



raising children

transformation through truth

raising children

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table of contents

Young children and church life	1
Making family life a church life	1
Is Christ the centre of your home life?	1
Time and children	2
Helpful hints	2
Little children	2
How do we make God's love real to our children?	2
Husband & wife relationship.....	3
Family environment	3
Worship at home	3
Keep your house clean!	4
Front door	4
Parenting	5
Who qualifies?	5
Keys to successful parenting	6
Master Joy	6
Take delight in your family.....	7
Positive participation.....	8
Cords of love	10
Training your child	12
What is training?	12
Train to gain self-control.....	12
Authority	13
Boundaries	14
Preparing children for church life	16
Preparing children for service and home group.....	16
Training time at home is crucial	16
Training tools	17
The rod.....	17
Selecting the rod	18
Rod used for chastisement	19
Rod used for punishment, brings judgment and law	20
Family unity	20
Rewards	21
Parenting teenagers	22

Parents 22
 What impact do parents have on their children today?22
 Accepting changes in our teenagers23
 Respect and disrespect.....24
 God is the foundation for our teenagers24

Examples of teenage interviews and answers..... 25
 Why do mom and dad talk about getting a divorce?27
 Why do my parents never believe me? Any suggestions?28

Is pornography wrong? 28

Christian resources for teenage parenting 29

Teenage suicide 29
 Why do children and adolescents commit suicide?.....30
 Causes of teen suicide30

Teenagers growing up 31

What is your ship? 31
 My testimony.....32

Fruit bearing..... 32

Family cruise 33

Giving respect 34

Passengers or crew members? 34

Maintain morale..... 35
 Good children grow up out of good soil.....35

Respect and dignity..... 35
 Ideas to build respect35
 If your child jumps ship37

Credits..... 38

Young children and church life

Making family life a church life

Is Christ the centre of your home life?

Church Life and Family Life should be as one - what you are at home is what you are at church.

"For the Lord takes delight in his people." Psalms 149:4

God takes pleasure in our existence. He delights in us. We too should delight in him at home as well as at church.

"Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created." Revelation 4:11

Before we start the first thing we need to ask ourselves is- "Do we as parents delight in the God we serve?" and "are our lives surrendered to Jesus?"

Our children watch us. Our faith in Jesus and our worship needs to stem from the purity of our hearts. It is not a performance on how well we do outwardly but an intimate relationship with Jesus that reflects in everything we say and do – if you don't have that purity and joy in your family starting at home then the show you put on in church could eventually turn them away from God. Children can see through hypocrisy. Children despise religion that says one thing and does another.

Living out our faith for Christ, with a child, is one of the most exhilarating experiences a parent, grandparent, uncle, aunt, family friend can ever experience. It actually causes us to draw closer to God if we are willing to come down to a child's level of discovering and coming to an understanding of how they view Jesus in life. These really are the sweetest moments in our Christian walk. It brings us back to the simplicity of our faith, sharing God's love with our children.

Parents will sow seeds of love into their children's lives that will introduce them to their maker, their heavenly Father.

"These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Deuteronomy 6. 6-8

This scripture was directed to the Hebrews reminding them of the importance of passing on all that they were taught to their children. Not just as a law, but from their heart. That is exactly what we are to do. We need to live out our faith. It has to permeate out of us like a fragrance. Children mirror us as parents; we cannot expect them to be something that we are not.

Time and children

- This has always been a sensitive issue in church life. Adults without children have a very flexible time schedule unless they wake up early in the morning and have important activities. However, children are not as flexible. We all know that tired children can be grumpy and lethargic. So children going to school and those who have to write exams the day after home group need to be in peak condition.
- Parents need to consider their child's natural sleeping patterns, the time they wake up in the morning, what is expected of them the next day and also consider the number of late nights required such as in the case of conferences.

Helpful hints

- Parents, a great idea is to set up a room where children can be laid down to sleep if community goes on longer than expected. Parents may need to shorten their time at home group if their children do not sleep there and leave a little earlier say at 8:45pm if they live close by their home.
- Home Group leaders need to be mindful to start on time and not delay, so all can participate and feel like they've participated in the group.
- At times parents may need to alternate, one week on and one week off in times of exams.
- Children who do go to home groups need to learn to respect the home group leaders home and how they run their home. Running around during the meeting and jumping on furniture, looking in closets is unacceptable behaviour. Once again training needs to take place at home.

Little children

There is grace for moms with little children

Late nights for babies and toddlers can be a nightmare and is often so unpredictable. When it is going well, enjoy home groups and service but there may be times when things are not going so well; the baby won't sleep or is sick. Under these circumstances, see the needs that need to be met for the child's sake and for yours without feeling condemned or guilty. This is a ministry in itself. Your spouse can attend the meetings and fill you in on it. There may be times that your spouse will allow you to go and he'll stay with the child. However, when things lighten up again, then participate again in your home group or service. Be careful not to use every excuse in the book not to go to church because it is an inconvenience for you or you just don't feel like it. Often these are the times God touches your heart and renews your strength.

How do we make God's love real to our children?

What better place to start than at home!

The dynamics of your home life will vastly influence a child's relationship with God. Now we're not saying this is the way to a child's salvation but what we are doing is living out our faith so that our children will understand how much more God loves them and how they get to experience it in everyday life, just as God directed in Deuteronomy 6:6-8. Impress, talk, sit, walk, lie down and get up with God.

Let's take a look at some keys that will help us.

Husband & wife relationship

"This is a profound mystery-but I am talking about Christ and the church. However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband." Ephesians 5:33

- Husband and wife do you love, honor, respect, and enjoy each other?
- Do your children see you having fun together?
- Are you there to support him and see his dreams fulfilled?
- Wives, are you your husband's helpmeet? Are you there to support him and see his dreams fulfilled?
- Husbands, do you love your wives and lead your family in all that is good for them?
- When going through crisis or hardship do they see you working together and supporting each other, or do they see parents pulling their own separate ways?

The way they perceive your relationship with each other is ultimately the way they will relate their personal relationship to God.

Family environment

Are you creating a comfortable and healthy environment in your home?

Home is to be a place of rest, offering a stable and comfortable environment. A place of peace and of safety.

Remember, your attitude sets the MOOD in the home. Your ambience can bring life with a smile, kind word and gentle rebuke or can crush the spirit with continuous whining, complaining and irritation. The choice is yours.

Worship at home

The home is the greatest place to start worshipping God with your children. Children should feel free at home. If you can play an instrument or even just to sing, put a worship CD on and worship God at home with the children. If they haven't done it before, they may initially feel shy. Give them time and soon they'll be singing, dancing, twirling and praising God with you. You cannot force but you can set the mood and step out of your own comfort zone. You can introduce them to praising God in the heart of your home and it will then naturally overflow into your church.

Keep your house clean!

Ephesians 4:25-32 says:

"Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to your neighbor, for we are all members of one body. "In your anger do not sin" Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold...Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you."

Many scriptures can be used for our home life, but this one sums it up very well. We won't look at it in depth here but it is important to mention these points, as it is the nucleus of a healthy family life. If you struggle in any of these areas, it is time to do a bit of house cleaning with God.

Front door

What are you bringing into the home? Much of what we bring into our home is usually the things that bring us pleasure, from a good book to a fun game. This may be anything from friends to fashion, empty philosophy and silliness via TV, movies, music. Yup, even via the x-box! If you had to do some stock taking at home and weigh the pro's and con's using God's standard, how much of what you've accumulated would end up in the trash? Knowing God's Word helps us to discern what is good for our children. Choose wisely the entertainment you would have for your children. Remember they came into the world as a book with empty pages. Everything their senses take in will be reflected on the pages of their hearts. These things do make a difference in their lives. Look for inspiring things that will promote life to your children. You are investing into your children's lives. There are excellent movies and DVDs out there that teach God's truth via stories. One example is the "Adventure in Odyssey" series produced through Focus on the Family. That is one example, there are many more. Ask around and do some research. It is worth the time.

Friends - Take a look at your children's friends and who they hang out with, even from a young age. Know the friends your children spend time with and get to know the parents. You are your child's guardian and God has entrusted him or her into your care. Friends are there to encourage and to build up, challenge and to be gracious in their own childlike ways. But, if their behaviour is out the norm, then for the safety of your child you'll need to put up boundaries for them. This might mean stopping friends that are corrupting your children. Bad company corrupts good morals. There may be times when a child's friend is weak in a specific area, then you as a parent must supervise these play times and gently direct the situation where peace is restored.

Do not give Satan a foothold in your life and home, guard the front door to your home.

James 4: 7 says, "Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."

- Through family life you will introduce your young children to God's kingdom.
- Parents need to role model Jesus' love to their children. A child's first experience of God's love and relationship will filter through you as the parent within your home life.

- Husband & wife relationship.
- Family environment.
- Front door.

Time to Ponder

Take a look at the above-mentioned points. What one thing in each section could you begin to change in your life that will have a positive impact on you personally and on your family life?

