

## A NOTE TO PARENTS

### *HOW TO USE THIS BOOK*

If you are looking at this book for the first time, your initial question might be, "Why should I spend my valuable time reading and using it?" The quickest way to answer this question is to let you know what is in these pages. Here is a brief overview.

In Part 1, **Learning The Game**, you will find out what the Bible has to say about the discipleship of children by parents.<sup>1</sup> These three chapters are designed to give parents a foundation in knowing what God's game plan is for children's spiritual formation. No matter what ages your children are, you will benefit from these chapters. If you are interested in gaining some insight for purchasing other materials, knowing why the rest of this book contains the *equipment* it does, or increasing your ability to disciple children, then you may want to read these chapters first. If, however, your chief desire is to have some immediate help in family discipling or devotions, then you may want to go on to Part 2. You can use the *equipment* there while (or even before) reading Part 1.

There is a great deal of material in this book to process. Rather than have you feel overwhelmed with it all, throw your hands up in the air, and decide, "I just can't do this!" You should know up front that you will be aided in practicing the book's material by working through a simple worksheet in Chapter Five, pages 142-144.

In Part 2, **Playing The Game**, several pieces of equipment are provided which will help you train your team (aka your children). In Chapter Five there are numerous helps: An agenda for family devotions; prayer helps; family memorization helps; and a guide for having weekly family meetings. Chapters Six through Eight contain three different types of family devotional

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<sup>1</sup> By the discipleship of children we are referring to the process of intentionally helping children, through teaching and modeling, come to trust Christ as Savior and to become like Christ in all aspects of life to God's glory. This is rooted and grounded in Matthew 28:19-20.

lessons designed for children ages 6-10.<sup>2</sup> These lessons (most of which center around stories) will teach your children very important biblical truths that they are ready to learn and in ways they can understand them. Each entry has an activity to help with application.

Finally, two indices locate these family devotional lessons according to subject and special days and then an Annotated Bibliography introduces you to other resources which will help with the discipling of your children.

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<sup>2</sup> If you have younger or older children than this age group, please don't think this book doesn't apply to you. It does. We will not only teach you principles which will help in discipling children of all ages, but will also suggests resources for other age levels as well.

## INTRODUCTION

### *THE DREAM TEAM*

In 1992 our family enjoyed watching the U. S. A. men's basketball team win the Olympic gold medal in Barcelona, Spain. For the second straight Summer games, a group of athletically-gifted giants donning the red, white, and blue, were so impressive that they were nicknamed the "Dream Team". Many sports fans tuning in to watch them play thought that coach Lenny Wilkins had it made. "How could you have an easier job than coaching a team full of NBA all-stars, a lean, mean, basketball machine?" Yet, even with all this talent and experience out on the court, they could not have won without a game plan. They had to decide how they would approach each opponent and which U.S.A. player would fulfill each of the needed roles. The end result was a string of decisive wins. The average margin of victory was 31.8 points.

As I reminisce about the Dream Teamers, my mind also drifts to another Dream Team which has come together in many homes throughout the world. I am talking about Christian moms and dads who seek to work together with our Great God to see children come to salvation and grow in the grace of Jesus Christ. Wow, what a team! God, the team's owner, has all the wisdom (Proverbs 9:10) and power (Titus 3:5-6; 2 Peter 1:3ff.) needed to gain the victory. This, along with parents who are willing, is all that is needed, except for one thing. Yes, you guessed it: A game plan!

There are scores of parents out there like a young couple I know. Tim and Cassandra<sup>3</sup> want to teach their children about God, but they do not have the foggiest idea how to do it. Cassandra had only minimal spiritual training from her parents and Tim feels like what he had was negative. They crave guidance in how to play the game. Even though you may be a Christian and have a strong desire to disciple your children, you might be in the dark, like this couple, as to what to do or where to start. In the pages of this book you will find what you need.

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<sup>3</sup>All names have been changed to protect privacy.

This book came about because I am a parent who wants for my children, more than anything else, that they be converted and that they persevere in the process of being "made new in the image of God...and more and more able to become dead to sin and alive to righteousness" (Ephesians 4:24; 2 Thessalonians 2:13).<sup>4</sup> I am also a Christian leader who enjoys teaching parents how to disciple children. Both of these roles demanded that I put in a good deal of time finding out how it is done.

It is my hope that this book will make an eternal difference for you as parents and also for your children. And I pray that you will win the game (1 Corinthians 9:24)!<sup>5</sup>

*The father of the righteous will greatly rejoice; he who fathers a wise son will be glad in him.* Proverbs 23:24

Tom Barnes

Fort Collins, Colorado

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<sup>4</sup>Quoted from the answer to question #35 in Douglas Kelly and Philip Rollinson, The Westminster Shorter Catechism: In Modern English (Phillipsburg, N.J.: Presbyterian And Reformed Publishing, 1986), 10. The Question is, "What is sanctification?"

<sup>5</sup>Throughout this book the metaphor of athletic competition is used to help communicate the need for training and teaching of children by parents. It is used in much the same manner Paul uses it in 1 Corinthians 9:24. In other words, it should not be taken too far. Paul was not saying that one's Faith was a mere playing around or a game. I also am not striving to belittle the importance of walking in the way and instructing children. Understand the metaphor as far as it helps you understand the points at hand. Do not read into it more than the particular point at hand.

**PART ONE**  
*LEARNING THE GAME*

## CHAPTER ONE

### *STRATEGY FOR THE GAME*

My wife, Karen, played volleyball in high school and still enjoys playing when she gets the opportunity. In fact, early in our marriage I gave her a volleyball as a gift. I know, you're thinking that I am a real romantic at heart. But honest, she liked it! She is a *real player*, in contrast to myself. I am a *hacker*. I don't like playing in volleyball games where anyone (like my wife) wants to follow the rules and call out, "illegal hit," or "carry" when I decide to slap the ball open-handed or catch it and throw it back over the net. You see, I don't have a long history of playing volleyball (give me a good baseball or basketball game any day!) and am not familiar with all its rules and techniques for playing. I am better than I was when my wife and I first met because I have spent some time watching it and asking questions, but I still have a long way to go.

I am convinced that many parents think about the spiritual training of their children much like I do volleyball. Give us the task of putting food on the table, making meals, washing clothes, putting bandages on cuts, or playing with our children and we are comfortable. But ask us to disciple our children? We are lost! What we need to do is learn what the *game* is all about and then we must discover how to play it. This is the subject of this chapter.

#### *Explaining The Game*

Whether it is the Dream Team going out on the court to play for the Olympic gold medal in basketball or a high school volleyball team going out onto the floor to play for a conference championship, the first thing that each one of those players had to learn was the purpose of the game. Basketball is about getting the ball into the basket. Volleyball is about getting it over the net. The discipleship of children must begin at the same place. What is it about? The discipleship of children is the process of helping children come to trust Christ as Savior and to become like him in all aspects of life to God's glory.

Notice that this explanation involves two main actions. The first is helping children come

to trust Christ as Savior. We want to know what the Bible teaches about parents helping toward this desired end. We need to know: Are we to give our children the freedom to "make up their own minds" without any influence from us? How do we talk to them about Christ? How do we know when they are truly a Christian?

The other main action in the *game* of discipleship is helping children become like Christ in thought, word, and deed. Herein lies the bulk of the process for parents. We need to know: What does the Bible say about who is responsible for training children? What are we to teach them? How are we to teach them?

Let's get into our *players' manual* so we can learn what our strategy should be.

#### Parents: Active Coaches

I used to pastor a small town church in Nebraska. One of the things this meant was that we had some very good after-service Sunday *pot-luck* dinners. During one such dinner I was the last person to go through the food line. Another man and I were filling our plates as we got into the subject of training children spiritually. He quickly informed me that he did not push his young pre-school children into "religious things". He wanted them to make up their own minds about God. If they decided that they wanted to come to church or read the Bible, then that was fine. Yet, he did not want to take any initiative.

The view of this parent is very common today. Somehow it seems taboo for parents to take the initiative in showing children that God does exist, he is important, they should follow him, and how to follow him. We prize the individual's choice and freedom so highly that we back away from taking an active, intentional role. When we couple this tendency with the growing trend of outsourcing parenting responsibilities to the "experts," even ordinary things such as teaching them to ride a bike, clean their room, or to agree to a modest dress,<sup>6</sup> we come to see that

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<sup>6</sup> Betsy Hart, "Some Parental Duties Just Shouldn't Be Outsourced," Jewish World Review (April 5, 2005). [www.jewishworldreview.com](http://www.jewishworldreview.com).

parents who want to take an active and deliberate role in discipling their children are swimming against the current. This is why we should not be surprised that in a typical week less than 10% of parents who regularly attend church read their Bible with their children, pray together as a family, and/or participate in an act of service as a family.<sup>7</sup> The reality is that even among those who are involved in Bible-believing churches, the rule of the day is passivity.

Yet, when we succumb to this current, we are little different than a coach who says that she will merely sit back and watch her players out on the court and hope that they know the fundamentals, are in shape, and play together. Yet, she does not lift a finger to help. Strong Christians throughout history have been different. For example, while discussing Puritan families of 17th c. New England, Edmund Morgan writes:

*If [a parent] considered only their material welfare without attention to their spiritual needs, he was, the Puritans thought, like those "who are very careful for the shoe, and take no care for the foot." He lacked common sense. He also lacked religion.*<sup>8</sup>

Why must we take the initiative?

