

Place Lurgan Baptist 7:4:2009

## **FOCUS ON THE FAMILY**

Reading: Deuteronomy 6:1-25

## **PARENTS AND CHILDREN**

As a parent I can sympathize with Charles Shedd's story about his changing approach to parenting. Before he was married he had an excellent lecture entitled “*How to raise your children.*” When he became involved with families who had children he changed his lecture and called it, “*Suggestions to parents.*” After he was married the Shedd's first child came along and the title of his lecture was changed again to “*Feeble hints to fellow strugglers.*” When the rest of the children came along he stopped giving the lecture altogether. I know that the Bible says, “*Lo children are an heritage of the Lord and the fruit of the womb is His reward,*” ( Ps 127:3 ) but do you ever feel that they do not seem like much of a reward ? I mean it's a joy to have children, but wouldn't it be nice to take a little holiday from responsibility ? Wouldn't it be nice to be able to sit back for a month or two, and let the children be solely in charge of raising themselves, correcting themselves, providing for themselves ? But God says, “*No you cannot do that. As long as children are in the home you must be constantly, persistently, bringing them up.*”

Some years ago two young men from a home in California were in training at Dallas Theological Seminary in Texas. One day one of the professors there asked them this question. “*What do you remember about your father ?*” He thought for a moment and then said, “*Two things stand out in my mind and they are quite contrasting. The first part is getting up early in the morning for a paper round and seeing my father on his knees praying, that made a profound impression on me. The second thing is my father rolling on the floor with laughter with us kids.*” What a combination, on the floor in prayer and on the floor in laughter. Tell me, what way will your children remember you ? If you had to do it all over again would you make any changes ? One father summed it up practically this way. “*My family is all grown up but if I had to do it all over again, this is what I would do.*”

**I would love my wife more in front of my children.**

**I would laugh with my children more at our mistakes and at our joys.**

**I would listen more even to my youngest child.**

**I would be more honest about my own weaknesses and stop pretending perfection.**

**I would pray differently for my family, instead of focusing on them, I would focus more on me.**

**I would do more things with my children.**

**I would do more encouraging and bestow more praise.**

**I would pay more attention to little things deeds and words of love and kindness.**

**Finally, if I had to do it all over again I would share the Lord more intimately with my family.**

**I would use ordinary things that happen every day to point them to the Lord.”**

Tell me, honestly, if you to do it all over again would you make any changes ? Would you laugh more with them ? Would you spend more time with them ? Would you pray more for them ? Would you talk more about the Lord to them, remembering that our children are the only things we take to heaven with us ? Now remember when God created male and female He blessed them and told them to be fruitful and multiply. ( Gen 1:27 ) When the psalmist wrote, “ *Lo children are an heritage of the Lord,*” ( Ps 127:3 ) he was referring to the norm for married life, although there are times when in His infinite wisdom God sees fit to cause a couple to remain childless. Now children are a great blessing. I mean what can be compared with the joy of holding ones first born your arms and being able to say, “ *He’s ours, she’s ours.*”

But children are not only a tremendous blessing but they bring a tremendous responsibility. *Someone has pointed out that we spend the first twelve months of our children’s lives teaching them to walk and talk and the next twenty years trying to get them to sit down and be quiet.* Parenting is not for the faint hearted. Becoming a parent is an **exciting** experience, being a parent is a much more **exacting** experience, yet the Bible is very specific concerning the duties and responsibilities of parents. So in this area as in every other area the Scriptures are to be our final authority. Its not what Mrs. Jones says, not what some popular paperback says, not even what some child psychologist says but what the Word of God says that

counts. Now in coming to this subject this evening, I come acknowledging my own shortcomings as a parent. I come not as one who is qualified in this area, but simply as someone who believes that God in His inspired Word has given directives for the totality of life and in relation to this theme directives for us as Christian parents. Many years ago I listened to a series of messages given by Al Martin on the family and I am indebted to him and to others whom I have drawn from in this present series.