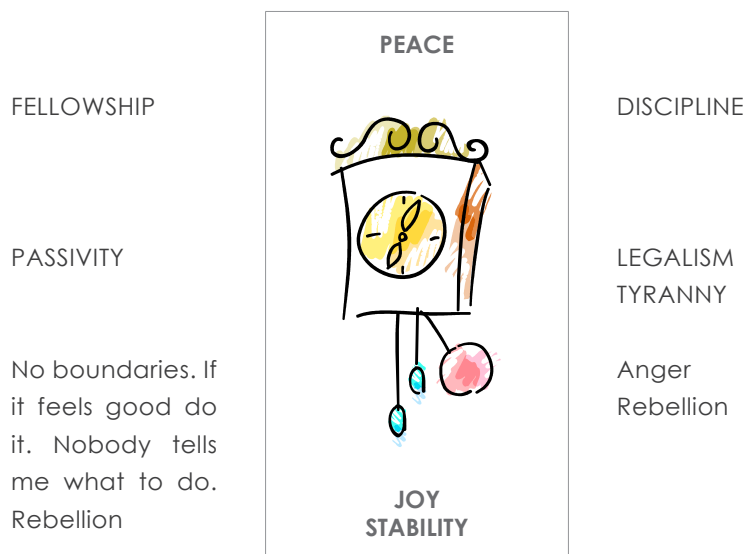
Parenting

"Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it."
Proverbs 22:6

Who qualifies?

Now you may be thinking, "I'm not even a parent, so really I'm wasting my time here!" Actually you couldn't be further from the truth. We all have relationships with children. As adults you are to sow good seed into children's lives. Imagine yourself being a writer. Each child is born into this world; their life is a book with crispy clean white pages waiting for people to write on the pages of their hearts. You as an adult will at some point in your life have a little protégé in who's book you will be writing. Now you have a choice to bring life or death into their story. That is up to you. So the more you know about what the Bible says about training children the better equipped you'll be to impart life into their lives. Whether you are a parent, a friend, teacher, children church worker etc., there is much to learn. God holds children dear to His heart. We see this in the New Testament when the disciples rebuked those who were bringing the children to Jesus. Jesus said,

"Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these." Matthew 19:14



Parenting can be likened to a clock. The pendulum sets the pace of the clock to keep its time in tune. In the above diagram, we take a look at fellowship on the one side and on the opposite side, of equal importance, is discipline. As parents we need to maintain the balance between DISCIPLINE and FELLOWSHIP to keep a healthy pace in our family structure.

The Bible is God's standard by which we measure truth and guidance; coupled with prayer we can walk in that balance that will bring fulfillment in our family.

"All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness," 2 Timothy 3:16

God entrusts our children into our care. Applying God's Word vs. the world's view on training our children, will bring the harmony we need in parenting.

Keys to successful parenting

Being a parent is one of the greatest privileges and responsibilities entrusted to an adult. We were not trained in college but it is a calling we take upon ourselves the moment a child is born to us. We are trained inadvertently through our parents and grandparents, aunts, uncles, friends and strangers, the second influence would be by the natural order ordained by God.

Being a parent is one of those vocations we learn as we go along. We learn what works well and what does not, through our successes and failures.

So how can we succeed in this great endeavor of raising fulfilled children?

Michael Pearl states, "Give attention to doing a few things right." We will take a look at these keys.

Master Joy

"For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit." Romans 14:17

"...for the joy of the Lord is our strength" Nehemiah 8:10

The Lord's joy is our strength, but realize too that our joy is strength to our children. What is mirrored in our relationship with God is reflected in their relationship with us. So let's strengthen our children with joy. You may not have had good mentors but if you're joyful, then you will win the heart of your child. A child loves a sincere heart. When you meet a child, so often you will see them keeping an eye on you, sizing you up, inspecting you. When they recognize the joyful nature in you, then you have a friend.

An enemy to joy is bitterness. It is like a garbage dump, nobody wants to be around bitter people and this is certainly no exception to children. They will tolerate you but there will be no pleasure. Bitterness strangles the family but joy causes a family to blossom in all goodness.

"A cheerful look brings joy to the heart" Proverbs 15:30

Joy is contagious. Your attitude will determine how you'll handle different situations in your family. A person with a cheerful heart will respond better than one with a sour disposition. People who are bitter, react.

Training that is produced from a cheerful heart brings life, but training without joy is tyranny. It is oppressive, and puts immense pressure on the children. If they are trained in this manner, they will become frustrated and will end up being rebellious. They may be obedient on the outside, complying with everything you require of them, but their heart will be far from you. These parents are often proud, as if the fear towards them gives some satisfaction. They will boast of the great accomplishment in their children. But the lack of joy will be evident.

Joy has a strong gravitational pull; it can be likened to a sunflower. The sunflower will always face the sun, as the sun rises the flower follows until the setting at the end of the day. A cheerful countenance to a child will be like the sun to the sunflower. The child will desire to please the parent who delights in them. Children love to be cherished and love it when you are interested in their lives.

- God created us to be joyful.
- The joy of the Lord is our strength.
- Joy is contagious.
- Train from a joyful heart.
- Love your children.
- Joy will help us succeed.

Time to Ponder!

Reflect on your attitude towards your children and spouse. What kind of atmosphere do you create in your home?

When was the last time you laughed and had fun with your spouse and children?

Take time to pray and seek the Lord. Remember that God brings in the joy when we draw near to him and surrender the hindrances in our lives to him.

Take delight in your family

"For the Lord takes delight in his people." Psalms 149:4

"Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created." Revelation 4:11

God takes pleasure in our existence and he delights in us. Therefore we should take pleasure in the things that our spouse and our children do that bring them pleasure and fulfillment. Recognize their gifts and talents. Take pleasure in their growth and discoveries. Show them that you are genuinely interested in what they do.

Enjoy your children's personalities. See and appreciate their strengths and lovingly guide them through their weaknesses. This is one of the key factors in boosting them forward to success. Don't fall into the trap of becoming critical and pointing out all their faults and failures. You've been called to build up.

Use the child's strengths to help him/her to overcome specific weaknesses. Your delight in them will boost them

to overcome fears and their courage will rise up within them when they see you are standing by. In church life look for areas that you may see your child developing, whether it is as small as clapping their hands in worship, to helping pack up chairs after service. Take delight in them and offer a word of encouragement.

Spend valuable time in quantity with your children. Invest in their lives. Let them know you are proud of them. It is important that when you are doing something with your children whether riding a bike or cooking pancakes that they know you are with them; adults are often distracted with phone calls etc. and their attention is elsewhere. These distractions rob us of valuable time with our children and they feel it when we are preoccupied with other matters. The time is lost, and hearts are disappointed. Dinner times are a perfect time to switch the phone off and ignore the SMS that just came through. It will be there after dinner. Use each minute to the fullest.

When you have an attitude of joy, and take pleasure in your children you won't have problems with bad attitudes and disobedience. Yes, they may still challenge you but on the whole they really will want to please you.

- Delight in your children
- Recognize their gifts and talents.
- Appreciate their strengths and guide them through their weaknesses.
- Spend time with them in quantity and quality.

Time to Ponder!

Write down the gifts and talents you see in your children. Take time to encourage them. Do any activity with them that brings them fulfillment.

Positive participation

Children need to know and feel that they belong to the family. They need to know that they have purpose and are valued. So often, inadvertently, we treat them as guests in our home. All their needs are met; they have a great education, sports and other extra activities are taken care of, they go to church and hang out with friends. The cleaning lady takes care of the house and dinner is ready to be served when everyone comes home. All the children have to do is relax, do homework, eat and prepare for bed. Children treated this way can feel that they have very little worth.

It is not enough to just affirm childrens personalities, praising them for the good that they do.

Children who do not spend much time with their parents, who are kept so busy with activities or spend much time in front of television, will become whiners and complainers. Nothing will seem to satisfy them.

Time: Quality in Quantity. Children must be involved in their parent's life on a day-to-day basis.

Children gain so much by being with you; you are able to show goodness and love too them in quantity and quality. It is not something rushed; it is a way of life.

Children need to feel that they belong to the family core, they are needed and their input is valued. They will feel secure, cherished and appreciated.

One needs to build into their lives daily by participating in activities and teaching them different things that will enrich their lives. This does not mean slave labor and commanding them at every turn, breaking their spirit or confidence. No! It needs to be done with delight; with a delightful attitude, you can make any chore or unpleasant task more bearable. It really depends on how you present it. We all need incentives or time limits that will cause us to complete the task, and so do children. You are mentoring young children to enjoy what they do with their hands and feet, the time they invest in thinking and doing needs to be worthwhile. They need to feel like they've made great accomplishments and when completing the task they feel like kings and queens. Everyday presents a wonderful opportunity for you to invest in your child's life.

Take time out of your day to spend with your children. If you can't make time for your children then you need to re-prioritize your life. You are the only father and mother they should ever need. If you don't have time for your children then you don't have time for life.

- So how do we do this?
- Ask yourself the question what do you enjoy doing?

