

Raising Children to Walk with God

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Raising Children to Walk with God

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***“...But as for me and my house,
we will serve the LORD.”
Joshua 24:15***

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Introduction

As a parent who is a follower of Jesus, you have a great responsibility. God has placed in your hands the task of not only caring for the physical needs of your children, but also nurturing them spiritually. With every child, parents have a limited time to train them to walk in God's ways, then they are grown and on their own. If we think about this, it will cause us to tremble at the seriousness of our calling as parents.

The good news is that God does not expect parents to raise their children with only their own wisdom and resources. He has given us His Holy Spirit as our "Counselor." He has also given us His Word, which is filled with all the wisdom and guidance we will need.

This book of 40 meditations has been written to help you discover the valuable insights from God's Word that relate specifically to parenting. A great way to use this book is for husband and wife to go through it together. It can also be used individually, as an aid to your personal time alone with God. Or it could be used as a guide for discussion and prayer by a small group of parents meeting together for mutual encouragement.

Besides the studies, this book contains several lists and resources in the Appendices at the back that you will find useful as your children grow up. It is recommended that you keep this book where you can refer to it frequently.

As you grow in the knowledge of God's Word, may He fill you with courage and hope, and may your children bring joy to God's heart and yours!

I. Children: A Precious Gift from God's Hand

The birth of every child is a miracle! How amazing it is that God gives to mankind the privilege of working together with Him to create a totally new human being. Think about it: God could have created all people in the same way He made Adam and Eve, without human participation—but He didn't. Instead, He gave to mankind the blessing of bringing forth that which is most precious in all the world, a tiny human being, totally dependent on its parents for life and nurture.

Every child will have an effect on the world, either for God's kingdom and for good, or for the kingdom of darkness and for evil. Parents have a unique opportunity to influence their children to choose God's way. What an awesome task God has given to parents! Let's begin our studies by looking at some Scriptures that will help us see the value of every human life. Let's start with the first man and woman.

1. Children Are a Blessing from the Lord–Part 1

Opening Thoughts:

Think about the time when you held your first child in your arms for the first time. How did you feel? What were some of the thoughts that were in your mind at that time?

Read the verses below from Genesis.

[26]Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness...” [27]So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.[28]And God blessed them. And God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.” (Genesis 1:26-28)

1. Look at verse 28 again. This verse begins with God blessing Adam and Eve. Included in that blessing is God’s first command to them. What is the first part of that command?
2. Look again at how this verse connects blessing with having children. Do you see your children as a blessing from God?

Read Genesis 4:1 (below).

[1]Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, saying, “I have gotten a man with the help of the LORD.”

3. What did Eve say when she gave birth to Cain?
4. Eve was the first woman to give birth to a child. Can you imagine what it must have been like to see a tiny, living person come from her own womb? What do you think she must have been thinking and feeling at this time?
5. What do you think she meant when she said she had received a child “with the help of the Lord”?
6. Do you think she saw her son as a blessing from God?

Prayer: Take some time to thank God for blessing you with each of your children. Ask God to give you His eyes to see each child as He sees them. If possible, do this together with your spouse.

2. Children Are a Blessing from the Lord–Part 2

“Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.” (James 1:17)

Opening Thoughts:

What are some good gifts that God has given to you personally?

Read the Psalm below.

[3]Behold, children are a heritage from the LORD, the fruit of the womb a reward. [4]Like arrows in the hand of a warrior are the children of one's youth. [5]Blessed is the man who fills his quiver with them! He shall not be put to shame when he speaks with his enemies in the gate. (Psalm 127:3-5)

1. What words are used in verse 3 to describe children?

Who does it say gives this heritage?

2. To what are children compared in verses 4&5? What do you think the writer is saying about children through this comparison?

Note: In the time of the Old Testament, the influential men would gather at the city gate to conduct business transactions or to settle disputes. A man's enemies might come to the gate to bring a court case against him. If that man had sons to stand with him, he would not be alone in defending himself. Therefore, he would be less likely to be “put to shame,” or defeated by his enemies.

3. Sometimes as parents we are tempted to think of our children as a burden; they cost us money and they take up large amounts of our time. How do these verses help you to see your children as a blessing from God?
4. Perhaps one or more of your children has been difficult, either because they have physical needs or because they have a very strong will. Can you accept that child also, as God's gift to you?

Prayer: Close your eyes now and picture in your mind each of your children one at a time. Ask God to help you see how each child is a gift to you from Him. Thank God that He will use each of your children to teach you more of His ways and draw you closer to Himself.

3. Every Child is Precious to God

Opening Thoughts:

Before your child or children were born, did you see a sonogram of them in the womb? When did you first realize that this was a little person growing inside its mother's body? How did you feel about this?

King David, the writer of many of the Psalms, describes the wonder that he felt when he thought about how God forms the unborn child.

Read the Psalm below.

[13]For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb. [14]I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well. [15]My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth. [16]Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them. [17]How precious to me are your thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them! [18]If I would count them, they are more than the sand. I awake, and I am still with you. (Psalm 139:13-18)

1. Look back over these verses and tell how God is involved in the formation of a child within the womb.

(**Note:** In verse 15, “in secret” and “in the depths of the earth” actually refer to “in his mother’s womb.”)

2. What words does the writer use to describe how God formed him in his mother's womb? (See especially verses 13-15.)
3. If God takes such care in the creation of every unborn child, what does this say to you about the value God places on every person?
4. What does verse 16 tell you about God's plan for every person?
5. Read Psalm 139:16-18 again. Do you believe that God has a good plan for every child—even if they have some physical or mental imperfection?

Prayer: Take a few minutes to think about each of your children one at a time. Picture God the Father forming that child with loving hands before they were born. (Don't rush through this, but allow time for God to speak to you.) Take some time to worship God for the amazing way He has designed for children to be born and the wonder of new life that He gives.

Pray *often* that God's special plan for each of your children would be fulfilled. If possible, do this together with your spouse.

4. Every Child Is Created for God's Glory

Opening Thoughts:

Do you ever stop to think about why you were created? What do you think is the main purpose for which you have been placed on this earth?

Sometimes as parents we think and act as if our children belong to us to do with as we please. Let's look at what God's Word has to say about this.

Read the verses below.

For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen. (The Apostle Paul, speaking of Jesus, Rom 11:36)

Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power; for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created. (from the Apostle John's vision of heaven, Rev. 4:11)

[6]Oh come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the LORD, our Maker! [7]For he is our God, and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand. (Psalm 95:6-7)

[1]Make a joyful noise to the LORD, all the earth! [2]Serve the LORD with gladness! Come into his presence with singing! [3]Know that the LORD, he is God! It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture. (Psalm 100:1-3)

1. Read the verses above again. Who created us and who do we belong to?
2. According to these verses, Who alone is worthy of all glory? What should our response to Him be?
3. Take a few minutes to think about this question: If your children are created by God to glorify Him, and if they belong to Him, how should this truth affect the way you raise them?

Prayer: Will you pray now, and in your heart, commit each of your children to God to use for His glory? Will you lay down any thoughts that you "own" your children and release them to Him? Take time, with your spouse, if possible, to dedicate each child individually to God.

Note: Many parents like to plan a special time with other believers to dedicate their children to God. This gives others a chance to pray over their children and commit to stand with them in raising their children to love and serve God.

5. Loving God More Than Our Children

Opening Thoughts:

Do you think it's possible for parents to put their children in the place of God in their hearts? How do you think this might happen?

Let's look at what Jesus said about this in the verses below.

[37] "Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. [38] And whoever does not take up his cross and follow me is not worthy of me." (Matt. 10:37-38)

1. Read verse 37 again. What does Jesus say about the person who loves their son or daughter more than Him?
2. In Luke 14:26, Jesus says that anyone who puts family members above Him cannot be His disciple. Why do you think this would be true?
3. Read the verses above from Matthew again. What does this passage say to you about the place that Jesus must have in our hearts?

Now read the verse below.

"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength." (Mark 12:30)

4. Jesus said that this verse is the greatest commandment. If you seek to obey this commandment each day, how will this help you not to put your children above God in your heart?

Of course as parents we love our children; God wants us to love them. It's also good to be proud of their accomplishments. But parents can easily be tempted to honor their children above God. Our children were not created to fill God's place, and it will cause damage to them emotionally and spiritually if we allow them to become gods in our lives.

5. In the previous study, we saw that our children are created for God's glory, not ours. If we keep this truth in our minds, how can this help us to keep everything in its rightful place--God first, and then our family?

Prayer: Be quiet for a few moments and allow the Holy Spirit to search your heart. Who holds first place in your affections? Bow humbly before the Lord, give your children to Him, and ask Him to help you, by His grace, to love Him more than you love anyone else.

6. Valuing Our Children Equally

Opening Thoughts:

How do you think it affects a family when one child is favored over the other children? How do you think it would feel to be the unfavored child?

In Genesis we read about Jacob (also known as Israel) and his twelve sons. The youngest two, Joseph and Benjamin, were born in his old age to his favorite wife, Rachel. In Genesis 37, we see how Jacob's unequal treatment of his children caused serious trouble in the family.

Read the verses below.

*[3]Now Israel loved Joseph more than any other of his sons, because he was the son of his old age. And he made him a robe of many colors.
[4]But when his brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers, they hated him and could not speak peacefully to him.
(Genesis 37:3-4)*

1. Read verse 3 again. What was Jacob's attitude toward Joseph?
2. What special gift did Jacob give him?
3. How were the brothers affected by Jacob's treatment of Joseph? (Verse 4)

In the rest of this chapter we read how his brothers sold him as a slave because they were jealous and hated him.

4. Every child has different gifts and abilities. Some children are more physically attractive than others, and some are more clever than others. Some children are easier to love because they are more obedient. And sometimes parents are tempted to favor one sex over the other.

Why do you think it is important for all of our children to know they are loved equally, in spite of their differences?

5. At various times in their growing up years, one child may need more attention than the others because of a physical, emotional, or spiritual need. At these times, think about how you can show the children receiving less of your time and energy that they are loved just as much.

Prayer: Think about your treatment of each of your children. Ask God to show you if there is any favoritism of one over the others in your heart. Ask Him to help you to show each one that he is dearly loved and precious in your eyes.

Sometimes children behave badly because they feel unloved and are desperately trying to get a parent's attention. Ask God to help you to discern these times and to know how to meet that child's real need—the need to know your love.

7. Jesus Blessed Children

Opening Thoughts:

Have you ever had someone speak a blessing over your life? How did that encourage you? If you have not had this happen, what blessing would you like to have spoken over you?

Let's go to the New Testament to see how Jesus blessed children. Read the verses below.

[13]And they were bringing children to him that he might touch them, and the disciples rebuked them. [14]But when Jesus saw it, he was indignant and said to them, "Let the children come to me; do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God. [15]Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it." [16]And he took them in his arms and blessed them, laying his hands on them. (Mark 10:13-16)

1. Why were people bringing children (in Luke 18 it says, "even infants") to Jesus?
2. Contrast Jesus' reaction to the children with the reaction of the disciples. (verses 13-14)
3. Read verse 16 again. What did Jesus do for the children?
4. Read this passage again. (verses 13-16) How did Jesus show by His words and actions that the little children had value in His eyes?
5. Think for a minute about your own responses to your children when they come to you for something. Do you take time for them, or are you frequently annoyed that they are bothering you?

Just as Jesus blessed the children, do you frequently pray for His blessing over your children?

Do you hug them often, to show your love through your touch?

6. Are there changes that you need to make in how you relate to your children?

Prayer: What are some blessings that you would like to pray for in your children's lives? Take time now to pray for these blessings and for God's protection over each child that He has given you. Ask God to give you eyes to see how precious they are—even when they seem to be a bother to you.

(Note: We will look more at this subject in studies 18 & 19.)