## **(1) THE RELATIONSHIP OF PARENTS TO CHILDREN**

What has God made me with reference to my children ? What has God made me by making me a Daddy or Mummy ? Am I to be a little administrator ? That is, am I to come to my children and find out their likes and dislikes, what they like, where they want to go on holiday and on the basis of that I seek to order the home. Other parents think that God has constituted them a horn of plenty. So whatever the child wants they turn on the handle. When we turn to the Scriptures however, we discover that God has appointed Christian parents as prophets, priests and kings within the framework of the home. ( 1 Tim 2:5 ) Prophets, to teach the will of God to their children, priests to plead with God on their behalf and kings to enforce the rule of God over them. You see,

**(a) *God has Constituted you as a Christian Parent a Prophet to your Children:***

That is, you are to be the primary instrument through which your children are to know the Word and Will of God. Notice,

### 1. THE WORD YOU ARE TO TEACH:

Look if you will at ( Deut 6:7 ) What was the “ *them*, ” ? The answer is in ( 6:7 ) “ *These words.* ” What were “ *these words*, ” ? God’s commands brought through Moses in ( Ch’s 5-7 ) That is, they were to impress on their children the laws and commandments of God. Here is God’s priority plan for passing on the truth about Himself from parent to child. Look at ( Ps 78:5-7 ) In other words, these precepts were passed from one generation to another and is this not the parents responsibility ? Is this not our responsibility to our children ? Do you want for you children the life of blessedness ? What is the life of blessedness ? “ *Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But His delight is in the law of the Lord and in His law doth he mediate day and night.* ” ( Ps 1:1-2 ) How can our children meditate unless their hearts and minds are saturated with the Word of God ? And who is going to get it into their hearts and minds ?

Not primarily the Sunday School teacher, the Good News Club teacher, nor the Child Evangelist. God has made you as a parent your child’s proper and primary instructor. Do you know what Proverbs says “ *Hear ye children, the instruction of a father and attend to know understanding. For I give you good doctrine forsake ye not my law.* ”

( Proverbs 4:1-4, 10-12 ) Are you seeking to teach your children the laws of God ? How can we do this ? 1.

### 2. THE WAY YOU ARE TO TEACH:

We are to teach our children **Verbally:** ( 6:7 ) Notice the word “ *teach*, ” that’s formal is it not ? We are to teach our children **Naturally:** “ *when thou sittest .... and when thou walkest,* ” notice the word “ *talk*, ” that’s informal is it not ? And a good parent uses both kinds of instruction realizing that informal times together are actually good teaching situations. Do you take the time and make the effort to have fun in your home ? Do your children enjoy their home ? Many of us are so glum we look as if we are on the road to hell instead of the road to heaven. You see, God says we are to allow the various circumstances of life to become opportunities for teaching. We are to teach our children **Visibly:** Later in Jewish history this phrase was taken literally and the people tied phylacteries, boxes containing these verses to their hands and foreheads with tongs of leather. The children were also to see the law of God written on their house. ( 6:9 ) Of course the best way to teach is by **example.** Do you recall what Christ said ?

“ *But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea.* ” ( Matt 18:6 ) Do we not sin when through inconsistent living we cause our believing children to stumble ? A little boy and girl were fighting in the home one day when their parents shouted,

*“ Stop fighting.” They replied, “ We are not fighting, we are just playing Mummy and Daddy.” (a)*

***(b) God has Constituted you as a Christian Parent a Priest to your Children:***

( Rom 8:34 ) Do you have a priestly heart ? Do you know what it is to bear your children before God in prayer ? You see, we should,

- *Pray Before they are Born:*

Is this not what Hannah did ? Do you recall her prayer ?  
*“ O Lord of Hosts if Thou wilt indeed look on the affliction of Thy handmaid, and remember me, and not forget thine handmaid, but wilt give unto thine handmaid a man child, then I will give him unto the Lord all the days of his life, and there shall no razor come upon his head.”* ( 1 Sam 1:11 ) Is this what you do ? Do you pray for your children even before they are born ? Do you say, *“ Lord, I’ll give this little one to You for You to do what You will.”*

- *Pray After they are Born:*

This is what Abraham did ( Gen 17:18 ) what David did ( 1 Chron 29:19 ) what Job did. The Scriptures says concerning Job that Job *“ rose early in the morning and offered burnt offerings according to the number of them all, for Job said, it may be that my sons have sinned and cursed God in their hearts. Thus did Job continually.”*

( Job 1:5 ) Nor literal sacrifices but the sacrifice of prayer to God continually is what we are to offer on behalf of our children. Now are you fulfilling your priestly function ? Are you as a parent, praying specifically for your children ? This is not something to which you can say, *“ Well, I would like to be a priest to my family, my .... this is what God has made you.”* (a) (b)

***(c) God has Constituted you as a Christian Parent a King to your Children:***

That is, you are to administer the rule and authority of God in your home. Now in this connection I want you to think about,