Do you enjoy gardening, sewing, carpentry, cooking, painting? If painting is your passion, give your child a canvas and some brushes and let him paint alongside you. If gardening, let him weed with you, or pick seeds etc.

As parents, you need to make sure there is enthusiasm and life in your family, so that your children do not become restless or bored, causing them to look to the world for entertainment and fulfillment.

Give them a glimpse of what it must feel like to be the head of the house.

Let your child feel like his input is appreciated and his little milestones feel like great achievements. Your child will eventually be a great inspiration to you as you see him or her tackle greater responsibilities. Remember, character is built with the smaller things in life that will equip them to tackle greater obstacles in life with success. It takes **patience** and **perseverance** to complete a papier-mâché jet, **self-control** to paint it with care and not just splash it with colour. It takes **gentleness** to care for chicks and **faithfulness** to look after a pet, feeding, cleaning, training and loving them. So much more is achieved by these activities than we realize.

As the children grow up, the activities will stimulate greater responsibilities which in turn will make them feel confident and appreciated and they will want to do their best, knowing that their input is valued by you as a parent or an adult. They will step out to do anything for you because they know you love them and want what is best for them.

Every child likes to be praised for accomplishments, and a child who has done his best feels confident and satisfied that he is part of a family and society.

- Time: Quality & Quantity
- Parents: Invest time and life into your children
- Children: Grow up Loved, worthy, confident, accomplished and responsible.

Time to Ponder!

Have you taken time out to embrace your son/daughter?

How can you bring your child alongside you to encourage them in feeling like they are worthy?

Cords of love

I led them with cords of human kindness, with ties of love. To them I was like one who lifts a little child to the cheek, and I bent down to feed them. Hosea 11:4

The cord that strengthens your relationship with your child is your love, time and dedication that has been poured into your child. In order to train your child, you need to have a good nurturing relationship with him or her. They will take pleasure in you and you in them. A secure family has cords of love weaving them together.

Parents can sever these cords of love in their children with careless words, attitudes and actions. Fellowship with their children is under strain and they become despondent. There is a great divide between parent and child.

It is of utmost importance that we as parents rectify the situation as quickly as possible. We need to **restore fellowship, and mend the breach with an open heart**. If you have been impatient with your child, made fun of him at his expense, been rude or shunned him – **FIX IT!**

"Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord." Ephesians 6:4

"And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." (KJV)

"Fathers, do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged.: Colossians 3:21

Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged. (KJV)

Warning: The two Scriptures above apply to both dads and moms and any adult who has a relationship with a child. Parents who belittle their children, or push their limits by teasing them, putting them on display to perform without the child's regard, calling them names etc will cause them to internalize their hurts and disappointments in you. Children who have been provoked will store up their anger and release it on others who are younger or weaker than they are. In essence, you are bullying your own child and will be training him to bully others. It is a continuous cycle.

If restoration is not sought the child will follow instructions but contact will be lost. There may be no outward disobedience but there will be dullness inside.

Restore your proper role as father or mother in love. Do not force it on the child. Be patient. Mending takes time.

The child can only forgive when you acknowledge your behaviour was wrong. Humble yourself and ask for forgiveness, even if it is to a 2 year old. When a child sees true repentance, their attitude towards you will change.

- You must have a strong relationship with your child before you can train.
- Confess your failures to God and your family. Be a friend.
- Don't try and justify. Don't lecture.
- Do things with them.
- Show you care.
- Tie cords until you have earned their **respect** and **honor**, then **maintain**. Strengthen your relationship with them.

If they sense you love them and enjoy them, they will respond to you with an open heart. Michael Pearl states, "The strongest cord of discipline is not found in the whip; rather, it is in the weaving together of strings of mutual love, respect, honor, loyalty, admiration and caring. It is the difference of being "led by the spirit" and being "under the works of law". The law brings direction but only the Spirit of grace gives us the power. If you will cultivate fellowship with your child, you will have cooperation and compliance."

When you love your child and live life with them, they being very much part of your life, your child will hate to disappoint you because he won't want to bring shame to you as a parent. You cannot do this by force or commanding them. It has to stem from their love and respect for you.

You need to create an environment that will cause your child to delight in obeying you.

- Keep nurturing your relationship with your child.
- Severed ties: mend by repenting & restore with patience.
- Cultivate fellowship and maintain .
- Child will desire to obey you.

Time to Ponder!

How is your relationship with your child? Have you broken ties with your child?

If you have, don't delay in seeking restoration. Be patient, your child will see if you are sincere.

Training your child

*"Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it."
Proverbs 22:6*

God's Word says we need to "train a child".

There is a difference between training and discipline.

Definitions:

- **Training:** (a): to teach in an art, profession, or trade (b): to teach to obey; to make ready for a test of skill or strength.
- **Discipline:** strict training that corrects or strengthens mental ability or moral character, control gained by enforcing obedience or order <trying to maintain discipline>, a system of rules governing conduct.

What is training?

Training is an integral part of your lifestyle. It is an everyday habit like drinking water throughout the day. We need to be constantly pointing children into the right direction and causing them to think about the consequences of their actions whether good or bad. Training is shaping and molding your child that he will be able to stand firm in truth in all of life's endeavors.

- Understand there is positive training and negative training.
- We as parents can direct our children's lives in the right direction. We cannot prevent life's tests that a child will face but we can prepare and train them to walk in self-control.
- Training takes place before the need to discipline arises. Good training will keep you from having to discipline.
- Children are continually being trained either in the right or wrong direction. With God's guidance we need to discern what is good in the building up of our children. Make sure you are surrounded with people you trust are like-minded; it is up to you to convince your child to choose to do what's right. Children watch you and how you react in life to different situations. They, in turn, will model your principles.
- Training will take place in teaching your children to respond to first time you call as a parent, greeting people, being polite, saying thank you, packing toys away and helping in age appropriate chores etc. Training done consistently produces good fruit.

Train to gain self-control

"For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want." Galatians 5:17

A child is born with no sense of right or wrong and no rules. In essence, he or she is undisciplined.

"Your children who do not yet know good from bad". Deuteronomy 1: 39

As babies they know pleasure and pain. They want to have their needs met. Babies cry when they are hungry and you feed them. They coo when they are content, they cry when they've soiled their nappy and quiet down when they are cleaned up. Simple!

These desires are natural. However, as a child matures certain needs can cause them to fall into temptation or they may lust after things without self-control. I like it - therefore I must have it. This becomes sin.

A desire out of control exposes the sinful nature in the heart; selfishness demands its own way.

As parents, we need to turn this around and train them in self-control. We teach them to wait on things before giving in to them on demand. We teach them how to serve others first and cultivate patience, kindness, goodness, love, loyalty and self-control. God has entrusted our children into our care. If we neglect to train them in these principles, they will be governed by their own desires and pride, which will lead them into a life of darkness. These children can soon become trapped in pornography, alcoholism, drug abuse, and fraud. They'll become obnoxious professionals ruling with an iron hand. A classic example is King Ahab and Jezebel concerning Naboth's land, found in 1 Kings 21.

In training a child, bad behaviour is never to be rewarded, for this will be counter-productive. Good behaviour always comes with a reward; a smile of openness from you and fellowship.

- Training is a lifestyle
- Train before the need arises
- Train to gain self-control
- Direct our children's lives in the right direction

Time to Ponder!

Consider your child's character strengths and weaknesses.

Choose one character trait you'd like to see your child improve on. Be creative, patient and consistent.

While training, make a mental note of your attitude!

Authority

Jesus taught with authority and the people marveled at him.

"The people were amazed at his teaching, because he taught them as one who had authority, not as the teachers of the law." Mark 1:22

"Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you." Hebrews 13:17

- Believe in the authority given to you by God. Do not misuse it.
- Expect to be obeyed.
- Authority causes a child to obey, it brings them security.
- You need to control a child's will to dominate you.
- Your child knows that you are his parent and you know what is best for him.
- You can spend more time smiling and enjoying your children.

A good example of seeing authority in action is to watch a dog trainer or horse trainer. It is a constant conditioning. There is firmness in voice, clarity, simplicity, and expectation within reach, conditioning, practice and praise. The end result is mutual trust and respect in the relationship between the owner and the dog/horse.

Time to Do!

Take time off to observe dog or horse trainers in action.

Find people who are respected by the community. Observe how they walk in Godly authority.

As you watch these people, what lessons can you apply to your own life?

Boundaries

In life we are surrounded by boundaries. We see it in the market place, churches, schools, government, traffic, taxes etc. Law brings order and protects you.

Life is full of consequences. You need to have a good deal of respect and fear for the law or you will face horrible consequences. Those resisting boundaries in life end up being rebuked by law enforcers, their rewards being fines and eventually prison sentence.

Why do we need boundaries?

- Children need boundaries to develop morally.
- Children learn their purpose in life and these boundaries give them security. They will love the person who gives them boundaries.
- Parents create the boundaries for their children and these need to be obeyed.
- Parents acts as a child's restraint by putting boundaries in the mind of the child. E.g. Training a toddler not to enter the pool, or cross the road without adult supervision.