II. Example: Modeling Christ to Our Children

When God the Father wanted us to know how to live as children of His kingdom, He did not just give us a book of instructions. He sent Jesus to be our perfect example. Jesus showed us God's love, even to the point of giving His life for us.

Jesus' entire life on earth showed us what God the Father is like. In John 14:9 Jesus said, "*Whoever has seen me has seen the Father.*" Now we have the opportunity to follow Jesus' example and show our children by our lives what Jesus is like. From a very young age, our children are watching everything that we do and listening to everything that we say. As our children see Christ-like behavior and attitudes modeled before them everyday, it will help to motivate them to give their hearts to Him.

The studies in this section will look at a few of the important ways that Jesus was an example to us. This will help us to look at our own lives before we begin to look closely at how to influence our children.

As you go through the studies, ask yourself, "Am I truly modeling Christ to my children? Although I will never do this perfectly, how can I, with the help of the Holy Spirit, grow to do it better?"

8. The Example of Love and Obedience–Part 1

“...love one another as I have loved you.” (John 15:12)

Opening Thoughts:

Can you think of someone who showed love to you in a special way at some time in your life? How did their example of love affect you?

(**Note:** If you have not already done so, read the introduction to Section 2 (page 15) before you continue with this study. It will help you to understand why we are looking at Jesus’ example.)

Jesus set the perfect example for us of love and sacrifice. As you study the passage below, think about how you can, by your own life, encourage your children to also love God and others.

Read the verses below.

[9] “As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love... [12] This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. [13] Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.” (John 15:9&12-13)

But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. (Romans 5:8)

1. Read the verses above again. In John 15:9 Jesus says that He has loved His followers in the same way that His Father has loved Him. What command does He then give to His disciples? (verse 12)
2. What does He say shows the greatest love? (verse 13) How did He show that kind of love for us? (See Rom. 5:8)
3. To “lay down your life” for someone doesn’t always mean to die for them. Often it means to give up what you want in order to serve them. Do you set aside your own desires to serve your family with a willing heart?
4. As we see in these verses in John, Jesus showed his love by his actions. Think about your own actions in the past week. Do your children see love in the way you “lay down your life” for them as well as others outside the family? How do you show love in your everyday life?

Prayer: Look back at the questions in number 4 above. Take some time to pray for yourself. Ask God to show you how you can grow in love for Him and others. In the future, take time often to ask God to change you where you see that you are weak, both for your own spiritual growth, and to be a good example for your children to follow.

9. The Example of Love and Obedience—Part 2

Opening Thoughts:

How do you think obedience to God shows our love for Him?

Read the verses below from the book of John.

[27][The Jews] did not understand that he had been speaking to them about his Father. [28]So Jesus said to them, “When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am he and that I do nothing on my own authority, but speak just as the Father taught me. [29]And he who sent me is with me. He has not left me alone, for I always do the things that are pleasing to him. (John 8:27-29)

“I can do nothing on my own. As I hear, I judge, and my judgment is just, because I seek not my own will but the will of him who sent me.” (John 5:30)

So Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise.” (John 5:19)

“For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me.” (John 6:38)

1. Look again at the verses above. All of these are Jesus’ words, speaking about His relationship to the Father. What truth about this relationship do you see repeated in every passage?
2. What do these passages tell us about His submission to His Father?
3. What do they tell us about His obedience?
4. Jesus gave us an example of One who was perfect in his submission to his Father. Think about your own obedience to God and to His Word as you read the following questions:
 - Is it your desire to try to “always do what pleases him”?
 - Do you obey Him because you know how much He loves you and because you love Him, too?
 - As your children watch your life, do they see an example of someone who shows honor and love to God by seeking to do His will rather than their own?

Prayer: Read again the questions in number 4 above. As followers of Jesus, all of us will be growing throughout our whole lives in learning to submit our will to His. At this time, what is God speaking to you about that you need to submit to Him? Will you do that now? If possible, share your thoughts with your spouse and pray together for each other.

A Note about Hypocrisy

In striving to set a good example for our children, it's important that we ourselves live out—from our hearts—the things we teach. Do you tell your children to do things that you don't do yourself? Do you expect them to have good attitudes when your own attitude is bad? Do you act one way when you are with your children and another way when they are absent? All of these are signs of hypocrisy—trying to appear to be someone that we really are not. Young children are very good at sensing when we are not genuine. Jesus will be faithful to show you any hypocrisy in your life if you ask Him to. And the Holy Spirit will help you begin to change so that all that you do comes from a heart of true love and submission to God.

Jesus' Words about Hypocrisy

Jesus often rebuked the religious leaders of his day because they tried to look very religious to impress other people, but their hearts were not right with God. You can read more of what Jesus had to say about hypocrisy in the verses below from Matthew 23.

[1]Then Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples, [2]"The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses' seat, [3]so do and observe whatever they tell you, but not the works they do. For they preach, but do not practice. [4]They tie up heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on people's shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to move them with their finger. [5]They do all their deeds to be seen by others.

[23]"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness. These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others. [24]You blind guides, straining out a gnat and swallowing a camel!

[25]"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you clean the outside of the cup and the plate, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. [26]You blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and the plate, that the outside also may be clean.

[27]"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful, but within are full of dead people's bones and all uncleanness. [28]So you also outwardly appear righteous to others, but within you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.

10. The Example of Prayer and Devotion to God

Opening Thoughts:

Can you think of someone you know or someone you have read about who has a strong prayer life—that is, someone who talks to God about everything and enjoys spending time with God? What do you see in that person’s life that you would like to see in your own life?

Let’s look at Jesus’ relationship to His Father through prayer. Read the verses below.

And rising very early in the morning, while it was still dark, [Jesus] departed and went out to a desolate place, and there he prayed. (Mark 1:35)

But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed. (Luke 5:16, NIV)

[12]One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God. [13]When morning came, he called his disciples to him and chose twelve of them, whom he also designated apostles. (Luke 6:12-13)

1. Look over the verses above. Where did Jesus often pray?
2. In these verses, when did Jesus pray?
3. Why do you think that Jesus often got away by Himself to spend time with His Father?

Read the verse below.

Now Jesus was praying in a certain place, and when he finished, one of his disciples said to him, “Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples.” (Luke 11:1)

4. Read the verse above again. What did Jesus’ disciples ask Him to do?
5. Why do you think they wanted to learn to pray in the same way that Jesus did?

When we look at all that Jesus said and did, we can see that He loved His Father and spending time alone with the Father was very precious to Him. Jesus never did anything out of religious obligation.

6. Think about your own relationship to God. Do you spend time with Him because you know that you need Him and you want to know Him better?

Prayer: The most important thing you can model for your children is a genuine and growing relationship with God. Take some time now to talk with God about how you want to grow deeper in your personal walk with Him.

11. The Example of Servanthood

“...the Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve...” (Mark 10:45)

Opening Thoughts:

Think back to your own childhood. Was there ever a time when your parents or someone you knew did something for you when they probably would rather have done something for themselves?

In John 13 we read how Jesus took the role of the lowliest servant and washed the feet of his disciples.

Read John 13:12-17 (below). If you are not familiar with this story, you will want to read John 13:1-11 first.

[12]When he had washed their feet and put on his outer garments and resumed his place, he said to them, “Do you understand what I have done to you? [13]You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am. [14]If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. [15]For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you. [16]Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master; nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. [17]If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them. (John 13:12-17)

1. Look back at verse 13. Who did Jesus say that He was, in relation to those sitting with Him at the table?
2. In verses 14 and 15, how does Jesus challenge them to follow His example?
3. Picture in your mind Jesus kneeling down and washing His disciples’ feet. How did His actions show humility? How did He show that He cared more for them than for Himself? (As we said above, this was usually the job of the lowest servant!)

Note: As a parent, you will sometimes find yourself in a situation where you need to do things for your children that are neither pleasant nor convenient. A child may be ill in the middle of the night; they may need your help when you are exhausted; sometimes, helping them may require getting yourself very dirty or humbling yourself in some way.

4. Think about your attitude when your children have a need, or when you have an opportunity to serve your family. Do you complain, even inside, to yourself? Or do you give of yourself willingly, asking God to give you the grace to have a pleasant attitude?
5. Take a minute to think about the attitude of Jesus. He not only washed His followers’ feet, but He gave up His place in heaven to come to earth and die for us. Can there be any greater example of servanthood?

How does His example help you want to be a loving and caring servant to your family?

Prayer: Take some time to thank Jesus for giving Himself so willingly for you. Ask Him to give you that same heart attitude to serve your family. Trust Him to give you the grace and strength you need when serving them is difficult.

12. Imitating Christ

Opening Thoughts:

Is there someone you know or have read about who is a very godly person, whose example you would like to follow? What are some of the things that you admire in that person?

In the previous four studies we have looked at the example that Jesus set for His followers. They saw His love for His Father in His perfect obedience and in time spent alone with Him, and they saw His example of humble service in washing their feet. Over many centuries, God's kingdom has grown throughout the world as followers of Jesus have imitated the Christ-like example of those who have gone before them.

In his letters, the Apostle Paul often encouraged his disciples to follow his example. Think about what this means in training your children.

Read the verses below.

Brothers, join in imitating me, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us. (Phil. 3:17)

Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ. (1 Cor. 11:1)

[15]For though you have countless guides in Christ, you do not have many fathers. For I became your father in Christ Jesus through the gospel. [16]I urge you, then, be imitators of me. (1 Cor. 4:15-16)

1. Who was Paul imitating? (See 1 Cor. 11:1 above)
2. Paul knew that he was not a perfect person. Why do you think he is encouraging them to imitate him?

The purpose and goal of Paul's life was to die to himself and his desires daily, so that the life of Christ might be seen in him. In Galatians 2:20 he wrote, *"I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."* He continually encouraged the believers to whom he wrote, to imitate him in this.

3. Who are you imitating? Could you say to your children, "Imitate me, as I imitate Christ"?
4. Take a minute to picture in your mind what it would look like if your children imitated your attitudes and behavior. Are you pleased with that picture?

Prayer: Take a few minutes to be quiet and ask God's Spirit to search your heart. In what ways do you want to grow in order to better reflect Christ in your life? Ask God to begin now to work those changes in you. Each day, learn to say along with Paul, *"I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me."*

III. Discipline: The Key to Wisdom

*“...bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.”
(Ephesians 6:4)*

According to God’s Word, every child ever born has been affected by the sin of Adam and Eve.

“...sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned...” (Romans 5:12)

“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” (Romans 3:23)

Within every child is a tendency toward selfishness, stubbornness and pride. When they misbehave or disobey, they are only acting according to the sinful nature within them. How can parents help their children overcome these traits and live lives pleasing to God?

In this section, we will turn our attention to the instructions of the Apostle Paul in the New Testament to children and to parents. In his words to fathers, Paul speaks of “discipline” (or training) and “instruction.” Discipline opens our children’s eyes to see that they “fall short of the glory of God.” Parents must then help them see that they cannot please God in themselves, and they must instruct their children in the Gospel of Jesus, as found in the New Testament. We will look more closely at instructing our children in Section IV.

13. Helping Our Children Learn to Honor and Obey– Part 1

Opening Thoughts:

When you were a child in your parents' home, how well did you obey your parents? Was it easy for you to obey, or did you often want to rebel and disobey?

Read the verses below.

[1]Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. [2]"Honor your father and mother" (this is the first commandment with a promise), [3]"that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land." (Ephesians 6:1-3)

[20]Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord. (Colossians 3:20)

1. Read Ephesians 6:1 and Colossians 3:20 again. What instructions are given to children in these verses?
2. Ephesians 6:2-3 is a quote from the Ten Commandments. Read these verses from Ephesians again. What is the commandment in verse 2? What is the promise in verse 3?

Note: This command was first given to the nation of Israel. (See Exodus 20:12 and Deuteronomy 5:16.) If they obeyed it, they would be blessed. If they did not obey it, life would be hard, and they would be conquered by their enemies. Usually, children who honor their parents will naturally honor other authorities as they grow up. Think about the blessing that comes to families and nations today where children are taught to respect authority. How do you think this compares to families and nations where children grow up to be disrespectful and rebellious?