To begin with, we must do it because experience tells us if we do not, then our children will not see their Faith as important. I once met with several members of our church to find out what kind of input their parents had on them and to get some ideas for how we could better train the children in our church. Eighty percent of the people interviewed, when asked, "What were some things in your life that have influenced you to be committed to Christ?" said that at least one or both parents influenced them. These results are pretty indicative of what we would find among

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<sup>7</sup> George Barna, Transforming Children Into Spiritual Champions (Ventura, Ca.: Regal, 2003), 78.

<sup>8</sup> Edmund S. Morgan, The Puritan Family: Religion And Domestic Relations In Seventeenth-Century New England (New York: Harper and Row, 1966), 87. In my doctoral studies I found that through much of Church History there has been a strong emphasis on parents intentionally training their children. Martin Luther, for example, called his family "my little parish." (cited in Michael Horton, "Good News For Bad Dads, Modern Reformation, 14, 3 [May/June 2005]). Jonathan Edwards, "Farewell Sermon" (in Carl W. Bogue, "Jonathan Edwards: The Man," TABLETALK, June 91: 12), added: "Every Christian family ought to be as it were a little church, consecrated to Christ and wholly influenced and governed by His rules. And family education and order are some of the chief of the means of grace." Of course this conviction has been stronger in some periods than others. Proverbs 17:16 (NLT) reminds the parent that material welfare or academic training is not enough. Consider: "It is senseless to pay tuition to educate a fool who has no heart for wisdom."

many Christians within the Church. Even those who were not positively influenced by parents and came to Christ later in life will often say that they wish their moms and dads had taught them about Christ.

The fact of the matter is, from birth to age eighteen, no other adult will spend as much time with your sons and daughters as you do. You have an opportunity to model behaviors and attitudes, teach them how to deal with stress, how to spend their money, what is true, what is right and wrong and so many other things. No one else is in a position to make more of an impact than you. If you show and teach them that God and his word are important, they will be more apt to believe this. If, however, you decide to be passive, in that passivity what you are really saying is that God is not that important. "Oh, it's good to go to church and have a little religion. But anything more is not really all that necessary."

Experience is not the only way we see that parents must be active, nor is it the most important. The most important means of learning this is in the Bible. Let's see how scripture teaches that parents are to be *active coaches* in helping their children *play the game*.

The first way we learn this is by the example of God. The heavenly Father holds himself up to us as a model for how to live, both in the Old Testament (Leviticus 19:2: "Be holy because I, the Lord your God, am holy.") and in the New Testament (Ephesians 5:1: "Be imitators of God...").<sup>9</sup> This is also true when it comes to parenting. In Deuteronomy 8:5 Moses compares how God disciplines his people to how a father disciplines his son.<sup>10</sup> God often treats his people as a parent should a child. In this Deuteronomy 8 passage it is clear that God is more concerned that his children learn his truths and grow than he is that they are comfortable and happy according to their own standards. In order to get Israel to obey God's commands, Moses reminds them of how God dealt with them in the wilderness. In verses 2-3 Moses shares that one of the

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<sup>9</sup> All scriptural quotes in Chapters One and Two are my own translation, unless otherwise noted.

<sup>10</sup> Deut. 8:5 (ESV) reads: "Know then in your heart that, as a man disciplines his son, the Lord your God disciplines you." This is also seen in Proverbs 3:12: "...because the Lord disciplines those he loves, as a father the son he delights in."

reasons God led them for forty years in the manner he did was "to test" them. In the same way that a coach might put an athlete through some tough drills and conditioning to see what they have and see if they are up to playing, so God tested his people. He wanted them to learn who really sustained them. It was not bread, but God. They could only learn this, if God placed them in a difficult situation of hunger; that is, if he actively pursued teaching them and preparing them to deal with life's difficulties from a perspective pleasing to him.

Not only does God set himself forth explicitly as our model in parenting, he also does this implicitly. To begin with, we must remember that conformity to the likeness of the God-man (Jesus Christ) is the goal of the Christian's sanctification (Rom. 8:29; 2 Cor. 3:18). When applied to parenting, moms and dads should understand that we are to be Christ-like as we raise sons and daughters. Additionally, we must understand that as a husband and wife we are to model before our children how the Father is the head of the Son (1 Cor. 11:3) and how Christ and the Church relate (Eph. 5:22-33, esp. 32). In other words, in all we do we are either helping or hindering our children from understanding how God relates to his people and how his people are to relate to him.

There are three important implications of the biblical teaching that God is our parenting model. First, we discover we must be active and intentional in teaching and training our sons and daughters. This is how the heavenly Father, our model, functions. Second, we discover a theme which we will come back to over and over again—namely, that our example will play a key role in providing a strong object lesson (or not) for how God relates to us and how we are to relate to him. So, as we speak of discipling our children, we must never forget that who and what we are speaks as loud (or louder) than what we teach.

The third and final implication of the biblical teaching that God is our parenting model is that this opens up the entire Bible as a guide in how we parent. From Genesis to Revelation, as we witness God's mode of parenting his children, we discover a fuller picture of what a mom and dad are than merely the passages that address the subject directly. As we think carefully through this matter what we discover is that the basis of how God relates to his people is

covenant. In the Bible a covenant is the “unchangeable, divinely imposed legal agreement between God and man that stipulates the conditions of their relationship.”<sup>11</sup> The three key elements of God’s covenantal relationship with His people are: He has committed himself to those whom he has chosen; he has loved and acted graciously toward those same ones; and he also has set forth how they are to love, follow, and obey him (cf. Dt. 7:6-11; Rom. 8:29-30; 12:1-2ff.; Eph. 1:3-4:1ff.).<sup>12</sup>

What this sets forth for parents is a whole-Bible understanding which not only provides rich specific examples of how we are to relate to sons and daughters, it also affords an overall grid that helps us balance our approach. To begin with, we are to be committed to our children, to care for them, provide for them, keep promises to them, and be faithful to them even through hard times. Additionally, we are to love and exercise grace toward them—not only realizing how desperately they need this kind of environment, but also remembering that they will make mistakes and will need to experience that we do not disown them as a result. Our children should not know us merely as the law enforcers or controllers. They should also know that we love them deeply. Finally, we must be willing to teach and discipline our children so that they learn both how to submit to us and God, as well as the way in which God wants them to walk. This not only balances out the emphasis on love and helps avoid becoming merely the permissive parents vying to have their children like them, it also is one of the greatest ways we can love them!

As we unpack what it means to disciple our children in this book, it is my hope that your mind and heart will never stray too far away from this Family Covenant Model of parenting. For, in many ways it lies at the heart of what we are teaching and will provide the glue to hold together all of our teaching in a biblical, balanced, and cohesive manner.

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<sup>11</sup> Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000, repr.), 515.

<sup>12</sup> In this discussion of God, the covenant, and his relation to his children as a model for parents, I am heavily indebted to three helpful articles by Paul Randolph: “The Family Covenant Model, Part 1: A Biblical Model of The Family,” “Building The Family Covenant Model, Part 2,” and “Applying The Family Covenant Model, Part 3,” all in *The Journal Of Biblical Counseling*. These appeared in 15: 2 (Winter 1997): 17-21; 15: 3 (Spring 1997): 32-41; and 16: 1 (Fall 1997): 10-19, respectively.

There are few things greater than the experience of seeing your children respond to your intentional parenting as you model God's commitment, love, and teaching. One night years ago when I was tucking our two daughters into bed they wanted me to kiss the cat goodnight after I kissed them. Our cat never wanted anything to do with me. She often ran the other way when I come toward her. Because of this I carried on a feud with her (all in good fun) while in the presence of Melissa and Meagan. This particular night I told them that I wasn't going to be nice to her because she is not nice to me. Both of them together, in our joking around, told me that I should be nice to her because Jesus wants us to treat others like we would want to be treated and not be mean to them when they are mean to us. Now, I know we were having fun, but I was smiling inside, not from humor, but from joy. Their comments were a reminder to me that our time we had put into teaching and training them was bearing fruit. The word of Christ was dwelling in them richly (Colossians 3:16). Yet, this does not happen by chance. God calls us to imitate him and take an active role in making sure our sons and daughters are trained in reference to their thoughts and conduct and, as a general rule-of-thumb, they will not depart from this when older (Proverbs 22:6).

Yet, God does more in the Bible than just hold up himself as an example to get us to be assertive as parents. He commands us to train our children. In Deuteronomy 4 Moses is preparing the Israelites to live in the Promised Land and experience the fullest life God has for them. This is very similar to the abundant life Jesus speaks of in John 10:10 for New Testament believers. In verses 9-10 we are told that spiritual training of children is necessary in order for our children and us to experience this fullness of life or God's blessings (vv.5-8).

Moses begins by teaching that the discipling of children starts with the parents themselves *working out* spiritually. He tells parents that they need to be diligent and pay very close attention to their soul (which includes thinking, emotions, desires), for, if they do not, then they will forget about all the things they have seen God do. This not only includes God's deliverance of them

from Egypt, but also his taking care of them, and how wonderfully God revealed himself to them at Mt. Sinai (vv.11-14). The context suggests that when the parents forget about God and all he has done, then they will slip into the sin of idolatry. Contemporary moms and dads need to hear the same message. The more you read your Bible and learn about who God is, what he has done for us, and what he can do, the more we are able to please him (Psalm 119:11: "I have stored your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you." [ESV]).