CONSISTENCY IS KEY

Boundaries must be consistently implemented. Without consistent boundaries children become rebellious, and will resent anyone telling them what to do. Rebellion becomes a way of life; they feel the need to control.

It is important that you dominate the child's need to control you as the parent. The boundaries you have established need to consistently be enforced. Not subjected to how you feel and the energy you have available to you.

Some ways the children will react to correction:

- Stubborn refusal to obey.
- Body language – the slump posture.
- Deceitfulness – “I did not hear you. I didn't understand.”
- Emotional weakness or playing the victim.
- Begging with promises. “Oh, please Daddy can I go with you? I'll be very good.”

In dealing with correction the parent must maintain his/her authority and calmly, discipline until the child surrenders. You will win their hearts and will not have to go through a training session like that again. You decide what is good for your children.

Expect immediate obedience. “Delayed obedience is disobedience.” Be consistent in all areas and you will have success.

A child who refuses to respect the boundaries you have set in place causes strife in the home and harmony is lost. It is up to the parent to restore order in the child's heart and harmony in the family by not allowing the child's selfish desires to dominate the atmosphere in the home. Choosing to overlook these offenses indicate that you do not love your child.

The smallest boundaries you set in place for him causes a great network of protection for him in the future.

*“Discipline your son, for in that there is hope; do not be a willing party to his death”
Proverbs 19:18.*

Training a child not to run across the road without looking, causes him to obey your voice. Note, yanking on the arm and screaming is counterproductive. Calm, consistent training will in the end cause the child to be very aware of the consequences of disobeying you and will obey. Therefore, you have established a safety net for him by controlling his desire to run across the road without thinking an accident is avoided.

- A child doesn't exercise self-control initially.
- You are his restraint.
- You train a child to obey you with a consistent and calm voice.
- You are training him to exercise self-control, which in time will lead him to exercise good moral choices.

How old must a child be before training can begin?

- You start training from the beginning, in their infancy.
- Use creative conditioning. Be creative.

Reward positive behaviour and make all negative behaviour unproductive. Parents, praise your children when they have done well and let them know you are proud of them. Smiles and joy are a great reward. Cheer them on; you are their greatest fan.

Preparing children for church life

Preparing children for service and home group

- Children learn what the social norm is for church life through you the parent. When in worship, they witness your worship. When praying, there is a reverence and participation in an appropriate manner, whether it be raised hands, agreement, silence or even praying aloud in one accord. In teaching times, there is a time of listening. As we model this to our children, they will need us to train them in the acceptable behaviour of church. Often times in church, parents themselves will chat when an elder is praying up front etc. Children run around and parents don't direct. It really is the parent's responsibility, not the Children Church workers.
- When applying the principles listed in the manual you'll begin to realize that these are the tools that will help you train your child at home, so he will understand what is the required behaviour for social functions as a whole, whether it be at a home group or a church service.
- The first virtue that needs to be honed on is respect for God, those in authority and adults. That is why it is important to model it in your home and enforce it. If your child cannot respect you he won't respect anyone in authority at church.

Training time at home is crucial

Your training time at home is crucial to how he will behave outside the home in any situation.

Many a parent has set up boot camp for their children at home and has practised church in a creative environment. With plenty of patience, consistent training, children have come to understand their boundaries. Parents create the vibe and set up chairs. Stuffed toys come in quite useful to fill the empty chairs. Dad, the great preacher sets off teaching God's Word, in whatever manner he chooses, being excited or monotone. The child or children are given a book and crayons or quiet activity. The parents stipulate the boundaries. This is all done in a lighthearted manner, no drudgery please! Once the activity starts, training begins. If the child over steps his boundaries as in talking loud or wanting to stop, Mom comes in and does the correction while Dad continues to read. You'll do this in small increments at a time. Start with 10 minutes and gradually work your way up. Your child will know exactly what is to be expected after their training time. This does take time but the results are rewarding.

The boundaries may be tight when they are young but as they grow up and you see that they respect the boundaries set in place by you, you will be able to extend these boundaries where they can join their friends knowing they will be respectful.

CONSISTENCY IS THE KEY. Don't give up.

- Boundaries create security and harmony in the family.
- Consistency is the key to establishing boundaries.
- Boundaries are to be enforced consistently.
- Expect immediate obedience.

Time to Ponder

Reflect back on the boundaries you have set in place. Were they done for the good of the child or out of frustration?

Have you or have you not been successful? Does your child know the boundaries you've set? Are you consistent in enforcing these boundaries?

Practise consistency; do not delay!

Training tools

The rod

Spanking has become a controversial issue in this day and age. That is why it is important to study God's Word to guide you.

Why apply the rod?

"Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness. No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it." Hebrews 12: 10-11

- God disciplines his children.
- We are disciplined for our own good.
- Discipline seems unpleasant and painful.
- It produces righteousness and peace.
- The Lord loves those whom he disciplines; we share in his holiness.

"Folly is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of discipline will drive it far from him." Proverbs 22:15

One thinks only of the goodwill of the child.

"The rod of correction imparts wisdom, but a child left to himself disgraces his mother." Proverbs 29:15

"He who spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is careful to discipline him." Proverbs 13:24

"Discipline your son, for in that there is hope; do not be a willing party to his death." Proverbs 19:18

*"Do not withhold discipline from a child; if you punish him with the rod, he will not die. Punish him with the rod and save his soul from death." King James Version "hell"
Proverbs 23:13-14*

Note:

- A wise parent patiently instructs the child.
- The rod creates boundaries for the child.
- The rod must be accompanied by reproach in order to impart wisdom.
- Reproach suggests mild criticism aimed at correcting a fault or pattern of misbehavior. Definition from Apple dictionary
- Explain why his behaviour is unacceptable and then offer suggestions on how he should conduct himself.

"The rod of correction imparts wisdom," Proverbs 29:15

Time to Ponder

Parents, when do you apply the rod?

Do you wait for your child to continue on in his disobedience before you correct him?

Do you apply it at the end of your tolerance curb? Are you driven by anger by the time you use the rod?
Do you scream and yell at them?

This is not training or disciplining. Your behaviour will cause your child to disrespect you, he will feel bullied and will become bitter in heart resenting and resentful in his heart.

Make it a point never to use your hand. Hands are for loving. Hand swatting releases the parent's frustration.

The rod is not just used for disciplining your children but is also used as a training tool. We will take a look at the different approaches to applying the rod.

- Rod as a training tool – reinforces command.
- As chastisement – brings repentance and removes guilt.
- As punishment – brings judgment and law.

Selecting the rod

Remember, a spanking must cause some pain otherwise it is useless and your child will remain unchanged. It is most effective to strike a light rod against bare skin. No bruising, no injury.

Select the thickness of your rod according to your child's age.

- 1 year old – a small rod 25 – 28cm long and about 3mm in thickness
- For a larger child a +/- 90cm wooden rod or plastic rod.

It is possible to use the rod in training but never having to use it for punishment.

If you are using the rod just for punishment then training will never work. A child will defy you and build up hatred inside. Children will take a beating, holding back the emotion to make a point that they don't care.

The rod is the most effective training tool. A swift switch on the leg, behind, tap on the hand is all that is needed to give a reminder to obey authority and not touch or do what they were instructed not to do.

No outburst, no anger, frustration just a part of life.

Simply state the command. "Don't touch the vase".

Remind them: Walk with them, make eye contact, remove their hand off the vase and state: "Mom said do not touch, understand?"

The child acknowledges they understand.

Should the child return and touch the vase, a swift switch with the rod on the hand is administered with, "No touching.

Lead the child away. Keep an eye on the child until you see the child has been convinced that the vase is out of reach.

Consistency is the KEY!

Rod used for chastisement

Webster dictionary 1828, defines the word chastisement as, "The act of chastising; pain inflicted for punishment and correction", in other words, a spanking.

When used: **Attitude training**

- A child with a bad attitude or rebellious heart needs to be restored back to you as the parent.
- A rebellious and disobedient child needs to know the consequences of his behaviour.
- Discipline with the rod and give him a spanking or two.
- Do not remove him from the scene. If he can commit the offense in front of his siblings then he can be chastised in front of them. Simple effective training on the spot is all that is needed. If there are outsiders then remove him from the scene and discipline where you think appropriate. No threats.
- Do not spank in public, school or church. All training should be done at home.
- Realizing the rod is used as a tool for training and chastisement, you will become more consistent and quicker to train.

Child training rule # 1

WIN - IF YOU CAN'T WIN, BE PERCEIVED TO WIN.

It is important that a child's heart gets restored as quickly as possible. They need to understand you are the parent and that they need to submit themselves to your leadership. In establishing this you'll be less frustrated and will have more time to enjoy your children.

Rod used for punishment, brings judgment and law

A child who has committed an offense is burdened with guilt.

Your child needs to be cleansed of this guilt by the use of the rod, then restored and forgiven.