*1. The Faithfulness of Joshua:*

Look if you will at ( Joshua 24:15 ) Notice will you what he does not say. *“ As for me and if my children agree to it we will serve the Lord.”* Nor does Joshua say, *“ If its in keeping with family consensus we will serve the Lord.”* No no, *“ As for me and my house we will serve the Lord.”* *“ I will administer in my home,”* says Joshua the *“ rule of God.”* Is it not true that many of us are afraid to assume our kingly role in the home ? Jumping every time the children whimper, moan, complain ? How different Joshua was. Still again, do you remember what God said about Abraham ? *“ For I know him that he will command his children, and his household after him and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment.”* ( Gen 18:19 ) Abraham will suggest to his children. No. Abraham will bargain with his children. No. Abraham

will command his children, for he is a king in his home administering God's rule with authority yet in love and understanding. Now when we apply God's rule in the home we do not need to get up tight when we gather the family together and say, "*This household will be in the Lord's house on the Lord's day.*" You see, we seek to set that home in the direction of the Lord and we say, "*this is the direction we move under the Lordship of Christ.*" ( Eph 6:4 1 Tim 3:4 ) " Oh," but " *Daddy John's parents allow him to stay in all day Sunday to watch television.*" " *No, no this is the direction we go under the Lordship of Jesus Christ.*" Do you want to know how God feels when we fail as parents to exercise our kingly role ? Well, having looked at the faithfulness of Joshua, consider,

## 2. The Failure of Eli:

Do you recall Eli ? Like many respected today Eli was called to assume a position of leadership in the community. First and foremost he was a priest ( 1:9 ) Besides that Eli served in a civil capacity as a judge, a position he occupied for forty years ( 4:18 ) Added to these heavy burdens Eli had also the personal responsibility of being a father to his two boys. ( 1:3 ) Now Eli seems to have left behind a forty year record of faithful service at least in regard to his public life, but he did not fare so well in his home life. Do you see his family ? The Bible refers to them as " *sons of Belial.*" Look if you will at ( 2:12 ) It means " *sons of wickedness,*" " *hell raisers.*" Why were they called that ?

Well, they abhorred the offering of the Lord ( 2:22 ) and they had sex with the women of the congregation ( 2:24 ) Moreover, they were instrumental in leading others astray. ( 2:24 ) Now Hophni and Phinehas were raised in the manse. Now that this makes any difference. Down through the years Christians have thrown jibes at me and my children. " *But you're children are supposed to be holy,*" come off it. I want to tell you that they are just as sinful, corrupt and depraved as your children. But look at the privileges of Eli's sons. Here were two young men nourished in the Word of God, trained in the Work of God and instructed in the Worship of God, but they did not turn out right. Why ? How can you explain it when your children don't turn out to be spiritual and godly ? Well, there is every evidence that Eli was a godly man. Was there something he overlooked ? What was he blind to ?

- Was there **IMBALANCE** ?

Was there a preoccupation with his calling to the exclusion of his family's needs ? Did Eli's intense focus on his duties as a priest and judge relegate his family to a blur in the background ? Listen carefully to what Alexander Whyte the commentator has to say.

**Let me consider well how conceivable it could come about. Well, for one thing their father was never at home, and what with sacrificing and interceding for Israel Eli never saw his children till they were in their beds. What mean ye by this ordinance ? All the other children in Israel asked their fathers as they came up to the Temple. And all the way up and all the way**

**down those fathers took their inquiring children by the hand and told them all about Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Aaron and the exodus, the wilderness, the conquest and the yearly Passover. Hophni and Phinehas were the only children in all Israel who saw the temple every day and paid no attention to it.”**

How those words have searched my own heart. Tell me, are you a success in your job but a failure at home ? Are you a success in your preaching but a failure at home ? Why is it that sometimes the children of pastors and missionaries do not turn out to be godly ? Is it because we have been so caught up spending time with others that we have not spend time enough time with our families ? *I can think of nothing more tragic than arriving in heaven and discovering that while others came to know Christ because of my ministry, my own family were lost because of my neglect and preoccupation.* Which is more important ? To be a success in the business world, in the evangelical world and have your peers rise up and cheer you ? Or to be a success in your home and have your children rise up and call you blessed ? Imbalance.

- Was there **INDIFFERENCE** ?