But Moses tells us also to take the things we learn and "teach them to your sons and your son's sons." In verse 10 we find out that when God gave Israel the Law on Mt. Sinai his purpose was that "they may learn to fear me...and so that they may teach their sons." God has always had a very simple game strategy for parents. We are to know God ourselves and grow in our knowledge of his word and we are to pass this on to our children. That is the very best way they learn the importance of a relationship with God, how to come to that relationship, and how to practice it.

Two chapters later, in Deuteronomy, 6:4-9, Moses gives the same two-step strategy. Parents are to love God with all they have (v.5) and they are to learn the teachings about and from God in a very deep and full way. They are to be "upon your heart" (6). This means that parents are not just to go through the motions of religious stuff. The truths of God are to touch their mind, emotions, and will. And then, notice the second step in verses 7-9: "And you shall diligently teach them to your sons (children) and you shall talk about them when you sit in your house and when you walk along the way; when you lie down and when you arise. You shall bind them as a sign upon your hand...write them upon the doorposts of your house...." Parents are to talk repeatedly about Bible teachings with their children in all kinds of settings-- formal and informal--and to do it on a regular basis.

The wisdom of this full approach to the spiritual training of children is evident. Not only does the formal instruction (such as family devotions and intentional discipling times) build a foundation for understanding God and his word, but the informal is also beneficial. Children are quite inquisitive and throughout the course of any given day may ask questions which could

provide teaching opportunities. Because their questions reflect what is on their minds and what they want to know, they may be more apt to remember the teaching which takes place. This principle is even exemplified in the life of Jesus and his disciples as he often utilized questions from the disciples as teaching opportunities (Mt.24:1-3ff.; Mark 13:1ff.).

Parents, I know of no greater impetus for studying the Bible and for growing as a disciple of Jesus Christ ourselves than the need to teach and train sons and daughters. Though you might be tempted simply to float along spiritually doing only the minimum to get by, this will be out of the question if you truly want to win with your children. You will have to keep on your toes and remain a step ahead of them.

We not only find God's command to disciple children in the Old Testament, but also in the New: Ephesians 6:4. Following the wonderful spiritual blessings outlined in chapters 1-3, Paul calls Christians to live in a manner worthy of the calling with which we have been called (4:1). In the process of telling us how to do this he exhorts us to "be filled with the Spirit" (5:18). In 5:21 he writes that one of the ways Christians can be filled is for those who are in divinely-ordained subordinate positions to submit to those in authority. This includes wives to husbands; children to parents; and slaves unto masters. Yet, he does not stop there. For, the spirit-filled Christian in an authoritative role will also act in love toward those over whom God has placed them: Husbands to wives; parents to children; and masters to slaves.

It is the second relationship (parents to children) which interests us here. Children are not only to submit to parents by obeying them, but fathers are told: "do not unnecessarily anger your children, but bring them up in the training and instruction from and about the Lord." (Eph. 6:4) Paul tells dads (the application can be to moms also, even though the primary focus is dads) to avoid provoking children to anger unnecessarily or placing demands upon them which are too harsh (see Colossians 3:21). Because men typically have a strong drive to achieve and conquer, they often transfer this into a practice of pushing children beyond their capability or being impatient with them in their childish ways.

He also tells fathers to disciple their children. How different this is than the norm. Most

dads think that it is the wife's duty to "give the kids some religion". Yet, here Paul places the primary responsibility upon the shoulders of dads. I have experienced over the years that children whose dads are actively involved in their spiritual training are more apt to be adults committed to following Christ and to persevere in their Faith. This is a truism which others have also acknowledged.<sup>13</sup>

The two terms "training" and "instruction" are virtually synonymous and are both used by Paul to heighten the importance of what they both communicate. Each conveys the idea of instruction and correction. Christian parents are to take the teaching from the Lord (the Bible), which is also about the Lord, and teach sons and daughters how to think, what to believe, what their hearts are to desire, how to make choices, how to relate to others, and how to behave. When children stray away from these teachings, then parents are to help steer them back by discipline. We could look at other passages in both Testaments, but the point is clear: God wants parents to be active coaches--we might even say *player coaches*.

In the 1970's I was one of the biggest fans of the Cincinnati Reds major league baseball team (aka "The Big Red Machine") you could imagine. I ate, drank, and slept Reds baseball. My dream was someday to be their catcher. I wanted to play defense like Johnny Bench and hit and run like Pete Rose.<sup>14</sup> Aside from Pete's gambling problem which left him barred from the Hall Of Fame in Cooperstown, NY., I have great memories of "Charlie Hustle": head-first slides; running full-speed to first base on a base-on-balls, and surpassing Ty Cobb's all-time record for the most base hits in a career. In the 1980's, before Pete quit playing, he spent a couple of seasons as a player-manager (coach) for the Reds. I always thought that he must have been a great manager. With his discipline on the field, his knowledge of the game, and his

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<sup>13</sup>Ken R. Canfield, *The Seven Secrets Of Effective Fathers* (Wheaton: Tyndale House, 1992), 174-75. Such an assertion is often challenged. One such recent work which suggests that men are not needed in the raising of children is *Raising Boys Without Men*, by Peggy Drexler and Linda Gross (cited in Mark Early, "Junk Science: Raising Boys Without Men," October 26, 2005. [www.breakpoint.org](http://www.breakpoint.org)).

<sup>14</sup>These were two of the most well-known players from the team in that era.

hands-on experience he was second-to-none when it came to instructing young players about performance on the diamond. And there is no way he simply sat back and let players do their own thing, hoping the Reds would win. He made an effort to teach, train, and pass on what he had so they could win.

This is similar to what God desires from parents with their children. He wants us to live out the Christian life and his Word, always growing and learning. Then he commands us to be actively involved in training our children to do the same. Mom and dad, it is not a suggestion, it is a command!

Scripture's teaching that parents are to be actively involved in the spiritual training of their children should carry more weight with us than any other sources of motivation. Yet, I will include two more just to support the biblical teaching. The first comes from the findings of researchers who have observed strong families. A few years ago Dick Stinnett, chairman of Human Development And The Family at the University of Nebraska (USA) conducted a "family strengths research project". He directed several national studies on strong families in South America, Switzerland, Austria, Germany, and South Africa. The only criteria for involvement was that families rate themselves very high in marital happiness and satisfaction in parent-child relationships. After studying 3,000 families he concluded that there were six qualities that virtually all these strong families possessed. They were: (1) They have commitment to the family; (2) They spend time together; (3) They have good family communication; (4) They express appreciation to one another; (5) They have a spiritual commitment; (6) And they are able to solve problems in a crisis.<sup>15</sup>

Did you notice the fifth characteristic of a strong family? They have a spiritual commitment. And notice that the other five are all enhanced by number five. The strongest families are those who are committed to God. This will necessarily involve taking an active

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<sup>15</sup>Taken from Charles R. Swindoll, Growing Wise In Family Life (Portland, Oregon: Multnomah Press, 1988), 35-36.

approach to teaching children about the Christian Faith.

The next support for the scriptural teaching comes from the impact on society that our spiritual training (or lack thereof) can have. Columnist Mona Charen wrote the following on this topic:

*Christie Davies offers a fascinating historical survey of crime and disorder in Great Britain. The first half of the 19th century was marked by high levels of public drunkenness, theft, violence and illegitimacy, all of which dropped to remarkably low levels in the late 19th c. and early 20th c. George Orwell, writing in 1944, noted that England was renowned for "gentleness." But "it is not much more than a hundred years since the distinguishing mark of English life was its brutality." What changed an entire nation's national character? Davies has an intriguing suggestion: Sunday School. Attendance at Sunday schools rose steadily throughout the latter half of the 19th century. In 1888 75% of children in England and Wales attended religious schools [Sunday School]. When attendance fell off in the 20th c., crime, dishonesty, illegitimacy and disorder increased dramatically.<sup>16</sup>*

Along with that high percentage of Sunday school attendance most likely came an active role by many parents in the spiritual training of their children. Regardless, this suggestion reminds us that spiritual training (or the lack thereof) can have great consequences upon the society. "One child lost to the faith usually becomes a family lost to the faith, and not many generations later a whole community of unbelief is set in motion because of some earlier neglect of parental duties."<sup>17</sup> Remember that our children are the future Church and, as such, a key to whether the Great Commission will flourish.

### Parents: Head Coaches

Several summers ago I volunteered to help coach little league baseball in our small town. The first summer there was no problem because I was the assistant to two other coaches. They

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<sup>16</sup>Mona Charen, "A Heavy Price For Moral Confusion," Norfolk Daily News (Norfolk, Ne., March 24, 1993).

<sup>17</sup>Carl F. H. Henry, "Classic And Contemporary Excerpts," Christianity Today, 36, 5 (1992): 36.

shouldered all the weight of parents' complaints and the responsibility of organizing practices and deciding who played and where. The next summer, however, was a different story. Again, I desired to be the assistant, but a problem arose. The two other coaches decided that they had given enough years to little league baseball and "retired". No one else volunteered, so I became an assistant coach without a head coach. Or you might say I was a reluctant head coach.

Now, I believe that the feelings of many parents are similar to what I experienced those first two years of coaching. I really did not want to be the number one man. I preferred that "the buck stop" somewhere else. Many parents feel the same way about parenting. They think they are inadequate to train their children in the ways of God. They are convinced that the pastor, the Sunday School, the Wednesday night children's club, or Christian school teachers can do a much better job. "After all," we reason, "what do we know about helping our children come to faith in Christ and walking in a manner pleasing to the Lord?"