He will feel confident that all wrongdoing has been paid for and put behind him. It brings freedom.

Understand that guilt gives Satan a foothold in our lives. The sooner we are rid of this guilt, the better for us.

Spankings bring restoration and are crucial in removing guilt.

A child properly and timely spanked is healed in the soul and wholeness of his spirit is restored. Proper use of the rod gives new hope to a rebellious child.

Note of caution:

Never spank another person's child, unless the parent or parents give you permission to do so by requesting you to be part of raising their child or children. Make sure all parties are in agreement and boundaries are set. It is of utmost importance that your heart is right before the Lord and that you are fair in all dealings and that you live above reproach. Also, it is important that you understand the law and that you act upon the conviction of God's truth, should you ever have to explain yourself.

Family unity

A child raised with the balance of fellowship and training will grow up living in truth and the life skills gained will be imprinted upon his heart as his time comes to face the world on his own.

Parents, be sure to maintain unity with each other. Talk beforehand on how you are going to handle different circumstances. Always be in agreement in front of your children, If there is a concern, discuss it in private at a later stage when the child is not present. Retain unity at all costs.

Parents, do not let your **emotions** stand in the way of TRAINING.

A parent who allows their own insecurities and emotional weaknesses to govern their actions will only harm the child in the long run.

It is important never to cause division in the home. Women who may have had harsh fathers tend to be mercy hearted and never want to discipline their children. The children pick up on this, so when Dad disciplines, the children flee to Mom for comfort. Mom ignores the father's leadership. The child will disrespect authority over them due to Mom's disrespect for Dad. In time the child will disrespect Mom as well. Children raised in this manner will grow up being emotionally unstable, rebellious and later in life, defiant.

"A child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame". Proverbs 9:15 (KJV)

A Word of caution. There are people who go to the extreme; namely the strong disciplinarian who rules his house with an iron fist. The word of God cautions us as adults, parents and care-givers in Matthew 18:6 "But if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a large millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea."

Parents, if you are prone to the extreme on the pendulum swing, in either being too harsh or too lenient, now is time to repent and bring your life in subjection to God's standard. If you are angry, then save the discipline action until later when you can think clearly and can act calmly and rationally. This would be a good time to pray.

Spankings should never be the last resort or forced on by frustration. Reproof without the rod is equally unbalanced for it leaves the impression that the law has no consequence. Think of the traffic officers. They make sure the law is enforced but if there are no consequences they would have no leg to stand on. Hence fines and prison sentence.

A child trained and disciplined is a pleasure to be around. They bring life and joy in the home and many fond memories are built in the family.

Rewards

*"Discipline your son, and he will give you peace; he will bring delight to your soul."
Proverbs 29:17*

There are two rewards, the first being the enjoyment of being with our children, the pleasure of being part of their world: their smiles, kisses and hugs. A child is an absolute blessing as there is never a dull moment with them around. There is always a wonder and many joys of discovery around them. They keep us young at heart.

The second reward is this: John writes in 3 John 1:4, addressing the church, "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth." This too should be our delight. We are training our children not just to be good obedient children. We are building upon the foundations of their hearts, loving them and training them so they will come to walk the truth. Jesus Christ loves them and there is a plan and a purpose for their life. We are introducing them to the King of kings. Understand that you are to model the life God shows us in the Bible. You have a disciple in your home and your child is precious in God's sight. They will gain an understanding of the love of God in their lives because they saw it in action in their home.

The Lord directs and guides our steps. When situations get sticky and we honestly don't know how to handle it, we can always turn to our heavenly Father for strength and wisdom. The Holy Spirit teaches us daily.

THERE IS AN ETERNAL PERSPECTIVE TO PARENTING

"There is no greater calling than to raise a son/ daughter for the throne."

We are raising our children for the Kingdom of God and to bring glory to Him.

This revelation gives new perspective to parenting our children. We are conditioning their hearts, to in essence, be responsive to God's calling in their lives one day. So we as parents have a great task ahead of us, but thank God, he gives us the grace, wisdom and knowledge in this role.

Parenting teenagers

Parents

What impact do parents have on their children today?

In today's society we might think we have very little impact. It is as if our children download information from some outer space experience! They seem so different!! Yet, our parents thought the same – and look at us today – how many times have you heard – you are just like your dad or mom!?

1. **2 Kings 17:41** Even while these people were worshiping the LORD, they were serving their idols. To this day their children and grandchildren continue to do as their fathers did.
2. **2 Chronicles 20:12** O our God, will you not judge them? For we have no power to face this vast army that is attacking us. We do not know what to do, but our eyes are upon you." 2 Chronicles 20:13 All the men of Judah, with their wives and children and little ones, stood there before the LORD. 2 Chronicles 20:14 Then the Spirit of the LORD came upon Jahaziel son of Zechariah, the son of, as he stood in the assembly. 2 Chronicles 20:15 He said: "Listen, King Jehoshaphat and all who live in Judah and Jerusalem! This is what the LORD says to you: 'Do not be afraid or discouraged because of this vast army. For the battle is not yours, but God's. (Do not parent your child on your own. The army against us – that entice in this world – is vast!!)
3. **Proverbs 4:1** Listen, my sons, to a father's instruction; pay attention and gain understanding. Proverbs 4:2 I give you sound learning, so do not forsake my teaching. Proverbs 4:3 When I was a boy in my father's house, still tender, and an only child of my mother, Proverbs 4:4 he taught me and said, "Lay hold of my words with all your heart; keep my commands and you will live.

IF you build consistently into your children from when they are little, the next phase will be easier. If you have not, all is not lost.

This phase in your life is as important, if not more, than the previous phases. Some parents shift from parenting and try and make their children their friends first. This is not right as you are their parent first. This is for their benefit and it is a good seed to sow for their adult life. Why?

- This is a very difficult age for them, as they start changing physiologically. For instance their sex drives, and all that comes with it, begin to develop.
- They find themselves approaching adulthood, yet they are treated as children. This only increases confusion in them, so their defence strategy is to give the impression that they know everything. They try and set their boundaries as they prefer, or so that they can "breathe", which is rather selfish.
- What they deem as priority to their needs is mostly peer driven – yet they still value and need your input – it now depends on how you give it, not whether you should give it.
 - ♦ Very important to remember is that what you model to them has a primary impact on how they will believe and on what they will base their relationship with God. You are the ultimate authority in their life, not others! Others can only support your role.

- If the above is true, we need to lead by example. How is your relationship with God? Is it built on “works” (reading your Bible, going to church, good worksetc.) – or is it a relationship? i.e. Do they see you:
 - ◆ Spending quality time with God?
 - ◆ Praying?
 - ◆ Separating time from the family and reading the Word with no one to disturb you?
 - ◆ Talking to others about God, where they can hear? And is your language filled with honour?
 - ◆ Walking out what you learn from God. The fruit of the Spirit is evident?

This is really a time that you need to put your money where your mouth is!

Accepting changes in our teenagers

We need to accept that teenagers are going through many changes that is a big mind-shift for us as parents as we have gotten used to treating them as children. This is not appropriate anymore. We need to consciously help them to transition – hoping that we can keep up with the changes.

- We need to give them more room to experience things on their own and let them know they are trusted, while still warning them of what they will face. Otherwise they will not be able to be trusted when they are alone.
- We need to be there if they make mistakes and help them through them without backing off, as otherwise they will not learn how to persevere.
- We need to be careful that we do not project the thinking and ideas that we had as teenagers; onto them, but rather understand their lives as unique.
- We need to teach them how to reason by listening intently to what they are saying and by guiding them appropriately (not telling them). If we do this correctly they will not cover up their facts all the time. This is not productive at all, and almost always leads to half truths.
- We need to become more flexible with boundaries, while still checking their behaviour, i.e. if they go to bed late and they are ratty the next day, sit them down and discuss it. Give context as to why you want them in bed earlier, and then give them consequences if the behaviour re-occurs. Stick to what you discuss.
- We need to adapt our discipline. Punishment is not butt-warming anymore; it does not go to the brain the same way as when they were younger. This rather causes embarrassment that turns to bitterness. You need to take privileges away, instead.
 - ◆ Most importantly stick to the rules you set. Do not withdraw from them because then the discipline is focussed on your relationship, and not on the issue.
 - ◆ Always continue to be your same loving self to them.
- We need to act swiftly. If they disappoint you because of something they have done, do not procrastinate, (life skill life skill) but sit them down and show them how to approach the situation and to overcome in a way that honours all involved.

Respect and disrespect

See that your teens do not become disrespectful – They tend to move into their own world.

For teens:

- They need to say please and thank you .
- They need to say good morning and good night.
- They need to greet visitors.
- They need to look at you when they talk (shyness is not uncommon in the beginning phase of teens)
 - ◆ By doing this, you teach them to face the world and conquer the difficult things they face.
 - ◆ In this way you will also pick up if they are going through serious issues.