Look if you will at ( 3:11-13 ) There was an indifference on the part of Eli to properly discipline his sons. When they needed a firm hand he simply questioned them about their behaviour. ( 2:23 ) So they just ignored him and went their way. You see, Eli’s indifference produced undisciplined children. *Do you see clearly what Eli failed to do ?* He failed to exercise his kingly rule in the home

and God judged him for it. Eli must have ached inside, such a success at work, such a failure at home. What about us ? Are we as parents exercising godly rule in our homes ? My .... this is what God has made us. Prophets to teach the Word of God, Priests to intercede on behalf of our families, Kings to enforce His rule in their lives. How are you getting on ? Are you an effective prophet, priest and king ? You say, “ *how can I be ?* ” The basic secret is to have a vital, vibrant relationship with Christ who is your prophet, priest, and king. (1)

## **(2) THE RESPONSIBILITY OF PARENTS TO CHILDREN**

And here I want to be selective rather than exhaustive. Now the responsibility of parents extends far beyond the matters that I shall mention. For example parents are to love their children ( Titus 2:4 ) they are to provide for their children ( Job 42:15 1 Tim 5:8 ) Also parents should know how to gave good gifts unto their children ( Matt 7:9-11 ) and they should discipline their children. ( Deut 8:5 ) But I want end this .... on a positive note and so I want us to consider,

### ***(a) Our Responsibility Considered GENERALLY:***

“ *What am I as a parent seeking to do ?* ” ( Prov 22:6 ) You see, two ways lie before a child. The way in which he would go, headlong to ruin, and the way in which he should go, the pathway to heaven. Everything depends on the training. Now as we consider this tremendous statement I want you to note several things.

## **1. The MEANING of the Word:**

The word “*train*,” comes from a verb which has as its root meaning “*to narrow, to choke*.” The concept is “*narrow down that child to the way he should go*.” Now what is the way he should go ? Of course, the answer is it’s the way back to God through Christ. Now that is right, but its more than that for “*training up a child in the way he should go*,” not only means the salvation of the child. It means the plan of God for the totality of his life. Do you recall the question of the catechism ? “*What is man’s chief end ?*” Answer, “*Man’s chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy Him for ever*.” How do we glorify God ? By doing His will. How can we do that ? By training, patience, example. What then is our task as a parent ?

Under God as prophet, priest, and king to be instruments in the hands of God to see them “trained,” in such a way that when they leave the circle of the home and go out to form their own circle, he may take his God given role in the light of the Word as a husband. She may take her God given role in the light of the Word as a wife and mother.

You see, that daughter will have learned in the circle of the home through precept and example to be a good wife and mother, so when she moves out of that circle into a new circle she will be able to accept and practice her God given role. My .... do you catch something of,

## **2. The MAGNITUDE of the Task:**

As a parent. It is nothing less than the training of the child for the totality of life’s experiences under the Lordship of Christ, and in the light of the revealed will of God. Then people say, “*I’m just a housewife*.” What a task. 1, 2,

## **3. The MERCY of the Lord:**

“*And when he is old, he will not depart from it*.” ( 22:6 ) The training of our children is a work of watchful anxiety, and who of us could continue with it, but for this wonderful promise ? “*When he is old he will not depart from it*.” You see, sometimes the fruit is immediate and what a joy it is for a believing parent to see their child coming to faith in Christ early in life. But often “*the bread cast upon many waters is not found till after many days*.” ( Eccl 11:1 ) Sometimes not until that godly parent has been called home to glory. Yet the fruit though late will nevertheless be sure. You see, the child may depart when he is young but “*when he is old*,” in after years the seeds of instruction will burst forth into life. ( 1 Sam 3:20 1 Tim 1:2 2 Tim 3:15 ) Smothered convictions will bring back the power of early impressions. The Scriptures fastened on the memory will force themselves upon him. Conscience will disturb his pleasures and the remembrance of the “*fathers house*,” will bring the prodigal to himself. ( Lk 15:17-20 )

You see, if the duty has been performed ( *train* ) then the promise will be fulfilled, “*when he is old, he will not depart from it*.” Is this not a word of encouragement to those who us who are parents ? Is this not a word of hope to those of us who have sought to train our children, but as

yet we see no fruit ? My .... here's the promise of One who cannot lie, ( Num 23:19 ) the promise of One who cannot fail, the promise of One who cannot falter. Are you disheartened because of your children ? Have you almost given up ? My .... ask yourself the question, “ *is anything too hard for the Lord ?* ” ( Gen 18:14 ) Is God able to fulfill His Word ? His God able to keep His promise ? His God “ *able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think ?* ” ( Eph 3:20 ) (a)

***(b) Our Responsibility Considered SPECIFICALLY:***

You see, our task is nothing less than the training of that child for the totality of life's experiences. Now let's break that down a little further and consider some of the areas in which we as parents are to give them training. Let's just think for a moment of what that child is. Contrary to what most people think, children are not little angels. Well, what are they ? Well, they are physical creatures of flesh and bones. They have got a mind, and a will. They have feelings and emotions. Then of course they have a spiritual element for they are made in the image of God. ( Gen 1:26 ) That is, they are made with a capacity to know God, they are savable creatures. Now our training in the way they should go must take into account all of these areas of development. Look if you will at ( Lk 2:52 )

Luke tells us here that in a quiet, gradual, natural, healthy manner, *Christ grew mentally, physically, spiritually, and socially*. Now this is a great mystery and it can only be partially understood if we remember that all of this growth applied to Christ's human nature. His Godhead could not

grow in any sense since that always had been complete, so we see here Christ the man. Matthew Poole says, **If any ask how He who was the eternal wisdom of the Father, who is the only one God, increased in wisdom they must know that all things in Scripture which are spoken of Christ are not spoken with respect to His entire person, but with respect to the one or other nature united in that person. Christ increased in wisdom as He did in age and stature with respect to His human not His divine nature.**

So here we see Christ the man developing in these four areas and I believe that the training we are to give our children must take into account these same four areas. In other words we are to give them,

**1. SPIRITUAL TRAINING:**

“ *And Jesus increased in favour with God.* ” Do you know something ? The vast majority of people deal with their children as if they are born only for this world and not for the next. They educate their children for time but not for eternity. But the Christian parent must be different. We must educate our children spiritually. That is, we are to give them right views of God, right views of themselves, right concepts of authority. How are we to do this ?

- **By Consistent Example:**

How do you teach them right views of authority ? You do, that by showing them what a father ought to be in the home.



- By Creating a Climate of Openness about Spiritual Things:

Is there a climate of openness in your home about the things of God ? Do you talk about them naturally ?

- By Regular Family Worship:

*“ And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house.”*  
( 6:7 Joshua 8:35 1 Cor 16:19 ) 1.

## 2. SOCIAL TRAINING:

*“ And Jesus increased in favour with men,”* the Lord Jesus was never a recluse. Indeed Matthew tells us that *“ the Son of Man came eating and drinking.”*  
( Matt 11:19 ) Here Luke tells us that He developed socially. And where is it that our children must glorify God ? In society. My .... we are sending our children into society to glorify God and so manners are important, what is proper, right and fitting is important. Being sensitive to the needs of others is important. The way they look and dress is important.

## 3. INTELLECTUAL TRAINING:

*“ And Jesus increased in wisdom,”* ( Lk 2:52 ) Was it not Christ who said, *“ And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength, this is the first commandment.”* ( Mk 12:30 ) The faculty of

comprehension and intelligence. What does it mean in reference to our children ? Does it not mean a controlled use of the television otherwise the mind becomes lazy and will not be stretched to its full capacity ? Does it not mean a guided reading programme ? Does it not mean seeking to saturate the mind with Scripture ? 1, 2, 3,

## 4. PHYSICAL TRAINING:

*“ And Jesus increased in stature,”* Christ had perfect development at every stage of human growth. He was no different from other children except for the absence of sin. Are we to give our children physical training ? Yes. Do you recall that Solomon did exactly this ?  
( Prov 5:1-11 7:6 ) Time and again in the book of Proverbs he pleads for physical purity. My .... are we not to teach our children concerning the dignity of the body ? Are we not to warn them of the danger of sexual immorality ? ( 1 Cor 6:13 ) Are we not to instruct them that the body is a vehicle through which we can glorify God ?

*“ Train up a child in the way he should go,”* how are you getting on with the training ? Are you training them spiritually, socially, intellectually, and physically ? A fragment of a letter was left by a young man in New York whose life had been shattered and destroyed by so many sinister influences. It went like this, *“ My parents,”* he wrote *“ brought me up to believe in God and to believe that God didn’t matter.”* My .... this is no easy task, indeed as we stand back and consider the magnitude of the task we may well say, *“ who is sufficient for these*

*things ?” ( 2 Cor 2:16 )* In and of ourselves we are not able, but bless God He is able. Let us therefore delight in Him, depend on Him, and draw from Him. Let us go forward with confidence realizing that “ *our sufficiency is of God.*” ( 2 Cor 3:5 )