There are two reasons why we are to be the head coaches and not someone(s) else. To begin with, we are with our children more often so that we can not only teach them about doctrines, we can live out before them what the Bible teaches. This is not only what Deuteronomy 6:6-9 addresses (in part), it is also how Jesus Christ trained the twelve. As we read the four Gospels something jumps off the pages at us. Jesus did not just train the Twelve by gathering them together for formal teaching times. Much of his teaching was on the go; in the course of their traveling, eating, sleeping, and ministering together.

The other reason that parents are to be the head coaches in training their children spiritually is that God teaches us in the Bible this is his intended design. We have already looked at some biblical passages which affirm this (Deuteronomy 4:9-10; 6:6-9; and Ephesians 6:4). Let's look at one other which teaches that parents have the primary responsibility in this task.

In Exodus 13 God gives Israel instructions for two very important religious observances, the dedication of each firstborn and the Passover with its following Feast of Unleavened Bread. Both of these were instituted to help each generation of Israel remember what God did in their behalf (vv. 3, 9). In other words, they were reminded of their nation's salvation and the character

of God such that they would be motivated to worship and trust in him. In relation to the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the parent was to instruct his children about the exodus out of Egypt and how God delivered his people in a very powerful way (v. 8). And in relation to the dedication of the firstborn, it is assumed that children would ask why this ritual is practiced. Parents would then have the opportunity to tell them about the exodus and God's powerful deliverance.

The Old Testament and New Testament believing parent understood God's intended design to be that parents were primarily responsible for training children. This can be seen from the fact, in both time periods, children's training was done by moms and dads.<sup>18</sup> During the Old Testament period parents were responsible for spiritual, academic, vocational, and domestic training. The father usually took the lead in all this except teaching daughters domestic duties around the home. Schools did not arise for sure until about 150-200 years prior to the time of Christ. Even then most children did not attend. With the influence of the Greco-Roman culture upon Palestine came, what we might call, public schools. Many Hebrews developed their own schools to train children in the Law of God and keep them out of pagan instruction. Yet, most Gentile and even many Hebrew parents did send their children to classical schools. Whatever approach parents took, they viewed it as their primary responsibility to teach children about God and give them guidance in his ways. They were aided by others in their faith community, but parents, motivated by biblical teaching, believed they were primarily responsible.

This has remained the most popular approach throughout the history of the Church with just a few exceptions and minor variations. Even today, many Christian parents may disagree as to whether or not sons and daughters should receive academic training in the home, Christian school, or public school, yet most who value the spiritual life of their children and the teachings of the Bible believe that parents are the primary trainers.<sup>19</sup> In addition, they understand that

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<sup>18</sup>Tom Barnes, "Teaching Parents In The Spiritual Training Of Their Children," (D.Min. Thesis, Bethel Theological Seminary, 1997), ch. 3.

<sup>19</sup>A must read for every Christian parent who is interested in his children receiving an integrated, holistic spiritual training which involves academic education is: Douglas Wilson, Recovering The Lost Tools Of Learning: An Approach To Distinctively Christian Education (Wheaton: Crossway, 1991). Wilson draws out the implications of

many others in the body of Christ, possessing gifts of teaching (Romans 12:7; 1 Corinthians 12:28; Ephesians 4:11; 1 Peter 4:11), can help in a supportive way. This can include pastors, Sunday school teachers, Christian school teachers, and many others.

So, the bottom-line is this mom and dad: You have the God-given responsibility of being active head coaches in training your children how to play God's "game". You are also in a privileged position so that no one can do it better than you. Commit yourself to reading on in this book and finding out how to coach them and what equipment you will need.

### *Helping Children Join The Team*

Moms and dads, we must not only be interested in teaching our children Christian principles, we must also give priority to their conversion. "It is vital that we understand...before a child can grow in the Lord, he must know the Lord. A program of training parents to lead a child to Christ is essential."<sup>20</sup> That is what we want to do now: Explain how we can help our children "join the team".

When discussing child evangelism, we must begin with stating the need. It is not uncommon for contemporary parents to think that children are innocent. Based upon a child's lack of development in sin, his physical and mental inability to do the kinds of acts adults may do, and a natural attraction many have to children, it is thought that children would certainly not be sinful or deserving of hell. Yet, scripture teaches that children are, in fact, born as sinners. This is what is known as *original sin*. By this phrase is meant "the dimensions of sin with which we begin life, or the effect which the sin of Adam has upon us as a precondition of our lives."<sup>21</sup> The scriptures teach that people are sinful from the very beginning of life (Psalm 51:5). This is

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the biblical teaching found in chapters 1-2 of this book and applies them to education.

<sup>20</sup>David L. Birch, "Home-Centered Christian Education," *Christian Education Journal*, 3, 2 (1982): 33.

<sup>21</sup>Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, eleventh printing, one volume edition (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), 631.

true because of the effect of Adam's headship upon all mankind (his representation) and his sin (Romans 5:12-19). Both physical and spiritual death come because of Adam's sin. Yet, according to Romans 5:12-13, it is also because of each individual's sin that all are held accountable.

If all people are born as sinners and, therefore, all sin, and if the wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23), then this spiritual and physical death also reigns over infants. What this implies is that children are in need of salvation. As a result, they are in need of being taught about how to be converted and obtain God's forgiveness. Your children are not automatically "on the team" at birth. However we deal with the question of infants who die, we must realize that, at the very least, all infants who grow into older children and adults are accountable for their sinfulness. They must be converted. They must be evangelized.

Something else that must be considered is the nature of saving faith. Different approaches to child evangelism arise out of different approaches to the nature of the faith that saves. This is often true, even if people have not thought through the issue, yet they still have very strong beliefs as to what saving faith is and how it must take place.

Scripture teaches that there is, in fact, a specific point in time when a person passes from death to life (John 5:24). A number of passages bears this out: Acts 2:38; 16:31; Acts 9:1ff.; Romans 10:13; 1 Thessalonians 1:6ff. In these passages it is implied that God knows when a person is converted--after all, he is the one doing the converting! The general time frame may even be evident to onlookers. What this does is validate two beliefs which many Christians have: True conversion always has a specific time when it happens. Also, this squares with some people being converted in crisis experiences with the result that they can look back and know when the change came.

A problem arises, however, when the crisis conversion is made the standard for all people. Many of us want to keep clear the need for genuine conversion as opposed to a little gradual reformation. Such a desire is commendable, yet it is misplaced when it is translated into the thought, "You must know the time and place you were saved." Or, "It must be a crisis

conversion." Even though, from God's perspective, the inauguration of true salvation takes place at a point in time, from the perspective of the individual or from onlookers, it can appear to be a gradual process--one in which the exact time is not apparent.

The support for this last statement comes from the full picture of salvation in the scriptures, particularly the New Testament. To begin with, it is true that we are saved through faith (John 3:16, 36; Romans 3:19-31; Ephesians 2:8). However, this *saving faith* (emphasis mine) is not just a mental assent. It also involves emotions and volition because obedience must be part of and a result of the true saving faith. In Romans 1:5 Paul writes of "the obedience of faith" ("the faith which results in obedience"); in Romans 10:16 "not all obeyed the gospel," and in 2 Thes. 1:9 "those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus". Both 1 John 2:3-4 and James 2:17 teach that the one who has true knowledge of Jesus Christ and saving faith does obey his will. This means that repentance is present with true saving faith (Acts 2:37; 3:19; 17:30). Though no Christian lives a perfect life and never sins (Romans 7; 1 John 1:8, 10), nevertheless, all true Christians have been changed from the inside out so that they are given the ability to obey God, have a hatred of sin, and a desire to live a righteous life (Romans 6:1-11; 2 Peter 1:3-11; 1 John 2:1).

This also means that the full vision of scripture involves the idea of remaining true to Christ in our faith (known as perseverance) and an obedient changed life which results from genuine conversion. As a result, a professing Christian must examine himself to make sure that he is saved (2 Cor. 13:5). We must "make our calling and election sure" (2 Peter 1:11). This involves asking two questions which are related: "Have I received and rested upon Christ alone for my salvation?" (John 1:12; 3:36; Acts 4:12) and "Does my life evidence a changed, enduring lifestyle which is consistent with God's will?" When we can answer, "yes" to both of these, then and only then can we have assurance that we are Christians and are secure in God's gracious, saving hand (John 10:28-29: "I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand...no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand." [NIV]). Jesus Christ said, "Not every one who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but

he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven." (Matthew 7:21, RSV)

When we understand the whole picture of scripture's teaching about saving faith, we can see the importance of biblical education in the lives of those within the body of Christ--and this includes children. Parents should seek to educate children in the gospel in such a way that true conversion and perseverance are solidified (2 Peter 1:10: "be zealous to make your calling and election sure"). We want more than just to push our children into a "decision" or praying through a "sinners' prayer". We want them to understand the gospel and what salvation is. We want them to be secure in God's gracious gift of redemption. As a result, the best approach to child evangelism is to nurture children all along the way so that they can learn about their sinfulness, what the Bible teaches about salvation, and what it means to live as a Christian.