For parents:

- Respect your teen's input, even if you do not agree.
 - ◆ Sometimes we need to let them make a mistake and then guide them through the process of making right (I am not talking about life threatening mistakes).
 - ◆ Sometimes it helps to loosen up on the rules you have laid down. Point them to what is right and let them act, later debriefing the situation and listening to their experiences.

God is the foundation for our teenagers

Our teens need to learn that God is the most important part of our life; followed by our partner, then by them. This order will give them security, as the basis of our relationships is vested on the Word. This means:

- We teach them priority as to our approach to things – this should help them when they face peer pressure etc.
- They have recourse in that they can point to the Bible if our conduct is not right (scary for us as we become more vulnerable/accountable) but this leads them into adulthood and the ability to base their thought processes on the Word.
- They realise that you are human and that you will make mistakes, and that it is okay to make mistakes. But it also helps us to focus on the situation and grow.
- They get to know/respect that mom/dad's relationship with each other is second priority after God. You won't believe how much security it gives to them. It also creates a healthy image of marriage and a desire to have that for themselves one day.

Lastly, PRAY, PRAY, PRAY for them – this is our best weapon and is scripturally correct.

Examples of teenage interviews and answers

**My mom and dad are constantly lecturing me and they always begin with "Well, when I was your age..."
Why can't my parents understand what it's like to be a teenager today?**

Do you want the good news first or the bad news? Let's get the bad news out of the way first. Check out Luke 2:41-51. It's the story of Jesus just about the time He became a teenager. He somehow didn't make contact with His folks and got separated from them. When His parents found Him, the conversation went like this:

*"And He said to them, 'Why is it that you were looking for Me? Did you not know that I had to be in My Father's house? And they did not understand the statement which He had made to them. And He went down with them, and came to Nazareth; and He continued in subjection to them; and His mother treasured all these things in her heart'"
Luke 2:49-51*

Sound familiar? Here is the bad news. If the parents of Jesus didn't understand Him, don't be surprised if yours don't understand you sometimes. Remember, your parents grew up in a different era. Your parents were probably born just about the time TV was invented! It is not easy for them to relate to you. Every generation struggles to understand the next generation.

But the good news is, you can respond the same way that Jesus did. As a Christian you have the power to do that.

Philippians 4:13 says: "I can do all things through Him who strengthens me."

Why do my parents sometimes look at me like I just arrived from outer space?

In a word, because you have changed. Consider your appetite. Where you once ate three meals a day (excluding vegetables, of course), you now have the appetite of a giant termite consuming a week's worth of groceries in a matter of minutes without any help from your friends. Speaking of which, your parents don't routinely interact with a person dressed in black leather with orange hair and a three-carat diamond in his pierced nose.

If those two developments alone aren't enough to amaze them, what about your growth?

They may be somewhat fearful that if you keep growing at the same rate you have, your body might soon be as big as your mouth (from their perspective, of course). Your intelligence has also grown. You now know everything about everything.

Where you once were polite and well-mannered, you now burp in public and respond to all questions with a terse, "Leave me alone." You no longer require any sleep. You go to bed at 4 am and get up at 7.

If you are a guy, you never leave your room. If you are a girl, you never come out of the bathroom.

In a matter of months they have witnessed a radical transformation take place in their "little boy" or "little girl." Little wonder they sometimes look at you as if you are sort of strange. Don't worry; the same thing happened to them. It's a great time of life that everyone goes through. Parents speak of it with great memories in regard to themselves, but with fear and trembling when it comes to their own children. It's called the teenage years.

Is there such a thing as “love at first sight?”

Love is not based on sight, looks or even romance. Real love is based upon commitment and a deep understanding of the other person. It is based on much more than just looks.

There is such a thing as attraction at first sight which can grow into real love. But love, a real, committed, true love cannot be determined at first sight.

What's wrong with Christians dating non-Christians?

The Bible says:

“Do not be bound together with unbelievers” 2 Corinthians 6:14

This can be tough to accept, especially when the oldest Christian guy in town is only nine years old! It gets lonely not going out. The longer you wait, the more attractive non-Christians become.

The tendency is to start to make excuses like:

- He understands me.
- She accepts me for who I am.
- I haven't gone out in a long time, and I'm lonely.
- There aren't any Christians I want to date.
- Non-Christians have more fun than Christians.
- She's nicer than the Christian girls I know.
- He's really changing. He's not at all like he was.
- I'm not going to marry her.
- I'll go out with him only once or twice.
- My friends want me to and I'll disappoint them if I don't.
- Everyone will think I'm stuck-up.
- I don't know how to say “no” when a non-Christian asks me out.
- I might lead him (or her) to Christ.

Is there anything that could cause God to change His mind and stop loving me?

We'll let God speak for Himself on that one. Romans 5:8 tells you how much God loved you when you weren't even a Christian:

“But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”

Romans 8:38,39 tells you what might try to separate you from God's love but can't:

"For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Jeremiah 31:3 tells you how long God's love will last:

"The Lord appeared to him from afar, saying, I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore I have drawn you with loving-kindness."

Get it in your head and don't forget it -- God loves you. You are special to Him. Now that you know this, do you want to hurt Him by making wrong choices? It is not God's desire to separate Himself from you, but if we make wrong choices, we choose to turn our backs on Him.

Why don't my parents like any of my friends?

There are probably different reasons for different friends. Usually the main reason is fear that a particular friend has been or will be a negative influence on you. They know (possibly from experience) how easy it is to pick up bad habits, and they don't want you to get into trouble. Or perhaps your parents think your friend is disrespectful. For example, take a typical phone conversation: your friend calls up and asks, with the sensitivity of a water buffalo, "Is Wild Man Willie there?" They would much rather hear a polite, "May I speak to William please? This is Mark calling."

Another reason is they might be thinking your friend isn't good enough for you. This is true, especially if your friend is of the opposite sex and you want to date him or her. Perhaps the underlying reason for all of these is that your parents want the best for you and very few of your friends can measure up to their standards. This issue, like many others in your relationship with your parents, can be a reason to initiate World War III or communicate (peacefully) some strong feelings. Choose the latter and be glad your parents care for you.

Why do mom and dad talk about getting a divorce?

There are times when mom and dad may have problems getting along. One thing or another may cause this. The major stress points in a marriage are not children as much as there are financial problems, lack of communication and lack of trust.

When parents, or anyone for that matter, become pressured, their sensitivity level goes up. As a result, they get easily offended by their spouse and begin to fight.

One of the deadliest weapons in their arsenal is divorce. They know that by merely bringing up the subject, they can inflict great pain.

During times when they talk like that, you too must fight, but not the same fight that your parents are having. Your fight is in the spiritual realm. When you discover that they are, or have been, talking about divorce, go into your room and assume the role of a prayer warrior. Ephesians 6:10-12, 18 says,

"Finally, be strong in the Lord, and in the strength of His might. Put on the full armour of God, that you may be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. . . . With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints."

Why do my parents never believe me? Any suggestions?

To get your parents to believe you, you must first ask why they don't trust you. Generally, it is because they have discovered that you have lied about something in the past. Lying has terrible consequences. If someone has lied to you in the past, how do you know they're telling the truth in the future?

Firstly, to get your parents to believe you, ask them to forgive you for any and every time you have lied to them in the past. And don't stop with just asking forgiveness for the lies you've said with your mouth. Also ask forgiveness for the lies you've said with your actions - like having a bunch of friends over at the house when it was forbidden, for example.

Secondly, learn to admit when you blow it. Nobody believes you always live a perfect life. So when they hear you volunteer the fact that you blew it, but now you are sorry for what you did, they will believe you much more quickly than if you never admit your shortcomings and failures.

Is pornography wrong?

You're hanging around the locker room and you see a rapid gathering of guys and a lot of laughs. You walk over, and they tell you to take a look at this. Then they jam a 12 x 12 full-colour photo of a naked woman in your face. What happens, guys? Your body goes berserk!

Many students, guys and girls, are into pornography, whether it's the sexy picture hanging on the wall or the magazines stacked under the mattress (not a very good hiding place). In fact, in one survey 99% of the young men and 91% of the young women had read or looked at pornographic magazines.

Pornography treats men and women as sex objects. It cheapens sex. Even more, it can get a hold on your mind and dominate your thoughts, so you are drawn to pornography any time you become lonely or sexually stimulated. This takes away your identity to a measure and you become weak. It is an addiction that is not easily broken, even if you are much older. It impacts on your future relationship with others and undermines your marriage when you get married, to the extent that it could even set you up for divorce. Why would you enter life on an insecure footing?

My friends keep teasing me because I don't drink. They ask me what I am afraid of. What can I tell them to make them back off?

Tell them it's not because of fear that you don't drink. Tell them it's because you are smart. Proverbs 22:3, 5 says,

"The prudent sees the evil and hides himself, But the naive go on, and are punished for it. Thorns and snares are in the way of the perverse; He who guards himself will be far from them."