3. Take a few minutes to think about honor and obedience. How are they alike? How are they different?
4. Do you think it is possible for children to obey their parents while at the same time not honoring them in their heart?

There is a story of a little girl who was being disobedient. Her parents told her to sit down. At first she refused, but when they threatened to punish her, she finally sat down. But then she said to them, "I am sitting down on the outside, but on the inside, I'm still standing up!"

5. Obedience is a physical act; honor is an attitude of the heart. Why do you think that both obedience to parents and honor of parents are important in our children?

6. Think about each of your children. Do they respond to you with a good attitude? Do they obey cheerfully without talking back or arguing? These are signs of honor. Where do you see signs of honor or dishonor in your children?

Prayer: Take time now to pray for your children to learn both to honor and to obey. Pray also for yourself to know how to encourage them in this important aspect of growing up.

Something Extra to think About

Take a few minutes to think about your own relationship to your parents. When your children look at how you interact with them, do they see an example of honor? When you speak about your parents, do the words you say show honor to them? Also, do you show honor to your mother-in-law and father-in-law?

If you do not honor your parents, is it right to expect your children to honor you?

If you have disobeyed this command, take time right now to pray and ask God's forgiveness. Ask Him to help you learn to control your thoughts and words toward your parents and in-laws. Ask Him to change your heart to truly honor them. (This is important even if your parents are no longer living.)

Are children required to both honor and obey their parents throughout all of life?

“Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land that the LORD your God is giving you.” (Exodus 20:12)

“Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.” (Ephesians 6:1)

The Bible does not say at what age children are to obey or to honor their parents. However, we can gain some understanding on this by looking closely at Scripture. You will notice that the command given in Exodus 20:12 as part of the Ten Commandments speaks of honor, but not obedience. The command to obey in Ephesians is directed to children; it is not given to adults.

In Genesis 2:24, God says *“Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife.”* The man is now the head of a new family unit. He is no longer under the care of his parents, nor is he under their authority. And the woman is now under her husband’s care and authority. Both Jesus and Paul affirm this in the New Testament. (Matthew 19:5 and Ephesians 5:31) Parents who recognize this will not require the same obedience of their adult children that they did when the children were young and living in their home. Adult children will also realize that their first responsibility is to their own spouse and children.

Honor, however, is an attitude of the heart and should not end when young men or women leave their parents’ home. When this command was first given in Exodus 20:12 as one of the Ten Commandments, it was directed to everyone and not just to children. In Matthew 15:4, Jesus, speaking to grown men, quoted this command to honor parents. We are actually told to show honor to all people (Romans 12:10), but we are *commanded* to honor our parents—even if they have done many wrong things. Forgiveness from the heart can help enable us to do this. If they truly are bad people, we may not be able to trust them, but we should not speak badly about them or show disrespect either. God’s Word does not say to honor them if they do things well. It simply says we are to honor them. There is no time in our lives when this requirement ends.

14. Helping Our Children Learn to Honor and Obey— Part 2

Opening Thoughts:

If a child is obedient and honors his parents, what do you think his behavior and attitudes would look like?

Let's look again at Paul's instructions in Ephesians and Colossians.

Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. (Ephesians 6:1)

Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord. (Col. 3:20)

1. Read Ephesians 6:1 again. According to this verse, why should children obey their parents?
2. Now read Colossians 3:20 again. How does this verse say they should obey their parents?

Why does it say they should obey?

3. These verses are directed to children, but we all know that children do not naturally obey these commands. Think about the behavior of your own child or children. How does it compare to what you described in the opening question above?
4. As you train your children to be obedient and to honor you as parents, here are some questions to ask yourself:
 - Am I doing this just to make life easier for me?
 - Am I doing it to make me look good before other people?

Ephesians 6:1 says they should obey their parents because “this is right.” Colossians 3:20 says they should obey “in everything” because “this pleases the Lord.” This is our ultimate goal—that they do what is right in order to please God.

Prayer: Take time to think about each one of your children and their behavior. Where do you see that they need to grow? Take some time now to pray for them. Ask the Holy Spirit to show them any ways that they are not pleasing God and that they need a Savior to change their heart. Continue to pray for them often. If you have several children, you may want to focus on each child separately in your prayer time on different days.

If possible, discuss these things and pray about them together with your spouse.

15. Helping Our Children Learn to Honor and Obey– Part 3

Opening Thoughts:

If children are disobedient, do you think that sometimes parents could be partly responsible for their misbehavior? How could they be responsible?

Read the verse below.

Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. (Ephesians 6:4)

1. According to this verse, what is the role of parents in helping their children learn to be obedient and honor their parents?

Note: The word that is used for “fathers” in the original language (Greek) can actually have the broader meaning of “parents.” This means that mothers could also be included in this word.

2. What do you think it means to “bring [your children] up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord”?
3. How do you think parents sometimes hinder their children from learning obedience and honor?
4. Here are some questions to think about:
 - Do I think it’s cute and laugh when my children are disobedient or talk back?
 - Do I ignore it when they hit me or show other disrespectful behavior?
 - Do I expect my children to obey, or do I make excuses for them? (“He/She is only a child!”)
 - When they don’t do what I ask them to, do I just do it myself because that’s easier than making them do it?
 - If they don’t want to do what I say when I say it, do I let them do it whenever they want to?
 - If they obey only part of what I ask them to do, do I ignore the part they didn’t do?
5. Read the questions in number 4 again, slowly and thoughtfully. How might these things hinder your children from learning the kind of obedience that pleases God?

Prayer: Of the things we have looked at in this study, what could you change in how you relate to your children that would help them learn honor and obedience? Take some time now to pray, asking God to help you to change in these areas.

16. The Value of the Rod—Part 1

Opening Thoughts:

What are some methods that parents use to discipline their children?
Which ones do you think are most effective?

Unless your child is still an infant, it is probably clear to you that children do not just naturally love to obey their parents! All children have a free will of their own, and every child has been affected by the sinful nature that is passed down from one generation to the next since Adam and Eve. We have looked at the importance of helping our children grow to be obedient from the heart, but how do we do that? What can we do when they are stubborn and refuse to listen? This study and the next will look at some guidance that God's Word has for parents.

The writer of Proverbs suggests the use of a rod to help our children learn discipline. **Read the verses below.**

Whoever spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is diligent to discipline him. (Proverbs 13:24)

Discipline your son, for there is hope; do not set your heart on putting him to death. (Proverbs 19:18)

1. What connection is there between love and discipline? (Prov. 13:24)
2. Why would the lack of discipline show hatred?
3. If you don't discipline your children, how do you think this might lead to their death—either physical death or spiritual, eternal death? (Prov. 19:18)

Folly is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of discipline drives it far from him. (Proverbs 22:15)

4. What is the goal of the rod of discipline according to this verse?

[13]Do not withhold discipline from a child; if you strike him with a rod, he will not die. [14]If you strike him with the rod, you will save his soul from Sheol. (Proverbs 23:13-14)

5. How do these verses encourage you to be bold and consistent in your discipline, even if your child cries and resists?

(Note: Be sure to read page 30 that discusses the difference between loving discipline and child abuse.)

6. What is the very serious goal of your discipline according to Prov. 23:14? Look back also at Prov. 19:18 above.

Prayer: Take a few minutes to think about your own discipline of your children. Are you consistent in your discipline so that they learn to love God's way that leads to life? Pray for God's help in any area where you want to grow. If it is difficult for you to give discipline, pray that God would strengthen you in this.

What was the “rod” that Proverbs speaks about?

The Hebrew word that is used for “rod” in Proverbs means simply “a wooden stick.” There is nothing in the definition of the word to tell us how big the stick must be or what it should look like. Therefore, parents must use wisdom and careful judgment in choosing what they will use to correct their children. When we look at all that Proverbs says about using the rod, it seems that the writer is referring to something that will cause pain. Pain is often necessary in order to convince a child to obey. But it is neither loving nor kind to beat children so they are bruised or bleeding. Nor should they be hit on parts of the body that can be easily damaged. This is child abuse.

Many parents choose to use a wooden spoon or something similar to give a light slap on their child’s thigh or bottom. This will sting, but should never be used hard enough to cause long-term pain or injury. When this is done out of a desire to motivate the child to do what is right and not out of anger, it is loving discipline.

Some parents believe that it is wrong to spank a child. The goal of these studies is not to promote a certain method of discipline, but rather simply to look at what God’s Word says. Parents must decide for themselves how they will discipline their children, but they need to choose a method that is effective. Their discipline should help the child want to choose what is right and hate evil. Young children are not yet able to understand reason. Therefore, something that causes mild, physical pain is often necessary in order to accomplish this goal. The writer of Proverbs does not shy away from the idea of causing pain.

We need to remember, of course, that it is not enough just to discipline our children for wrong behavior. Along with this, we need to teach them God’s way. We must pray and work to draw their hearts toward Him. We will look more at this in Section 4.

17. The Value of the Rod—Part 2

Opening Thoughts:

Do you enjoy your children? Think about some times when they have brought joy to your heart.

Let's look at more of what Proverbs has to say about discipline.

The rod and reproof give wisdom, but a child left to himself brings shame to his mother. (Proverbs 29:15)

1. What will be the end result of using the rod and reproof? How do you think this gives wisdom?
2. How might the child “left to himself” bring shame?

Discipline your son, and he will give you rest; he will give delight to your heart. (Proverbs 29:17)

3. How is this child different from the “child left to himself” in verse 15 above?
4. Read again the verses above from Proverbs, and also the verses from study 16 (below). Name the various goals or results of discipline that are stated in these verses.

Whoever spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is diligent to discipline him. (Proverbs 13:24)

Discipline your son, for there is hope; do not set your heart on putting him to death. (Proverbs 19:18)

Folly is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of discipline drives it far from him. (Proverbs 22:15)

[13]Do not withhold discipline from a child; if you strike him with a rod, he will not die. [14]If you strike him with the rod, you will save his soul from Sheol. (Proverbs 23:13-14)

5. Are your goals the same as those found in Proverbs?

What are you doing now to accomplish those goals?

What do you need to begin to do differently?

Prayer: Take some time to pray now for God's wisdom and direction in how and when to discipline your children so they become wise and are saved from eternal death.

18. Building Our Children Up

Opening Thoughts:

Proverbs speaks of disciplining your children in love so that they become wise and are saved. How is this different from beating them to hurt them because you are angry over their behavior? How is it different from publicly shaming them?

Sometimes as parents we try to force our children to behave in certain ways. We are tempted to use anger and harsh punishment against them. But James 1:20 tells us that “...*human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires.*” Let’s look again at the letters of the Apostle Paul to see what he has to say about this.

Read the two verses below.

Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. (Ephesians 6:4)

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

1. What are some ways that parents sometimes “provoke their children to anger”? (Eph. 6:4) How might the things listed below contribute to a child’s anger?
 - Treating them unfairly
 - Being harsh with them with your words or physical abuse
 - Embarrassing them in public
2. Were there things in your own experience growing up that stirred up anger in you?
3. How do parents sometimes “embitter” and “discourage” their children? (Col. 3:21) Below are some ways that parents often do this.
 - Putting their children down or yelling at them if they haven’t done things perfectly
 - Nagging at them constantly about things they do or don’t do
 - Frequently being impatient with them
 - Cursing them
 - Frequently speaking negatively about them either to them directly, or to others
 - Making your home feel like an institution run by rules rather than a home run by love
 - Can you think of other examples based on your own experience?

4. Think about your own home. Are you guilty of provoking your children to anger?

Do you sometimes say or do things that discourage them?

Prayer: Take some time now to invite the Holy Spirit to search your heart. Ask God's forgiveness for any ways that you have provoked your children to anger or discouraged them. You may need to also go to your child and ask his forgiveness. Ask God to teach you ways to encourage and build up your children, rather than tearing them down.