Another line of support for this gradual and consistent approach to evangelism of children is the manner in which scripture calls us to disciple our children. It is by on-going teaching and modeling (See Exodus 12:24-28; Deuteronomy 6:6-9; Ephesians 6:4). "Incline the child to put his faith in Christ by sound Christian teaching surrounded by Christian love from birth onward. Such preevangelism, as it may be called, builds a proper foundation for intelligent faith and active discipleship" (see 2 Timothy 1:5; 3:15).<sup>22</sup>

The discussion of original sin and the nature of saving faith sets forth the foundation for child evangelism. I want to offer some specific guidelines now for how to teach children about the need to receive and rest upon Christ alone for salvation. Keep in mind that many of these guidelines flow out of what we have just discussed.<sup>23</sup>

Realize that your child is in need of salvation and this takes place by placing his faith in Jesus Christ as previously presented.

Do not push your child to "make a decision" or "a public profession of faith" based upon

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<sup>22</sup>Edward L. Hayes, "The Biblical Foundation Of Christian Education," Introduction To Biblical Christian Education (Chicago: Moody, 1981), 407.

<sup>23</sup>I am also indebted to the following article which stands behind many of these guidelines: Drew J. Grunnels, "Counseling Children About Conversion," Southwestern Journal Of Theology, 33 (1991): 35-39.

your desire for them to be converted. This could be extremely dangerous and give a child a false sense of security. It could also give them a false sense of comfort so that they ignore legitimate warnings in the future. **Pray** that God's Spirit would work in their heart to bring them to a realization of the need for Jesus Christ as Savior. This is absolutely necessary for them to be truly born-again (John 3:3-9).

Look for signs that your child is ready to receive Christ. (1) A change in disposition. They will demonstrate the conviction of the Holy Spirit (John 16:8). This may be evidenced by more serious meditation, sober thoughts, or expressions of worry. (2) An inquiring mind. They will ask questions about Christ and want to know about salvation.

This happened with both of our daughters. During the first few years of their lives we taught them Bible stories, read them scripture, used devotional books, and explained the gospel to them. My wife, Karen, and I decided that we would teach them, pray for them, and challenge them to receive Christ by faith and repentance. But we would wait for God's Spirit to work in them so that they truly receive Christ and not just make an empty profession. With our second daughter, Meagan, we even put off talking to her more seriously about salvation after she asked us a couple of times, "How can I receive Jesus Christ as my savior?". We explained the gospel to her each time, but we did not coerce. We wanted to make sure that she was speaking from the heart and not simply making a profession to be like her older sister. Some of you might think this sounds sacrilegious. Yet, keep in mind that God, through his Spirit, is the one who must initiate salvation (John 6:44) and if the Spirit was opening up the Spiritual eyes of Meagan to make her willing and able to believe in Christ (1 Corinthians 2:14; Ephesians 2:1-5f.), he would complete this work in her (Romans 8:29-39). We didn't have to think, "Oh my, what if she never wants to receive Christ again?" This is a wrong-headed view of what salvation is!

(3) The development of concepts. The response of the child to specific questions which reveal the right concepts of God, the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and the work of the Holy Spirit would indicate readiness to receive and rest upon Christ alone for salvation.

When teaching your child, explain the gospel in terms she can understand. I know of no

better way to do this than to use The Children's Catechism: A New, Modern Version.<sup>24</sup> This small booklet by Philip Rollinson and Mark E. Ross is designed to prepare a child to learn and understand The Westminster Shorter Catechism. Even if you do not choose to teach these two catechisms to your children (A catechism is a tool which uses questions and answers to teach children about the Bible and God), The Children's Catechism is worth purchasing just to read and gain help in explaining the gospel to your younger children. Another helpful resource is to go to your pastor and ask him to help you with wording the gospel in ways which your children can understand. I have had parents do this and I find great delight in helping moms and dads with this wonderful ministry!

When teaching children about salvation, call them to response. Jesus often did this when he called people to follow him (Matthew 4:20, 22; 8:19; 10:38; 16:24; 19:21). This refers to a divine command to come and submit to Jesus as Lord, be committed to him, serve him, and leave behind former allegiances and priorities. It involves being sorry for sins, a desire to be changed, and the conviction that Jesus alone, through his death and resurrection, can change us and forgive us. One tool that can be used for children to respond is that of prayer. However, this has been abused by many in recent years. We must remember that a prayer is not what saves or gives assurance to a child. It is merely a tool which can solidify their faith and response to God.

Remember that there is no such thing as an age at which all children are ready to place their faith in Christ. It depends upon their maturity and the work of the Holy Spirit in individuals.

Do not push for assurance of salvation too quickly. Allow the Holy Spirit to do this in your child's heart (Romans 8:16: "The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children." [NIV]). It takes time to know for sure the child has come to Faith. Continue to pray, teach, love, and lead by example. And by all means, teach your children to base their assurance upon the biblical test which is a changed life that results from true conversion (2 Peter 1:3-11).

Once your child has made a profession of Faith, treat it as genuine. Continue to train them

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<sup>24</sup> Available from Summertown Texts, P. O. Box 453, Signal Mountain, Tennessee, USA. 800-742-5710.

in the Christian Faith as set forth in the rest of this book. We must pray and leave it up to God to convince them that they are not converted or that they are.

Throughout this book parental example is emphasized. It is no different when it comes to being part of the team (salvation). Moms and dads, God calls you also to repent and believe the gospel to be saved (Acts 2:38; 16:31; 17:30). Have you done this? Have you made your calling and election sure? Not only will your lack of example hurt children in relation to salvation, if you have not, but it will also be hard to help children find true life when you are spiritually dead (John 5:24). And, in addition, your eternal destiny will be separation from God (2 Thes. 1:9) and eternal conscious punishment, if you refuse to do so (Rev. 20:14-15).

### *The Team's Objective*

It is quite probable that if you have taken the time to read this book and especially to come this far in it, you have an interest in your children and in what God has to say about parenting them. Hopefully, you have been brought "on-board" to the viewpoint that God has given you the responsibility of discipling your children. Now that you are "on-board" and know you must be active player-coaches who help your children join the team, we must discuss what the objective of your coaching should be. After all, no good coach recruits players, has his team run sprints, do calisthenics, and run through tedious drills merely for the sake of watching them exert themselves. There is a purpose, an objective. What is to be the objective of our parenting? What does the Bible teach we should strive to accomplish?

I believe the answer to this question is the same answer as to the question, "What is the ultimate purpose of mankind?" Whatever the Bible teaches should be this ultimate purpose, it stands to reason, should be what we are trying to accomplish with our sons and daughters. The first question and answer of the Westminster Shorter Catechism summarizes what the scriptures teach about our ultimate purpose. "What is man's primary purpose?" "Man's primary purpose is

to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever."<sup>25</sup> As one Puritan writer asserted, this is to be the ultimate objective of our parenting. "Every Christian...should do all he can to promote the glory of God, and the welfare of those about him; and the well ordering of matters in particular families tends to promote these things."<sup>26</sup>

Since we often speak of glorifying God, but rarely stop to define it, let's spend some time doing just that and also finding out whether or not this truly is man's chief purpose.

Most of the time in the Bible "glory" is the manifestation or showing forth of God's greatness and importance. Often this is associated with his visible presence (Exodus 24:16-17; 40:34; Lev. 9:23; John 1:14; Lk. 9:31-32) or with his great works (his provision of manna and quail [Exodus 16:7]; his reputation/name [Neh.9:5; Ps. 102:15]; his wonderful acts [Ps. 138:5]; the birth of Jesus [Lk. 2:14]; the resurrection of Jesus [Rom.6:4]; his holiness [Is. 6:3]; his judgment he brings upon the earth [Ezek. 39:21; Hab. 2:14]; and his gospel message and all it accomplishes [1 Tim.1:11]). God is first of all the subject of glory. In other words, he possesses glory as part of his very essence whether we recognize it or not. But he also is the object of glory. Because he is glorious and he has designed all the world to show forth his glory and recognize his glory (Eph. 1:11-12), then his moral will is that all mankind glorify him (1 Corinthians 10:31: "Whether, therefore, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all things unto the glory of God").

What does it mean to glorify God? First of all, it means that we show forth his greatness and importance through how we think and what we do. We glorify God when we show that he is true and righteous by confessing our sin (Joshua 7:19). We glorify God when we mature and are filled with the fruits of righteousness (Phil. 1:9-11), when our good works shine forth to the world (Mt. 5:16); when we obey God (2 Cor. 9:13), when we use our gifts in the strength God

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<sup>25</sup>Douglas Kelly, Philip Rollinson, The Westminster Shorter Catechism In Modern English (Phillipsburg, N.J.: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1986), 5.

<sup>26</sup> These are the words of Benjamin Wadsworth, cited in Leland Ryken, Worldly Saints: The Puritans As They Really Were (Grand Rapids: Academie/Zondervan, 1990, repr.), 74.

provides (1 Peter 4:11), and when we are unified with believers and receive one another (Romans 15:5-7). We glorify God when he works through us to perform miracles or to stand up for justice (Ps. 57:5; Mt. 9:8; 15:31). We glorify God when we trust in him (Ps. 50:15; Acts 4:21) and pray (John 14:13). Such trust and prayer shows God's sufficiency and our dependence upon him. We glorify God when his power is shown forth through our suffering and trials (John 21:19; 2 Cor. 12:7-10). In such times people see that the power of God and his gospel do not originate in us, but in God. Therefore, the world sees how great and wonderful he is (2 Cor. 4:7). We also glorify God when we proclaim his works among the nations and throughout the world-- in other words, through evangelism and missions (1 Chronicles 16:24-29; Ps. 145:10-12; 2 Cor. 4:15; Acts 11:18; 21:20; Gal. 1:24).