Just because all your friends are doing something doesn't mean it's a wise thing for you to do. Alcoholism is one of the world's largest health problems, following heart disease and cancer. It affects millions of people, costs billions, and is implicated in thousands of deaths annually. Alcohol is involved in 50% of deaths by motor vehicle and fire, 67% of murders, and 33% of suicides. It contributes to morbidity in certain malignancies and too many diseases of the endocrine, cardiovascular, gastrointestinal and nervous systems. The suicide rate of alcoholics has been found to be 6 - 20 times higher than that of the general population.

Physically, alcohol can damage your liver, put undue stress on your heart and impair your memory. Emotionally, it can cause you embarrassment from stupid behaviour and create anxiety, cause family hassles, guilt from improper actions and a poor self-image. What happens is that alcohol limits your freedom. It limits your ability to make right decisions and to act upon them.

Don't give in to your friends' pressure. Hold firm. They will probably continue to tease you. But know that deep down they respect you for your convictions.

Christian resources for teenage parenting

Teenagers are more susceptible to peer pressure, which may lead to risky behaviour and low self-esteem. You no longer have to worry about whether or not they will learn to make friends. You will be more concerned about the friends that they do make and whether these friendships will nullify the Christian parenting pursuits that you took during their childhood.

Their peers may encourage them to engage in risky teen behaviour such as stealing, lying, cheating, using drugs and alcohol, smoking, skipping school, self mutilation, and so forth. They may even be influenced to be oppositional to their parents and may be introduced to atheism or agnostic viewpoints. Statistics indicate that there is reason for concern about teen suicide as well.

Christian parenting becomes extremely essential during this stage of development. How you handle teenage parenting can really make a difference in your child's life and their view towards Christianity.

You may be confused about the difference in tough love parenting and permissive parenting and which approach to choose. Reading Christian books about raising teens will help you decide what is best in your situation.

Teenage suicide

Schlebusch conducted research on suicide over a period of 25 years. Until recently, reliable statistics have been unavailable. For the first time there is a more accurate picture of the prevalence of suicide in South Africa.

According to Schlebusch, approximately six to eight thousand people commit suicide in South Africa every year, making suicide the third greatest cause of unnatural death in the country after homicide and unintentional causes. On average 9% of deaths in young people, especially black youth in South Africa, are due to suicide. This is almost as high as adult suicide rates. Approximately one third of all patients admitted to hospital after attempted suicide, are children or teens.

The finding that younger and younger people are committing suicide raises concern. "Ten years ago, the elderly were most at risk of committing suicide. Nowadays, younger people are committing or attempting suicide," says Schlebusch.

Fatal suicides are only one part of the picture. For every one fatal suicide, there are 20 suicide attempts. The Durban Parasuicide Study conducted by Schlebusch and his team of researchers revealed that children and adolescents (aged 10 to 19 years) are the second most at-risk age group for non-fatal suicides after young adults.

According to two surveys as many as 4% (in 2001) to 24% (2003) of school children have suicidal ideation and up to 7.8% of these children have attempted suicide.

Why do children and adolescents commit suicide?

According to Schlebusch, the greatest precipitators in children and adolescents are:

- academic-related problems, such as poor school performance or academic failure
- incest
- stress
- psychological disorders, especially depression
- interpersonal problems
- family problems

Certain factors increase the risk that a child or adolescent would attempt or commit suicide. These include:

- previous suicide attempts
- substance abuse (especially alcohol abuse) and other psychological disorders
- exposure to family violence
- a family member's suicidal behaviour
- child abuse
- school-related problems
- access to firearms

Causes of teen suicide

There are numerous diverse factors that may lead a teenager to take his/her life, but the most common is depression. Feelings of despair and anxiety, along with feelings of being trapped in a problem that he/she is unable to handle are major symptoms of depression. These feelings are actual contributors to teen suicide. Teenagers believe that suicide is the only way to solve their problems.

Other factors that may contribute to teen suicide include:

- parents' divorce.
- violence in the home.
- incapability to find success at school.
- feelings of triviality.
- rejection by friends or peers.
- substance abuse.
- death of someone close to the teenager.
- the suicide of a friend or someone he/she "knows" online.

Teenagers growing up

What is your ship?

I want to recommend a book called 'Jumping Ship' by Michael and Debi Pearl. I think it's a book that every parent should have. It gives you biblical and practical tools to help you build with your children and it teaches you how to keep your children aboard your ship and not jump into a ship passing by.

*A lot of my information I share will be from this book and from our own experiences with our girls and other teenagers.

Your ship is your family - everything you have taught your children-your values, Godly principles, the ways of life, everything you believe and what's important to you - from God, marriage, sex, finances, family, holidays, birthdays, friends etc.

What can I do to ensure that my children do not jump ship when they get to 16-18 years of age?

We need to lead by example: children soon pick up when you are leading by false pretences. You cannot be a good father/mother and not be a good husband/wife. You cannot be a good example to your children without being a good example to everyone who knows you.

We are a whole person and need to make right in the areas where we are not whole.

You must be all that you want your children to be: You cannot drag them to Godliness and Heaven, you have to lead them.

Quote: "You cannot focus your energies on building walls against the darkness outside the home. You must build a wall within that admits lots of Heavenly light."

NB. You need to sell your children your world view. It must be attractive, active and convincing because you are not the only salesman knocking on their door. They must be convinced that your world view is BEST. You will not be able to pretend-by the age of 16 years old your teens have worked you out and know you sometimes better than you know yourself.

- Do your children know and see that you have a relationship with God? Do they see you spend time with God, praying, worshipping and reading the Word? Do they know that God is number one in your life?
- Do they know and see how much you value your spouse; that your spouse comes before them?

The above 2 points are something that we have lived out strongly with our girls. Even though God is number one and we are number two to each other and then them, they know that they are loved and very special. Therefore, they do not vie for our attention, unless we have neglected them because of busyness.

Many Christians operate by being 'good people'. They are hard working, honest and respectable people. They choose to live a good life and avoid the consequences of sin, so they expect their children to do the same. Their good lifestyle is a product of their religious convictions, but a good lifestyle can be lived by any religion-even an atheist. There are lots of unsaved people who live good lives and love their spouses, but what do you have to offer them that is any better?

There are only two lives lived on the earth: a natural life, whether good or evil, and the 'Jesus Life' when you surrender your life to Jesus and live for Him. We have a life of abundance.

*"I have come that they might have life and that they may have it more abundantly."
John 10:10*

There is no, and should be no, hypocrisy in the life we live for Jesus.

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance..." Galatians 5:22

Do your children see that fruit in your life? How is your life that you have chosen any better?

A 'good' life without passion is not worth repeating. Love is always passionate; so is joy, peace and longsuffering in a quiet way... The fruit of the Spirit is attractive. Teenagers are attracted to attractive people. If their parents are unattractive, they will look for someone else who is... that's exactly what happened to me.

My testimony

My parents' marriage was rocky, my dad was drinking on and off and without realising it, I started to adopt aunts and uncles and other friends' parents as part of my parents. I still loved my parents but I was longing for something that brought me security and safety. It is actually scary for me to look back at this time and realise that no one taught me how to do that, I did it out of a need to be loved and feel safe. Because of that, in my heart I 'jumped ship' at a very young age, and this made it easier for me to keep jumping ship more and more as I got older.

A light-hearted spirit of joy and happiness is attractive, but sometimes a teenager is not wise in discerning the difference between real joy and cheap laughter, but they can discern when their parents don't have it at all. So when they find someone that is light-hearted and full of fun, they feel alive and have hope that life is not always going to be dull and boring. They normally find unconditional acceptance with these people, and because they may not have experienced God's love in the natural context in their homes, they think this acceptance is the love they've missed out on. They will walk away from their so called boring parents into the devil's den without any doubt.

As parents, our ability to communicate our world view to our children is locked up in our personal relationship with each other. If our children see a romance between their parents, a fun and joy that is uncontained and a passion for life, they will want to follow on the same road as us in the hope of reaping the same fruit in their own lives.

Fruit bearing

The fences that parents build are able to constrain their children while they are young, but the time comes around 16-18 years of age where they start to choose for themselves.

We cannot escape from the world, and this is where many parents' faith can be shaken.

*"Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it."
Proverbs 22:6*

The key is in the word "train", but not just any training will do. The effort put into training is not the same as the quality of the training.

The actual training comes in the doing/living out what they have learnt. (Share example of consequences: Jess with cell phone - lied - consequence - took cell phone away). If you decide to ground him/her for a week, don't give up after the first day. Be a man/woman of your word. When you do this you are showing and teaching your children who the authority is and that you stick to your word and create a boundary for them, which is healthy.

*So many parents don't stick to their word and this causes a huge level of distrust between you and your children. Build those bridges of trust between you and your child, especially in the difficult times.

Family cruise

Each family is a ship with a captain, a crew, sometimes passengers and cargo. It can be a pleasure liner, a research vessel, cargo ship, mercy ship etc. Each ship has a purpose and a destination which can and will affect the crew members' lives.

No ship is an island. The ship must be going somewhere with a meaningful purpose, otherwise the crew will get very disgruntled.