Note: If you have ever spoken curses over your children, it is important to realize that there is power for evil in those words. But that power can be broken if you turn to Jesus and ask his forgiveness. Pray in the strong name of Jesus, asking Him to come and break the power of the evil that you have spoken. If you spoke these things in front of your child and he is old enough to understand, you need to ask his forgiveness also. Then speak blessing over that child.

19. Using Our Words to Build Up Our Children

“Death and life are in the power of the tongue...” Proverbs 18:21

Opening Thoughts:

Can you think of a time when you were discouraged and someone spoke an encouraging word to you? How did it make you feel?

All of us have been affected by the words of others. Positive words can give us renewed strength when we're weary or discouraged, while negative words can make us feel worthless or hopeless. As parents, it's good to realize that the words that we speak and how we speak them, can have a powerful effect on our children. They can either help them become all that God has planned for them, or they can be the cause of deep insecurities and wounds.

Let's look at some verses from Proverbs that help us think about this.

There is one whose rash words are like sword thrusts, but the tongue of the wise brings healing. (Proverbs 12:18)

1. It is easy to speak harshly when we don't stop to think before we speak. To what does this verse compare these rash words?
2. How is the tongue of the wise different?

A gentle tongue is a tree of life, but perverseness in it breaks the spirit. (Prov. 15:4)

3. Compare the two ways of speaking that the verse above speaks about. What is the result of each?

Are you sometimes guilty of breaking your child's heart or spirit?

Gracious words are like a honeycomb, sweetness to the soul and health to the body. (Prov.16:24)

4. To what are gracious words compared? According to this verse, what are some benefits we can expect from these kinds of words?

It's not easy to control the tongue, but it's very important that we learn to do so. Think about the words that you speak to your children. Do they bring life, health and sweetness, or do they crush the child's tender spirit?

Prayer: Ask God to help you control your tongue so that you learn to speak to your children only words that bring life—even when you correct and discipline them.

Begin now to speak words of encouragement and blessing regularly to your children. Also, pray often for blessing in their lives. (See **Appendix A, page 69** for blessings from Scripture that you can pray.)

“She opens her mouth with wisdom, and the teaching of kindness is on her tongue.” (Prov.31:26)

20. God's Loving Discipline of His Children

Opening Thoughts:

What do you think are some ways that God disciplines us as His children?

In the Word of God, we read of how God disciplines both individuals and entire nations. Why does God discipline us? What is His goal for us in his discipline? Let's look at the Scripture below to see what we can learn from the perfect Father of us all.

Read the verses below from Hebrews.

[5]And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons? "My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him. [6] For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives." [7]It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? [8]If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. [9]Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live? [10]For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. [11]For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it. (Hebrews 12:5-11)

1. According to verse 10, why does God discipline us?
2. Read verses 6-8 again. What does His discipline show us about His love and acceptance of us?
3. What is the end result of God's discipline of us? (verse 11)
4. What do you want to see as the end result of your discipline of your children?
5. Think about your discipline of your children. Do you discipline them because you love them?

Do they know you are doing it out of love? How do they know this?

Prayer: Take some time to pray for yourself as a parent to grow to be more like Christ in your discipline of your children. Where do you see a need to change? Ask God to help you show your children how much you love and accept them, even when you must correct their behavior.

If possible, talk about this together with your spouse and pray for each other.

21. Being Parents of Grace

Opening Thoughts:

What do you think the word “grace” means? What are some ways that you have experienced God’s grace in your life?

In the past studies we have looked at how important it is for parents to discipline their children. This must not be neglected! But in all we do, let us keep in mind the attitude of our heavenly Father toward us as His children.

Grace: undeserved kindness or mercy shown by God to us, or by us to one another

Read the verses below from the beginning of John’s Gospel.

[14}And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth...[16}For from his fullness we have all received grace upon grace. [17}For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. (John 1:14,16&17)

1. Look closely at verse 14. What two things does it say Jesus was full of?
2. Take a few minutes to think about what it means for you, personally, that Jesus came to earth bringing grace and truth. Why do you need both in your life every day?
3. Read verse 16 again. In what ways have you seen “grace upon grace” in your life?
4. How has the grace that God has shown to you helped you grow to be more like Him?
5. Now look at verse 17. What was given through Moses? What came through Jesus Christ?

Of course, every home must have the law (rules that must be obeyed) if there is to be peace and order. But every child must also know that there is forgiveness, love, and acceptance when they fail. Our children, like us, are fallen human beings who are greatly in need of mercy and grace. Just as we want our heavenly Father to show mercy toward us, we also need to have hearts of mercy toward our children.

6. Think about your own family. Is it characterized more by law or by grace?

How do you think the grace that you show your children might help them desire to be more like Jesus?

Prayer: Take a minute to wait silently and allow God’s Spirit to speak to your heart. How do you need to grow in showing grace toward your children? Take time to thank God for the grace He has shown to you.

22. How Can We Show Grace to Our Children?

“So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them,” (Matt. 7:12)

Opening Thoughts:

Can you think of a time when someone showed mercy to you when you did not deserve it?

The idea of “grace” includes many things—kindness, forgiveness, patience, gentleness, etc. The verses below from the letters of the Apostle Paul can help us see practical ways that we can be parents who are full of grace.

Read the three passages below.

Love is patient and kind... Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. (1 Corinthians. 13:4&7)

Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you. (Ephesians. 4:32)

[12]Put on then, as God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, [13]bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. [14]And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. (Colossians 3:12-14)

1. Read the passages above again. Describe how we are to treat others, according to these verses.
2. Which characteristics are repeated in these passages?
3. Think about your relationship with your children.
 - Are you patient with them or are you quick to accuse and judge?
 - Are you quick to forgive?
 - Do you have compassion for them in their weakness, just as God has had compassion on you in your weakness?

Prayer: Take a few minutes to think about the mercy and kindness that God has shown to you, especially through the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. Do you deserve His mercy and kindness? In prayer, ask God’s forgiveness where you see that you have not shown the characteristics described above toward your children. Ask God to help you grow to be a parent characterized by grace.

IV. Instruction: The Key to the Knowledge of God

“Bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.” (Ephesians 6:4,)

We have looked at what God’s Word teaches about discipline, or training of our children; now we will look at what it means to instruct, or teach them. Discipline and instruction must always go hand in hand. It is not enough to just correct our children’s wrong behavior; we must also teach them the truth that is found in God’s Word. If we help them to see the goodness of God and the blessing that comes from living for Him from an early age, they will often be ready to commit their lives to Him as they grow older.

Besides the studies in this section, there is much more for our children to learn about God. As your children grow in wisdom and understanding, you will want to study with them through the Old and New Testaments. You will also want to teach and inspire them to study God’s Word for themselves. If they love God’s Word, they will continue to grow in Him throughout their lives.

Appendix B, page 70 has suggestions of important topics not included in this book, for you to study with your children.

23. Why Is It Important to Teach Our Children God's Word?

Opening Thoughts:

Why do you think it is easy for us to forget about God when life is going well and we have abundance?

After the nation of Israel had been slaves in Egypt for hundreds of years, God sent Moses to bring them to the land He had promised them. The book of Deuteronomy is Moses' final message of warnings and encouragements to Israel as they are about to take possession of the Promised Land. Moses knew how easy it would be for the people to go away from God in their hearts after they got comfortable in the new land. Therefore, he stressed the importance of passing on to the next generation all that they had experienced and learned about God.

Read the verses below from Deuteronomy.

[9]Only take care, and keep your soul diligently, lest you forget the things that your eyes have seen, and lest they depart from your heart all the days of your life. Make them known to your children and your children's children— [10]how on the day that you stood before the LORD your God at Horeb, the LORD said to me, "Gather the people to me, that I may let them hear my words, so that they may learn to fear me all the days that they live on the earth, and that they may teach their children so." (Deuteronomy. 4:9-10)

1. Read verse 9 again. What strong words does Moses use to encourage the people not to forget God's work among them? What is he concerned might happen if they are not careful?
2. The generation that Moses is speaking to has seen many mighty works of the Lord. What are they to do to make sure that this important part of their history is kept for following generations? (verse 9)
3. Read verse 10 again. When God spoke to his people at Mount Horeb, what was his purpose for them and for their children?

(**Note:** You can read more about what happened at Mount Horeb in Exodus 19.)

4. What do you think it means to "fear God"? (For more understanding on the fear of the Lord, see page 41)
5. Why do you think it would be important for them and their children to learn to fear God all the days of their lives?

6. Do you fear God? What are you doing to “keep your soul diligently” (v. 9) so that you never forget what God has done for you and how Jesus has saved you from your sin?

What are you doing to pass these important lessons on to your children?

Prayer: Pray for yourself and your family to learn to fear God. As you do this, you will hate evil, you will be wise, and you will have strong confidence and a fountain of life as described on the following page.

What is the “fear of the Lord”?

To “fear God” is to understand that He is the Creator of the universe and all power and authority belong to Him. He will one day be our judge, and we cannot bribe Him or deceive Him in any way. Everything is open before Him. Psalm 96:9 tells us to “tremble before Him” as we worship Him. Here are some verses to help us understand the fear of the Lord:

- *Let all the earth fear the LORD; let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him! (Psalm 33:8)*
- *The fear of the LORD is hatred of evil. (Proverbs 8:13)*
- *The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom (Prov.9:10)*
- *In the fear of the LORD one has strong confidence, (Prov.14:26)*
- *The fear of the LORD is a fountain of life, that one may turn away from the snares of death. (Prov. 14:27)*
- *The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; (Psalm 19:9)*

The idea of the fear of the Lord is not just found in the Old Testament. Believers in New Testament times also saw the importance of fearing God.

- *So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and was being built up. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it multiplied. (Acts 9:31)*
- *For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil. Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade others. (2 Cor. 5:10-11)*
- *And he said with a loud voice, “Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come, (An angel, speaking at the end of time— Rev. 14:7)*
- *And from the throne came a voice saying, “Praise our God, all you his servants, you who fear him, small and great.” (Rev. 19:5)*

Even though we recognize God’s greatness and holiness and stand in awe of Him, to fear Him does not mean we run and hide from Him. Although we cannot come near to God on our own because of our sin, we have a mediator, Jesus, our Savior, who makes us clean (Hebrews 4:16). Therefore, we can come near with confidence to our Father (Matthew 6:9), who loves us (John 3:16).

24. Keeping God and His Word Central in Your Home

Opening Thoughts:

What are some things that you and your family talk about the most frequently throughout the day? How much do you talk about God, about his goodness and greatness and the joy we can find in following Him?

Read the verses below from Deuteronomy.

[4]Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. [5]You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. [6]And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. [7]You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. [8]You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. [9]You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.(Deuteronomy 6:4-9)

1. Read verse 5 again. Describe the love that they are to have for God. (Jesus quotes this verse in Matthew, Mark, and Luke as the most important commandment.)
2. What are they to do with these instructions that Moses is giving them? (verses 6-9)
Name all of the various times they are to speak about God's words. (verse 7)
3. After reading these verses, what do you think is the parent's responsibility in passing God's Word on to the next generation? (See especially verse 7.)
4. Do you think Moses' instructions to Israel in these verses are still valid for us today? Take a few minutes to think how you could apply these verses in your family.
5. If you continually keep God's Word central in your family as suggested in these verses, how will that help your family to love God with all their hearts?

Prayer: Do you have the kind of love for God that is described in verse 5 above? How do you want to grow in this love? Pray about this now. Pray also that God would show you how to keep Him and his Word as the central focus of your home.

See **Appendix C, page 71** for suggestions on how to keep Christ central in your home.

25. Teaching Our Children to Listen

Opening Thoughts:

When was the first time that you knew God was speaking to you? How did He speak to you—was it through His Word; through another person; through a vision or dream; or some other way? How did you respond?

The book of Proverbs, has much to say to parents about training their children. Many passages are speaking to sons, but certainly these exhortations are true for all our children.

Read the passages below.

[8]Listen, my son, to your father's instruction and do not forsake your mother's teaching. [9]They are a garland to grace your head and a chain to adorn your neck. (Proverbs 1:8-9, NIV)

[1]Hear, O sons, a father's instruction, and be attentive, that you may gain insight, [2]for I give you good precepts; do not forsake my teaching. (Prov. 4:1-2)

1. Look at Prov. 1:8 again. Who is involved in training the child according to this verse?
2. Think back to what we have read on past days from Ephesians 6:4: “Fathers [parents]... bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.” What does this verse, along with Proverbs 1:8 tell you about who has been given the main responsibility for training children to know God?
3. What exhortation is given to sons in Prov. 1:8 and 4:1?
4. Why do you think it might be important to begin our instruction of our children with teaching them to “listen”? (The word “listen” means both to hear with the ears, and also to obey.)

How effective will any other instruction be if our children have not learned to listen?

5. Besides listening, what is he told to do in Prov. 1:8 and 4:2?
What do you think it means to “not forsake” what you have been taught? Why is this an important part of paying close attention?
6. When you give instruction to your children, do you take time to make sure they are listening closely to what you say?

Do you make sure they also obey what you are telling them?

Prayer: Think about your children’s response to you. How well do they listen to you? What can you do to help them learn to be better listeners? Ask God to help you to be patient and kind, yet firm and consistent in training your children to listen and obey.

26. Teaching Our Children to Look to God (Trust)

Opening Thoughts:

When you are in a difficult situation, or when you have an important decision to make, what is the first thing you usually do?

Read the verses below from Proverbs.

[5]Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; [6]in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight. [7]Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD and shun evil. [8]This will bring health to your body and nourishment to your bones. (Proverbs 3:5-8, NIV)

1. Read again verses 5-6. These are very good verses to memorize and to have your children memorize. How is this exhortation a good foundation for our children throughout all of their lives?
2. Take a few minutes to think about this: What does it mean to “trust in the Lord *with all your heart*”?
3. According to verse 6, what must you do if you want God to “make your paths straight”?
4. Do you apply verses 5&6 in all of your own life? How important do you think your example is in teaching your children to trust God?
5. How is being “wise in your own eyes” different from trusting in the Lord and submitting to Him?
6. How can you teach your children to trust in the Lord and to submit to Him in the ups and downs of everyday life?
7. Think about the following questions:
 - Do you encourage your children to pray and put their hope and trust in God in every decision or difficulty that they face?
 - Are you training them to submit their whole lives to Him, asking Him to show them His will for their lives?
 - Are you helping them to see how very much He loves them and wants the best for their lives?

Prayer: Take some time now to pray for your children to learn to trust God. Pray that they would see that He is completely trustworthy and always faithful to his Word.

“Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” (Phil. 4:6-7)

27. Teaching Our Children to See God’s Greatness and Worship Him

Opening Thoughts:

How does looking at God’s creation—the heavens above and nature around you—help you to worship God?

Many of the Psalms speak of God’s greatness as seen in creation and in the miracles and wondrous things He does. Teaching these Psalms to our children can help them to have a greater appreciation for how awesome God is.

Read the Psalm below.

[3]Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised, and his greatness is unsearchable. [4]One generation shall commend your works to another, and shall declare your mighty acts. [5]On the glorious splendor of your majesty, and on your wondrous works, I will meditate. [6]They shall speak of the might of your awesome deeds, and I will declare your greatness. [7]They shall pour forth the fame of your abundant goodness and shall sing aloud of your righteousness. (Psalm 145:3-7)

1. What are some things that the Psalm writer encourages his readers to pass on to the next generation?
2. What does he say about the greatness of the Lord in verse 3?

Think about some of the ways that God displays His glory. He shows it to everyone through creation. Psalm 19:1 says, “*The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork.*”

3. Do you take time with your children to marvel at God’s greatness as seen in the nighttime sky? If you haven’t done this before, when and how could you do this? (You could plan a walk in the park or in the country on a clear night, or plan a camping trip.)
4. What are some ways that nature shows the awesome power of God?
Think about how plants, and even giant trees, grow from tiny seeds. Think about mountains, rivers and seas. Can you think of other examples?
5. Read verse 7 again. What do God’s people proclaim and sing about?
6. What are some ways that God has shown his goodness and faithfulness to your family? (Don’t forget about the greatest thing He has done for us all in giving his Son to die for our sins.)

7. Do you take time together as a family to celebrate and sing together of the greatness and goodness of God?

Prayer: Take some time now to praise God for all that He has done. Do this often together with your family.

When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him? (Ps. 8:3-4)

28. Teaching Our Children to Know Christ

Opening Thoughts:

How did you first learn about Jesus? What was it that drew you to want to give your heart to Him?

As parents our most important goal in training and instructing our children is to lead them to know Jesus as their Lord and Savior. Timothy is a good example from the New Testament of a young man who was brought up by his mother and grandmother to know and love God. While he was still young, Timothy became a disciple of the Apostle Paul. He is mentioned several times in Acts, chapters 16-20, as well as in many of Paul's letters. We learn the most about him from the two letters that Paul wrote to him specifically—1 & 2 Timothy.

Read the two passages below from 2 Timothy.

[5]I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, dwells in you as well. (2 Tim. 1:5)

[14]But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it [15]and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. [16]All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, [17]that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work. (2 Tim. 3:14-17)

1. From whom did Timothy learn the truths of Scripture? (2 Tim. 1:5)
2. Read 2 Tim. 3:14-15 again. When was he taught?
3. What was he taught? (3:15) How did he come to have a saving faith in Jesus?
4. What was the result of the teaching of his mother and grandmother? (1:5 and 3:14&17)

As we read about Timothy in the book of Acts and throughout the letters of Paul, it is clear that, even as a youth, he was mature and firm in his faith. We frequently see Paul giving him leadership responsibilities among the believers. The things he was taught from childhood took deep root and bore good fruit in his life.

5. As your children grow older, are you seeing signs that they understand the way of salvation and want to live for Christ? What specific signs do you see?

We cannot force our children to follow Jesus; this must be their own decision. Nevertheless, if you are doing your best to teach them the Word of God which is “able to make [them] wise for salvation,” God’s Spirit will work in their hearts to draw them to Him.

Prayer: Pray for each of your children by name. Ask God to show you what each one needs to help them come to saving faith in Jesus. Pray that they would see the sinfulness of their hearts and their need for a Savior. If they have already committed their lives to Jesus, pray that they would be firmly established in Him.

See **Appendix D, Page 72** for a brief overview, including Scriptures, of what your child needs to know to be saved.

29. Teaching Our Children to Walk By the Spirit

Opening Thoughts:

Do you sometimes find that one part of you wants to think and do what is right and good, but another part of you wants to do something different? What do you do in these situations?

After our children have trusted in Christ as their Savior, they will face many temptations from the sin that surrounds them in the world and the wrong desires of their own flesh. How can we help them win these battles? Let's look at Paul's instructions to the believers in Galatia.

Read the verses below.

[16]But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. [17]For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do. [18]But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law... [22]But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, [23]gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. [24]And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. (Galatians 5:16-18 & 22-24)

1. Read verse 16 again. What does Paul say will be the result if you walk by the Spirit?
2. Read verse 17 again. Describe the war that is going on inside the believer.

In what ways do you see this war going on inside of you?

How do you see this war going on in the lives of your children?

3. Read verses 22-23. Name the fruit that will be produced in the life of the person who is led by the Spirit.
4. Take a few minutes to read again and think about verse 24. What does this verse say about our fleshly passions and desires?

Crucifixion is not easy, nor is it painless. In the same way, it is not easy or painless to deny the desires of the flesh and choose instead to walk by the Spirit. But as our children learn to practice this each day, they will find that the desires of the flesh grow weaker and their desire for true, spiritual life will grow stronger. For more verses on this topic see **Appendix E, p. 73**.

Prayer: Pray that both you and your children would learn to submit yourselves to God each day, asking Him to strengthen you to say “no” to fleshly desires, and “yes” to the Spirit. Pray for this with your children as soon as they are old enough to understand.

30. Inspiring Our Children to Live by Faith

Opening Thoughts:

Who are some of the people in the Bible who inspire you to believe God for things that seem impossible? (Think about Moses, Hannah, Daniel, the apostles Peter and Paul, and many others)

Living as followers of Jesus should never be boring! God desires that we live by faith in Him. This means He is always challenging us to believe Him to work in and through us to do things that are greater than we could do in our own strength or with our own resources. This brings glory to Him and joy to us! Let's think about what faith is and how we can inspire our children to live by faith.

Read the verses below from Hebrews.

[1]Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. [2]For by it the people of old received their commendation. [3]By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible. [6]And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him. (Hebrews 11:1-3 & 6)

1. Read verse 1 again. How is faith different from being confident in something that already exists or believing in something concrete that you can see or touch?
2. What example of faith is given in verse 3?
3. Read verse 6 again. According to this verse, what is impossible without faith? Why do you think this is true?
4. What must we believe if we want to come near to God? (verse 6) Why do you think it would be important to believe this?
5. Over and over throughout God's Word, we read about men and women of faith. We see that faith is the most important thing that God looks for in the hearts of His people.

Think about your own life. Do you believe that God "exists and that He rewards those who seek Him"? Does the way you live show that you trust God and that you seek Him in faith?

6. What are you doing to instill this kind of faith in your children?

Hebrews, chapter 11 tells briefly of many heroes of the faith. As your children learn these heroes' stories, they will be inspired to trust the God of Noah, Abraham, Moses, and many others. The following page will give you ideas of how you can make these and other stories an important part of your children's upbringing.

Prayer: Pray for yourself and your children to be people of faith. Pray that you would all follow the example of the people of faith in God's Word, and that your lives would bring glory to Him.

Stories

One very important way that you can pass on God's truth to your children is through reading or telling stories. All children love to hear a good story! The most important stories to pass on to them are found in the Word of God. If your children are too young to understand the language used in the Bible, you can read the story and learn it first and then retell it in simple words. Ask them simple questions to help them discover the most important lesson in the story. You can tell the same story over and over again—young children love repetition! You may also be able to find a children's Bible story book in your language that you can read with them.

As your children become old enough to understand, it's good to read God's Word together as a family. (See **Appendix F, page 74** for a list of stories that are good to read with children.) As you read, help them to see that God's Word contains truths and lessons that apply to their lives today. Talk about what you have read, asking questions and praying together about it.

A good time to read God's Word together is either in the morning before going to work or school, or in the evening before bedtime. You might try turning off electronic devices after dinner and using this time to read together. Besides Scripture, you can probably also find wonderful stories of men and women of God throughout history that you can read to older children, one chapter each night. What could be better to fill your child's mind with before sleep, than thoughts of God's love and faithfulness?

Also, think about your own life story. What has God done for you? What have you seen Him do in the lives of others you know? What answers to prayer have you seen? Have there been times that you knew God was speaking to you about something, or times that you sensed His presence in a special way? Have you told these testimonies to your children? If you are a grandparent, have you told them to your children's children?

Children especially love to hear a story about people they know. As soon as your child is old enough to understand, you can begin to tell stories of God's faithfulness in your life and in the lives of others. Tell them often as you sit around the table, as you put them to bed at night, or at any other good time throughout the day.

31. Teaching Our Children to Obey God's Word

Opening Thoughts:

What do you think makes a person wise? What are some characteristics that you would expect to see in the life of a person who is wise?

Read the parable below that Jesus told about a wise man and a foolish man.

[24] "Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. [25] And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. [26] And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. [27] And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it." (Matthew 7:24-27)

1. Look at verse 24. Who does Jesus say is like the wise man? What does the wise man do in this verse?
2. What happens to the house in verse 25?
Why did the house not fall?
3. Look again at verse 26. Who does Jesus say is like the foolish man?
4. Where does the foolish man build his house? What happens to it? (Verse 27)
5. Compare the man in verse 24 with the man in verse 26. They both heard the words of Jesus. What was different about them?

Little children love this story! They will enjoy doing hand motions to pretend they are building a house, then making the noises of a storm. Then, with their hands, they can show the house standing firm or crashing down.

6. As you have fun telling this story to them, be sure you emphasize the main purpose of the story. What do you see as the lesson in this parable?

Prayer: Think about the end result of the two houses in the story above. None of us want our children's lives to end up like the house built on the sand! Pray that from an early age, your children would see the importance of obeying God's words, not just reading and knowing them. Pray that they would have hearts that are submitted to God and desire to be obedient to Him.

32. Teaching Our Children Moral Purity—Part 1

Flee from Sexual Immorality. (1 Cor. 6:18)

Opening Thoughts:

Did anyone give you any instruction regarding sexual purity when you were growing up? What do you wish you had been taught?

Read the Scriptures below.

[18]Flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body. [19]Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, [20]for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body. (1 Corinthians. 6:18-20)

[22]So flee youthful passions and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart. (Paul to his young disciple, Timothy, 2 Tim. 2:22)

1. In these verses, what does Paul say a person should do when they are faced with sexual temptation? (1 Cor. 6:18 & 2 Tim. 2:22)
2. In the verses above from 1 Corinthians 6, Paul gives several reasons why sexual immorality is so bad. What are these reasons?
3. In 2 Tim. 2:22, what is Timothy encouraged to pursue instead of “youthful passions”?

In many societies today, parents do not talk with their children about sexual things. Yet you can be sure, as your children reach their teenage years, they will learn these things—from their peers, from the internet, from television. And it is very likely that what they hear will not be God’s perspective! Therefore, it is of utmost importance that we, as parents who are also followers of Jesus, not neglect this part of our children’s instruction in godliness.

4. If you have children who are old enough to understand these things, will you be bold and begin to open up this subject with them?

Prayer: Pray for yourself to know when is the right time to begin this conversation with each child, and pray that you will have the courage to talk openly and honestly with them. Pray for each of your children to be saved from the deception of the enemy in the area of sexual temptation. Pray that each one might know the joy of true intimacy that is found in marriage alone.

See **Appendix G, page 76** for some Scripture passages that you will find useful in discussing sexual purity with your children.

33. Teaching Our Children Moral Purity—Part 2

Keeping Our Thoughts Pure

Opening Thoughts:

How do you think your thought life (the things you often think about) affects your attitudes and behavior?

Read the verses below from Ephesians.

[3]But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints. [4]Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which are out of place, but instead let there be thanksgiving. [5]For you may be sure of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is covetous, (that is, an idolater) has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. [6] Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. (Ephesians 5:3-6)

1. Look again at verses 3-4 above. Name the things that should not be a part of the life of a follower of Jesus.

What should there be instead of these things? (verse 4)

2. Read verses 5-6 again. What will be the results for those who do the unclean things listed here?

Read the verse below from Philippians.

[8]Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. (Philippians 4:8)

3. Name the kinds of things this verse says we should think about. What does this say to you about having a pure mind, thinking pure thoughts?

The verse above is a very good one to have children memorize. They can learn to ask themselves, “Do my thoughts line up with the things listed in this verse?”

4. What do you think about throughout the day? Are your thoughts the same as those that are described in Philippians 4:8?
5. Take some time to think through the television programs that you watch and that you allow your children to watch. Is your family watching things that will make it difficult to keep a pure mind?

Do you go to websites on the internet that show improper images or that discuss things that are impure?

6. What could you do with your children instead that would help them grow in godliness? (See **Appendix C “Suggestions for Keeping Christ Central in Your Home,” page 71**)

Prayer: Read Ephesians 5:3-4 again (above). What changes do you need to make as a family to help you and your children keep clean minds and hearts? Take some time to pray about these things now. Ask God to help you follow through and do whatever He shows you to do.

34. Preparing Our Children to Endure Hardship—Part 1

Opening Thoughts:

Have you ever suffered some kind of persecution because you were a follower of Jesus? If not, have you known someone who has had this happen? How did you (or they) respond?

Throughout the New Testament we read that followers of Jesus can expect to face persecution and hardship because of their faith. We must be prepared for this ourselves and we must prepare our children.

Read the verses below from the letter of the Apostle Peter.

[12]Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you.

[13]But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed. [14]If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. ...[19]Therefore let those who suffer according to God's will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good. (1 Peter 4:12-14&19)

1. Read verse 12 again. According to this verse, how should we react when facing “fiery trials”? Why does it say they come upon us?

If we expect trials as a normal part of the life of a believer, how can this help us to be strong when we face them?

2. Read verses 13-14 again. What should we do in times of trial? Why should we do that?
3. Look at verse 14. Have you or your children ever been “insulted for the name of Christ”? What encouragement do you find in this verse?
4. What does verse 19 say to do in times of suffering? Why would it be important to keep “doing good” at these times?

Read the words of Jesus in the verses below.

[10]”Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. [11]Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. [12]Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.” (Matthew 5:10-12)

5. Suppose one of your children comes home from school and tells you about being mistreated by a teacher or other children because of their faith. How could you use the verses above to encourage them?

Prayer: Speaking about the seed of God's Word, Matthew 13:20-21 says, *"As for [seed that] was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy, yet he has no root in himself, but endures for a while, and when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately he falls away."* Pray that your children's hearts would be good soil and that God's Word would take deep root there so that they would not fall away in times of hardship. Pray that instead, they would rejoice that they share in Christ's sufferings.

35. Preparing Our Children to Endure Hardship—Part 2

Opening Thoughts:

Do you think that anything good can come from going through hard times? (These could be any kind of hard times--sickness, financial need, persecution, etc.)

Read the verses below.

[2]Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, [3]for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. [4]And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. (James 1:2-4)

1. Verse 2 speaks of “trials of various kinds.” These trials may come because of hard times in your country (economic troubles, war, natural disasters); they may be caused by the sin of others against you; or they may be directed towards you because of your faith. Regardless of how they come, what does this verse say we should do when they come to us?
2. What do you see in verses 3&4 that should encourage you to rejoice at these times?
3. As parents, we often want to shield our children from the hard things in life. This is normal. But think about the end result that suffering brings. Look again at verses 3&4. Are these not things that you desire for your children?
4. Why is steadfastness so necessary in order to stay true to God in a dark world?

Read the verses below.

[35]Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword?...[37]No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. [38]For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, [39]nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8:35&37-39)

5. How do the verses above give you strength for difficult times?

If you teach these verses to your children, think about how they might be a help to them as well.

Prayer: Pray for yourself and your children that you would be able to welcome trials because you know they have a good purpose for your lives.

Pray that God would help you draw near to Him in hard times and have confidence that He is with you.

See **Appendix H on page 78** for other Scriptures about suffering in trials and persecution.

V. Prayer: A Parent's Greatest Resource

Although each of the devotionals so far has encouraged parents to pray both for themselves and for their children, this last section presents a specific call to prayer. There is nothing more powerful that you can do to influence your children than to pray for them.

As you read through God's Word for your own personal growth, be looking for verses that contain promises or truths that you want to see lived out in the lives of your children. For example, you could pray that they would be people of faith, like Noah or Abraham. You could also pray that they would not be like Cain (Gen. 4:1-7), who did not listen when God warned him. Pray that instead, they would have soft hearts and ears open to hear God's voice.

There are many beautiful prayers of the apostles found in the letters of the New Testament. Just as the apostles prayed for the believers of their day, you can pray the same things for yourself and for your children. (See **Appendix A, page 69** for blessings you can pray from the prayers of the apostle Paul.)

36. Finding the Wisdom We Need to Raise Our Children for Christ

Opening Thoughts:

As a parent, do you ever worry that maybe you aren't doing what is best for your children? How can you know how to raise a child when you've never done it before? What are some of your biggest worries?

Every parent feels inadequate at times. This is normal! God created us to be dependent on Him in all that we do. He wants us to work in partnership with Him in His good plan for our families. Let's look at what God's Word says about how to find the wisdom we need to raise our children for Him.

Read the verses below from James.

[5]If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him. [6]But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind. [7]For that person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; [8] he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways. (James 1:5-8)

1. Read verse 5 again. What does this verse say we should do if we lack wisdom?
2. How will God respond?
3. Read verse 6 again. What does it say is important in our asking?
4. What do verses 7-8 tell us about the person who doubts? What can he expect to receive from the Lord?
5. Do you frequently go to God when you don't know what to do in a situation concerning your children?
6. Do you believe that He will generously give you the wisdom that you need?

Prayer: At this time, where do you need wisdom in raising your children? Take some time to pray about these things. Pray with confidence that God will hear you and He will answer. God loves your children even more than you do, and He wants what is best for them.

If possible, pray for these things together with your spouse.

37. Fighting Spiritual Battles for Our Children

Opening Thoughts:

Do you ever feel that you are in a battle, with your children on one side and you on the other? What can a parent do in this situation?

Most parents feel this way at some time. The truth is, we are in a battle—but the real enemy is not our children. Let's look at what the Apostle Paul has to say about this warfare and how we can fight the *real* enemy.

Read the verses below from Ephesians 6.

[10]Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might.

[11]Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. [12]For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places... [14]Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, [15]and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. [16]In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; [17]and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, [18]praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints. (Ephesians. 6:10-12 & 14-18)

1. Read verse 12 again. Who does Paul say is really coming against us?
2. How do we stand against these forces, according to verses 10-11?
3. Read verses 14-17 again. Name the various parts of our spiritual armor described in these verses.
4. Look at verse 16. Why is our faith so important?
5. Read verse 18 again. What is the role of prayer in our fight against the forces of darkness? When and how are we encouraged to pray?

As parents we must recognize that we have a very real enemy who wants to destroy our families. Even the strongest, most disciplined person cannot conquer Satan on his own—only God's power can stand against him. But Jesus has defeated him on the cross! And He gives to us the strength and wisdom that we need as we stand in faith in His powerful name.

Prayer: Ask God to open your spiritual eyes to see where the enemy may be attacking your family. Often his ways are subtle. Take up the shield of faith, and pray in Jesus' mighty name for your family to be delivered from his schemes. Believe that God will always hear and answer these prayers. If you do not see an immediate answer, don't give up—keep on praying in faith!

38. Fighting in Prayer for Our Children

Opening Thoughts:

How often do you pray for your children? Do you believe that your prayers make a difference?

Read the verses below from the letters of Paul and of Peter.

Be watchful, stand firm in the faith. (1 Corinthians. 16:13)

Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving. (Colossians 4:2)

Pray without ceasing. (1 Thessalonians. 5:17)

[8]Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. [9]Resist him, firm in your faith. (1 Peter 5:8-9)

1. Notice the following phrases from the verses we have read: “*Be watchful,*” (1 Cor. 16:13); “*continue steadfastly*” (Col 4:2); “*Be sober-minded; be watchful.*” (1 Pet. 5:8)

What do these phrases say to you about the attitude we must have as we consider the spiritual battle we are in?

2. Read again 1 Cor. 16:13 and 1 Peter 5:9. How do you think we stand firm in the faith?
3. Think about this: Is it possible to stand firm and resist the enemy without faith in Christ’s victory over him?
4. Parents are in a unique position to provide spiritual protection for their children. God has established *you* to be the authority over the children He has given you, as we have already seen in many of the passages we have studied. Do you take this responsibility seriously?
5. We all feel inadequate for this. That is because in ourselves we are inadequate! But Hebrews 4:16 says, “*Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.*” How does this verse encourage you?

Prayer: Pray for yourself that God would teach you how to stand in prayer against the enemy. Pray for your children, that they would be protected from the enemy’s schemes by the powerful name of Jesus. Pray on all occasions, steadfastly, and without ceasing. Ask God to help you make this a habit throughout your life.

39. Agreeing Together in Prayer for Our Children

Opening Thoughts:

Do you sometimes find yourself growing weary or feeling weak in your prayers? How does it strengthen you to pray together with others? If you have never done this, how do you think it might strengthen you?

Read Jesus words in the verses below.

[19] “Again I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. [20] For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them.” (Matthew 18:19-20)

1. Read the verses above again. What does Jesus say will happen if two people agree together in prayer?
2. What does verse 20 say is true wherever two or three people gather in Jesus’ name?
3. Of course, we have many examples in God’s Word of people who prayed by themselves: David’s prayers in the Psalms, and Jesus, Himself, who often got alone to pray. But what do these verses say to you about the strength of the prayers of two or more who agree together?
4. What do you think it means to “agree” when you pray together about something?
5. Think about how it could affect your family if you and your spouse took time together regularly to pray for each other and for your children.

If it is not possible to pray with a spouse, is there a believing relative or friend you could meet with to pray together? A mother could meet together with one or more other mothers or a father with other fathers to pray for each other and for their children.

Prayer: Plan a time to pray together with your spouse or with someone else. Think about how you would like to see your children grow spiritually. Agree together in prayer for these things and expect to see wonderful answers, just as it says in the verses above!

James 5:16 says, *“The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.” (NIV)* The prayer of two or three righteous persons, agreeing together, can be even more powerful!

40. Praying for a Prodigal Son or Daughter

(**Note:** If you do not personally have a prodigal child, use this study to pray for someone you know who has wandered away from God.)

Opening Thoughts:

If an older child turns away from God, what do you think a parent can do to try to bring them back?

In spite of our best efforts to raise our children to follow Jesus, sometimes they choose to go their own way. What can parents do when this happens? Often, there is little we can say to them because they do not have ears to hear. But God's Spirit is able to speak to their hearts. We have a powerful tool we can use to release God's Spirit to work in them, and that is prayer.

Read the verses below.

[3]For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh. [4]For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. [5]We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ. (2 Corinthians 10:3-5)

1. These verses speak about the spiritual battle we are in as long as we live on earth. Read verse 4 again. What kind of power does it say our weapons have?
2. It's important that we learn to recognize what is happening when we are fighting spiritual battles and that we know how to use spiritual weapons. Think for a minute about some of the fleshly weapons we often use to try to persuade our children to change: threats, manipulation, yelling or "preaching sermons" at them, arguing, physical punishment. How does a rebellious child usually respond to these things?

Do these methods have any real power to change a child's heart?

3. There is a stronghold of the enemy in the life of a child who has rejected Jesus, and perhaps even denied the existence of God. They usually have "arguments" and "lofty opinions" against God.

Read verses 4-5 again. What are God's weapons able to do?

4. As we read through all of the Scriptures, we see that we have four powerful weapons: (These verses are written on the next page.)
 - The Word of God (Ephesians 6:17 & Hebrews 4:12)
 - Prayer (Ephesians 6:18 & Luke 18:1)
 - Our faith (1 Peter 5:9 & 1 John 5:4)
 - The power of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8 & Romans 8:26-27).

How can these weapons be effective in the life of a child who has closed his heart to our words?

In the book of the Prophet Ezekiel we read the words that God spoke to the rebellious nation of Israel.

[26]And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. [27]And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules. (Ezekiel 36:26-27)

5. How do these verses encourage you as you pray for your child who has wandered from faith in Christ?

Prayer: The strongest weapon we have to fight against the enemy of our child's soul is prayer. It is stronger than any argument, any punishment, any sermon we can preach to them. Don't be discouraged, but have faith, and pray daily for your child. Ask God to do what He says in the verses above from Ezekiel. Remember, He created your child and He loves them even more than you do!

If you don't see answers immediately, don't stop praying. Many parents have seen their children turn around after years of running from God.

(See **Appendix I page 79** for Scriptures to pray and encouraging verses for parents of prodigal children.)

Scriptures from question 4, above:

Ephesians 6:17: *and take... the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God*

Hebrews 4:12: *For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.*

Ephesians 6:18 (NIV): *And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people.*

Luke 18:1: *And he told them a parable to the effect that they ought always to pray and not lose heart.*

1 Peter 5:9: *Resist [the devil], firm in your faith....*

1 John 5:4: *And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith.*

Acts 1:8: *But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you.*

Romans 8:26-27: *Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.*

*Unless the LORD builds the house,
those who build it labor in vain.*

Psalm 127:1

Appendix A: Blessings to Pray for Your Children

Below are some blessings from the letters of the Apostle Paul that you can pray for you children.

From Ephesians 3:16-19:

- That they may “be strengthened with power through his Spirit in [their] inner being”
- That “Christ may dwell in [their] hearts through faith”
- That they would be “rooted and grounded in [Christ’s] love”
- That they would “know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge”
- That they would “be filled with all the fullness of God”

From Ephesians 2:10:

- That they would fulfill all the good works that God has prepared especially for them.

From Ephesians 6:10-11

- That they would “be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might” to stand against the evil one

From Philippians 1: 9-11:

- That their “love would abound more and more with knowledge and all discernment,” so they may “approve what is excellent”
- That they would be “pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness” that comes through Christ to the glory of God

From Philippians 2:15:

- That they would “be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation.”
- That they would “shine as lights in the world”

From Philippians 3:10:

- That they would “know [Christ] and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings,” (Yes, this, too, is a blessing!)

From Colossians 1:9-11:

- That they would “be filled with the knowledge of [God’s] will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding,”
- That they would “walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him,”
- That they would “bear fruit in every good work and increase in the knowledge of God.”
- That they would be “strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy,”

As you read God’s Word, you will find many more blessings to pray into the lives of your children.

Appendix B: Other Important Topics to Teach

The passages from God's Word that we have studied in Section 4 contain many important truths to teach your children. However, as your children grow, you will want to teach them more and more of God's Word. Included here are just a few important topics not covered in these studies, along with Scripture references that pertain to the topics, that you will find helpful.

Thankfulness

- Psalm 92:1-5
- Psalm 106:1-2
- Psalm 100 and other Psalms
- 1 Thessalonians 5:18
- Colossians 2:6-7
- Philippians 4:6-7

Being Content

- Philippians 4:11-13
- 1 Timothy 6:6-10
- Hebrews 13:5

The Value of Hard Work

- Proverbs 6:6-11; 12:24; 13:4; 18:9; 19:15; 20:4; 24:30-34
- 1 Corinthians 15:58
- Colossians 3:23-24
- 2 Thessalonians 3:6-12

Caring for the Needy

- Psalm 41:1-2
- Proverbs 14:21; 19:17; 21:13
- Isaiah 58:6-11
- Matthew 6:1-4
- Matthew 25:31-46
- Luke 10:25-37

Forgiveness

- Matthew 6:9-15
- Matthew 18:21-35
- Mark 11:25
- Luke 23:33-34
- Colossians 3:12-14
- Ephesians 4:32

Loving Your Enemies

- Matthew 5:43-48
- Luke 6:27-36
- Romans 12:14-21

Generosity

- Proverbs 11:24
- Matthew 6:1-4
- Mark 12:41-44
- Luke 6:38
- Luke 12:33-34
- Acts 20:35
- 2 Corinthians 8:1-7
- 2 Corinthians 9:6-15
- 1 Timothy 6:17-19

Honesty

- Psalm 15
- Proverbs 10:9
- Proverbs 19:5
- Ephesians 4:25
- Colossians 3:9-10
- Acts 5:1-11

Prayer

- Matthew 6:5-13
- Luke 18:1-8
- Luke 18:9-14
- Philippians 4:6-7
- James 5:13-18

Humility

- Micah 6:8
- Matthew 5:3&5
- Philippians 2:1-11
- 1 Peter 5:5-7

Appendix C: Suggestions for Keeping Christ Central in Your Home

And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. (Deuteronomy 6:6-7)

These verses say that parents are to make God's Word a central part of the life of their family every day. Take some time to think about how you can do this in your family. Many people spend a lot of time talking about their problems or about trivial or material things—gossip, food, clothes, money, work, etc. In your home, how much time do you spend focusing on eternal things—the love and greatness of God; how you can serve God; what God is doing in the world; what you are learning from God's Word, etc?

Below are a few suggestions to help you make Christ the center of your home.

- ➔ Memorizing Scriptures as a family; putting them up around the home where they can be seen often
- ➔ Setting aside a time for regular family worship and Bible reading or study
- ➔ Reading Scripture and praying together in the morning before going off to work/school/etc.
- ➔ Stopping throughout the day for moments to thank God for specific answers to prayer
- ➔ Stopping throughout the day to pray about problems or needs as they arise.
- ➔ Taking a moment before meals to thank God for his provision.
- ➔ Singing songs of praise and worship together often
- ➔ Reading together books about men and women of God
- ➔ Playing audio Scriptures in your home
- ➔ Playing spiritual music in the home, car, etc.
- ➔ Looking at nature together and talking about God's greatness
- ➔ When your children come to you with problems or questions, praying with them and helping them to find answers in God's Word

Appendix D: What does your child need to know to be saved?

The most important thing we can do for our children as they are growing up in our home is to lead them to trust in Jesus as their Savior. You must help them understand God's truths, and you can begin as soon as they are able to listen to a short story and understand very simple concepts. As they learn from God's Word, His Spirit will work in their hearts and convict them of sin and of their need for a Savior. Pray often that they would have ears to hear and soft hearts to receive God's truth.

Below are some basic truths taught in God's Word that our children need to understand in order to come to saving faith in Jesus.

1. They are sinners and separated from God. The price for sin is death.
 - Genesis 1-3 (The story of creation and the fall of mankind into sin.)
 - Jeremiah 17:9
 - Romans 3:23 & 5:12
2. Jesus died to pay the price for their sin. He rose again, conquering sin and death.
 - Matt. 26-28; Mark 14-16; Luke 22-24; John 18-20. (These chapters tell the story of Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection.)
 - Romans 3:21-26
 - Romans 5:6-11
 - Isaiah 52:13-53:12 (Prophecy of Jesus' suffering and death for our sin)
3. They receive forgiveness and new life in Christ by faith alone, not by anything they can do.
 - Romans 1:16-17
 - Ephesians 2:1-10
4. If they will confess their sin and turn from it, and believe that Jesus died for their sin, they will be saved.
 - Luke 24:46-47
 - John 3:16-18
 - 1 John 1:8-10
 - Acts 2:38
 - Romans 10:8-11
5. When they are saved, they are born of God's Spirit. God sends the Holy Spirit to live in them and give them the will and the strength to obey God and grow to become more like Jesus.
 - John 1:12-13
 - Romans 8:1-11
 - Philippians 2:13
 - 2 Peter 1:3-11

Appendix E: Verses to Help Our Children Learn to Walk by the Spirit

Throughout our entire lives we are all learning to say “no” to temptations and “yes” to Jesus. Below is a list of verses you can use to help your children learn to overcome sin.

Verses specifically about temptation

- Psalm 1:1-2 & 119:11
- James 1:12-15
- James 4:1-10
- Matthew 6:13
- Romans 6-8
- 1 Corinthians 10:13
- Galatians 6:7-9
- Ephesians 6:10-18
- 1 Timothy 6:6-16
- 2 Timothy 2:22
- Hebrews 2:18 & 4:14-16
- 1 Peter 5:8-11
- 1 John 2:1-6; 3:1-10 & 5:4

Verses about denying ourselves to follow Christ

- Matthew 10:37-39 & 16:24-26
- Mark 8:34-38
- Luke 9:23-25 & 14:25-35
- Romans 12:1-2 & 13:11-14
- Galatians 2:20; 5:16-25 & 6:14
- Titus 2:11-14
- 1 John 2:15-17
- Revelation 12:11

Appendix F: Suggested Bible Stories

Below is a list of Bible Stories that children will enjoy.

Old Testament

- Genesis 1&2: Creation
- Genesis 3: The fall of mankind into sin
- Genesis 4: Cain and Abel: the first murder
- Genesis 6:5—Genesis 8:22: Noah and the flood
- Genesis 11:1-9: The Tower of Babel
- Genesis chapters 12—50: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph: These chapters have many stories children will love. Some of the stories will be more appropriate for children who are a little older.
- Exodus chapters 1—20:21 & chapters 32—34: God Delivers Israel from Egypt and gives the Ten Commandments. There are many fascinating stories for children in these chapters.
- Numbers chapters 13—14: Spies are sent into Canaan; Israel rebels against God
- Joshua chapters 1—4 & 5:10—10:15: Joshua leads Israel into Canaan; the walls of Jericho fall
- Judges chapters 6 and 7: Gideon miraculously defeats the Midianites
- The Book of Ruth: This is a beautiful story of love and faith!
- The Books of 1 & 2 Samuel: Young children will love the story of David defeating the giant, Goliath, in 1 Sam. 17. Many of the other stories in these two books have important lessons for children who are a little older.
- 1 Kings chapters 16:29—19:21 and 2 Kings chapter 2: Elijah the prophet confronts a wicked king and false gods (Miracle Stories)
- 2 Kings chapters 4—7: Elisha the prophet does many miracles
- 2 Chronicles 20:1-30: Jehoshaphat: God delivers Judah
- The Book of Esther: Esther risks her life to save her people
- Daniel chapters 1—6: Exciting stories of Daniel and his three friends in Babylon and how God delivered them.
- The Book of Jonah: Jonah Runs from God and is swallowed by a fish

New Testament

Below is a list of 25 stories that young children will enjoy from the Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John) and the Acts of the Apostles. The Gospels contain many stories from the life and miracles of Jesus. The Book of Acts has many great stories of miracles God did through the Apostles after Jesus went back into heaven. It also tells of trials and suffering that

Jesus' followers endured as they took the gospel everywhere. These stories can inspire your children to also follow Jesus and take the gospel to others.

- The Birth of Jesus: Luke chapters 1&2 and Matthew 1:18—2:23
- Jesus Is Tempted: Matthew 4:1-11 and Luke 4:1-13
- The Parable of the House on the Rock: Matthew 7:24-27; Luke 6:46-49
- Miracles of Healing: Matthew 8:1-17
- Jesus Calms a Storm: Matthew 8:23-27; Mark 4:35-41; and Luke 8:22-25
- Jesus Forgives Sins and Heals a Paralyzed Man: Matthew 9:1-8; Mark 2:1-12; Luke 5:17-26
- Jesus Raises a Dead Girl and Heals Others: Matthew 9:18-34; Mark 5:21-43; Luke 8:40-56
- The Parable of the Sower: Matthew 13:1-23; Mark 4:1-20; and Luke 8:4-15
- Jesus Feeds Five Thousand People: Matthew 14:13-21; Mark 6:30-44; and Luke 9:10-17
- Jesus Walks on Water: Matthew 14:22-33; Mark 6:45-52; John 6:16-21
- Jesus Feeds Four Thousand People: Matthew 15:32-39; Mark 8:1-10
- The Parable of the Unforgiving Servant: Matthew 18:21-35
- Jesus' Entry into Jerusalem: Matthew 21:1-11; Mark 11:1-10 Luke 19:28-40
- Jesus Heals a Blind Man: Mark 8:22-26
- Jesus Says to Let the Children Come to Him: Mark 10:13-16; Luke 18:15-17
- The Parable of the Prodigal Son: Luke 15:11-32
- Jesus Heals Ten Lepers: Luke 17:11-19
- Jesus Meets Zacchaeus: Luke 19:1-10
- Jesus Is Crucified: Matthew chapters 26&27; Mark chapters 14&15 Luke chapters 22&23 John chapters 18&19 (These passages are very long. For young children you will need to tell it more briefly or read it from a children's Bible. You could also read a little each day, leading up to Easter Sunday.)
- Jesus Rises from the Dead: Matthew 28:1-10 Mark 16:1-13; Luke 24:1-12; John 20:1-18
- A Lame Beggar Is Healed in Jesus' Name: Acts 3:1-10
- Philip and the Ethiopian Eunuch: Acts 8:26-40
- Dorcas Is Raised from the Dead: Acts 9:36-43
- Peter Is Released from Prison: Acts 12:1-19
- Paul and Silas Sing in Prison; The Jailer's Family Believes: Acts 16:16-34

Appendix G: Suggestions for Teaching Sexual Purity

In many societies today, sexual images and temptations abound. Everything seems to say that this is fun, this is good, this is life-giving and brings freedom. But God's Word tells us something different. All sexual immorality is sin, and Romans 6 says that sin leads to slavery and death.

How can we help our children see the beauty of living according to God's righteous ways? If we just teach our children a list of things they are not supposed to do, they will get the idea that following Jesus means keeping burdensome rules, meant to take away all their fun in life. Instead, we must help them see that walking in God's way brings life and health to us spiritually, emotionally, and physically. We need to help them understand not just the negatives—all the things that are bad and forbidden—but also all of the positives—the blessings that come to those who choose God's wise and loving ways.

Below are suggestions of Scriptures and Bible stories that you will find useful in teaching your children this important subject.

A good place to begin is to show them that sexual intimacy in marriage is God's design and it is good:

- Genesis 1:26-28&31 and Gen. 2:18-25
- Ephesians 5:25-33 explains how intimacy in marriage is a picture of the relationship between Christ and His bride, the Church (all believers).

There are many passages in Proverbs that speak to the importance of keeping the sexual relationship for marriage alone. While these are generally addressed to sons, the truths certainly apply to daughters as well.

- Proverbs 2
- Proverbs 5
- Proverbs 6:20-35
- Proverbs 7
- Psalm 119:9-11 speaks of how God's Word keeps us from sin.

Jesus taught that impurity comes from within:

- Matthew 5:27-30
- Mark 7:14-23

In the letters of Paul, we read his exhortations to his young disciple, Timothy, to keep himself pure. He also speaks of this in other letters:

- 1 Tim. 4:7-8
- 1 Tim. 4:12-16
- 2 Tim. 2:22
- 1 Corinthians 6:12-20

- Galatians 5:16-25
- Ephesians 5:3-6
- Colossians 3:1-10
- 1 Thessalonians 4:3-8
- Hebrews 13:4
- Philippians 4:8 speaks about the importance of purity in the mind

There are two powerful examples in the Old Testament—Joseph, a positive example, and David, a negative example:

- Genesis 39-41: (The entire story of Joseph is found in Genesis 37 and 39-50) Even though Joseph suffered for choosing what was right, in the end God honored and exalted him. This was the consequence of choosing to be faithful to God, rather than enjoying the temporary pleasures of sin.
- 2 Samuel 11:1—12:23: King David committed adultery with Bathsheba and then tried to cover his sin.
- Psalm 51: This is David's prayer of repentance after his sin of adultery.

Appendix H: Verses to Encourage Endurance in Hardship

"...fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand." (Isaiah 41:10)

Scriptures on suffering and persecution:

- Joshua 1:1-9 (Encouragement to be strong and courageous)
- Matthew 5:10-12 & 10:16-33
- John 15:18-21 & 16:1-4 & 33
- Romans 8:28 & 31-39
- 1 Corinthians 15:58
- Hebrews 11 & 12:1-3
- James 1:2-4 & 5:7-11
- 1 Peter 1:3-9; 2:19-25; 3:13-17; 4:12-19 & 5:6-11

Scriptures about God's help in times of trouble:

- Psalms 3, 5, 13, 18, 20, 23, 27, 40, 46, 54, 56, 61, 62, 68, 70, 91, 121, 125, 130, 140 & 146
- Isaiah 26:3-4; 40:27-31; 41:10; 42:5-9 & 43:1-4
- Jeremiah 29:11-14
- Matthew 11:28-30
- Hebrews 4:14-16

Appendix I: Verses for Parents of Prodigal Children

From the Old Testament prophets:

The verses below were spoken by God's prophets to the nation of Israel. We can pray these verses for our children, knowing that God desires these same things for them as well.

- Isaiah 44:3-5
- Isaiah 54:13
- Jeremiah 24:6-7
- Jeremiah 29:11-13
- Ezekiel 37:23
- Hosea 14
- Joel 2:12-13

From the teachings of Jesus:

- Matthew 18:12-14
- Luke 15:11-24

Encouragement for parents of prodigals:

- Isaiah 55:6-13
- Psalm 20
- Psalm 65:1-5
- Psalm 68:19-20
- Psalm 102:25-28
- Psalm 103
- Psalm 107:1-22
- Psalm 112:1-2
- Psalm 116:1-2
- Psalm 128
- Psalm 130
- Psalm 139:1-18 (Your lost child cannot hide from God!)
- Luke 1:37
- 1 John 5:14-15
- Romans 15:13
- Philippians 4:6-7

If you would like to translate this book...

You will note that these meditations have been written in simple English. It is our hope that speakers of many different languages will find them easy to translate into their own language. **It is not necessary to ask permission before translating them.** However, if you do translate them, we would like to know about it. Please contact us through our website. It may be possible for us to include your translation on our website (www.learnhisways.com) in the future.

We also ask that you follow a few guidelines in translating. These will help to make things clearly understood and to keep the studies as close as possible to the Scriptures and to the original design of the writer of the study.

1. Use a version of the Bible that is easy to understand.

Unlike the other books we've done, this one has all the Bible verses that go with a study actually printed in the study. For this reason, we would like to request that you use a version of the Bible in your language that is accurate (not a paraphrase), but at the same time, is easy for young believers to read and understand. Some people who use this book will not have previous knowledge of the Bible or Bible vocabulary. Please do not use a version that was translated many years ago and uses language that people today do not commonly use or understand. Try to find a modern translation.

2. Copy quotes directly from the Bible in your language.

Any place where there are quotes from Scripture, please quote that verse or phrase from the Bible in your language--don't just translate from the English quote. There are a lot of places where part of a verse or a phrase or word from a verse is used. Please use the language of your Bible in those places. If you see something that is significantly different in the Bible in your language, so that what is written in English, either in questions or commentary, doesn't fit very well, please contact us through our website (see above) so we can discuss any necessary changes.

3. Use appropriate words for “Bible,” “Christian,” “God,” and “Christ.”

Choose words that are commonly used by followers of Jesus in your language group. For the word “Bible,” use words from your language for “Holy Book,” “The Word,” “God's Word,” or “Old or New Testament.” In many Muslim countries, “Injil” is a good word to use for “New Testament.” For the word “God,” you should choose the word that is most commonly used by believers in your country. Some Muslim

countries use the word “Allah,” other countries have other words that they prefer.

For “Christ,” it's best to use the word in your language for “Messiah,” or “Anointed One.” This is the meaning of the word “Christ.” For “Christian,” use words from your language for “follower of Jesus the Messiah,” “follower of Jesus,” or “believer”-- or whatever words are most commonly used and accepted by believers in your country.

4. Use simple language.

We have tried to use simple sentences in the English to make these meditations easy to understand for anyone, including those who have no knowledge of the Bible and those who have limited education. We want them to be a help to ALL people—not just those who already know a lot. Please keep this in mind in translating. Some languages commonly use very complex and formal language in writing. We would ask that these studies be translated into language that sounds just the way people talk in normal, everyday life.

5. Have someone check the translation.

To make these studies as accurate as possible in your native language, have a native speaker who is also fluent in English do the first translation **from the English**. Then, have a native English speaker who is also fluent in your language check the translation. In the final step, the original translator and the English checker should discuss any questions in the translation and come to an agreement on the best wording.

Remember... As you go through the translation process, if there is anything in the studies that is unclear, feel free to contact us through our website. (www.learnhisways.com) God bless you as you translate. We trust the Lord will use these studies to strengthen the Body of Christ in many different language groups around the world.