There is also a second way we glorify God. Ultimately, all glorifying of God results in worship of him. Either we acknowledge his goodness, power, holiness and praise him as a result; or, others do that in response to our testimony. Psalm 24:7-10 reads:

"Lift up your heads, O you gates; be lifted up, you ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in. Who is this King of glory? The LORD strong and mighty, the LORD mighty in battle. Lift up your heads, O you gates; lift them up, you ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in. Who is he, this King of Glory? The LORD Almighty--he is the King of glory" (NIV)

Luke 2:20 also teaches this: "And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God because of all the things they heard and saw which were just as it had been told them." 1 Samuel 6:5 shows that we acknowledge his supremacy and proclaim how great he is when we glorify him.

All that we have said about what it means to glorify God can be summed up this way. I believe we glorify God by enjoying him forever. In other words, the summary of the means whereby we show forth God's greatness and acknowledge his greatness directly to him is by enjoying him and being satisfied in him.<sup>27</sup> Stop and think about all that has been said above. If

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<sup>27</sup>I am indebted to the work of John Piper, Desiring God: Meditations Of A Christian Hedonist (Portland: Multnomah, 1986), ch. 1, for this insight.

we come to the realization that God is "all I really want in life" (Psalm 142: 5, NLT), that he is our ultimate desire (Psalm 73:25), since he has chosen us before the foundation of the world (Eph. 1:4) and has promised us a rich inheritance (Eph.1:18) he will never stop doing good to us and rejoices in doing good to us (Jeremiah 32:40-41) and he is our rock and redeemer (Psalm 19:14), would we not pant after him as deer pant for streams of water (Psalm 42:1)? Would not our great desire in life be to know him (Jeremiah 9:23-24; Phil.3:8) and to obey him (Col. 3:12) and to love him because he first loved us (1 John 4:10)?

The ultimate purpose of our life and that of our children ought to be to enjoy the splendor of God, to feast at his banqueting table of greatness and to drink from his well that satisfies (Is. 55:1ff.). We should delight in worshipping and glorifying God with a passionate love and enjoyment. When this is the direction of our heart, everything else will fall into place. When our sons' and daughters' hearts are set on God and God alone, to glorify him by enjoying him forever, then they will have found their ultimate purpose in life. All our training of them ought to be founded upon and working toward this end.

I can think of no better way to close out this section than by sharing with you the words of another saint who finds delight in glorifying God by enjoying him and desires the same for his sons. May his desire become your desire and mine!

*If there is any legacy I want to leave you, it is not money or house or land; it is a vision of God--as great and glorious a God as one could ever see. But more than that, I want to leave the legacy of passion for this God. A passion far beyond what any human can produce. A passion for God flowing from the very heart of God. Never forget that God is most glorified in you when you are most satisfied in him. But even more--and this is my prayer for you--in God's time, may your satisfaction in him be without measure, as it becomes the very pleasure of God in God.<sup>28</sup>*

### Coaching The Players

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<sup>28</sup>Taken from the dedication of John Piper to his four sons in The Pleasures Of God: Meditations On God's Delight In Being God (Portland: Multnomah, 1991), 11.

The church where I once pastored had the joy of having both the girls' varsity head volleyball coach and the boys' varsity head football coach as part of our body. I noticed that every August each would get excited about a new season and the beginning of practice. They knew that it would not be long before it was decided who would be on the team and then they would go about the task of teaching and reminding players of the fundamentals and helping them do their best on the court and field respectively.

What an appropriate illustration for parents who desire to disciple their children. We now know that we are the head coaches, we must be actively and aggressively involved in coaching sons and daughters, we know about how to guide them in becoming part of the team, and we know what the objective of the team is: To glorify God by enjoying him forever. What is left to find out from the scriptures is how we are to coach (or disciple) children so as to reach our objective.

### *Model*

The first (and one of the most important) biblical lesson for the training parent is the need to be a model. How we live will speak louder than what we say. No where is this made more apparent than in Genesis 19 and the relationship of Lot with his daughters. In this chapter we learn that two of the three angels who spoke with Abraham (Genesis 18) came to Sodom (in human form). After Lot greeted them he tries to get them to stay with him for the night and finally succeeds. He knew the dangers facing these two men, if they spent the night outside in this wicked city. In verses 4-5 we find out that before Lot and his two guests went to bed that night, men from all over Sodom, young and old, surrounded the house and demanded that he send out the guests so that they could have homosexual relations with the two.

In verses 6-8 we find out that Lot responds by pleading with them not to do this evil thing. Then he offers to send out his virgin daughters so that the men could do with them whatever they wanted. Though Lot's motivation may have been rooted in the culture's high priority placed upon hospitality, this in no way justifies what Lot suggested as a solution. He knew of the

degeneracy and evil of the town, so it is unconscionable that he would overlook his paternal responsibilities and the standards of God to do such a horrible thing. Lot was willing to compromise ethical principles because of a lack of biblical love, a lack of clearly defined priorities, and a lack of trust in God. Truly, this was the opposite of glorifying God by enjoying him forever!

After supernaturally rescuing Lot, the angels told him to inform all his family (and those close: future sons-in-law) to be ready to go out of the city because the Lord sent the angels to destroy the city (vv. 10-13). Lot went and told all this to his family. His future sons-in-law did not take him seriously. We do not know if this was an indictment upon Lot, his future sons-in-law, or all of them. We can at least say that the sons-in-law did not respect Lot. Also, they were not the kind of men who were sensitive to God. In that day and time when parents had a great deal to say about whom their children married, Lot was very careless with his daughters (contrast this with Genesis 24:37 and 28:1ff.).

The next morning (v.15) the angels urged Lot and his family to leave lest they be swept away in the judgment brought upon the city for its sinfulness. The angels' plea is laced with urgency! It is amazing that verse 16 states Lot "hesitated". Whatever the reason for the hesitation--love for things, fear of the unknown, or not trusting in what God said--it shows a character flaw within this nephew of Abraham: a dishonoring lack of trust in and submission to God.

Not only did Lot hesitate, but then he had the audacity to argue about where to go (vv.17-20). Lot was not poor in spirit before God. He did not acknowledge his inability to run his own life and his need to trust in God. He was also full of fear as seen in verse 19. The angels had to take him and his family and bring them out of the city. The compassion of the Lord (v. 16) motivated Lot's rescue, not Lot's faithfulness to him.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>29</sup>Peter's commentary on the life of Lot (2 Peter 2:7) was that Lot was "a righteous man, who was distressed by the filthy lives of lawless men...." Lot was a believer, he was distressed by what he saw around him, and God rescued him. Yet, he had some major weaknesses which influenced his daughters' eventual sinful choices.

In 19:30 we read that Lot and his daughters displayed fear once again. They leave Zoar (to which they came out of fear) and they settled in a mountain cave. These verses give a picture of a man who saw God work in a great way, experienced his blessings in the past, yet was not getting the message that he could trust the Lord. We cannot escape the conclusion that Lot was a believer characterized by compromise, fear, poor judgment, and an unwillingness to turn his life over to God's care.

This true story ends with his daughter's incest (vv. 30-38). The reason that it takes place is the daughters feared that they would not be able to have children. After all, no young men were available to them. So, what they did, following the example of their father, was compromise their ethics to have sexual relations with their father (after they intoxicated him). Because of their lack of trust in God and their fear, they committed a similar sin to what their father attempted to allow as recorded in 19:8.

The results of the daughters' sin was the birth of two sons: Moab and Ammon. These two became fathers of two groups of people who were perennial enemies of God. Thus, Genesis continues with its description of the beginning of the formation of God's people and the world-at-large which often opposed those people and God. This true story ends on a negative note, recording an event that resulted from lack of trust in God. As elsewhere in Genesis, such sin-induced behaviors often have long-range ramifications. Read about Ham's actions with his father, Noah (9:18-27); Abraham's sexual relationship with Hagar (ch. 16); and Esau's selling of his birthright and his choice of mate (27:1-28:9).

How much responsibility does Lot bear for what happened with his daughters? Genesis 19 does not explicitly say. However, it does strongly imply that this man created an atmosphere that fostered ungodly daughters who passed their lack of righteousness on to descendants with grave consequences. Lot provides a powerful illustration for the truth that how we live, whether or not we trust in God, and whether or not we take an active role in discipling our children, can have great impact upon our sons and daughters. It is not an absolute one-to-one correspondence or a neat little formula guaranteeing success or failure, but the scriptures repeatedly teach there is

often a connection between parents' lifestyle and the children's spiritual well-being.<sup>30</sup>

Moms and dads, you must teach your children from the scriptures and take them to church. Yet, what will make more impact on them than anything is how you live. Though modeling, by no means is enough, it is a great piece of equipment in the hands of the spiritual coach. In those times when you are not even aware of influencing that son or daughter, you will be showing them how to relate to a spouse, how to handle financial struggles, how to forgive someone who takes advantage of you, how to pray faithfully for someone's salvation, how to trust God when the car breaks down on the interstate in the middle of a storm, how to do all to his glory! This is why “raising children pushes parents to mature in their faith as much as it moves children toward spiritual wholeness.”<sup>31</sup> This is why, moms and dads, that having children and wanting to “do it right,” should be one of the greatest motivations to your own growth. In fact, I would go so far as to say that if you are not continually growing in the grace and knowledge of Christ, and becoming more like him, you will be unable to raise your children as God calls us to do in his Word.

### *Prayer*

Something else that is indispensable to the discipling parent/coach is prayer. We see its importance in two different ways from the Bible.

The first is by the example of Job in Job 1:1-5. This book is an account of Satan coming before God and setting forth a challenge that God's upright servant, Job, will not continue to fear and serve God with all his tangible and family blessings removed from him. God grants the

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<sup>30</sup>For a much shorter biblical example read 2 Timothy 1:5 and 3:15 which imply the influential examples of Timothy's mother and grandmother.

This text is also helpful because it provides an example of women discipling children when the father is not present or is not a believer. Though the primary responsibility ideally falls upon dads, this does not leave single moms without hope.

The book of Proverbs also makes this point. Consider two examples: “The righteous who walks in his integrity--blessed are his children after him!” (20:7) “In the fear of the Lord one has strong confidence, and his children will have a refuge.” (14:26)

<sup>31</sup> Barna, Transforming Children, 85.

great deceiver and enemy of all things righteous permission to remove everything from Job except his life. He lost family, property, status, and health. Most of the book contains interaction between Job and his three friends who thought that they had the answers to Job's dilemma: He must be living in sin and God is judging him. God ultimately answers them at the end of the book and the whole work is a great treatment of the problem of pain.

In 1:1-5 we read how blameless (or godly, we could say) this man, Job, was. The purpose is to establish that he was upright and did nothing to bring God's judgment, even though he experienced great pain (v.1). Verses 4-5 prove the statement of verse 1 by addressing Job's lifestyle and his great blessings. One of the ways that Job demonstrated his fidelity to God was by his great concern for his children's spiritual well-being. He was so concerned that one of them might sin during one of their frequent family get-togethers that he regularly offered burnt offerings in their behalf for atonement of sins. In other words, he interceded for them.

The implication this has for modern parents is that we should likewise be concerned about the spiritual well-being of our children and intercede for them. We should regularly pray that they would walk with the Lord. This is part of what being a godly parent involved for Job and the same is true for us.

We also find out prayer in behalf of children is indispensable from what the Bible teaches us about the human heart (the seat of thinking, affections, emotions, and will). When describing the sinfulness of the world at the time God brought the flood, Genesis 6:5 reads: "And Yahweh saw that great was the wickedness of man in the earth; and every imagination of the thoughts of his heart are only evil every day." Sin has affected how man looks at the world around him, what is important, what he imagines his priorities and purposes should be, what he chooses to do, and then ultimately how he behaves. His whole person has been twisted. The end result is that the heart is deceitful, thinking that which is unrighteous is good and that which is harmful and rebellious against God is desirable (Jeremiah 17:9: "The heart is deceitful above all things and very sick [or "desperately wicked"]; who knows it?"). There is, therefore, not one person born into the world who wants to know and serve God (Romans 3:10-12) or who is even capable of

seeing the significance of God's teachings (1 Cor.2:14). This heart condition is true of all people from the time they are born (Psalm 51:5; Romans 3: 23; 5:12-19). All are spiritually dead (Ephesians 2:1ff.), which means that they can do nothing associated with being spiritually alive, including faith and repentance.

This also includes our children. Left to themselves our children would never choose God because their natural, sinful hearts leave their wills in bondage and incapable of receiving Christ by faith. Salvation and saving faith are necessarily gracious gifts from God which he sovereignly works in a person's heart (Ephesians 2:8-9). Because this great wall of sin and darkness can only be broken down by God, prayer to God in behalf of our children becomes one of the most important steps we can take. God has chosen to respond to prayer (Genesis 18:23ff.; 24:12-27; Ex.33:17; Ps. 50:15), so parents must bring their sons and daughters before him.

It is not only salvation which God must work in us, but spiritual maturity must also come from God (Philippians 1:6; 2:13). Even though, as believers, we have all we need for true life and godliness (2 Peter 1:3), we are still in a battle with sin (Romans 7:21; Ephesians 6:10-18).<sup>32</sup> So, our children will not receive Christ and they will not grow in Christ unless God's Spirit is enabling them to do so (2 Thes.2:13). God is absolutely necessary from beginning to end. Our prayer life reflects how necessary we think God is, for prayer is the acknowledgment of our inadequacies and God's perfect sufficiency. And as a result, it is one of the greatest means whereby we honor his name.

What impact might prayer have upon our children? Steve Farrar illustrates in his Point Man by telling the account of George McCluskey.

When McCluskey married and started a family, he decided to invest one hour a day in prayer, because he wanted his kids to follow Christ. After a time, he expanded his prayers to include his grandchildren and greatgrandchildren. Every day between 11 A.M. and noon, he prayed for the next three generations.

As the years went by, his two daughters committed their lives to Christ and married men

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<sup>32</sup> The dominion or reign of sin has been broken and therefore Christians need not be dominated by it. However, sin still indwells and impacts the Christian.

who went into full-time ministry. The two couples produced four girls and one boy. Each of the girls married a minister, and the boy became a pastor.

The first two children born to this generation were both boys. Upon graduation from high school, the two cousins chose the same college and became roommates. During their sophomore year, one boy decided to go into the ministry. The other didn't. HE undoubtedly felt some pressure to continue in the family legacy, but he chose instead to pursue his interest in psychology.

He earned his doctorate and eventually wrote books for parents that became bestsellers. He started a radio program heard on more than a thousand stations each day. The man's name was James Dobson.<sup>33</sup>

Think of the fruit of those faithful prayers on the part of McCluskey! Not only did he commence a legacy for his own family, but he birthed a heritage (or at least input into such) for thousands of families. May we never underestimate what God can do in our children if we are willing to intercede in their behalf!

### *The Bible*

One of the most important aspects of the training of children is what we teach them and what is to be the source of our training. When we look at what Old Testament Israel and the Early Church did with their children, and what the Bible has to say, we find an emphasis cropping up over and over again. We must teach our children about God from the Bible. This has already been touched upon in such passages as Deuteronomy 6:4-9 and Ephesians 6:4 (we see this over and over again in both Testaments). Yet, one of the strongest Bible passages which teaches us about the source and content of child training is one of the most widely known and, at the same time, one of the most misunderstood. I am speaking about Proverbs 22:6 ("Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it." [NIV]) There is perhaps no other passage in all the scriptures which tells us what to teach our children more succinctly and more powerfully than this. Let's take a look at what it says to us.

The verse begins by giving a command, "train". This verb occurs only four times in the rest of the Old Testament. In each of those passages the meaning seems to be "dedicate" a house or a

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<sup>33</sup> Loyal J. Martin, "Prayer," *Leadership* (Fall 1995): 41.

building. There are no other biblical instances of its use in relation to a person. Yet, there are uses of it (and related terms) with persons in ancient extra-biblical writings. In those instances the verb refers to training or helping a person become accustomed to an action. In Genesis 14:14 we also see its noun form which almost certainly refers to training ("...he armed his trained servants..."). As the rest of Proverbs 22:6 is explained we will be able to see that this initial command is best translated as "give training to" with the meaning of helping the child start certain acts and thoughts, and become accustomed to them.

The word for "child" is *na`ar*. This term can refer to an "infant," "boy," "youth," "servant," and possibly even "young squire". When we examine the section of Proverbs in which 22:6 is located (10-24)<sup>34</sup> we find out that the meaning intended here is most likely that of a young boy in the early years (see 20:11; 22:15; 23:13). This is also supported by the command to train. In Hebrew culture the normal practice was to begin and engage in training during these early years (beginning in the "pre-school years" and continuing into the "elementary school years").

Jewish law prescribed that a boy begin the study of the Scriptures at five years of age and the study of legal traditions at ten (Pirke Aboth 5:21). [The first c. historian] Josephus relates that both the Scriptures and the traditions were taught in every city to Jewish boys "from our first consciousness" (Contra Apion II. 18), and Philo speaks of such instruction "from earliest youth" (Leg. Ad Gaium 210).

At thirteen a Jewish boy became a *bar mitzvah* ("son of the commandment"), at which time he took upon himself the full obligation of the Law and the more promising lads were directed into rabbinic schools under abler teachers.<sup>35</sup>

What is more, we find an example of a very young man not only coming to know God, but also to mature in him at an early age. Of the young boy Samuel we read: "Indeed the Lord visited Hannah, and she conceived and bore three sons and two daughters. And the young man Samuel grew in the presence of the Lord." And then, "Now the young man Samuel continued to grow both in stature and in favor with the Lord and also with man. (1 Sam. 2:21, 26, emphasis

<sup>34</sup>Proverbs 10:1 and 25:1 lets us know Proverbs 10:1-24:34 is a self-contained collection. Therefore, terms may be used differently than in ch's. 1-9 and 25ff.

<sup>35</sup> Richard N. Longenecker, The Ministry And Message Of Paul (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1971), 21-22, passim.

added) We should not only begin training early, but we should also realize that God can and often does a great work in the hearts of young children.

We should also understand that though God obviously can and does save people at any age, it is a well-known fact that most people who come to Christ do so as a young person. Most come by age 13 and the numbers of those who trust Christ decrease the older people become.<sup>36</sup>

The next part of the verse ("in the way he should go") is the most misunderstood statement in this proverb. It has been very popular within the last 20-30 years to suggest that this clause teaches parents that they need to consider the "natural bent" or "the way for which he was designed [to function] by God."<sup>37</sup> We have been told that the proverb is therefore teaching us that we must consider the personality, talents, and gifts of each child in raising them. In other words, all children are not raised the same. This is not at all what the proverb is saying. Let me explain.

The reason different interpretations have arisen is because of the strange wording found in the original text. It says, "Give training to a child *upon the mouth of his way....*" Your response to this phrase is probably the same as my response the first time I read it in Hebrew: "Huh?" Yet, when we see how the parts of these phrases are used elsewhere in the Old Testament, the powerful inspired intended meaning of Solomon emerges.

The phrase "upon the mouth" is not found anywhere else in Proverbs (which would be the most helpful place to start). So, we must go to the broader context of the rest of the Old Testament. In Genesis 43:7 Jacob's sons recount to him their conversation with newly-found brother, Joseph. The brothers tell their father that Joseph asked them a question and they replied,

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<sup>36</sup> George Barna, [Transforming Children Into Spiritual Champions](#) (Ventura, Ca.: Regal, 2003), 41, 45-46. Barna adds on page 47: "Research regarding all facets of moral and spiritual development—whether related to worldview, beliefs—show that such development starts as early as age two. The process then progresses rather quickly. Social scientists have known for years that the moral foundations of children are generally determined by the time the individual reaches age nine. Our research confirms a parallel outcome in the spiritual dimension: By age nine, most children have their spiritual moorings in place."

<sup>37</sup> Beverly LaHaye, [How To Develop Your Child's Temperament](#) (Eugene, Oregon: Harvest House, 1977), 121.

"We made known to him upon the mouth" (or according to what he commanded us to tell him). They responded to the command to answer from this high official (Joseph). In Genesis 45:21 it is written that Joseph gave his brothers goods "upon the mouth (according to the command of) of Pharaoh." Then, in Exodus 17:1 we read that the Israelites journeyed as the Lord commanded (literally, "upon the mouth of Yahweh"). So, what we find is this phrase is used in the Old Testament as an idiomatic way of referring to someone's message or command (which comes from their mouth). The wise teacher is telling parents, "Give training unto a child according to the word/command" of someone. But we still need to fill in some holes and understand the rest of the proverb.

We next must understand the words "his way". Whenever "their way" (Proverbs 10:9; 14:2, 14; 19:16) or "his way" (Proverbs 11:5; 14:8; 16:9, 17; 19:3; 20:24; 21:29) are used in chapters 10-24 the meaning is "his (or their) conduct" or it could be stated "his (or their) manner of life". Whether each instance speaks of good or bad conduct must be decided by the context of each passage. There is not any implication of "natural bent" in these uses, nor is it inherent in the term itself. So, Solomon writes here: "Give training to a child according to the command/word [of someone--we are not sure who yet] in reference to his manner of life." Parents are instructed to teach children how to conduct themselves in all aspects of life according to someone's commands. But the commands of whom?

Solomon does not tell us specifically, yet all of us have an idea by now . The training is to be according to the commands of the Lord. This is what makes the most sense in the text and in light of how "upon the mouth" is used in the Bible. The words "of the Lord (Yahweh) in reference to" are not found in the text, but they are to be understood as implied. This deliberate omission of words for the sake of brevity was used here because proverbs are often kept as short memorable statements of general truths that are not always technically exact, nor do they always explain all related information. As we read them we are drawn into their meaning to ponder the implications much as a cow chews its cud. The more we think about them, the more their significance is digested within our minds and brings nourishment.

So, we are ready to give the entire first half of the proverb in an amplified translation:

"Give training to a child according to the word of the Lord in reference to his manner of life."

This command is also a condition. If we do it, then we will experience a specific result, found in the second half of the proverb.

The result is, "and when he grows old, he will not turn from it." It has been popular of late to understand "when he grows old" as referring to "when he grows hair on his chin" or in the teen to late teen years. There is nothing inherent in the verb to carry this meaning unless the context warrants this. Solomon's intent does not seem that specific, in light of the general nature of the proverbs. Proverbs usually are not promises or guarantees and they usually state what generally happens. Such is the case here. Generally speaking, when we train our children according to the word of the Lord in reference to their conduct, as they grow older, they will not turn from that way of conduct. They will believe in the Lord and remain obedient to him. Are there exceptions to this? Yes. Yet, usually the grown children will continue on in this right path. Their homes, their families, will also be blessed as they apply that biblical wisdom to their daily experience: "“By wisdom a house is built, and by understanding it is established; by knowledge the rooms are filled with all precious and pleasant riches.” (Prov. 24:3-4)

Not only are parents challenged to train children according to God's Word in Proverbs 22:6, the rest of the scriptures also make it clear that all believers must know God's word and allow it to shape their thinking and conduct (this would include our children): Old Testament Israel was destroyed because they ignored God's word (Hosea 4:6); it is what brings God's blessing (Joshua 1:8; Psalm 1); the word helps us refrain from sin (Psalm 119:9,11); in it is found the power of God unto salvation (Romans 1:16); careful, accurate handling of it brings God's approval (2 Timothy 2:15); and the Word of God is the blueprint for all the Christian life--what we believe, knowing when we get off the path, gaining needed correction, and being equipped for every good work (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

My last year in college I worked as an assistant pastor in a small country church. One Sunday morning our pastor made the statement in his sermon, "Every home ought to be a

training center for theology and every parent the resident theologian." You may not be comfortable with the title, "Theologian," but the concept is exactly what the scriptures teach. Our homes are to be places where our children learn, by word of mouth, and by example "the whole will of God" (Acts 20:27, NIV). So, moms and dads, roll up your sleeves, study your Bibles, and begin teaching your children from them!

Before leaving the subject of teaching the Bible we should say something about what parts of the Bible we should teach our children. The entire Bible should be taught to our children. Yet, there are some portions which are especially important. Let me briefly mention these. The Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:1-17) are important because they give a summary of the standards of God. The Psalms are beneficial for teaching children about God, why they can trust in him, and how to worship. The book of Proverbs is also especially helpful because it was originally written for imparting wisdom to children and youth. It affords wonderful guidance and truths for any son or daughter. The Gospels are important because children should learn about the life of our Lord and Savior. Passages which teach about salvation and sanctification in the New Testament are extremely vital for children. In this light, Romans gives a great treasure of teaching. Children need to learn to obey parents, Ephesians 6:1-3. For more suggestions, see the Memorization section in Part 2.

### Living For Our Children

You love your children or you would not have stayed with this book as long as you have. Most likely, you would say, "I will do whatever I have to so that my children could experience life's best." Yet, because we might feel inadequate as teachers or disciplers, we have never "entered the game." I want to leave this last picture with you as we close out the chapter just in case you are still struggling with whether or not you will step out by faith to take leadership in the training of your sons and daughters.

The salmon nearly leaped onto their hooks! That was a far cry from the day before when the four anglers couldn't even seem to catch an old boot.

Disappointed but not discouraged, they had climbed aboard their small seaplane and skimmed over the Alaskan mountains to a pristine, secluded bay where the fish were sure to bite.

They parked their aircraft and waded upstream, where the water teemed with ready-to-catch salmon. Later that afternoon, when they returned to their camp, they were surprised to find the seaplane high and dry. The tides fluctuated twenty-three feet in that particular bay, and the pontoons rested on a bed of gravel. Since they couldn't fly out till morning, they settled in for the night and enjoyed some of their catch for dinner, then slept in the plane.

In the morning the seaplane was adrift, so they promptly cranked the engine and started to take off. Too late, they discovered one of the pontoons had been punctured and was filled with water. The extra weight threw the plane into a circular pattern. Within moments from liftoff the seaplane careened into the sea and capsized.

Dr. Phil Littleford determined that everyone was alive, including his twelve-year old son, Mark. He suggested they pray, which the other two men quickly endorsed. No safety equipment could be found on board—no life vests, no flares, nothing. The plane gurgled and submerged into the blackness of the icy morning sea. Fortunately, they all had waders which they inflated. The frigid Alaskan water chilled their breath.

They all began to swim for shore, but the riptide countered every stroke. The two men alongside Phil and Mark were strong swimmers and they both made shore, one just catching the tip of land as the tides pulled them out toward sea.

Their two companions last saw Phil and Mark as a disappearing dot on the horizon, swept arm-in-arm out to sea.

The Coast Guard reported they probably lasted no more than an hour in the freezing waters—hypothermia would chill the body functions and they would go to sleep. Mark with a smaller body mass, would fall asleep first in his father's arms. Phil would have made the shoreline, too, but that would have meant abandoning his son. Their bodies were never found.<sup>38</sup>

Patrick Morely concluded this account with these words: “What father wouldn't be willing to die for his son? If we are willing to go so far as die for our children, why is it that we often don't seem willing to live for them?”

Parents, this is my admonition to each of us. Let us decide with no less heroism and courage as that father in the frigid Alaskan waters that we will live for the God-glorifying spiritual maturity of our sons and daughters—no matter what it costs us!

If that is your commitment, then read on and find out more about what this will require.

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<sup>38</sup> Patrick Morely, The Man In The Mirror (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 1997, repr.), 116-17.



7. In your own words explain what the main objective of discipling our children is and also comment on how you can improve on this in your own parenting.
  
8. Are you enjoying God? How can you teach your children to enjoy God?
  
9. Explain why it is necessary that we teach the gospel to our children so that they can receive Jesus Christ as Savior?
  
10. Explain some key principles to keep in mind as we seek to teach the gospel to our children that they might trust Him.
  
11. What other step(s) must you take as a parent given what you have learned in this chapter?