Many fathers/captains are afraid of failure so they go nowhere and do nothing but stay afloat outside of the influences of other ships.

This is when your children will look at other ships passing by and wish they were on that other ship, and decide to 'jump ship' for a more exciting ride.

But if they know their ship is going somewhere and to a port that offers possibilities they will stay.

1. Share the mission and what's ahead and they will feel part of the upcoming events.
2. One of the most important things is that they are a CREW member, not just a passenger.
3. For a son, it is important for the dad to train him for one day being the captain of his own ship. Give your children opportunities to serve and help.
4. There must be an authority on the ship that provides security and promotes admiration. Young people need this, and they respect it if the chief officer is respectful.
5. The crew must never be left with a feeling of isolation.
6. The crew must know that the captain is answerable to a higher power who holds the power of life and death.
7. The captain must not contradict himself in his dignity, integrity and honour, in order to maintain the respect of his crew. At the same time he must be approachable, accessible and willing to work harder and serve more diligently than all.
8. Weathering storms together and overcoming adversity will create a bond of mutual respect between the officers and the crew.

9. Each person on board must take responsibility for, and pride in his ship. **Example:** When we go on holiday we speak about it as a family and get everyone on board and excited for what's ahead. We speak about what's expected of everyone and who will be doing what and when. Our main holiday is a family place, a place of fun and friends for the girls, and a place for fun and chilling for us. The boundaries are quite relaxed but still very much in place in certain areas. The girls know what these are and respect Charl's authority.

We always have a time of Bible reading, discussion and prayer each morning and each of us gets a turn for this. Breakfast chores are done, and afterwards the girls are free to hang out with their friends. When we face difficult times we sit as a family and openly discuss matters including finances, family issues, sickness etc. We pray together and see how we can work it out together, being aware of how we are all doing. This brings a closeness and sensitivity to where we are all at.

*When we go camping, or even here at home, from young, our children have had responsibilities they need to fulfil. That is how they earn pocket money as well.

They need a sense of purpose and don't want to feel they are cheap labour.

You can't just drive children, they have to learn to steer. I have learnt this literally with Jess learning to drive. Up until a certain age she was happy to be a passenger in the car. Now she just loves to get behind that steering wheel and drive which is part of her training and mine!

It is important for your children to imagine and dream about the world to come, so don't stifle that. If they fail in something, don't tell them "I told you so." For them to grow they must experience success and failure. Success encourages them to do more; failures can be used as stepping stones and to strengthen them within.

Giving respect

Give respect where respect is due. When you admit to your children that their new and fresh ideas are better than yours, there's a bond and trust that is built.

When you can apologise for something that you did wrong, a huge amount of respect is earned. We have done this from young with our girls and the golden rule is: 'NO BUTS!'

NB. You can still respect someone's point of view even when you disagree. Remember to fight the right battles.

Passengers or crew members?

Children who are treated like passengers will not be content aboard their ship; they want to be crew members. They will trust those who have trusted them with responsibility, who are patient, who taught, who encouraged, who listened to their dreams and assured them of success. Believing in your children is trusting them with responsibility.

Maintain morale

Good children grow up out of good soil

When children are trained right, they walk right. Training is much more than words and warnings, Actions speak louder than words. NB. When the example is wrong, the words can never be right enough, because our attitudes screams louder than our words.

NB. Parenting is the most accurate test of one's true character. It reveals the fountain-head of what lies within the parents' heart and soul, and uncovers all that is hidden.

Our children become windows to our true selves, often opening the window wider than we would like, and when we least expect it.

NB. When we have a transformation from within, good parenting comes naturally. Pure souls living pure lives don't need a great deal of knowledge about child training to raise good children. Good children grow out of good parental soil.

What to do if they are about to jump ship?

1. Love God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength until the joy of the Lord fills your cup to overflowing
2. Fall back in love with your spouse and enjoy each other in front of the children.
3. Let the Holy Spirit create discipline in you so that you use your time wisely and have more time to be with your children.

Be encouraged.

If God gave us a parenting test before we could have babies, most of us would fail.

Parenting is continual on-the-job training. We need to be consistently real and caring. When our hearts and attitudes are right, somehow things tend to fall into place. Our children will respond positively to us when they know that we care more about them than we care about what people will think,

YOUR CHILDREN ARE YOUR TEACHER... Some of the things I learnt growing up, I've put into place with our girls. WHY? Because they worked; and I saw a lot of validity in them.

Respect and dignity

Ideas to build respect

1. Allow them to share their ideas.
2. Talk to them and listen to them.
3. Don't always talk to them in a teaching manner.
4. Talk about your strengths and weaknesses, and ask for their advice.

5. Ask for their opinion on how to solve an issue between you and a friend. Jess voluntarily did this with me once when she saw how the issue upset me, it was amazing to hear the wisdom and compassion with she spoke to me.
6. Remember that children, especially teens, test the waters to see if you are listening before they jump in with the BIG STUFF.
7. The reality that we parents have to work with, is the one your teen sees. What do you think? What have they said to you? NB. They want recognition and respect before we realise it's important to them.

Quote: "Children/teens will not be content to be protected and guarded. If you squeeze too hard, they will slip out of your grasp as sure as a wet bar of soap."

We want to protect and guard them against sudden waves but they have to get their own set of legs and learn the ropes of life.

Example: The past 2-3 weeks have been quite intense for us, learning to let our oldest daughter, now 18 years old, go her own way. This has been new and very difficult. She is now at the age where she is legal in so many ways and, phew, it has been hard letting her go! It's not that we don't trust her, but we know the deception of the world. When you have a good relationship with your children, you are able to talk this through with them even if you disagree with certain things.

Some important pointers:

1. **Teach** your children to work. The most miserable people are those without responsibility. People are happiest when someone depends on them.
2. Your family's morale will sky rocket when they understand the **purpose** of their existence.
3. Boredom is the mother of invention, but if not used properly it can become the 'devil's workshop'. Bored children are pouty, ungrateful, unhappy, self-condemning and "unlikable".
4. Enthusiasm of ideas is a fountain of energy. God is a creator and we are created in His image. Your children must be growing or they will go somewhere more interesting and challenging where they can grow.
5. Children need **responsibility**. Allow this to develop, but don't expect it. Responsibility demands and produces the best in all of us. It is like a magnet pulling us towards maturity. **Trust** is a powerful incentive.
6. Children learn to **respect authority** when they see you respecting the authorities above you.
7. **Elevate** your children. Help them grow taller, not with flattering words, but with space to grow. When they see you taking pleasure in helping them grow, they will do the same with others.
8. Teach them to have **fun**. They love the thrill of simple things.
9. **A social Life** is important for teens. Make your home available for this and let them use it. For example, host youth in your home.
10. They need a strong sense of **community** where they are loved, accepted and included by others older than themselves, their age and even younger. Our girls have this in the church mainly, but also at school. Children form gangs for a need of wanting to be loved and accepted.
11. Use opportunities we face, or in the world to **build character** in our children. Educate them when the opportunity arises, but be wise in how you do it.

12. There comes a time when you need to talk about sex, what it is about, and what it entails. Be open-minded and not shocked at the questions they ask. They have probably heard much from their friends/school already.
13. Your children need to follow the **prompting of the Holy Spirit**. Teach them that from young, because one day when they are out there in the world, it's going to be the Holy Spirit they need to hear loud and clear, not your rules.
14. We, as parents, need to be **consistent**. Consistency teaches that God is to be feared, whereas inconsistency communicates that God is only "let's pretend". God can be turned off.
15. When fathers show their hearts to their children, there will be no ship jumping. To follow after the Holy Spirit and not after the flesh is the foundation of sound parenting. A father who **worships continuously** will have the heart of his children.
16. To instill a **wholesome fear of God** in your children is the most precious gift. They will either see it lived out in your lives, or read about it in the Bible and believe it. The best is, if they get both.

If your child jumps ship

1. Stay away from the blaming game.
2. Get your own heart right with God.
3. Become what you want your child to become: a person of love, joy and peace.
4. Know God and love Him.
5. Be disciplined and holy in your own life.
6. Get your marriage in the best place.
7. Accept their jumping.
8. Don't demand they come back. Rather earn the right to have a small part of his life, by his invitation.
9. Pray for him from Gods perspective, until your heart breaks.
10. Maintain contact on a level that isn't smothering to him, but let him know you care.
11. Keep your heart in the right place. Lips speak out of the overflow of the heart.
12. Pray for divine wisdom.
13. Your goal is to see him become a success in God.
14. Start spending time with him.
15. A SPIRIT FILLED LIFE is the only hedge against jumping ship and divorce.

Credits

The content of this manual has been inspired and adapted from No Greater Joy Ministries. Material can be ordered on-line at: www.nogreaterjoy.org.

- No Greater Joy Magazine
- The Joy of Training by Michael and Debi Pearl in Seminar
- To Train Up a Child by Michael and Debi Pearl
- No Greater Joy Volume 1, 2 & 3 by Michael and Debi Pearl
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Additional Notes: