to Stand in Purity Without Making Them Ashamed of Growing Up**

First Timothy 4:12 declares, “Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.” Paul was instructing Timothy concerning his ministry, conduct, and responsibility as a servant of Jesus Christ. The verse was not written as an independent commandment to every twelve-year-old, and Timothy's ministerial responsibilities must not be confused with ordinary childhood. Nevertheless, the character qualities listed are worthy of instruction. The word “conversation” concerns conduct, not merely spoken words. Timothy was to demonstrate godliness through speech, behavior, love, spiritual life, faith, and purity. Christian parents should cultivate those qualities as their children mature. Purity involves more than avoiding a collection of prohibited activities. It includes learning honorable speech, respectful relationships, sound judgment, and the responsibility to govern one's conduct. A young person does not become mature merely because the world has introduced him to adult subjects. Maturity is demonstrated by the wisdom with which he handles responsibility.

Second Timothy 2:22 provides another significant instruction: “Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart.” Paul does not merely command Timothy to flee wrong desires. He also identifies righteous pursuits. That distinction deserves emphasis. Christian parenting should provide young people with worthwhile opportunities to develop their abilities, form healthy friendships, serve others, and pursue meaningful responsibilities. A daughter interested in art and writing should be encouraged to develop her talent. A son demonstrating exceptional ability in academic work should be encouraged toward diligence and humility. Young people need constructive purposes beyond a constant inventory of forbidden activities. They should learn that holiness does not require abandoning joy, creativity, or legitimate ambition. The Lord has not commanded Christian children to spend their adolescence sitting motionless in a dark room congratulating themselves for avoiding entertainment. He commands righteousness, and righteousness has practical expression throughout life.

Parents must also recognize that adolescence involves increasing responsibility and developing independence. A child approaching maturity should receive honest explanations, opportunities to exercise judgment, and appropriate freedom consistent with

demonstrated character. Parents should discuss friendships, personal boundaries, future marriage, sexual purity, and the consequences of irresponsible decisions before circumstances demand immediate answers. They must also establish that a young person can disclose temptation, confusion, or wrongdoing without automatically being humiliated. Galatians 6:1 instructs spiritual believers to restore one overtaken in a fault in the spirit of meekness. The immediate setting concerns believers restoring fellow believers, but its instruction concerning humility and restoration is valuable within Christian homes. Correction remains necessary, yet correction should point toward righteousness rather than permanent disgrace. A young person who has sinned needs truth, accountability, and the opportunity to respond rightly. A child who has been victimized needs protection and reassurance that another person's wicked conduct has not made the child guilty. Biblical wisdom knows the difference.

**Conclusion — Protect Their Innocence Without Withholding the Truth They Need**

Christian parents cannot prevent their children from growing up, and they should not attempt to do so. Childhood is a season of preparation, not a permanent condition to be preserved through ignorance. The changes of adolescence will arrive. Questions will arise. Friendships will develop. New responsibilities will appear, and young people will encounter ideas that challenge their understanding of themselves, other people, and the world around them. Parents cannot guarantee that every influence will be wholesome or every decision wise. They can, however, provide faithful instruction, appropriate supervision, biblical correction, and a household where truth is not treated as an embarrassing subject. Genesis 1:27 establishes God's creation of mankind. Psalm 139 celebrates His workmanship. Proverbs 4:23 commands watchfulness over the heart. First Thessalonians 4 requires sanctification and honorable conduct. These passages provide a foundation stronger than the changing opinions of popular culture. The world may change its standards every few years, but God has not surrendered His authority over righteousness to the latest generation.

The responsibility must begin with fathers and mothers who are willing to live according to the principles they teach. Parents should not demand purity while entertaining corruption, insist upon modesty while cultivating vanity, or lecture children concerning self-control while demonstrating little of it themselves. Ephesians 6:4 commands fathers to bring children up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord without provoking them to wrath. That requires firmness without cruelty and instruction without unnecessary shame. Speak plainly about bodily development. Teach personal boundaries. Explain why inappropriate conduct is wrong. Protect children from exploitation. Listen when they ask difficult questions. Respond wisely when they encounter troubling situations. Make sure they know

that their value does not depend upon physical appearance, sexual attention, popularity, or the approval of classmates. Above all, teach them the gospel of Jesus Christ, for religious conduct cannot replace salvation by grace through faith. The family should demonstrate that holiness is not hostility toward the body, but obedience to God in the use of the life He has given.

One day the children entrusted to your care will face decisions without you standing beside them. A daughter will encounter people who measure her worth through appearance. A son will hear voices insisting that self-control is weakness and sexual indulgence is proof of manhood. Both will confront circumstances requiring discernment, courage, and personal responsibility. What will they remember? Will they remember parents who were too embarrassed to explain the truth? Will they remember constant accusations that made ordinary growing up seem shameful? Or will they remember a father and mother who opened the Scriptures, answered questions honestly, established reasonable boundaries, and demonstrated that righteousness could be practiced without fear or hypocrisy? Proverbs 4:23 still commands, “Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.” That is the responsibility toward which faithful parenting must lead. The world may be determined to introduce children to corruption before they understand what they are losing. Christian parents must be equally determined to teach them truth before corruption becomes their teacher. Protect their innocence, prepare their understanding, and never confuse keeping them ignorant with keeping them pure.

**9 of 10 — Parenting in a Rebellious Age — You Cannot Get Saved for Your Children, and They Cannot Borrow Your Christianity**

Key Passage — 2 Timothy 3:15 (KJV): “And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.”

There is a dangerous little assumption floating around Christian homes, and it has probably sent more parents into false confidence than a truckload of religious certificates. A child attends church, memorizes Scripture, behaves respectfully, knows the books of the Bible, answers questions in Sunday school, and occasionally says something that makes the adults smile. Wonderful! The parents beam with satisfaction, the church members admire the family's spiritual accomplishments, and everybody begins talking as though the child arrived from heaven with a certificate of regeneration already attached. But somebody had better open the Bible before the congratulations get out of hand. Knowing the language of

Christianity is not the same thing as possessing eternal life. A child can learn to say “Amen” at precisely the right moment without understanding the gospel. He can explain David and Goliath, recite John 3:16, and identify all twelve apostles while remaining personally lost. You can teach a child the vocabulary of salvation, but you cannot manufacture the new birth by making him fluent in religious language.

Christian parents possess tremendous responsibility, but that responsibility has limits established by God Himself. They can teach the Scriptures, explain sin and salvation, establish church attendance, demonstrate godliness, encourage prayer, answer difficult questions, and provide an environment where biblical truth is taken seriously. They can correct dishonesty, discourage wickedness, cultivate reverence, and teach their children how to examine Scripture. What they cannot do is believe on Jesus Christ in another person's place. They cannot transfer their salvation through family affection, administer regeneration through household discipline, or secure eternal life by arranging enough religious activities. A father may have preached the gospel for forty years, and his son must still personally believe on Christ. A mother may be one of the most faithful Christians in the congregation, and her daughter's salvation does not arrive as an inheritance when she learns to read. God has no grandchildren in the matter of the new birth. Every saved person must receive salvation through personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

This distinction is particularly important in an age when religious appearances can be mistaken for spiritual reality. Some parents are so anxious to see their children profess salvation that they begin supplying the answers before the questions are understood. Others assume that a single religious experience proves everything necessary, even when the child has never demonstrated a clear understanding of the gospel. Still others place such enormous emphasis upon outward behavior that Christianity becomes a family performance rather than personal faith in the Saviour. None of these errors is necessary. The Scriptures provide a better foundation. John 3 explains the necessity of the new birth. Romans 10 identifies faith in the risen Lord Jesus Christ. Ephesians 2 establishes salvation by grace through faith, apart from works. Second Timothy reveals the importance of childhood instruction, while First Corinthians reminds us that God gives the increase. The Christian parent's assignment is not to produce religious actors who know their lines. It is to faithfully introduce children to the Saviour and teach them the truth upon which genuine faith must rest.

**1. Nicodemus Had Religion, Education, and Respectability, but He Still Needed the New Birth**

John 3:3 records the Lord Jesus Christ speaking to Nicodemus: “Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” Consider the man

receiving that declaration. Nicodemus was a Pharisee and a ruler of the Jews. He possessed religious education, social standing, familiarity with the law, and an understanding of Israel's traditions. He was not a pagan wandering through Jerusalem searching for the nearest idol. He was a recognized teacher among the covenant people. Yet Jesus did not congratulate him upon his impressive religious qualifications and announce that his education had already accomplished everything necessary. He told him that he must be born again. There is the trouble with religious confidence. It can produce a remarkably respectable exterior while leaving the fundamental spiritual question unanswered. Nicodemus possessed enough religion to impress Jerusalem, but Jesus informed him that his religious résumé could not produce another birth.

The distinction becomes even clearer in John 3:6: “That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.” The Lord was explaining the difference between natural birth and spiritual birth. Nicodemus had misunderstood the statement and wondered how a man could enter his mother's womb a second time. Jesus corrected that misunderstanding by directing his attention to the work of the Spirit. The immediate historical setting concerns Christ's earthly ministry to Israel before His crucifixion and resurrection, and it must not be treated as though every detail of later Church Age doctrine had already been revealed. Nevertheless, the necessity of spiritual regeneration is unmistakable. Natural birth does not produce spiritual life. Neither does descent from Abraham, membership in a religious household, or submission to outward ceremonies. A child born to Christian parents enters the world through natural generation just like every other child. The spiritual condition cannot be corrected by pointing toward the family tree.

John 1:12–13 establishes the same distinction: “But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” Notice those exclusions. Not of blood. Not of the will of the flesh. Not of the will of man. The language eliminates hereditary salvation and humanly manufactured regeneration. Parents cannot exercise their will strongly enough to cause another person to become spiritually alive. They cannot substitute their own belief for the child's response to Christ. The passage identifies those who believe on His name, not those who merely belong to a religious family. Parents should therefore teach children the difference between God's work in salvation and the ordinary responsibilities of Christian upbringing. Good manners are desirable. Obedience is commanded. Biblical knowledge is valuable. But none of these things is the new birth.

**2. Salvation Is by Grace Through Faith, Not by Being Raised in a Christian Home**

Ephesians 2:8–9 declares, “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.” The Apostle Paul is writing to believers concerning their former condition, their salvation through God's mercy, and their new position in Christ. Earlier in the chapter he describes them as having been dead in trespasses and sins. Verse 5 explains that God quickened them together with Christ. Salvation was not presented as the successful completion of a religious improvement program. It was the gracious work of God received through faith. This distinction must govern every Christian parent's explanation of the gospel. A child is not saved because he is obedient, baptized, respectful, generous, educated, or capable of quoting impressive portions of Scripture. These things may possess value in their proper places, but none constitutes the payment for eternal life. If good behavior could purchase regeneration, Calvary would have been unnecessary and the family chore chart could have replaced the cross.

First Corinthians 15:3–4 identifies the gospel Paul preached: “Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures.” Here is the foundation that must never be obscured beneath religious activity. Jesus Christ died for sinners, was buried, and rose again. His finished work is sufficient. Romans 4:5 declares, “But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.” That statement leaves no room for turning salvation into a reward for parental obedience or personal moral achievement. Children must understand that their need is not merely to become nicer people, improve their manners, or make the family proud. They need the Saviour. The gospel confronts sin and announces God's provision through Jesus Christ. Faith rests upon Him, not upon an impressive record of religious accomplishments.

This is also why parents must distinguish salvation from discipleship. Christian growth involves learning obedience, developing spiritual understanding, resisting temptation, and walking according to Scripture. Those responsibilities matter tremendously, but they do not constitute the means by which eternal life is received. Titus 3:5 declares, “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us.” A child who believes the gospel has not suddenly become incapable of foolishness, disobedience, or immaturity. Saved children still need instruction and correction. Conversely, a remarkably well-behaved child should not automatically be pronounced saved merely because the outward behavior resembles Christian conduct. Parents who confuse these matters may unintentionally teach salvation by works while verbally claiming to believe salvation by grace. The gospel is not that good children eventually qualify for heaven. It is that sinners are saved by God's grace through faith in the crucified and risen Lord Jesus Christ.

**3. A Child Must Understand the Gospel, Not Merely Memorize the Correct Response**

Romans 10:9 declares, “That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.” Verse 10 continues by connecting belief in the heart with righteousness and confession with salvation. Paul is explaining the righteousness of faith, contrasting it with attempts to establish righteousness through the law. The passage does not describe a complicated religious ceremony requiring professional supervision. It identifies faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, who has been raised from the dead. Verse 13 provides the glorious invitation: “For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.” The word “whosoever” does not establish an exemption for children who have grown up hearing Scripture. Neither does it establish a privileged category for children whose fathers are preachers. The gospel invitation is personal. The child must believe the truth concerning Christ rather than merely repeat what the adults expect to hear.

There is nothing wrong with helping a child find words to express personal faith, but parents must not confuse repeating a prayer with the act of believing the gospel. Some children have been hurried through religious conversations in which every question receives a predetermined answer. An adult asks whether the child wants to go to heaven. Naturally, the child says yes. The adult asks whether the child wants to avoid hell. Again, the child agrees. A prayer follows, the adults celebrate, and the matter is declared permanently settled before anyone has established whether the child understood the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. A child can repeat a prayer as accurately as he repeats the alphabet, but accurate repetition is not the definition of saving faith. The words of a prayer do not possess magical power. Salvation rests upon Christ and His finished work, received through faith. The responsibility of the parent is to explain the gospel clearly rather than manufacture a particular response.

Parents must therefore learn to answer questions without attempting to control the conclusion. What does it mean to be a sinner? Why did Jesus Christ die? What happened when He rose from the dead? What does the Bible mean by believing on Him? These questions deserve explanations grounded in Scripture. Romans 10:17 declares, “So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” The word of God supplies the truth upon which faith rests. There is no universally prescribed birthday at which every child suddenly becomes capable of understanding the gospel. Children develop understanding differently, and parents should neither discourage sincere faith because a child seems young nor pronounce regeneration simply because a child has learned religious vocabulary. Listen carefully. Explain faithfully. Avoid manipulation. Let the Scriptures speak. A parent who rushes a child toward a profession to satisfy personal expectations

has confused spiritual responsibility with religious ambition. The objective is not securing a date for the family scrapbook. It is making Jesus Christ known.

**4. Timothy Had a Godly Mother and Grandmother, but Their Faith Could Not Replace His Own**

Second Timothy 1:5 records Paul's remembrance of “the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also.” Notice the expression “unfeigned faith.” Paul was speaking of genuine faith rather than something performed for religious appearances. Timothy's grandmother and mother possessed a testimony that had influenced his upbringing. Their faith was not a ceremonial decoration brought out whenever visitors arrived. It was sincere. Yet Paul does not describe salvation passing from one generation into another through biological inheritance. He recognizes faith in Lois, faith in Eunice, and faith in Timothy. Three people, personally responsible before God. Timothy benefited tremendously from the faithful instruction of these women, but his relationship to God was not established merely by their family connection. A mother's faith can illuminate the road to Christ, but her son must still believe the gospel himself.

Second Timothy 3:14–15 develops that testimony further. Paul commands Timothy to continue in what he has learned and reminds him that from childhood he had known the holy Scriptures. Those Scriptures were able to make him wise unto salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. There is an important distinction between knowing Scripture and responding to the truth Scripture reveals. Timothy's childhood knowledge was a tremendous advantage because he possessed access to divine revelation. Nevertheless, the passage identifies salvation through faith in Christ, not through knowledge alone. Parents should therefore encourage Scripture memorization, personal Bible reading, and careful examination of doctrine without imagining that accumulating verses automatically regenerates the soul. A child who can quote fifty passages has received valuable instruction. But those passages must be understood in their proper setting and believed where they reveal the gospel. The Bible is not a collection of religious passwords through which children obtain admission into heaven.

The testimony of Timothy's family should also correct the idea that genuine spiritual instruction requires constant religious pressure. Lois and Eunice are remembered for unfeigned faith, not for extraordinary skill in manufacturing public performances. Parents should cultivate an environment where Scripture is discussed naturally and sincerely. A daughter who begins reading her Bible voluntarily deserves encouragement, not an immediate demand to prove how much she has learned. A son who asks difficult doctrinal questions should receive thoughtful answers rather than suspicion. Proverbs 18:15

declares, “The heart of the prudent getteth knowledge; and the ear of the wise seeketh knowledge.” That pursuit should be welcomed. Sometimes a child's question reveals incomplete understanding. Sometimes it exposes a contradiction the parent has never considered. Neither situation requires panic. Open the Bible, examine the passage, and seek the truth together. A household that welcomes honest Bible questions is better equipped to develop genuine convictions than one where children are expected to applaud every answer without understanding it.

**5. Parents Can Plant and Water, but Only God Gives the Increase**

First Corinthians 3:6–7 declares, “I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase.” The immediate context concerns divisions among the Corinthian believers who had begun identifying themselves with particular ministers. Paul corrects their foolishness by explaining that ministers are servants through whom God works. One plants, another waters, but God supplies the increase. The passage is not specifically describing fathers and mothers raising children, and it should not be presented as though Paul were writing a parenting manual. Nevertheless, the distinction between human service and divine increase provides a powerful application to Christian instruction. Parents can faithfully teach God's word and explain the gospel. They can demonstrate righteousness, pray diligently, and cultivate opportunities for spiritual understanding. But regeneration remains God's work. No amount of parental determination can replace the saving operation of the Holy Spirit.

This distinction should humble successful parents and comfort faithful parents who are struggling. A father whose children demonstrate genuine faith should thank God rather than congratulate himself as though his parenting methods possessed supernatural power. A mother whose adult child rejects biblical instruction should examine her responsibilities honestly without automatically concluding that every wrong decision proves personal failure. Scripture recognizes individual accountability. Ezekiel 18:20 declares, “The soul that sinneth, it shall die,” within the LORD's correction of Israel's misuse of inherited guilt. That passage belongs to Israel's prophetic setting and must not be confused with the Church's doctrine of justification. Nevertheless, it establishes a distinction between one person's sin and another person's responsibility. Parents answer for their own faithfulness. Children become responsible for their own decisions. A parent is commanded to teach the truth, not granted the power to make every hearer believe it.

This does not excuse negligence. A father who never discusses Scripture cannot appeal to God's sovereignty as justification for abandoning his responsibility. A mother who refuses to answer sincere questions cannot claim that spiritual instruction belongs exclusively to

the pastor. Deuteronomy 6 commanded diligent instruction within Israel's households, while Ephesians 6:4 commands Christian fathers to bring children up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Those responsibilities remain serious. But they should be carried out through faithfulness rather than manipulation. Parents must not threaten children with the withdrawal of affection because they have not produced a desired profession of faith. Neither should they continually interrogate a child about salvation until the child discovers that saying the expected words is the easiest way to end the conversation. The gospel is good news to be believed, not an examination to be passed so the adults will finally stop asking questions. Teach faithfully, pray earnestly, and remember who gives the increase.

**6. The Local Church Must Teach Children Christianity, Not Train Them to Perform It**

Hebrews 10:24–25 instructs believers to consider one another unto love and good works, "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another." The passage concerns the responsibility of believers to assemble and encourage one another, particularly as the day approaches. The local church has an important place in the spiritual life of the Christian family. Faithful preaching, sound doctrine, fellowship, worship, and opportunities for service provide valuable instruction. Children benefit from observing believers who take Scripture seriously and demonstrate genuine Christian conduct. But the church is not a spiritual washing machine into which parents place their children every Sunday expecting automatic regeneration before the final hymn. Church attendance is valuable, but attendance is not salvation. A child may occupy the same pew for fifteen years and remain personally unconverted. The building does not regenerate anybody, and the Sunday school attendance record is not the Lamb's book of life.

Church leaders and parents must also beware of encouraging religious performance at the expense of understanding. A child may memorize passages, participate in activities, sing hymns, and answer questions correctly while possessing only a superficial knowledge of the gospel. These activities are not inherently wrong. They can provide meaningful opportunities for learning and service. The danger begins when adults treat participation as proof of regeneration or reward children primarily for appearing unusually spiritual. Matthew 6:1 records the Lord's warning against performing righteousness merely to be seen of men. The immediate context concerns the hypocrisy of public religious display under Christ's earthly teaching. Its application to outward pretense remains searching. Children should not learn that Christianity means knowing when to raise a hand, how loudly to sing, or which phrases secure the approval of adults. If the church teaches children to perform Christianity more convincingly than it teaches them to understand the gospel, it has mistaken religious theater for spiritual instruction.

A faithful local church should also support parental responsibility rather than replace it. Ephesians 4:11–12 explains that Christ gave ministers to the Church for the perfecting of the saints and the work of the ministry. Sound teaching contributes to the believer's growth and stability. Yet a pastor cannot supervise every family conversation, answer every child's private question, or substitute for years of neglected instruction at home. Parents should become familiar with what their children are learning, discuss the sermons, examine difficult passages, and encourage appropriate involvement without turning participation into a competition for recognition. Children should learn to appreciate faithful ministers while recognizing that Scripture, not the personality of a preacher, possesses final authority. Acts 17:11 commends those who searched the Scriptures daily to determine whether the things they heard were so. That is the proper spirit. The church should help children develop biblical convictions, not merely produce young people who know how to imitate the religious habits of their congregation.

**7. Teach Them to Stand on Scripture When You Are No Longer Standing Beside Them**

Second Timothy 2:15 commands, “Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.” Paul addresses Timothy concerning his ministerial responsibility to handle Scripture faithfully, especially amid false teaching and profane disputes. The command establishes the importance of careful study and proper doctrinal distinctions. Christian parents should teach their children to approach the Bible with the same reverence for truth. Israel and the Church must not be confused. The law must not be presented as the means of justification under grace. Salvation and Christian service must not be treated as identical matters. The new birth cannot be manufactured through baptism, church membership, moral improvement, or family tradition. Children need more than the ability to repeat a few familiar verses. They need to understand how those verses fit together. A borrowed conviction may sound impressive while father is standing nearby, but its strength becomes apparent when somebody else challenges it.

Personal Bible study should therefore become an encouraged habit rather than a punishment administered whenever a child behaves incorrectly. Parents can explain how to compare passages, examine context, recognize doctrinal distinctions, and distinguish a direct biblical statement from an inference. A child who asks whether a certain belief is true should be shown what the Scriptures say instead of merely being told that the family has always believed it. First Peter 3:15 instructs believers to be ready to give an answer concerning their hope with meekness and fear. The passage concerns Christian testimony amid suffering, but the value of a reasoned, respectful answer deserves attention. Parents should welcome sincere questions, including questions about salvation and assurance. If a

child struggles to understand a passage, study it carefully together. If the parent does not know the answer, admitting that fact is better than inventing doctrine. The Bible does not become more authoritative when an adult pretends to be incapable of misunderstanding it.

Assurance of salvation must likewise rest upon God's word rather than parental approval. First John 5:13 declares, “These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life.” The passage directs believers toward assurance grounded in God's testimony concerning His Son. Ephesians 1:13 explains that believers, having heard the word of truth and believed, were sealed with the holy Spirit of promise. John 10:28 records Christ's promise, “And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish.” Parents should not manufacture assurance through repeated declarations that a child must be saved because he prayed at a particular age. Neither should they torment a believing child by continually suggesting that every failure proves salvation has disappeared. Teach the difference between salvation, assurance, fellowship, obedience, and spiritual growth. A child's confidence must eventually rest upon what God has promised in Christ, not upon how confidently mother or father remembers a childhood conversation.

**Conclusion — Your Greatest Responsibility Is to Point Them to the Saviour**

Christian parenting involves a thousand responsibilities, and many of them are demanding. Fathers and mothers must provide food, clothing, shelter, education, supervision, affection, correction, and countless ordinary necessities. They must teach honesty, diligence, respect, self-control, and wise judgment. They should encourage worthwhile talents and prepare their children for the responsibilities of adulthood. But none of these duties can replace the central importance of the gospel. A child may grow into an accomplished musician, brilliant scholar, successful professional, or respected member of society while remaining spiritually lost. Mark 8:36 asks, “For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?” The Lord spoke those words within His teaching concerning discipleship, suffering, and the seriousness of eternal matters. The question exposes the inadequacy of worldly accomplishment as the final measurement of a life. Parents who prepare their children for every earthly opportunity while neglecting the gospel have overlooked the one matter that eternity will not permit them to correct afterward.

Yet the answer is not to turn the home into a place of constant religious pressure where children become frightened of every sincere question. The gospel is not strengthened by manipulation, nor is genuine faith produced through parental anxiety. Explain the Scriptures. Teach the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Make clear the difference between sin and righteousness, law and grace, works and faith, natural birth and

spiritual regeneration. Encourage children to read the Bible for themselves and ask questions without embarrassment. Demonstrate genuine Christianity through personal conduct. Let them see that prayer matters, Scripture matters, truth matters, and the Lord Jesus Christ is worthy of trust. Romans 10:17 declares, “So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” Parents cannot control every response, but they can faithfully provide the truth through which the gospel is understood. Their task is not to make salvation appear complicated. It is to prevent religious confusion from obscuring the simplicity of faith in Christ.

One day your children will no longer live beneath your roof. They will face circumstances you cannot anticipate, questions you cannot answer in advance, and decisions you cannot make for them. Your name will not secure their entrance into heaven. Your ministry accomplishments will not serve as their righteousness. Your faith cannot be transferred to them, and your obedience cannot substitute for theirs. What you can leave them is a faithful testimony, a sound understanding of Scripture, and a clear presentation of the Saviour who died for their sins and rose again. Timothy knew the holy Scriptures from childhood, and Paul declared that those Scriptures were able to make him wise unto salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. That remains the greatest spiritual instruction parents can provide. You can give your children your name, your possessions, your instruction, your affection, and the benefit of everything God has taught you. But you cannot give them your salvation. You can lead them to the cross, explain what happened there, and show them the empty tomb. You cannot believe for them. Raise them to know the Scriptures, teach them the gospel without compromise, and never mistake a child who knows how to act like a Christian for one who has personally believed on the Lord Jesus Christ.

**10 of 10 — Parenting in a Rebellious Age — Raise Them to Stand, Not to Remain Children Forever**

Key Passage — Proverbs 22:6 (KJV): “Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.”

There comes a day in the life of every parent when the little child who once needed help tying his shoes begins making decisions that mother and father cannot make for him. The boy who once required instructions to brush his teeth becomes a young man facing questions about employment, money, marriage, morality, and the direction of his life. The little girl who once reached for her father's hand while crossing the street becomes a young

woman making decisions about friendships, education, responsibilities, and personal convictions. Somewhere between bedtime stories and adulthood, the assignment changes. Parents who once determined practically everything must begin preparing their children to determine certain things for themselves. And here is where some otherwise faithful parents encounter a serious difficulty. They have become so accustomed to being needed that they have forgotten the purpose of being needed in the first place. God did not give parents children so they could remain children forever. He gave them children to raise. There is a difference.

Some parents spend eighteen years protecting their children from every conceivable inconvenience, making every decision, correcting every mistake before consequences appear, and removing every obstacle that might require independent judgment. Then, when the child approaches adulthood, they express astonishment that he cannot manage ordinary responsibilities without calling home for instructions. Well, what did they expect? A young man who has never been permitted to exercise judgment does not suddenly receive eighteen years of experience with his birthday cake. A young woman who has never been allowed to make an age-appropriate decision will not necessarily develop sound discernment merely because somebody hands her a diploma. Protection is necessary, especially during childhood, but protection that never develops into preparation eventually defeats its own purpose. A greenhouse can protect a young plant while it develops, but the object is not to keep the plant dependent upon the greenhouse forever. The purpose of raising children is not to make them permanently dependent upon your wisdom, but to teach them how to exercise wisdom when you are no longer standing beside them.

Proverbs 22:6 provides the foundation: “Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.” The verse belongs to the wisdom literature of the Old Testament, and it must be understood as practical instruction rather than an unconditional guarantee that every properly raised child will make righteous decisions throughout adulthood. A parent cannot override another person's will, manufacture spiritual regeneration, or secure obedience through some mysterious formula hidden in the Book of Proverbs. Nevertheless, the command to train is unmistakable. Training involves direction, instruction, correction, practice, increasing responsibility, and preparation for circumstances beyond the immediate supervision of the instructor. Proverbs 3:5–6 establishes trust in the LORD rather than confidence in human understanding. Ecclesiastes 12:1 calls young people to remember their Creator. First Corinthians 13:11 distinguishes childhood from maturity, while Second Timothy 3:14–17 establishes the importance of Scripture. These passages reveal the great responsibility of Christian parenting: preparing sons and daughters to stand upon truth when childhood has passed and parental supervision can no longer govern their every decision.

**1. Training a Child Is Not the Same Thing as Keeping Him Tied to the Nursery**

Proverbs 22:6 begins with the command "Train up a child," and those words deserve more attention than they ordinarily receive. The Book of Proverbs does not present wisdom as something acquired through perpetual helplessness. It repeatedly calls the young to receive instruction, understand consequences, recognize wickedness, exercise discretion, and walk in the right way. Proverbs 4:11 declares, "I have taught thee in the way of wisdom; I have led thee in right paths." Notice that the instructor is preparing the student to walk. The father teaches, directs, and demonstrates, but the son must eventually take the steps. Training is not merely the delivery of information. It involves the development of judgment through instruction and experience. A man may explain how to ride a bicycle for twenty years, but if he never allows the child to put his feet upon the pedals, he has produced an expert in bicycle lectures rather than somebody who can actually ride one. Instruction that never develops into responsible action has not completed its assignment.

The phrase "in the way he should go" also establishes direction. Scripture does not instruct parents to cultivate independence from righteousness, authority, or personal responsibility. The destination matters. Proverbs 14:12 warns, "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death." Merely following personal preferences is not sufficient. Children need to understand that choices possess moral consequences and that sincerity cannot transform wrongdoing into righteousness. Parents should therefore teach the distinction between what is right, what is merely permissible, and what may be unwise under particular circumstances. A young child may require a simple instruction concerning an immediate danger. An older child should increasingly understand the principle behind that instruction. The objective is not to eliminate every opportunity for independent judgment but to make that judgment more reliable through biblical understanding. Wise parents gradually move from issuing directions toward helping their children understand why those directions were necessary.

The closing words, "and when he is old, he will not depart from it," describe the enduring significance of training. Yet the verse must not be turned into a contractual guarantee through which parents imagine they can purchase a particular adult outcome by performing enough childhood procedures. Proverbs contains inspired wisdom, including observations concerning the ordinary consequences of righteousness and foolishness. It does not abolish personal responsibility. A parent may faithfully instruct a child who later makes wicked decisions, and another parent may neglect important responsibilities while a child eventually turns toward righteousness. Neither circumstance changes what parents ought to do. The emphasis belongs upon faithful preparation. Children should progressively receive responsibilities appropriate to their demonstrated maturity rather than being

treated as though every birthday leaves them exactly where they were five years earlier. A seventeen-year-old does not need the same supervision as a seven-year-old, and treating them identically is not necessarily faithfulness. Sometimes it is simply a refusal to recognize that the training is supposed to produce growth.

**2. Teach Them to Trust the Lord Instead of Borrowing Your Judgment Forever**

Proverbs 3:5–6 commands, “Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.” These verses belong to the wisdom instruction of Proverbs, where the father addresses his son concerning obedience, mercy, truth, wisdom, and the fear of the LORD. The command establishes the proper foundation of confidence. The son is not told to trust his father with all his heart. He is instructed to trust the LORD. That distinction matters tremendously. Parents possess legitimate authority while their children are growing up, and faithful parental counsel may remain valuable throughout adulthood. But a father's judgment is not infallible, a mother's understanding is not unlimited, and neither possesses divine knowledge concerning every future circumstance. A Christian parent who teaches his child to depend upon him more than upon the Lord has placed the wrong person at the center of the instruction. The parent should point toward God's authority rather than attempt to occupy God's place.

This requires children to develop the ability to examine decisions through Scripture instead of merely asking what mother or father would prefer. Suppose a teenager must choose between worthwhile educational opportunities, consider a potential friendship, evaluate employment, or determine whether an activity agrees with biblical convictions. Parents should provide counsel and establish appropriate boundaries while the child remains under their care. But they should also explain how to evaluate the choices. What does Scripture command? What circumstances require prudence? What obligations already exist? What consequences might follow? Proverbs 15:22 declares, “Without counsel purposes are disappointed: but in the multitude of counsellors they are established.” Wise counsel matters, but counsel is not the same thing as permanent dependence upon a single person's decisions. A child approaching adulthood should learn to seek appropriate advice without becoming incapable of exercising personal judgment. Otherwise, parental influence has produced obedience to a personality rather than understanding of truth.

Parents must also confront their own temptation to control circumstances that rightly belong to a maturing child's responsibility. Love can become distorted when anxiety is allowed to govern every decision. A mother may fear allowing her daughter to travel independently for an appropriate activity. A father may hesitate to let his son accept a responsibility that includes the possibility of failure. Such concerns deserve consideration,

and legitimate danger must never be dismissed. Nevertheless, fear is not automatically wisdom. Proverbs 29:25 declares, “The fear of man bringeth a snare: but whoso putteth his trust in the LORD shall be safe.” The verse does not promise immunity from every earthly difficulty. It contrasts fear-driven dependence upon man with confidence in the LORD. Parents should evaluate actual risks, establish suitable safeguards, and permit appropriate growth. If the only way to keep a child from making mistakes is to prevent him from making decisions, the parent has not developed wisdom. He has merely postponed the examination.

**3. Remember Thy Creator While You Are Young Enough to Establish Your Ways**

Ecclesiastes 12:1 declares, “Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them.” Solomon's instruction appears at the conclusion of a book examining life under the sun, the vanity of earthly pursuits, the certainty of death, and the responsibility to fear God. The following verses describe the decline associated with advancing age through vivid imagery, culminating in the return of dust to the earth and the spirit unto God who gave it. The command is not merely an invitation to develop pleasant religious habits during childhood. It is a sober reminder that youth is temporary and that the opportunities of life should not be squandered. A young person who continually announces that serious obedience can begin later has misunderstood the brevity of human life. The devil has never objected to somebody planning to obey God tomorrow, provided he can keep that tomorrow permanently out of reach.

Ecclesiastes 11:9 gives another necessary part of the context: “Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth,” followed by the warning that God will bring these matters into judgment. Scripture does not teach that youth must be a miserable season devoid of enjoyment, friendship, creativity, or legitimate ambition. Young people may rejoice in appropriate opportunities while remembering their accountability before God. There is nothing wicked about enjoying a worthwhile education, developing artistic talent, participating in athletics, learning music, or preparing for a meaningful occupation. The problem arises when enjoyment becomes the governing purpose of life and responsibility is endlessly deferred. Parents should teach children that freedom carries accountability. The opportunity to make a decision includes responsibility for its consequences. Wisdom does not despise youthful energy; it gives that energy direction. The young person who learns to join enjoyment with responsibility is being prepared for a life larger than immediate gratification.

The final verdict of Ecclesiastes appears in 12:13: “Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man.” The

statement must be read within its Old Testament setting rather than presented as the means of justification for the Church under grace. Romans 4:5 establishes righteousness through faith rather than works, and Ephesians 2:8–9 identifies salvation as God's gift. Nevertheless, Ecclesiastes confronts the vanity of living without regard for divine accountability. Parents should teach children to take their responsibilities seriously before adulthood arrives. Encourage diligence in school, honesty in friendships, faithfulness in commitments, and thoughtful consideration of future opportunities. Do not make every childhood interest into a career decision, but help young people recognize that their present habits influence their future conduct. A child who repeatedly practices negligence is not preparing for responsibility. Adulthood does not arrive carrying a miraculous replacement set of habits. It generally reveals the habits that childhood has been rehearsing.

**4. Put Away Childish Things Without Throwing Away the Joy of Living**

First Corinthians 13:11 declares, “When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things.” Paul is not writing an independent commandment requiring children to abandon every recreational interest at a particular age. The immediate context concerns charity and the contrast between partial knowledge and the fuller understanding to come. He uses the distinction between childhood and adulthood as an illustration. That historical and doctrinal setting must remain intact. Nevertheless, the comparison rests upon an obvious reality: childhood and maturity are not identical conditions. The mature person possesses responsibilities and understanding that the child has not yet developed. Parents should recognize this distinction when preparing their sons and daughters for adulthood. Growing older should be accompanied by increasing responsibility, not merely increasing freedom to enjoy more expensive forms of entertainment. A young man who demands every privilege of adulthood while refusing every responsibility of adulthood has misunderstood what growing up means.

One essential area of preparation concerns work. Colossians 3:23 commands, “And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men.” Paul addresses servants concerning faithful conduct in their appointed responsibilities, but the principle of diligent labor is applicable to legitimate work generally. Children should learn to complete assignments, care for their possessions, maintain reasonable order, honor commitments, and finish necessary tasks even when those tasks are not particularly entertaining. They should gradually acquire practical abilities such as preparing simple meals, washing clothing, maintaining personal spaces, managing schedules, and handling routine problems. These are not glamorous achievements, and nobody is likely to organize an

awards ceremony because a teenager successfully operates a washing machine. Nevertheless, the skills matter. A person who can discuss advanced subjects but cannot manage ordinary daily obligations possesses an incomplete preparation for adulthood. Parents should cultivate ability without making children responsible for burdens beyond their maturity.

Work also teaches the distinction between responsibility and immediate reward. Second Thessalonians 3:10 states, “For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat.” Paul was confronting deliberate idleness among believers who refused responsible labor. He was not instructing parents to deprive children of necessary food or punish inability as though it were unwillingness. The distinction between would not and could not is essential. Nevertheless, the passage exposes the wickedness of willful idleness. Children should gradually learn that household responsibilities are not always optional activities performed only when somebody offers payment. Families require cooperation. Younger children can perform simple duties, while older children can assume more substantial responsibilities as maturity permits. Appropriate work should cultivate diligence without eliminating rest, recreation, education, or ordinary childhood enjoyment. The goal is not to make children into unpaid household employees. It is to prevent them from reaching adulthood believing that responsible living is somebody else's occupation.

**5. Teach Them to Manage Money, Make Decisions, and Recognize the Company They Keep**

Luke 16:10 declares, “He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much.” The Lord Jesus Christ speaks within His teaching concerning stewardship, faithfulness, and the proper relationship to material possessions. The principle is especially valuable when preparing children for financial responsibility. A young person who has never learned to manage twenty dollars should not be expected to become a financial genius merely because somebody eventually approves him for a credit card. Parents should teach saving, giving, budgeting, honest transactions, and the difference between necessities and desires. Explain how bills are paid without unnecessarily burdening children with adult anxieties. Demonstrate why borrowing creates obligations and why purchases should be considered before money is spent. Proverbs 21:5 declares, “The thoughts of the diligent tend only to plenteousness; but of every one that is hasty only to want.” A child who cannot distinguish wanting something from affording something is being prepared for a very expensive education in reality.

Financial stewardship is only one part of practical judgment. Children must also learn to manage time, honor commitments, evaluate opportunities, and recognize when an

attractive decision carries hidden consequences. Proverbs 14:15 states, “The simple believeth every word: but the prudent man looketh well to his going.” That is wisdom worth cultivating before the first employment agreement, major purchase, or serious personal commitment. Teach young people to read carefully before signing, ask questions before agreeing, and examine claims before accepting them. A young person should understand that not every opportunity is beneficial merely because it is available. First Corinthians 10:23 declares, “All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient.” Paul was addressing Christian liberty and the responsibility to consider what is profitable and edifying. The principle applies to judgment beyond the immediate question of sin. Something may be permissible yet unwise under particular circumstances. Mature decision-making requires more than asking whether somebody has expressly forbidden an activity.

Relationships require the same discernment. Proverbs 13:20 declares, “He that walketh with wise men shall be wise: but a companion of fools shall be destroyed.” Parents should prepare children to recognize honorable friendship, dishonesty, manipulation, selfishness, and corrupting influence. They should teach sons and daughters to respect others, establish appropriate boundaries, and understand that affection does not excuse wickedness. As young people mature, questions concerning serious relationships and future marriage deserve increasingly thoughtful instruction. Proverbs 18:22 declares, “Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favour of the LORD.” Marriage is not a trivial social experiment, and preparation for it involves character long before a wedding is contemplated. Parents can provide counsel concerning faithfulness, responsibility, compatibility, and biblical conduct without attempting to choose every future relationship through personal preference. The purpose is not to raise young people who cannot make a decision without parental permission, but people who have learned enough wisdom to recognize when they should seek counsel before making one.

**6. Let Them Learn From Smaller Failures Before Life Presents Larger Consequences**

Galatians 6:7 declares, “Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.” Paul is addressing believers concerning spiritual responsibility, conduct, and the consequences associated with sowing to the flesh or to the Spirit. The principle reaches into the practical realities of life. Decisions possess consequences, and consequences can provide valuable instruction. Parents sometimes become so determined to prevent disappointment that they continually rescue their children from the ordinary results of careless decisions. A forgotten assignment becomes the parent's emergency. A neglected responsibility becomes somebody else's problem. A foolish purchase is immediately replaced with more money. Eventually, the child learns

that mistakes have no consequences provided a sufficiently determined adult is available to repair everything. You cannot teach responsibility while continually protecting irresponsibility from meeting its consequences. Wise parents allow age-appropriate, manageable consequences to instruct while intervening whenever safety or serious harm requires protection.

There must, however, be a distinction between allowing natural consequences and abandoning a child in genuine difficulty. A parent should not permit dangerous situations, exploitation, serious injury, or irreversible harm merely to deliver a memorable lesson. Wisdom evaluates the matter before deciding how much independence is appropriate. Proverbs 27:12 declares, “A prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself; but the simple pass on, and are punished.” Prudent parents recognize danger and establish reasonable safeguards. Yet when the consequences are manageable, they need not eliminate every discomfort. A teenager who spends his recreational money foolishly may need to wait before purchasing something else. A child who neglects an ordinary responsibility may need to correct the mistake personally. A young person who speaks disrespectfully should learn to acknowledge the offense and make amends. These experiences should be handled with fairness rather than humiliation. The school of consequences can provide excellent instruction, but parents must possess enough judgment to distinguish a useful lesson from an unnecessary disaster.

When a young person sins or fails, the objective should be correction and restoration rather than permanent disgrace. Galatians 6:1 commands, “Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.” The immediate setting concerns believers restoring a fellow Christian, but the instruction exposes the proper spirit of correction. Parents should not treat every failure as evidence that years of instruction have accomplished nothing. Determine what happened. Address the wrongdoing. Require appropriate accountability and restitution. Help the young person understand how to proceed more wisely. Proverbs 24:16 declares, “For a just man falleth seven times, and riseth up again: but the wicked shall fall into mischief.” The verse contrasts the righteous man's resilience with the overthrow of the wicked. Failure need not become a permanent identity. Children should learn to acknowledge mistakes without excuses and recover without surrendering responsibility. A parent who teaches a child how to get up after a fall has provided instruction that may prove more valuable than preventing every stumble.

**7. The Final Test Is Whether Their Convictions Stand When You Are Not There**

First Timothy 4:12 declares, “Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.” Paul was

instructing Timothy concerning his responsibilities in ministry, including doctrine, public reading, exhortation, and personal conduct. Timothy was not an elementary-school child receiving a general classroom assignment. Nevertheless, the qualities identified provide an excellent picture of spiritual responsibility. Timothy was to demonstrate godliness through speech, conduct, love, spiritual life, faith, and purity. Notice that Paul did not merely command Timothy to preserve the appearance of youthfulness until somebody older could make his decisions. He expected responsible conduct appropriate to his calling. Christian parents should likewise prepare their maturing children to accept increasing responsibility. A young person's character should not depend entirely upon whether father is watching or mother has inspected the situation. The strongest evidence of training appears when the student practices what was taught without the instructor standing over his shoulder.

Second Timothy 3:14–15 reminds Timothy to continue in the things he had learned and identifies the holy Scriptures as able to make him wise unto salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. Verses 16–17 establish the divine inspiration and profitability of Scripture for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness. That is the foundation Christian parents must provide. They should teach children to open the Bible, examine passages in context, recognize dispensational distinctions, and understand salvation by grace through faith rather than religious works. A child raised in a Christian home does not automatically inherit regeneration from believing parents. Ephesians 2:8–9 establishes salvation as the gift of God, received through faith, not earned through family obedience. Parents can faithfully teach the gospel concerning Christ's death, burial, and resurrection, but they cannot believe for their children. Spiritual maturity requires personal faith and growing understanding. A child who only knows what his parents believe may possess valuable information. A young person who understands why Scripture teaches those things has begun developing convictions capable of standing independently.

There must also come a time when parents accept that their responsibilities toward adult sons and daughters have changed. Genesis 2:24 declares, “Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.” The passage belongs to the creation account and establishes the formation of the marriage relationship. It demonstrates that marriage involves establishing a new household rather than remaining permanently governed by the parental household. Adult children should continue honoring their parents, seeking wise counsel, and showing appropriate respect, but honor does not mean perpetual submission to every parental preference. Parents should resist the temptation to use guilt, money, affection, or religious language to control decisions that belong to responsible adults. They may offer counsel, express concerns, and maintain biblical convictions without attempting to govern every detail. There is a difference between a father who remains available to guide his grown son and one who

cannot tolerate the possibility that his son may make a decision without consulting him. One has prepared a man; the other is still trying to supervise a boy.

**Conclusion — The Greatest Achievement Is Not Keeping Them Close, but Preparing Them to Stand**

The years of childhood move considerably faster than parents imagine. There are seasons when the responsibilities seem endless: school assignments, medical appointments, family schedules, correction, instruction, transportation, and the ordinary demands of maintaining a household. Then, almost without warning, the child who once required help with everything begins preparing for a life beyond the family home. Parents should not despise those years or become so consumed with future accomplishments that they neglect present relationships. But they must remember that childhood is temporary by God's design. First Corinthians 13:11 recognizes the movement from childhood understanding toward maturity. Proverbs 22:6 commands training directed toward the child's future way. Ecclesiastes 12:1 urges the young to remember their Creator before the declining years arrive. These passages should remind Christian families that parenting involves preparation for responsibilities that extend beyond parental supervision. The greatest achievement of parenting is not producing children who remain incapable of living without you. It is faithfully preparing them for the day when they must exercise the wisdom you have spent years teaching.

That preparation should include more than academic honors, athletic accomplishments, fashionable possessions, and impressive opportunities. Encourage diligence and cultivate gifts, but teach character alongside ability. Teach financial stewardship before debt becomes a master. Teach personal responsibility before negligence produces serious consequences. Teach discernment before corrupting influences gain authority. Teach children to work honestly, speak truthfully, respect others, establish wise relationships, and acknowledge wrongdoing. Above all, establish their understanding of Scripture and faithfully explain the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. Proverbs 3:5 commands trust in the LORD with all the heart, not permanent dependence upon the judgment of another human being. Parents must themselves demonstrate that confidence. Their children will make decisions they cannot control, encounter circumstances they cannot prevent, and face responsibilities they cannot personally carry. Faithfulness does not guarantee that every adult child will choose wisely. It does mean that parents have fulfilled their responsibility to instruct, correct, encourage, and prepare while the opportunities were entrusted to them.

So raise your sons and daughters with the future in view. Enjoy their childhood without attempting to preserve it forever. Protect them while they are vulnerable, instruct them while they are learning, correct them when they are wrong, encourage them when they are

discouraged, and gradually entrust them with responsibilities as they demonstrate maturity. Let them develop their individual abilities without making their accomplishments trophies for parental pride. Teach them to seek wise counsel without becoming dependent upon constant approval. Let them know that your love does not disappear when they make a mistake, and that biblical truth does not change when they encounter opposition. One day the schoolbooks will be closed, the childhood bedrooms may stand empty, and the family schedule will no longer revolve around the activities that once filled every afternoon. What remains will matter far more than the trophies, report cards, and photographs. Proverbs 22:6 still commands parents to train their children in the way they should go. Do not spend eighteen years teaching your children to hold your hand without teaching them how to walk. The day will come when you must loosen your grip, but the word of God need never lose its authority over their lives. Raise them to know the Saviour, understand the Scriptures, recognize righteousness, accept responsibility, and stand faithfully when you are no longer there to stand beside them. That is not the end of successful parenting. That is what the training was for.

**Parenting in a Rebellious Age**

**Raising Children Without Letting the World Disciple Them**

**Conclusion**

There comes a time when every Christian parent must confront a sobering reality: the children we are raising today are going to live in a world where we cannot make every decision for them tomorrow. We can teach them, correct them, protect them, encourage them, pray for them, and demonstrate the truth before them, but we cannot live their lives in their place. One day the little hands that reach for ours will be occupied with responsibilities of their own. The children who once needed permission to cross the street will make decisions concerning employment, marriage, finances, friendships, spiritual convictions, and the direction of their lives. They will encounter temptations we never anticipated, circumstances we cannot control, and people who have absolutely no intention of respecting the biblical standards we taught them. And when that day arrives, the real question will not be whether we successfully sheltered them from every difficulty during childhood. The question will be whether we prepared them to recognize truth when falsehood becomes attractive, choose righteousness when wickedness becomes convenient, and stand upon the word of God when nobody from home is standing beside them. **The purpose of Christian parenting is not to make children permanently**

**dependent upon their parents. It is to prepare them to live responsibly before the Lord when childhood has passed.**

That responsibility has become particularly demanding in a generation where almost every institution seems determined to compete for a child's attention, affection, and understanding. The world has developed an extraordinary collection of instructors, and a considerable number of them are available twenty-four hours a day. A child can receive moral instruction from an entertainer, financial instruction from an advertiser, relationship advice from a stranger, and an entire philosophy of life from somebody whose greatest accomplishment is maintaining a large audience on the internet. The modern world is not particularly concerned whether the information is true, whether the influence is wholesome, or whether the child possesses enough maturity to understand what is being presented. Popularity becomes authority. Repetition becomes credibility. Entertainment becomes education. And parents who fail to recognize what is happening may eventually discover that they have been providing room, board, transportation, and expensive electronics while somebody else has been furnishing the convictions. Romans 12:2 commands, "And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind." That command is directed toward believers under grace, and its authority has not diminished because technology has improved. **The world does not have to defeat biblical parenting through open persecution. Sometimes it accomplishes a great deal through parental inattention.**

But the answer is not panic, isolation, or the foolish assumption that everything invented after a particular decade must be wicked. There have always been corrupting influences, rebellious philosophies, foolish companions, and people determined to make merchandise out of human appetites. Ecclesiastes 1:9 declares, "The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun." The instruments change, but fallen human nature remains remarkably consistent. Today's temptations may arrive through electronic devices rather than printed magazines, and today's peer pressure may involve expensive digital entertainment instead of the fashionable clothing of another generation. Nevertheless, the underlying questions remain the same. Who possesses authority? What is right? What is wrong? What deserves our affection? What governs our conduct? Whose approval matters? Parents should not raise children who are terrified of every new development or incapable of recognizing legitimate opportunities. Neither should they raise children who accept every modern fashion merely because somebody has managed to advertise it attractively. **Christian discernment does not require a person to become an enemy of everything new. It requires him to recognize that something does not become righteous merely because it is new.**

Throughout these ten studies, one biblical responsibility has remained unmistakable: fathers and mothers must actively teach the children entrusted to them. Deuteronomy 6:6–7 commanded Israelite parents to keep God's words in their hearts and diligently teach them to their children. That passage belongs to Israel under the Mosaic covenant, and Christians must not confuse Israel's national responsibilities with salvation by grace through faith. Nevertheless, the principle concerning deliberate parental instruction remains powerful. The words were first to occupy the hearts of the parents and then be taught within the ordinary circumstances of family life. Ephesians 6:4 brings the responsibility directly into the Christian household: "And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." There is the commandment. Not merely feed them. Not merely finance them. Not merely arrange enough activities to occupy every afternoon until they graduate. Bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. That requires time, personal involvement, knowledge of Scripture, faithful example, correction, patience, and the willingness to remain responsible even when parenting becomes inconvenient. **God never promised that raising children would be effortless, and He certainly never assigned the responsibility to whichever electronic device happens to possess the largest screen.**

Parents must also remember that their conduct preaches long after their formal instruction has ended. Children are watching how we handle disappointment, how we speak to one another, how we treat people who cannot benefit us, how we respond when money becomes tight, and whether our Christianity survives the ordinary aggravations of daily life. Proverbs 20:7 declares, "The just man walketh in his integrity: his children are blessed after him." The verse concerns the man's walk, not merely the impressive religious statements he occasionally makes. A father can deliver an excellent sermon about controlling the tongue and then demonstrate precisely the opposite before the family reaches home. A mother can instruct her daughter concerning forgiveness while preserving an old grievance with the determination of a historian protecting a priceless manuscript. Children notice these contradictions. They may not possess the theological vocabulary necessary to describe hypocrisy, but they recognize it when they encounter it. James 1:22 commands believers to be doers of the word rather than hearers only. **A parent who wants his children to take the Bible seriously had better demonstrate that the Bible possesses authority over his own conduct. The most damaging contradiction in the home is not a child who occasionally forgets a commandment, but an adult who continually excuses himself from obeying it.**

There must also be a proper understanding of authority, because modern parenting frequently swings between two equally foolish extremes. In one household, the children make the demands, establish the schedule, control the atmosphere, and negotiate every

instruction until the exhausted adults surrender. In another household, the parents have confused biblical leadership with intimidation, and everybody behaves as though a minor mistake might bring down fire from heaven. Neither arrangement demonstrates the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Ephesians 6:1 commands children to obey their parents in the Lord, for this is right. Colossians 3:21 commands fathers not to provoke their children to anger, lest they be discouraged. God establishes responsibility on both sides. Children must learn obedience, respect, honesty, and accountability. Parents must exercise authority through fairness, patience, consistency, and self-control. Correction is necessary, but correction is not revenge. Affection is necessary, but affection is not indulgence. A child who never hears the word no is being prepared for serious disappointment, while a child who never experiences parental kindness may eventually associate authority with misery. **The home should not be governed by the child's temper or the father's temper. It should be governed by biblical truth.**

And somewhere in the midst of all the instruction, discipline, schedules, and responsibilities, parents must remember that children need to know they are genuinely loved. They are not merely assignments to complete or accomplishments to display. A son who earns exceptional grades still needs his father to listen to him. A daughter who develops remarkable artistic or literary ability still needs her mother to understand the things that matter to her. Children need encouragement when they succeed, correction when they do wrong, and reassurance that affection does not disappear when their performance is imperfect. Proverbs 23:26 declares, "My son, give me thine heart, and let thine eyes observe my ways." There is more involved than securing outward compliance. A parent should cultivate the kind of relationship in which difficult questions can be asked and troubling experiences can be discussed. Some parents are so determined to win every disagreement that they never recognize when their children have stopped trusting them enough to speak. Others mistake friendship for the abandonment of authority. Both are wrong. **You do not have to surrender your position as a parent to become someone your children trust, and you should not have to frighten your children into silence to prove that you possess authority.**

The same biblical wisdom must govern the influences entering the household through technology, entertainment, and companionship. Psalm 101:3 declares, "I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes." Proverbs 13:20 warns that walking with wise men produces wisdom, while companionship with fools brings destruction. These principles deserve serious consideration in a world where children can communicate with strangers, encounter inappropriate material, and absorb entire philosophies without leaving their bedrooms. Parents should understand the devices they provide, the games their children enjoy, the conversations they participate in, and the personalities influencing their thinking.

But surveillance alone cannot develop character. Electronic restrictions may provide necessary protection, especially for younger children, yet the long-term objective must be discernment. A child must eventually learn why certain material is wicked, why certain relationships are dangerous, and why self-government matters. First Corinthians 6:12 declares, "I will not be brought under the power of any." That principle applies to adults as well as to the habits they permit their children to develop. **There is something rather ridiculous about a parent declaring war against his child's screen time while spending six hours arguing with strangers on his own telephone. Biblical instruction becomes considerably more convincing when the instructor practices it.**

Then there is the question of possessions, and here the surrounding culture has developed an impressive ability to transform perfectly ordinary merchandise into a supposed requirement for human happiness. Children naturally want to enjoy the things their friends enjoy. There is nothing automatically wicked about fashionable clothing, popular entertainment, or desirable possessions. Nevertheless, the desire to belong can become a powerful instrument of manipulation. An expensive pair of shoes does not establish character. A particular gaming system does not confer human dignity. A fashionable label does not make its owner morally superior to the child wearing something less expensive. Philippians 4:11 records the Apostle Paul's declaration that he had learned contentment in whatsoever state he was. First Timothy 6:6 declares, "But godliness with contentment is great gain." Children must learn gratitude, financial responsibility, generosity, and the difference between a legitimate desire and an unreasonable demand. Parents should also understand that exclusion can genuinely hurt, and those difficulties deserve thoughtful attention rather than contempt. But purchasing every fashionable item cannot guarantee friendship, and continual spending cannot produce contentment. **If a child's identity must be purchased from the opinions of his classmates, the price will keep increasing while the value continues disappearing.**

Education presents another responsibility that Christian parents must take seriously. We should encourage academic excellence, intellectual development, diligence, and the cultivation of legitimate gifts. There is no spiritual virtue in laziness, ignorance, or the deliberate neglect of ability. Proverbs 4:7 declares, "Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding." Daniel and his companions demonstrated extraordinary knowledge while maintaining their convictions before God. Christian parents should want their children to read carefully, reason thoughtfully, write clearly, work diligently, and develop their talents in whatever worthwhile fields they possess ability. A child who excels academically should be encouraged without becoming arrogant. A child who struggles should receive assistance without being humiliated. But education must never be confused with wisdom. A person may acquire

exceptional intellectual ability while lacking honesty, humility, self-control, or biblical understanding. Parents must remain involved in what their children are learning, regardless of the educational arrangement selected. **A straight-A student can still possess a crooked conscience, and a diploma cannot substitute for the fear of the Lord. The purpose of education is not merely to fill the mind with information, but to prepare a person to use knowledge responsibly.**

As children grow, parents must also prepare them for the changes of adolescence without treating ordinary development as something shameful. Boys and girls need truthful instruction concerning their bodies, personal boundaries, modesty, purity, relationships, and the moral responsibilities that accompany maturity. Genesis 1:27 establishes that God created mankind in His image, male and female. First Thessalonians 4:3 commands sanctification and abstinence from fornication. These truths should be taught clearly, with reverence for Scripture and consideration for the child's understanding. Parents must not surrender delicate conversations entirely to classmates, popular entertainment, or anonymous personalities on the internet. Neither should they introduce adult subjects prematurely merely because the surrounding culture has abandoned restraint. Children need appropriate information, genuine protection, and the assurance that troubling experiences can be reported without fear of automatic blame. A child who has been exploited is not guilty of another person's wickedness. A child who asks an honest question has not necessarily demonstrated rebellion. **The objective is not to make children ashamed of growing up, but to prepare them to enter adulthood with dignity, discernment, purity, and a sound understanding of personal responsibility before God.**

Yet the most important distinction in this entire series concerns the difference between raising a respectable child and raising a child who has personally believed on the Lord Jesus Christ. Parents can teach the Scriptures, explain the gospel, cultivate reverence, and demonstrate genuine faith. They cannot regenerate another human being. John 3:3 records the Lord's declaration, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Nicodemus possessed religion, education, and standing among the Jews, but those advantages could not substitute for spiritual regeneration. Ephesians 2:8–9 establishes salvation by grace through faith, not works. The gospel concerns Christ's death for our sins, His burial, and His resurrection according to the Scriptures, as declared in 1 Corinthians 15:3–4. Children must understand that church attendance, respectable behavior, baptism, family tradition, and Scripture memorization cannot purchase eternal life. These things must never be confused with faith in Christ. **A child can inherit his father's name, his mother's talents, and the accumulated possessions of the household, but he cannot inherit salvation through the family tree. Every saved person must personally believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.**

This should encourage parents to make the Scriptures familiar without turning Christianity into a religious performance. Second Timothy 3:15 reminds Timothy that from childhood he had known the holy Scriptures, which were able to make him wise unto salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. His mother and grandmother had demonstrated unfeigned faith, but their faith did not eliminate his personal responsibility before God. Children should be encouraged to open the Bible, ask questions, compare passages, and develop understanding that extends beyond the opinions of their parents. They should learn why salvation is by grace, why the finished work of Christ is sufficient, why Scripture must be rightly divided, and why religious tradition cannot replace divine revelation. Parents should not become frightened when children ask sincere questions. Neither should they manipulate them into professions of faith merely to satisfy adult expectations. **The objective is not to produce children who can perform Christianity convincingly before an audience, but young people who understand the gospel and know how to examine the Scriptures for themselves.** A borrowed conviction may survive a Sunday school examination, but it will be tested when the child must answer without somebody whispering the correct response.

And that brings us to the final responsibility: preparing children to stand when the training years have ended. First Corinthians 13:11 recognizes the distinction between childhood understanding and maturity. Proverbs 22:6 commands parents to train children in the way they should go. Proverbs 3:5–6 establishes trust in the LORD rather than dependence upon human understanding. Children should gradually learn to manage responsibilities, exercise judgment, accept consequences, handle money, cultivate healthy relationships, and recover wisely from mistakes. A young child requires supervision appropriate to his limited experience. An older child who demonstrates responsibility should gradually receive opportunities to exercise greater judgment. The purpose of protection is not to prevent maturity. It is to make maturity possible. Parents who make every decision indefinitely may produce children who possess considerable knowledge but little confidence in their ability to exercise it. Others grant unrestricted freedom before the child has demonstrated the judgment necessary to use it responsibly. Wisdom rejects both extremes. **You cannot prepare a young person to carry responsibility by refusing to let him practice carrying anything, and you cannot call abandonment independence merely because you have stopped supervising him.**

There is another truth parents must eventually accept, and it may be one of the hardest lessons in the entire assignment. Your children belong to God before they belong to you, and your authority over their lives is not unlimited. Psalm 127:3 declares, "Lo, children are an heritage of the LORD: and the fruit of the womb is his reward." An heritage carries responsibility, but it does not make the steward the ultimate owner of another person's

soul. Parents can faithfully instruct children who later make decisions they do not approve. They can provide wise counsel that adult sons or daughters sometimes decline to follow. They can pray for circumstances they cannot personally change. None of this eliminates the importance of faithful parenting, but it does establish the limits of human authority. Children eventually become adults who must answer personally before God. Parents must not attempt to preserve control through guilt, manipulation, financial pressure, or religious intimidation. The obligation to honor father and mother remains, but adulthood carries responsibilities that cannot be permanently exercised by somebody else. **A parent who cannot release an adult child from childhood supervision has confused faithful influence with perpetual ownership. Love prepares another person to stand; pride demands that he remain dependent.**

My wife and I are still walking through the responsibilities of raising our own children, and I do not imagine that having a Bible in the house automatically makes every decision simple. Children grow. Their interests change. Their questions become more complicated. What occupied their attention last year may seem completely unimportant next year. They develop abilities, discover new responsibilities, experience disappointments, and begin seeing the world through an understanding that is increasingly their own. There are wonderful moments when their diligence, intelligence, creativity, and personal interest in Scripture bring genuine encouragement. There are also moments when parenting requires patience, difficult decisions, and the humility to acknowledge that adults are still learning as well. That is one reason this subject deserves serious consideration. These are not abstract questions reserved for somebody else's household. They concern the ordinary responsibilities fathers and mothers encounter every day. **The longer we raise children, the more clearly we should understand that parenting is not a demonstration of our perfection. It is a responsibility that continually requires us to examine our own faithfulness before God.**

For parents who recognize failures along the way, the answer is not to surrender to discouragement or spend the remainder of childhood rehearsing yesterday's mistakes. The answer is to begin doing what is right with the opportunities that remain. James 1:22 commands, "But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves." If you have neglected family instruction, begin teaching. If you have exercised authority through uncontrolled anger, acknowledge the sin and correct your conduct. If your children have received too little personal attention, begin listening. If technology has gained too much influence, establish reasonable boundaries and demonstrate them yourself. If the family has confused material accomplishments with spiritual maturity, restore the proper priorities. If difficult conversations have been avoided, approach them with honesty and wisdom. No parent can recover every missed opportunity or guarantee every future

outcome. But faithfulness does not require the ability to change yesterday. It requires obedience with the responsibilities presently entrusted to you. **A father who recognizes that he has been wrong should not waste another ten years defending the mistake merely because admitting it would injure his pride. Repentance is not a threat to biblical leadership. It is evidence that God's authority still matters.**

And for those who are just beginning the responsibility of raising children, understand that the years will pass faster than you imagine. The child who currently needs assistance with nearly everything will not remain that age. The questions will change. The responsibilities will increase. The influences will become more complicated, and your methods of instruction must develop with the child's maturity. Enjoy the ordinary moments while fulfilling the serious obligations. Spend time together. Teach the Scriptures. Encourage worthwhile interests. Celebrate honest accomplishments without making performance the measure of affection. Correct wrongdoing without humiliating the offender. Establish boundaries without turning the house into a prison. Allow children to experience manageable consequences while protecting them from genuine danger. Above all, demonstrate that the Lord Jesus Christ is more than a religious subject discussed on Sunday. He is the Saviour, and His word possesses authority over daily life. **The greatest inheritance a parent can leave is not merely a collection of possessions, but the faithful instruction, godly example, and biblical understanding that help prepare a child to live responsibly after the possessions have been spent.**

These ten essays have not been an argument for raising children who are strange merely for the satisfaction of being different. Christian children do not have to reject every popular interest, avoid every unbelieving acquaintance, dress in deliberately unfashionable clothing, or treat ordinary enjoyment as spiritual compromise. Neither should they become little Pharisees who know how to condemn everyone else while remaining ignorant of their own need for grace. The objective is something far more substantial. We want children who can recognize truth without arrogance, practice righteousness without hypocrisy, enjoy lawful blessings without covetousness, and respect others without surrendering their convictions. We want sons who understand that manhood requires responsibility rather than domination, and daughters who understand that personal worth is not determined by appearance, popularity, or the approval of others. We want young people who possess the courage to say no when no is necessary and the wisdom to recognize when something is genuinely good. Philippians 4:8 directs believers toward things that are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, and of good report. Those are not characteristics of a miserable life. They are foundations for a life governed by sound judgment. **Biblical separation is not the art of making children afraid to live. It is teaching them how to live without becoming servants of wickedness.**

So where does that leave us as Christian parents? It leaves us with a tremendous privilege, a serious responsibility, and a Bible that has not surrendered its authority to the opinions of the present generation. The world will continue changing. New technologies will appear, new fashions will emerge, new arguments will be presented, and new pressures will confront our children. Some of those developments will provide legitimate opportunities, while others will require firm resistance. We cannot prepare children by pretending that tomorrow will look exactly like yesterday. We can prepare them by establishing principles that remain true regardless of the circumstances. Proverbs 9:10 declares, "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding." That foundation does not become obsolete when a new generation arrives. Christian parents should teach children to think, investigate, reason, work, pray, study Scripture, and recognize the difference between God's commandments and man's preferences. **We are not raising children merely to survive the present culture. We are preparing them to walk faithfully before God in the world they will eventually inherit.**

One day the last school assignment will be completed, the final childhood activity will become a memory, and the familiar routines of family life will begin to change. The toys will disappear. The clothing sizes will stop changing in the closet at home. The children who once needed constant reminders will be making decisions concerning their own households and responsibilities. And when that day comes, the measure of faithful parenting will not be found merely in the academic certificates, photographs, expensive experiences, or impressive accomplishments accumulated along the way. It will be found in the truth that was taught, the character that was cultivated, the love that was demonstrated, the correction that was administered wisely, and the preparation that helped those young people assume responsibility for their own conduct. Parents cannot guarantee that every lesson will be followed, every conviction retained, or every decision made wisely. But they can stand before God knowing they faithfully labored to instruct the children entrusted to them. Second Timothy 3:16–17 declares that all Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness, furnishing the man of God unto good works. That is the foundation upon which our instruction must rest.

And so the final word is not despair over the wickedness of the world, but determination concerning the responsibility of the home. Fathers, do not surrender your children to the culture simply because teaching them requires effort. Mothers, do not underestimate the lasting influence of faithful instruction, affection, and personal example. Parents, do not allow religious appearances to replace genuine spiritual life or worldly accomplishments to become the final measurement of success. Teach your children that truth matters when it is unpopular, integrity matters when dishonesty would be profitable, purity matters when

temptation is convenient, and personal responsibility matters when nobody is enforcing the rules. Above all, teach them that salvation is found in the Lord Jesus Christ, not inherited through family tradition or earned through good behavior. Show them how to open the Scriptures, rightly divide the word of truth, and stand upon what God has said. The day will come when your children no longer need you to hold their hands, but that does not mean they must abandon the truth you faithfully taught them. **The world may want to disciple your children, but it does not have to become their master. Raise them with love. Correct them with wisdom. Teach them with Scripture. Prepare them with patience. Point them to the Saviour. And when the day finally comes for them to stand on their own, may they possess something far greater than the memory of parents who protected them from the world: may they possess the biblical understanding and personal convictions necessary to stand faithfully before God while living in it.**

