

CHILDREARING

**GOD'S WONDERFUL WAY OF LIFE
COMPILATION
BOOK 6**

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INTRODUCTION

An article entitled, "Are We Neglecting Our Youth?" in a WCG brochure of the same name says the following:

Never have our young people had more leisure time, better food, better education, or more material goods. Yet youthful violence, aggression, and hostility is more pronounced than in any period of modern history.

Forty percent of United States crimes of violence and two thirds of crimes against property (80% of vandalism) are committed by those under 21. And the U.S. is by no means alone in this phenomenon. Youth crime and violence are epidemic in almost all "advanced" countries.

Never has a society been in greater need of good, responsible parents who know how to raise happy and balanced children who are law-abiding and live by God's way of life.

What are the pressures and the problems that are leading to this epidemic of delinquent children in our society? I'd like to continue quoting from the above-mentioned article which discusses the factors contributing to this breakdown in our society:

Are We Neglecting Our Youth?

"We are experiencing a breakdown in the process of making human beings human," stresses Cornell psychologist and career child watcher Urie Bronfenbrenner.

It would be grossly misleading to implicate that all modern youth are turning out "bad." There are innumerable notable exceptions with which we are all familiar. Still, our children and young adults—tomorrow's most valuable and important resource—are tempted to respond to alluring but warped social forces that have already pushed untold numbers into heartache, disillusionment, and ruined lives.

Parents on the Run

Many forces have caused this crisis, but without a doubt the biggest single factor is that youth and parents increasingly are going their separate ways.

Having lost their spiritual and moral roots, many parents are running, many literally, from one of the most important responsibilities in life: that of preparing the future

generation under their charge to become intelligent, self-disciplined, responsible, productive, decent human beings.

"An increasing number of parents have resigned their responsibility for the character of their child," says Dr. Amitai Etzioni, professor of sociology at Columbia University. "It's as elementary as that."

Caught up in a whirlwind of work, social, or entertainment activities, many parents have little time, desire, or energy to show affection or to give positive training and discipline to their offspring. Yet these are the basic essentials of "making human beings human."

Finding their children irritating, ungrateful, unrewarding, or "in the way," many parents have come to resent their children. Backed up by stacks of social statistics from government agencies, Bronfenbrenner points to an alarming but irrefutable fact: Upside-down homes and family fracture, while more serious in poor and nonwhite groups, cut right across all income, race, and education categories.

To compound the problem, more modern women are beginning to desert their home and family. In some places, wives actually outnumber husbands as runaways.

Working Mothers

Another well-established trend—the desire of mothers to pursue a career outside the home—hasn't improved overall parent-child relationships or character training. One third of American mothers of preschool children are in the labor force. More than half of our school-age children now have mothers who work outside the home, mostly full time.

While this is not to say it is always harmful for mothers to work outside the home (much depends on the family circumstance, age of children, and quality of training), this situation has produced a growing number of neglected children who barely see or know their parents, or vice versa.

Worst Fruit from Child Rearing Extremes

While broken homes often engender a great deal of youthful problems, much dehumanising is done in intact homes where childrearing extremes or inconsistency is the rule.

Untold numbers of homes are not homes, but battlegrounds where children and parents endlessly "fight it out," with many parents intimidated and cowering before their child's every selfish whim.

In too many homes at the other extreme, harsh, oppressive, whimsical, or capricious parental discipline leaves a variety of deep scars on its youthful victims. The toll of emotionally and physically battered and abused children mounts up into the hundreds of thousands every year.

In between are a large group of parental oscillators; they swing back and forth between being too strict and too lenient. Unhappy with the results of their inconsistency, many just give up and take the path of least resistance.

Parenting—A Dying Art

Parental influence is rapidly diminishing to a very low point. Many parents seem to be blindly apathetic or demoralized while a growing list of [substitute] "parents" indoctrinate their children with questionable values and attitudes.

For many younger children, television—with its violence and inanity—is frequently used as a flickering electronic parent. TV now occupies more waking hours of millions of young children than any other single influence—including both parents and schools.

Peer groups, schools, preschools, and various child-care centers have also taken over the role that too many parents seem reluctant to perform. While none of these are necessarily wrong, and in some regards may be quite beneficial, none fulfill the major responsibility of preparing youth for mature, responsible adulthood.

Even after six years of formal schooling, though, an average child has spent only seven percent of his or her life in school. Ninety-three percent of the child's life has been influenced by the moral, ethical, and social values of the home, neighborhood, friends, community, or church. So without the active participation of parents or guardians who value and exhibit some measure of the qualities of respect, cooperation, and concern for others, there is almost no possibility that the next generation can learn them.

"What is needed," says Bronfenbrenner, "is a change in our ways of living that will once again bring adults back into the lives of children and children back into the lives of adults."

Parents in Need of Help

Responsible parents dare not depend on hope and luck to fashion the critical attitudes they value in their children. We cannot really expect desirable behavior in our children if we haven't done our homework early in their lives. To a large degree, we reap what we sow.

There is a critical period during the first four or five years when a child can most readily get a solid foundation of proper attitudes and values. We must not fail the generation which is still responsive to sound values and principles of good character.

Too frequently young, immature or unprepared men and women find themselves saddled with the responsibility of an impressionable, helpless infant about which they know almost nothing.

How many parents have received one iota of formal training in the very critical area of child rearing? Society demands that those who raise chickens and pigs have more training than those who rear children. What a tragedy and travesty!

Many parents do not understand the emotional or intellectual needs of their children. Many parents are unwittingly reinforcing in their children the very habits they want to eliminate, largely from an improper approach or wrong emotional communications with their children.

No parent is perfect. And a child is not usually destroyed by a few mistakes. Every parent can improve on the parenting art: yet it will take effort to get the proper balance of knowledge, methods and attitudes.

What is a good parent? Every parent needs to know right moral values, how to set limits, how to encourage intellectual and emotional growth, as well as how to discipline within a framework of love. It's a mighty big task.

The helpful principles on the following pages, while not total answers to every child rearing problem, are solid, common-sense methods to use in training your children to become responsible and useful members of society.

THE BASIC PRINCIPLES OF RAISING GODLY CHILDREN

Now it is time to get into some of those vital principles that parents need to do in order to help raise godly offspring (Malachi 2:15).

To begin with I'd like to quote an excellent extract from a PCG booklet entitled "The Decline of Modern Israel" by Colin Sutcliffe. This extract gives parents twelve very good points on being a better parent.

Twelve Steps To Better Child Rearing

There is no "golden age" to look back to, but when we were less urbanized, industrialized, computerized and pasteurized, most parents were far more involved and interested in their children and extended families. And every member of the family and our whole society was the better for it!

Today, all too many people have grown up without FAMILY SECURITY (and that is not a term for government welfare), without PARENTAL TEACHING and DISCIPLINE, with little concern for anyone OTHER THAN SELF with few interests other than leisure and pleasure! All too many have very little idea of how to work, or even the desire to do so!

Again, remember God's prophecy: "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, truce breakers, false accusers, incontinent (without self-control), fierce (savage), despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady (rash, headstrong), high minded (lifted up with pride), lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God For of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts" (II Tim. 3:1-4,6).

What a perfect prophetic description of our society today. This alone should tell all of us that we're in the last days! These are all current social problems and are simply the result of disobeying, or ignoring certain basic laws. If obeyed, these would produce an entirely different society. It would be peaceful, happy, successful, secure, and fulfilling for everyone.

But what can you do? There is plenty we can all do. We can begin by appointing ourselves as a COMMITTEE OF ONE and determine to make many changes in our own lives. The word of God will guide us in those changes, if we are willing to make them.

Here are twelve points relating to better child rearing. Even if you are not yet a parent, they will help you understand what an effective parent SHOULD or SHOULD NOT do. If you are a grandparent, then they will help you to help your children avoid some of the mistakes you made with them.

1) Build a good marriage.

Child rearing problems are mostly marriage problems and unless you are a good husband, or a good wife, you can't even begin to be a good parent. Of course, if you are a single parent, ask yourself -- what kind of spouse WERE YOU and what kind of spouse WOULD YOU BE TODAY, if you were still married?

Isn't it strange that every profession in the world requires years of intensive study and training, yet most of us act AS IF WE ARE BORN TO AUTOMATIC SUCCESS IN MARRIAGE AND CHILD REARING?

God expects us to apply II Timothy 2:15-16 in all areas of our life: "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. But shun profane and vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness."

When husbands learn to really love their wives and lead them in a strong, positive and considerate manner, and when wives learn to SUBMIT to their husbands and OBEY them as they follow God -- then couples can expect to be effective in their CHILDREARING and FAMILY RELATIONS.

2) Don't argue in front of your children. No, never!

Airing differences before your children automatically sends them the wrong signal. They know immediately that they have dad and mom divided! That usually means their natural and repeated struggles to get their own way are as good as won, if they "play their cards correctly." It also tells them which parent is most likely to agree with their DEMANDS, that is if you tolerate DEMANDS.

Whatever you do as a wife, DON'T underestimate the negative effects of FEMALE REBELLION and DOMINATION. And please don't argue in front of the children. Male homosexuals, irresponsible wimps and delinquents, lesbians, liberated feminists, and other rebellious women are MADE, not BORN. Most of them are products of defective marriages! The following verses may drive that unpopular message home: "Behold, every one that useth proverbs shall use this proverb against thee, saying, As is the mother, so is her daughter. Thou art thy mother's daughter, that loatheth her husband and her children; and thou art the sister of thy sisters, which loathed their husbands and their children: your mother was an Hittite, and your father an Amorite" (Ezek. 16:44-45).

Let's hope this leaves an indelible impression on the minds of both women AND men; because weak or irresponsible men invite the wife into dominance and rebellion. Again, arguing in front of the children gives the impression of rebellion

and struggle for power. Parents, this problem is like hitting another car from behind. It may not always be your fault, but you will always be held responsible! If you feel a need to air a difference of opinion, send the child outside, or to another room, temporarily.

This all comes back to one question: How can we expect our children to honor us (Exod. 20:12) if we don't uphold each other in front of them AT ALL TIMES? Another point to remember in this regard: come down hard if you find them going from one parent to another without telling the second person they have already had an answer from the other parent. Children should never be allowed to play one parent against the other.

3) Husbands, don't leave most of the disciplining and loving of your children to your wife.

Men, we must honestly face the fact that this is one of the most prevalent mistakes in child rearing. When we do this, it leaves us looking like a disinterested wimp in the eyes of our wife and everyone around us. Proof of the prevalence and seriousness of this problem is in that last verse in the Old Testament. As God says through the prophet Malachi, utter destruction of our people will follow, unless fathers resume their God-given role as HEAD OF THE FAMILY (Mal. 4:6).

As the end-time Elijah, Mr. Herbert Armstrong saw the great importance of this scripture and how widespread the effects are, when husbands opt out of their leadership responsibility. That's why he taught so strongly on this issue, and we can know that God inspired him to do so, especially as we see the frightening increase in social degeneracy all around us.

When any husband fails to lead his family, it thrusts a grossly unfair responsibility on his wife; unfair because it immediately thrusts her into the DOMINANT role. Together with the children, it throws the whole family into a state of uncertainty, insecurity and ultimately, frustration.

Such a parental role-reversal can leave a mother wondering why her application of the basic principles of childrearing doesn't appear to succeed. This will become most evident in male children, especially after they reach TEENAGE years.

One of the most deceptive aspects of this whole problem is that husbands can completely opt out of the family leadership and still believe they are the head of the family and be quite determined that no one is going to push them around, least of all in their own house. What they fail to realize is that their NONINVOLVEMENT simply makes them the oldest UNCOOPERATIVE child to be looked after by the wife! Every father reading this ought to examine himself and rethink his whole position in relation to his wife and children.

4) Parents must be sure they exercise fair judgment toward each child, at all times.

In all child-discipline situations, the offspring are on trial for their misdemeanors, but then so are you, as their judge and jury! Don't be an "UNJUST JUDGE." Here the most common pitfall is the "spoiled brat" syndrome in relation to the youngest child in the family. Don't show favoritism.

Parents, ask yourselves: If you can't judge your own kids, how can you ever hope to judge THE WORLD and ANGELS? Notice what God's word says: "Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? and if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy (incapable) to judge the smallest matters? Know ye not that we shall judge angels? how much more things that pertain to this life?" (1 Cor. 6:2-3).

Remember, your judgment is final! Children have no right of appeal, but they can spot INJUSTICE a mile away. That is a way many children are provoked to ANGER and FRUSTRATION. God says don't do this (Eph. 6:4).

5) Be consistent at all times with your children.

INCONSISTENCY is a form of injustice and provokes great WRATH and FRUSTRATION. As adults, most of us can recall working under the authority of someone who was totally inconsistent. You know what a great trial their unpredictability could be. Children have the same reaction when parents are inconsistent.

How often do we hear an aggravated parent raise his voice to the child and screech: "Haven't I told you 50 times not to do that?!" -- WHAM! WALLOP! Any child who gets away with wrong conduct when spoken to five times (let alone a figurative 50 times) is going to be SHOCKED and quite CONFUSED at being punished after so many empty threats!

That kind of discipline is usually done in angry exasperation and is more to relieve pent-up frustrations of the parent than for loving benefit to the child. This kind of parental reaction is all too common and is "grist-to-the-mill" of every liberal opposed to all forms of corporal punishment. In such cases, they have a point. It is the wrong way to administer discipline. In whatever form, discipline should be done PROMPTLY and always IN LOVE. Never in a temper!

6) From an early age, teach your children to work.

This process should begin by requiring little children to learn the habit of picking up after themselves. They should not be allowed to just walk off to another location, leaving trash or toys scattered behind them.

Where tidiness is not required, mothers eventually become frazzled, kids become SPOILED, LAZY, and THOUGHTLESS, and the environment degenerates to that of a PIG STY! These permissive parents and children set the tone of modern Western society, which is now unbelievably scruffy, untidy, unkempt, boorish, ignorant, arrogant, discourteous and usually selfish!

In teaching our children to work, we should assign everyone meaningful chores. These should contribute to the well-being of the whole family. Remember, motivated children love meaningful work. Encourage them to volunteer their help, instead of allowing a family argument as to whose turn it is to do a particular job.

This is where parents begin to set standards and values that will stay with young people for the rest of their lives and be proudly passed on to the next generation. Such people, at any age, are a delight to live with. Their thoughtful habits and good attitude promote ORDER, PEACE, and HAPPINESS in any environment.

Always keep in mind that children will not rise above the standards you set for them, and above that which you REQUIRE of them. There is a right balance in this. We should consider the child's age and not make unreasonable demands.

If you want children who will go above and beyond, you must set the example as a parent. You must be a SELF-STARTER in order to also be a MOTIVATOR. It is very difficult to motivate others if you are LAZY.

7) Maintain a right balance between love and law.

Discipline in various forms will always be a requirement in all child rearing. However, the amount any parent can successfully administer will be in exact proportion to the amount of AFFECTION you are prepared to give. This also applies in other areas. Here is a simple equation to illustrate the point:

**DISCIPLINE plus AFFECTION equals obedient, secure, balanced children.
DISCIPLINE minus AFFECTION equals provoked, deceitful children.
AFFECTION minus DISCIPLINE equals insecurity and role reversal.
And NO AFFECTION plus NO DISCIPLINE equals rebellion and anarchy.**

It is therefore impossible to provide a true sense of security without a balance of discipline and affection. "Affection" is used rather than the term "love," because many today don't realize that "discipline," properly administered, IS LOVE!

Here is proof from the Bible that our Western liberals are in complete disagreement with God in this socially fundamental issue of discipline: "... My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons" (Heb. 12:5-8).

8) Discipline promptly and appropriately.

"Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil" (Eccl. 8:11).

Discipline must be preceded by patient teaching, and teaching that the parent must ensure is clearly understood by the child. Bear in mind, as adults, we don't usually understand new things the first time they are explained. Maybe we don't fully comprehend on the second, or the third time either, so BE PATIENT with your children, but not PERMISSIVE! To make sure you know that they understand what you require, have them repeat your instruction and keep teaching them until they can repeat it.

Discipline must also be preceded by ONE warning, which should be accompanied by another round of TEACHING. Never forget that REPEATED warnings before discipline are WEAKNESS. REPEATED TEACHING AND PATIENT EXPLANATION are UNDERSTANDING and MERCY. Discipline itself MUST BE ACCOMPANIED (before and after) by further teaching.

Discipline comes in many forms, but delayed, bad-tempered walloping is not one that is acceptable in God's sight. Neither is sending a child to his room. Deal with the

problem then and there, while the infringement is fresh on their mind and yours. A mixture of corporal punishment and deprivation of privileges is best for most children. The mix of these two will vary with the child and their age and sex.

Regardless of the form employed, don't let any liberal teaching dissuade you from your God-given responsibility toward your children. If you do: "... Ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby" (Heb. 12:5,11).

Our God is very well aware that ALL human beings need chastening. He means us to be aware of it too. That's why there are so many references to it in His holy word. He knows that the best time to start is VERY EARLY in a child's life. The few years we have when we can be most effective pass all too quickly. There is not time for delay or procrastination. The longer we delay the start of child rearing, the harder it will be. It is amazing that so many people are more willing to understand this in relation to dumb animals than to children!

Also, the longer we delay, the less effective the training will be in the long run. God even spells this out: "Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying" (Prov. 19:18).

Most so-called "experts" in child rearing are completely at variance with the clear teaching of the One who created human beings. You either accept liberal human reasoning, or the inspired word of God Almighty. This needs to be stated, lest some try to dismiss this material as being just another human opinion. That's why so many scriptures are quoted. They cannot be denied without rejecting the infallible word of God.

Do you believe God? Notice what He says: "Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod (or paddle) of correction shall drive it far from him" (Prov. 22:15). Proverbs 23:13 says, "Withhold not correction from the child"

God has prophesied horrendous penalties for modern Israel for ignoring these instructions. Speaking of this rebellious end time society, He says: "Violence is risen up into a rod of wickedness: none of them shall remain, nor of their multitude, nor of any of theirs: neither shall there be wailing for them Make a chain: for the land is full of bloody crimes, and the city is full of violence" (Ezek. 7:11, 23). Why?

It should be obvious. Nationally, we have disregarded and discredited God's clear instructions on MARRIAGE and CHILDREARING. So in effect God has said we can choose between the "rod of correction" or the "rod of wickedness." One would have saved our society, the other is now destroying it! We chose, on the advice of "liberal experts," not to use the "rod of correction" since the 1950s. Now we are being beaten, raped, and pillaged with the "rod of wickedness" which has "risen up" as a direct result of following false teachers.

God says, "Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter! ... Therefore as the fire devoureth the stubble, and the flame consumeth the chaff, so their root shall be as rottenness, and their blossom shall go up as dust: because they

have cast away the law of the Lord of hosts, and despised the word of the Holy One of Israel" (Isa. 5:20,24).

Today, those children are our "OPPRESSORS" and certain "women rule over" us because weak, gutless men have abdicated their family responsibilities. "The Lord will enter into judgment with the ancients of his people, and the princes thereof: for ye have eaten up the vineyard ... What mean ye that ye beat my people to pieces, and grind the faces of the poor? saith the Lord God of hosts" (Isa. 3:14-15).

It is lack of strong male leadership among mature age men in religion, education, the judiciary, and the legislature that is beating God's people "to pieces." It all comes back to the lack of DISCIPLINE and AFFECTION.

To be fully effective, that discipline must be followed by the child's expression of SORROW, then HUGGING from the parent, along with REASSURANCE and MORE TEACHING, and a required big smile, at the end! All will then be well, and life can return to normal.

9) Eat, work, and play together as a family.

In doing these things, always maintain your position as a parent. Never become just a "pal." Children of all ages look to you for leadership, an example, and guidance, even in play. You are an ADULT. Always conduct yourself as an adult, never as a "pal." As a "pal," you descend to their level. This confuses them and they don't appreciate it.

It is said: "The family that EATS together, STAYS together." We may be sure the same can be said for work and play! As the leader of the family, set the example and require all to be present, washed, dressed and groomed when your wife is ready to serve the meal. This is an important avenue for training and maintaining law and order in the family. It is considerate of the wife in regard to her responsibilities, and provides the best daily opportunities for group conversation. If at all possible, this program should definitely include breakfast, even if some have to rise earlier to participate.

HOSPITALITY and ENTERTAINING should also come within the scope of this point. Smart parents make their home the focal point of family social life. It will otherwise become little more than a dormitory. If you are willing to make the effort (and don't let the family leave most of the extra work to the wife), all members of the family will be well rewarded.

One of the best rewards for parents is that you directly control the guest list, the entertainment, the food and drink, the dress, and general conduct, when your home is the social center. At any other location, you control NOTHING, except your child's attendance!

Be willing to spend time teaching your young children to play various types of sports and other games. They will love it. Encourage both boys and girls to get involved in some kind of sport and other vigorous physical activities from an early age. This helps them build coordination, confidence, strong, well-developed, healthy bodies, and good relationships with others of their own age and sex. A variety of games also helps young people develop personality, and the ability to win and lose in the right attitude and control a wrong spirit of competition. It has been said, one can learn

more about a person's character in a half hour of a sport or game than in a year under many other circumstances.

10) Control what goes into your child's mind.

First of all, SET THE EXAMPLE by what you allow into your home and your mind. This applies to TV, videos, radio, cassettes, records, compact discs, papers, books, magazines, etc. Rock concerts and video arcades are dynamite and to be avoided like a plague! Here is a proven warning given by a well-known British author over 20 years ago: "Above all the demand for equality and the utter rejection of class, or hierarchic differences is widespread: the young simply carry it further The desire for euphoria can be seen in the passion for rock music, which blocks intellectual activity, and opens the mind to impulse and euphoric sensations. Drugs also do this, though here other factors are also present, including the desire to defy authority" ("Rethink", by Gordon Rattray Taylor, p. 52).

Films are almost as bad, because most of the censors in our Israelitish nations are some of the most liberal-minded people in the society. Do your own censoring. Don't depend on them. If need be, go with your family on the rare occasions you may wish to permit a film evening and be prepared to walk out and lose your money!

Much will still enter your child's mind that is bad. You can't completely prevent it. This will come from SOCIETY, PEER PRESSURE and the EDUCATION SYSTEM. All you can do is make sure your children COMMUNICATE what is going on in these areas of influence. Then you can endeavor to counter the negative with positive input of your own. Encourage your children, through discussion, to think things through for themselves. This is where eating, working, and playing together help so much.

Herbert Armstrong often said, to get air out of an empty glass, you have to put something else into it. It's the same with a child's mind. Don't just ban all negative things and leave it at that. As parents, YOU MUST PUT GOOD music, art, literature, decor, dress, grooming and life style in place of the bad, the ugly, the filthy, the scruffy, the violent, and the evil. Upgrade your own standards, so you can positively influence your children. Point your children to all the good quality examples around them, including other families and young people.

"Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you" (Phil. 4:8-9).

11) Teach your children good manners and the social graces of a prince or princess in Israel.

"But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light: Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy" (I Pet. 2:9-10). As parents with the mind of Christ (I Cor. 2:16), and as

ambassadors for Jesus Christ (II Cor. 5:20), UPGRADE YOUR STANDARDS and TEACH YOURSELF FIRST. Then you will be able to inculcate these things into the minds of your children.

Teach your children to honor you both as parents (Exod. 20:12); to rise up before the hoary head (Lev. 19:32); to stand for adults; to open doors; to shake hands firmly and look people in the eye; to use "please" and "thank you" and people's names; to conduct themselves properly at the table; to speak correctly and clearly.

Boys need to keep their hair properly cut (I Cor. 11:3-4,7-9,14,16; Dan. 4:28-37; Ezek. 44:4-5,20; Mal. 2:7); keep their hands out of their pockets; their clothes neatly pressed; their shirt tucked into their pants, rather than hanging out like some unemployed dead-beat; their shoes cleaned and laces tied.

Girls should be taught and required to dress modestly; to avoid every extreme of fashion; to avoid dressing beyond their age; to avoid clothes that are too tight, too short, or four sizes too large. They should be taught to take good care of their hair, preserving that natural, healthy appearance.

Mothers should always set the example in dress and grooming; shun extreme hair styles, such as the masculine, overly short look (I Cor. 11:5-6, 10, 15). Then there is that other popular extreme which is long, but looks like a wild bird's nest that has been teased out and fallen apart since the last breeding season!

12) Teach your children to believe and obey God.

"By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous" (I John 5:2-3). John also wrote in I John 3:23: "And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment."

How are we to do this? There are a few very simple steps which we can all follow and diligently apply:

a) Set your children a godly example in your life as parents (or as a parent).

b) Fathers, lead your family in regular and interesting Bible studies and family prayer.

c) Help your children prove that God exists (Job 38:1-8,18,33; Isa. 43:8-15; 40:12-26, 28-31; Rom. 1:18-28).

d) Help your children prove that the Bible is God's word (Deut. 30:11-15,19; Matt. 4:4; John 7:17; 10:35; 17:17; II Tim. 3:15-17; II Pet. 1:16-21; Rev. 12:9).

e) Help your children prove which is God's one true Church (Exod. 31:13-18; Lev. 23:1-44; Isa. 58:13-14; Matt. 16:18; Luke 12:32; I Cor. 1:2, 10, 13, 17-31; 2:5-16; 11:3; Eph. 4:1-6; 4:14; Col. 1:18).

f) Help your children prove who are God's true ministers (Deut. 18:15-22; 30:11-14; Isa. 8:13-20; 29:13-14; 58:1; Jer. 3:14-15; 17:5-8; Ezek. 33:1-11; Mal. 3:1-

3; 4:5-6; Matt. 7:15-16; Luke 6:46; 16:31; John 3:34-36; I John 4:1; III John 1-4; Jude 3).

g) Help your children prove who are Satan's false ministers (Jer. 5:26-31; 6:10, 13-14; Mal. 2:1, 7-10, 17; II Cor. 11:2-4, 13-15; II Thes. 2:1-7; III John 9-11).

Young people, like the rest of us, have all kinds of WANTS and DESIRES, but teach them to GET THEIR PRIORITIES RIGHT early in life, and keep them right. As Christ said, "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matt. 6:33).

At the beginning of this booklet it was pointed out that our society is out of control. It is spiralling downwards, in a tail-spin toward prophesied destruction for the majority, and captivity for the minority who survive (Matt. 24:21-22; Ezek. 3:4,7,10-11,15-19; 5:1-17; 7:1-8; Jer. 30:1-8; Dan. 12:1,4,7-10).

Both the cause and solution have been shown. "The time of the end" is very near and there is but ONE way of escape! It is for us as individuals to take God's many warnings to heart and do something about them! We cannot change the direction in which our nations are going, but with God's help, we can change the direction of our own lives.

If we are fathers, we can also begin to work seriously at changing the direction in which our children are going, especially those of school age and younger. To do that, we must also work at improving our marriage relationship.

It is not too late for US and OUR FAMILIES to be rescued from this coming "time of trouble" (Dan. 12:1), "... so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob's trouble" (Jer. 30:7). If we will only HEAR THE WARNING, MAKE THE EFFORT, AND SUBMIT TO GOD, we can then truly say as did the apostle Paul: "If God be for us, who can be against us?" (Rom. 8:31).

The next article that I'd like to quote from is the first article in a series of articles that deals with parenting from a WCG brochure "The Plain Truth About Childrearing". I quote now from the lead article entitled "Five Basic Rules of Parenting":

Do you know what the five basic rules of parenting are? Some parents practice none of these basic rules—they in fact aren't rearing their children. Others practice only two or three!

1) Love Your Children

No one needs and requires love more than do children. Parents can demonstrate that love and concern daily, whether for a newborn or a youth just turned 15.

Parents soon learn that physical requirements vary with a child's age, but they often forget that love is required continually. Affection, attention, outgoing concern are key ingredients in all relationships. Children most assuredly shrivel up and die inside—and sometimes literally, too—without these ingredients of love.

Most parents believe they love their children a great deal. Some, however, knowingly or unknowingly compete with their children; others live their lives vicariously through them. Others will not let go of their children and allow them to develop and mature.

The needs of children are ever changing. Love makes the growth transitions possible. Loving parents produce loving children! A father who is overbearing cannot expect affectionate sons and daughters. The apostle Paul cautioned: "Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged" (Col. 3:21, Revised Standard Version).

When a mother yells at her son, "You dummy! Why did you do that?", she is not only discouraging her son, she is encouraging a brother or sister to think of the child in a disrespectful manner. Little babies and small children require affection, kisses, hugs and tenderness in order to grow and develop at a normal rate.

The effect of love on children—and adults, too—is as important as clothing and good food, sunshine and fresh air all put together.

Babies and children must have constant affection and encouragement to develop the right kind of confidence and sense of worth and the capacity to feel and express affection themselves. Even though this may seem obvious to some, it is, sadly, one of the most neglected areas of childrearing.

You who are parents must learn to hold, kiss, cuddle and encourage not only your babies but your younger children as well. The habit of touching, hugging and physically expressing affection to children is something one should never outgrow! Yet how many parents have been emotionally crippled in this respect?

Men, especially in the United States, too often have been taught to be the strong, silent types. By example and inference, males were taught that it is not proper for he-men to kiss and cuddle their young children—especially their boys. Perhaps we do not realize that for centuries it has been customary for countless millions of fathers in the Middle East and in the Latin world to kiss and embrace even their grown sons on occasion!

You who are fathers and mothers should learn to regularly hug and kiss your children. Take them in your arms and hug them when you have been away from them for a while.

Play with them, teach them, read to them while they are sitting on your lap, and then hug them and kiss them again as you put them to bed. Tell them: "Daddy and Mommy love you. We are proud of you. We are very glad to have a little boy (or girl) like you."

With such love and encouragement, your children will bloom before your eyes. Your love and assurance and the sense of security it provides will nourish them as surely as physical food. And in doing all this, you will be building a deep bond of affection and trust that will make it much easier for your children to want to respond to your training and to please you even when you are not present to supervise them.

Always let your children know that you will love them and try to help them no matter what. You may disapprove or even correct them for the genuine mistakes

they will certainly make. But that does NOT change the underlying love and affection you will always feel for them.

But what is love? Many have false concepts of love. They think love is to let their child do whatever he or she wants to do at the moment. This is not love—it's permissiveness, the antithesis of what the Bible calls love.

"Love," says God, "is the fulfilling of the law" (Rom. 13:10). Jesus said God's law could be thus summarised: "'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself'" (Matt.22:37-39, Revised Authorized Version).

Your relationship to God will manifest itself to your children in numerous ways. You will show love and mercy, because God shows us love and mercy. Demonstrating respect for your children is a basic quality of love. Demonstrating that respect is much easier when we realize that children—and other persons—are members of the God-created human family and are potentially members of the God family. That in turn helps children approach others in a similar way.

Parents need to realize that love does not negate firm discipline. There is a right time to discipline children. But parents should never allow themselves to go on a yelling, storming rampage. That is not discipline. Nor does it show self-discipline. Such wild, uncontrolled parental emotion will only produce disrespect in a child for his or her parents.

If you are to really love your children, you must learn to know them as individuals. When children know that you understand their feelings and wants, they are much more willing to respond positively to discipline. Nothing frustrates children more than to be told to do something when they feel that parents don't understand.

This does not mean catering to a child's demands or whims. It simply means listening so that children don't feel you have ignored their thoughts and feelings when you use your authority. This will lessen anger and resentment that could come back to haunt you. In-focus listening requires eye contact, with physical contact if appropriate. Acknowledging that you understand a child (even if you disagree) is usually helpful. Many parents mistakenly do not accept the fact that a child may have a different opinion. Repeating a child's thoughts is a good way to ensure mutual understanding.

We all lose our tempers at times. When this happens don't be afraid to apologize after things have calmed down. It is possible to create a beautiful thing out of a bad experience. It's amazing how pleasant communications can become when a family member is big enough to apologize when wrong. You are teaching your children by example how to admit and handle their own mistakes.

The times of warmth and closeness that usually follow such episodes are among those special memories that children and parents never forget. Showing care and concern for others is an additional value you can demonstrate and encourage in your children. Take an active interest in your children's activities and their friends. Take time to play with your children.

Caring is also reflected in the family members' affection for each other. Men who believe they should show an unemotional image to their children deceive themselves. Moms and dads who take their children up in their arms and express warm affection are laying the foundation for love, compassion and caring in their children.

2) Set the Right Example

Parental example is a critical factor in right child rearing. Nothing renders a parent's efforts in child rearing more ineffective than parental hypocrisy. Children cannot be expected to adopt standards their parents are unwilling to practice.

Children and teenagers who smoke pot or take drugs will often point to their parents' addiction to alcohol, tobacco or prescription drugs. If children observe one spouse verbally attack, criticise or ridicule the other, they are likely to think this is the appropriate way to respond.

Children learn from example more than from words. They are natural mimics. A child's personality often mirrors that of parents. Mannerisms, habits, vocabulary and opinions will reflect those of the parents—for better or for worse!

Learning takes place through the five senses: seeing, hearing, smelling, feeling, tasting. The right example, therefore, is important in all aspects. The way we learn is through repetition, perception, association. Your children; learn from the whole range of words you use, how you use them, the attitudes you express, the situations you explore and the information you share. Therefore, you would do well to evaluate what your example is teaching.

Take for instance a little boy and girl observed fighting and screaming at one another in the yard. The girl's mother came out to stop them. She asked why they were fighting. The explanation: "Oh, we weren't fighting; we were playing family. He's the father, and I'm the mother." Some may find that humorous, but it's a sad commentary on the condition of many families these days.

Parents also need to set the right example in providing for their children's needs. The children, after all, had not ask to come into this world. The parents, whether on purpose or accidentally, produced them. When a man and woman embark on such a course, they are obligating themselves to provide for the child until the child is grown. If anyone does not provide for his own, including children, "he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever" (I Tim. 5:8, RAV).

Basic provisions that children need include wholesome, balanced food; appropriate, quality clothing; cheerful, well-kept living quarters; proper education; and wholesome entertainment. Remember that children will follow parents' examples more than parents' words.

Do you keep your word? Are you obedient to God? Do you respect law and those in authority? Or on the other hand, do your children see in you an individual who criticises, complains and talks back? Do you say nice things to other people's faces and then speak critically of them in private? Do you claim to be one thing in public and then do just the opposite in private—even in your own home? You will be a successful parent only if you are a right example.

3) Take Time to Teach

Some persons slap their children because it is so much easier than teaching or training. God instructs you to teach your children. "And thou shalt teach them [God's commandments] diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in shine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up" (Deut. 6:7).

The Scriptures also admonish, "Train up a child, in the way he should go..." (Prov. 22:6, RAV). Teach and train. What's the difference? They're similar but not exactly the same. Teaching involves gaining a child's undivided attention and taking time to give instruction about how to do something or how to act in various situations.

Training, however, is repeatedly and diligently guiding children to apply what you have taught until it becomes a part of their character. Training may involve such simple things as developing the habit of being clean or of washing hands before eating. It also involves developing the habit of respecting elders and the property of others.

Teaching and training require time, patience and repetition. Begin by setting the right example. Show principles and examples from the Bible. Use your own experiences and those of others to relate the proper way. Children, remember, learn by association. Often the best time to instruct a child is when he or she asks a question.

Most children, especially young children, love to be read interesting and exciting stories. Reading aloud as little as 10 minutes a day from sound educational materials more than teaches specific facts. It stimulates a young mind's mental, intellectual and language development.

Children need to be taught and trained in positive skills—for example, social and cultural manners. They must be taught how to develop their bodies and minds. Point out the positive results of right actions and the negative results of wrong actions in language your children will understand.

For example, children should be warned about the tragedies of illicit sex. Explain what is happening in the world around us because of violating God's law against adultery and fornication. Point out the toll that is being reaped in unwanted pregnancies and the epidemics of social diseases. If the people now suffering from these penalties had obeyed God, they would not have these unpleasant and painful problems.

You can illustrate to your children the bad results of smoking, drug abuse, lying stealing, watching the wrong kind of movies, reading the wrong kind of literature, listening to degrading music and participating in the wrong kinds of activities.

Children are not yet equipped to make right decisions in these areas. They need clear explanations and continuous encouragement as they learn to make right decisions. It is your responsibility to know God's way well enough to be able to effectively impart it to your children.

All of this training takes time—lots of time. Try to spend time each day with your children. Talk to them, teach them, get to know them and let them get to know you.

Go places and do things with your children. You can attend cultural events or visit places of natural or man-made beauty. Teach them to appreciate and enjoy the finer things life has to offer. Go on family outings or camp-outs. Such activities will be memorable for your children—and for you. They will help to bind your family together as a unit.

The necessity of parental involvement cannot be overemphasised. Too many parents rely on others to fulfill this God-given responsibility.

4) Discipline Your Children

You may have seen it—a young mother, wrestling with her small children. She tries to be nice to them and reason with them. She even tries to bribe them with candy and other treats if they would only "be good." But they seem to delight in throwing tantrums and embarrassing their mother in public. They seem totally uncontrollable.

Part of that mother's problem is that she—along with millions of other parents—has no definite plan or program in rearing children. Much of this comes from parents having been led to believe that in rearing children your choice has to be either love or discipline. That is utterly and tragically wrong! In truth, the correct approach to child rearing involves both love AND discipline. They are not opposites, but go hand in hand.

If your little child keeps running out in the street—laughing at you because you either can't or won't discipline for this foolishness, you may one day lose your child under the wheels of a passing automobile. And all the permissive sociologists and psychologists on earth won't be able to bring your child back to life! That's why it is important to teach children the meaning of "no" in advance of problems. Little children, for their own welfare, must be taught to obey their parents. In any number of dangerous situations, it could spell the difference between life and death.

God's Word clearly admonishes to correct and discipline our children for wrong actions. However, discipline involves not only appropriate punishment for wrong behavior but rewards for right behavior (Prov. 22:15 and 29:15).

Unfortunately too many view discipline in a negative manner. They have seen so much child abuse that they reject the principle of proper discipline altogether. They adopt, instead, a destructively permissive stance in respect to their children's attitudes and actions.

But proper discipline for wrongdoing must never take the form of child abuse! Discipline for wrong acts or attitudes should never involve verbal insults or degrading putdowns. It should never involve punching or slapping in the face, strapping with a heavy belt, twisting arms, boxing or pulling ears, pinching, kicking, or hitting about vital organs. We speak out in the loudest terms against an adult losing his or her temper and striking a child in uncontrolled anger or rage.

The word discipline comes from a Latin word that literally means "instruction." That instruction must begin at a very young age. A small sapling can easily be trained to grow in the right direction, but once that sapling becomes a mature tree, it is not possible to change it. In a similar way, children can be trained when young, but there comes a time when parents may no longer be able to teach a child.

While children are young, teachable and pliable, they can be trained by proper instruction and correction. This includes approbation or reward for doing well. Never injure a child. Do NOT lose your temper or strike the child on or about the head or any vital organ. Your child should learn early in his or her life—that you the parent are in charge, that discipline must and will be carried out for the child's good if wrong attitudes or rebellious, disrespectful behaving occur.

Discipline can take many forms. One of the most effective, especially for older children, is the withholding of privileges. Banning use of television for a certain period, for example, or withdrawing permission to play with a friend, to go to a movie or to use the family automobile can be effective.

In most cases it is better to withdraw privileges for relatively short periods (a few days or a week or two depending on the age of the child). Long periods—especially with young children—are usually ineffective. Giving children a chance to have the privilege reinstated by the correct behaviour can help underline the lesson being learned.

Making a child of any age realize the consequences of his wrong action or attitude is a form of punishment in itself. Suppose, for example, a young boy throws a rock and injures his little sister or brother. The parent may then give the offending child the opportunity to "care for" the wound.

Make him sit beside the injured child and hold a cold cloth against the wound. Or have him administer the adhesive bandage. Let him "suffer" (see I Corinthians 12:26) with the injured child a little, and he will soon feel remorse over what he has done!

Children must be made to realize that wrong actions hurt other people. Undesirable conduct is such because it hurts everyone involved—including those who perpetrate it. Remember, too, that any correction should fit the infraction, and that children vary in temperament and aptitude. Use wisdom and discretion, and make sure all disciplining is done out of proper concern for the child.

Parents should always seek to explain, their actions to the child who is receiving correction. A child must be made to realize why he or she is being disciplined. He or she should understand the justice of that correction. Don't overdiscipline for a minor infraction. Don't underdiscipline for a major one.

Correction should be greater, for example, for stubbornness tantrums and wrong attitudes than for careless oversight or an accident that did not involve a wrong attitude. And remember, discipline should never be revenge!

Vindictive parents are ineffective. Poor child rearing produces maladjusted, unfulfilled, insecure children. Proper child rearing bears the good fruit of bright, responsive well-adjusted, happy children. Remember, proper child rearing is built

upon the bedrock of these critical principles: love and open affection; right parental example; intelligent, balanced teaching, and effective, appropriate discipline.

And always remember each child is different. Some children respond positively to a great deal of love and encouragement—and not so much punishment. Get to know your children. Realize each one has different needs.

5) Accept Your Responsibility

How many parents today know that God has ordained government in the family unit? How many know God holds fathers responsible for properly leading, guiding and providing for their families?

This husband-father leadership in no way demeans a mother's role. Mothers often carry more of the day-to-day load of teaching and training of children, especially when they are young but God holds fathers accountable to see to it that the home is being guided by God's child-rearing instructions.

Of course, if a husband isn't physically present because of death, divorce or desertion, the mother has to do the best job possible.

God's instructions on family government are clear. "For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church.... Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything" (Eph. 5:23-24, RAV).

That doesn't mean a father should rule his family in a dictatorial, selfish, inconsiderate manner. God's Word commands, "Husbands, love your wives [and families, we could add], even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it" (Eph. 5:25).

Ephesians 6:4 also emphasises parental responsibilities: "And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord" (RAV). How contrary to today's practices!

A superb book on the subject of childrearing (as well as many other subjects) is Dr Dobson's book "Dr Dobson Answers Your Questions". I'd like to quote now a number of his questions and answers that deal with basic principles of childrearing:

Q: My wife and I are extremely busy during this period of our lives. My job takes me on the road several days a week, and my wife has become very successful as a real estate agent. Quite honestly, we are not able to spend much time with our three children, but we give them our undivided attention when we are together. My wife and I wish we had more family time but we take comfort in knowing that it's not the quantity of time between parent and child that really matters; it's the quality of that time that makes the difference. Would you agree with that statement?

A: There is a grain of truth in most popular notions, and this one is no exception. We can all agree that there is no benefit in being with our children seven days a week if we are angry, oppressive, unnurturing and capricious with them. But from that point forward, the quantity versus quality issue runs aground.

Simply stated, that dichotomy will not be tolerated in any other area of our lives, why do we apply it only to children? Let me illustrate.

Let's suppose you are very hungry, having eaten nothing all day. You select the best restaurant in your city and ask the waiter for the finest steak on his menu. He replies that the filet mignon is the house favorite, and you order it charcoal-broiled, medium rare. The waiter returns twenty minutes later with the fare and sets it before you. There in the center of a large plate is a lonely piece of meat, one inch square, flanked by a single bit of potato.

You complain vigorously to the waiter "Is this what you call steak dinner?"

He then replies, "Sir, how can you criticize us before you taste that meat? I have brought you one square inch of the finest steak money can buy. It is cooked to perfection. salted with care and served while hot. In fact, I doubt if you could get a better piece of meat anywhere in the city. I'll admit that the serving is small but after all, sir, everyone knows that it isn't the quantity that matters; it's the quality that counts in steak dinners".

"Nonsense", you reply, and I certainly agree.

You see, the subtlety of this simple phrase is that it puts two necessary virtues in opposition to one another and invites us to choose between them. If quantity and quality are worthwhile ingredients in family relationships, then why not give our kids both? It is insufficient to toss our "hungry" children an occasional bite of steak, even if it is prime, corn-fed filet mignon.

Without meaning any disrespect to you for asking this question, my concern is that the quantity-versus-quality cliché has become, perhaps a rationalization for giving our kids neither! This phrase has been bandied about by over-committed and harassed parents who feel guilty about the lack of time they spend with their children.

Their boys and girls are parked at child care centers during the day and with baby-sitters at night, leaving little time for traditional parenting activities. And to handle the discomfort of neglecting their children, Mom and Dad cling to a catch phrase that makes it seem so healthy and proper: "Well, you know, it's not the quantity of time that matters, it's the quality of your togetherness that counts." I maintain that this convenient generalization simply won't hold water...(p.20-21)

I believe many Americans have forgotten the value of characteristics and activities which identify the families as unique and different. This benefit beautifully illustrated by the stage play *Fiddler on the Roof*. What gave the violinist his stability and balance on his precarious perch? It was tradition—which told every person who he was. I want to give that same heritage to my children.

Q: Can these traditions be useful in teaching spiritual values as well?

A: They certainly can. In fact, by far the most important traditions are those that help instill Christian principles and elements of the Judeo-Christian heritage in our children.

This gives a boy or girl an additional sense of history and of his/her place in it. If you asked me to indicate who I am today my answer would reflect the Christian values and teachings that I learned as a child. Those understandings began even before I could talk.

Thus, a vital fringe benefit of Christianity is the tremendous sense of identity that grows out of knowing Jesus Christ. Each child can be made aware, beyond a shadow of doubt, that he is a personal creation of God. He can know that the Creator has a plan for his life and that Jesus died for him. I'm convinced that there is no greater sense of self-esteem and personal worth than the personal awareness that comes from deeply ingrained spiritual values. This understanding answers the important questions of life including "Who am I?" "Who loves me?" "Where am I going?" and "What is the purpose of life?" Only Christ can provide the answers to these questions which give meaning to this earthly experience...(p.26)

Q: How can I teach my children Christian attitudes toward possessions and money?

A: This is accomplished not only with words, but also by the way you handle your own resources. It is interesting to me that Jesus had more to say in the Bible about money than any other subject, which emphasizes the importance of this topic for my family and yours. He made it clear that there is a direct relationship between great riches and spiritual poverty, as we are witnessing in America today.

Accordingly, it is my belief that excessive materialism in parents has the power to inflict enormous spiritual damage on our sons and daughters. If they see that we care more about things than people...If they perceive that we have sought to buy their love as a guilt reducer...If they recognize the hollowness of our Christian testimony when it is accompanied by stinginess with God...the result is often cynicism and disbelief.

And more important, when they observe Dad working fifteen hours a day to capture ever more of this world's goods, they know where his treasure is. Seeing is believing...(p.47)

Q: How do you feel about the teaching of traditional male and female roles to children? Do you think boys should be made to do girls' work, and vice versa?

A: The trend toward the blending of masculine and feminine roles is well ingrained in America at this time. Women smoke cigars and wear pants. Men splash perfume and don jewelry. There is little sexual identity seen in their hair length, manner, interests, occupations, and the trend is ever more in this direction. Such similarity between men and women causes great confusion in the minds of children with regard to their own sex-role identity. They have no distinct models to imitate and are left to grope for the appropriate behavior and attitudes.

Therefore, I firmly believe in the value of teaching traditional male and female roles during the early years. To remove this prescribed behavior for a child is to further damage his sense of identity, which needs all the help it can get. The masculine and feminine roles are taught through clothing, close identification with the parent of the same sex, and, to some degree, through the kind of work required, and in the selection of toys provided for play. I am not suggesting that we panic over tomboy tendencies in our girls or that we demand he-man behavior from our boys. Nor is it unacceptable for a boy to wash the dishes or a girl to clean the garage. We should, on

the other hand, gently nudge our children in the direction of their appropriate sex roles...(p.89)

Q: Some parents feel guilty about demanding respect from their children, because it could be an underhanded way of making themselves feel powerful and important. What you think?

A: I disagree. It is most important that a child respect his parent because that relationship provides the basis for his attitude toward all other people. His view of parental authority becomes the cornerstone for his later outlook on school authority, police and law, the people with whom he will eventually live and work, and for society in general.

Another equally important reason for maintaining parent respect is that if you want your child to accept your values when reaches his teen years, then you must be worthy of his respect during his younger days.

When a child can successfully defy his parents during his fifteen years, laughing in their faces and stubbornly flouting their authority, he develops a natural contempt for them. "Stupid old Mom and Dad! I've got them wound around my little finger. Sure they love me, but I really think they're afraid of me." A child may not utter these words, but he feels them each time he outsmarts his adult companions and wins the confrontation and battles. Later he is likely to demonstrate his disrespect in a more open matter. His parents are not deserving of his respect, and he does not want to identify with anything they represent. He rejects every vestige of their philosophy.

This factor is important for Christian parents who wish to sell their concept of God to their children. They must first sell themselves. If they are not worthy of respect, then neither is religion or their morals, or their government, or their country, or any of their values. This becomes the generation gap at its most basic level.

The chasm does not develop from a failure to communicate; we're speaking approximately same language. Mark Twain once said about the Bible. "It's not the things that I don't understand that bother me: it's the things I do!" Likewise, our difficulties between generations result more from what we do understand in our communication than in our confusion with words. The conflict between generations occurs because of a breakdown in mutual respect, and it bears many up consequences.

Q: You place great stress on the child being taught to respect authority of the parents. But doesn't that coin have two sides? Don't parents hare an equal responsibility to show respect for their children?

A: They certainly do! A mother cannot require her child to treat her with dignity if she will not do the same for him. She should be gentle with his ego, never belittling him or embarrassing him in front of his friends. Punishment should be administered away the curious eyes of gloating onlookers. The child should not be laughed at unmercifully. His strong feelings and requests, even if foolish, should be given an honest appraisal. He should feel that his parents "really do care about me."

Self-esteem is the most fragile attribute in human nature; it can be damaged by very minor incidents and its reconstruction is difficult to engineer. A father who is sarcastic and biting in his criticism of children cannot expect to receive genuine

respect in return. His offspring might fear him enough to conceal their contempt, but revenge will often erupt in late adolescence...(p.112-113)

Q: Why is parental authority so vigorously supported throughout the Bible? Is it simply catering to the whims of oppressive, power-hungry adults, as some modern educators surmise?

A: No, the leadership of parents plays a significant role in the development of a child! By learning to yield to the loving authority (leadership) of his parents, a child learns to submit to other forms of authority which will confront him later in life. The way he sees his parents' leadership sets the tone for his eventual relationships with his teachers, school principal, police, neighbors, and employers. These forms of authority are necessary to healthy human relationships. Without respect for leadership, there is anarchy, chaos, and confusion for everyone concerned. And ultimately, of course, respect of earthly authority teaches children to yield to the heavenly authority of God Himself.

On this and other relevant issues, the Bible offers a consistent foundation on which to build an effective philosophy of parent-child relationships. It is my belief that we have departed from the standard which was clearly outlined in both the Old and New Testaments, and that deviation is costing us a heavy toll in the form of social turmoil. Self-control, human kindness, respect, and peacefulness can again be manifest in America if we will return to this ultimate resource in our homes and schools.

Q: Philosophically, I recognize need to take charge of my kids. But that isn't enough to help me discipline properly. Give me a step by step set of instructions that will help me do the job correctly. All right, let me outline six broad guidelines that I think you'll be able to apply. These principles represent the essence of my philosophy of discipline.

First: Define the boundaries before they are enforced. The most important step in any disciplinary procedure is to establish reasonable expectations and boundaries in advance. The child should know what is and what is not acceptable behavior before he is held responsible for those rules. This precondition will eliminate the overwhelming sense of injustice that a youngster feels when he is slapped or punished for his accidents, mistakes and blunders. If you haven't defined it—don't enforce it!

Second: When defiantly challenged, respond with confident decisiveness. Once a child understands what is expected, he should then be held accountable for behaving accordingly. That sounds easy, but as we have seen, most children will assault the authority of their elders and challenge their right to lead. In a moment of rebellion, a little child will consider his parents' wishes and defiantly choose to disobey. Like a military general before a battle, he will calculate the potential risk, marshal his forces, and attack the enemy with guns blazing.

When that nose-to-nose confrontation occurs between generations, it is extremely important for the adult to win decisively and confidently. The child has made it clear that he is looking for a fight, and his parents would be wise not to disappoint him! Nothing is more destructive to parental leadership than for a mother or father to disintegrate during that struggle. When the parent consistently loses those battles, resorting to tears and screaming and other evidence of frustration, some dramatic

changes take place in the way they are "seen" by their children. Instead of being secure and confident leaders, they become spineless jellyfish who are unworthy of respect or allegiance.

Third: Distinguish between willful defiance and childish responsibility. A child should not be spanked for behavior that is not willfully defiant. When he forgets to feed the dog or make his bed or take out the trash—when he leaves your tennis racket outside in the rain or loses his bicycle—remember that these behaviors are typical of childhood. It is, more than likely, the mechanism by which an immature mind is protected from adult anxieties and pressures.

Be gentle as you teach him to do better. If he fails to respond to your patient instruction, it then becomes appropriate to administer some well-defined consequences (he may have to work to pay for the item he abused or be deprived of its use, etc.). However, childish irresponsibility is very different from willful defiance, and should be handled more patiently.

Fourth: Reassure and teach after the confrontation is over. After a time of conflict during which the parent has demonstrated his right to lead (particularly if it resulted in tears for the child), the youngster between two and seven (or older) may want to be loved and reassured. By all means, open your arms and let him come! Hold him close and tell him of your love. Rock him gently and let him know, again, why he was punished and how he can avoid the trouble next time. This moment of communication builds love, fidelity, and family unity.

And for the Christian family, it is extremely important to pray with the child at that time, admitting to God that we have all sinned and no one is perfect. Divine forgiveness is a marvelous experience, even for a very young child.

Fifth: Avoid impossible demands. Be absolutely sure that your child is capable of delivering what you require. Never punish him for wetting the bed involuntarily or for not becoming potty-trained by one year of age, or for doing poorly in school when he is incapable of academic success. These impossible demands put the child in an unresolvable conflict there is no way out. That condition brings inevitable damage to human emotional apparatus.

Sixth: Let love be your guide! A relationship that is characterised by genuine love and affection is likely to be a healthy one, even though some parental mistakes and errors are inevitable.

Q: I want to control and lead my strong-willed child properly, but I'm afraid I'll break his spirit and damage his emotions in some way. How can I deal with his misbehavior without hurting his self-concept?

A: I sense that you do not have a clear understanding of the difference between breaking the spirit of a child, and shaping his will.

The human spirit, as I have defined it, relates to the self-esteem or the personal worth that a child feels. As such, it is exceedingly fragile at all ages and must be handled with care. You, as a parent, correctly assume that you can damage your child's spirit quite easily...by ridicule, disrespect, threats to withdraw love, and by verbal rejection. Anything that depreciates his self-esteem can be costly to his spirit.

However while the spirit is brittle and must be treated gently, the will is made of steel. It is one of the few intellectual components which arrives full strength at the moment of birth.

A recent issue of Psychology Today, this heading described the research findings from a study of infancy: "A baby knows who he is before he has language to tell us so. He reaches deliberately for control of his environment, especially his parents." This scientific disclosure would bring no new revelation to the parents of a strong-willed infant. They have walked the floor with him in the wee small hours, listening to this tiny dictator as he made his wants and wishes abundantly clear. Later, a defiant toddler can become so angry that he is capable of holding his breath until he loses consciousness.

Anyone who has ever witnessed this full measure of willful defiance has been shocked by its power. One headstrong three-year-old recently refused to obey a direct command from her mother, saying, "You're just my mommy, you know!" Another mere mommy wrote me that she found herself in a similar confrontation with her three-year-old son over something that she wanted him to eat.

He was so enraged by her insistence that he refused to eat or drink anything for two full days. He became weak and lethargic, but steadfastly held his ground. The mother was worried and guilt-ridden, as might be expected. Finally, in desperation, the father looked the child in the eyes and convinced him that he was going to receive a well deserved spanking if he didn't eat his dinner. With that maneuver, the contest was over. The toddler surrendered. He began to consume everything he could get his hands on, and virtually emptied the refrigerator.

Now tell me, please, why have so few child development authorities recognized this willful defiance? Why have they written so little about it? My guess is that the acknowledgment of childish imperfection would not fit neatly with the humanistic notion that little people are infused with sunshine and goodness, and merely "learn" the meaning of evil. To those who hold that rosy view I can only say, "Take another look". Returning to your question, your objective as a parent is to shape the will of your child while leaving his spirit intact.

Q: Then how can I do that? How can I shape my nine-year old's will without damaging his spirit?

A: It is accomplished by establishing reasonable boundaries and enforcing them with love, but by avoiding any implication that the child is unwanted, unnecessary, foolish, ugly, dumb, a burden, an embarrassment, or a disastrous mistake.

Any accusation that assaults the worth of a child in this way can be costly, such as "You are so dumb!" Or, "Why can't you make decent grades In school like your sister" Or, "You have been a pain in the neck ever since the day you were born!"

Rather, I would suggest that you respond decisively the next time your son behaves in a blatantly disruptive or defiant manner. There should be no screaming or derogatory accusations, although he should soon know that you mean what you say. He should probably be given a spanking and sent to bed an hour or two early. The following morning you should discuss the issue rationally, reassuring him of your continuing love, and then start over. Most rebellious pre-teenagers respond

beautifully to this one-two punch of love and consistent discipline. It's an unbeatable combination...(p.124-130)

Q: My six-year old has suddenly become sassy and disrespectful in his manner at home. He told me to "buzz off" when I asked him to take out the trash, and he calls me names when he gets angry. I feel it is important to permit this emotional outlet, so I haven't suppressed it. Do you agree?

I couldn't disagree more strongly. Your son is aware of his sudden defiance, and he's waiting to see how far you will let him go. This kind of behaviour, if unchecked, will continue to deteriorate day by day, producing a more profound disrespect with each encounter. If you don't discourage it, you can expect some wild experiences during the adolescent years to come. Thus, the behaviour for which punishment is most necessary is that involving a direct assault on the leadership and personhood of the parent (or teacher), especially when the child obviously knows he shouldn't be acting that way.

With regard to the ventilation of anger, it is possible to let a child express his strongest feelings without being insulting or disrespectful. A tearful charge, "You weren't fair with me and you embarrassed me in front of my friends", should be accepted and responded to quietly and earnestly. But a parent should never permit a child to say, "You are so stupid and I wish you would leave me alone!" The first statement is a genuine expression of frustration based on a specific issue; the second is an attack on the dignity and authority of the parent. In my opinion, the latter is damaging to both generations and should be inhibited.

Q: How should I respond if my child says, "I hate you" when he is angry?

A: If my child screamed his hatred at me for the first time in a moment of red-faced anger, I would probably wait until his passion had cooled and then convey this message in a loving and sincere manner:

"Charlie, I know you were very upset earlier today when we had our disagreement, and I think we should talk about what you are feeling. All children get angry at their parents now and then, especially when they feel unfairly treated. I understand your frustration and I'm sorry we got into such a hassle. But that does not excuse you for saying, 'I hate you!' You'll learn that no matter how upset I become over something you've done, I'll never tell you that I hate you. And I can't permit you to talk that way to me. When people love each other, as you and I do, they don't want to hurt one another. It hurt me for you to say that you hated me, just as you would be hurt if I said something like that to you. You can, however, tell me what angers you, and I will listen carefully. If I am wrong, I'll do my best to change the things you dislike. So I want you understand that you are free to say anything you wish to me always, even if your feelings are not very pleasant. But you will never be permitted to scream and call names and throw temper tantrums. If you behave in those childish ways, I will have to punish you. Is there anything you need to say to me now? (If not, then put your arms around my neck because I love you!)"

My purpose would be to permit the ventilation of negative feelings without encouraging violent, disrespectful, manipulative behavior...(p.132-133)

Q: You have stated that a majority of children emerge from the school systems with the conviction that they are unintelligent and stupid. Would you explain why this attack on self-worth affects so many kids today?

A: There are five large groups of children who consistently fail in the classroom, leading them (and their parents) to conclude they are incapable. These broad categories are as follows:

1. The slow learner. This is the child who lacks an aptitude for academic work. He tries to do the assignments but nothing turns out right. He has difficulty learning to read in the first grade. He doesn't understand science. He rarely receives a "happy face" for doing things properly, and never has his teacher written "Nice work!" on his paper. He is the only child in the room who won't get a gold star on his spelling chart. And he is probably going to be retained in the same grade at least once which convinces him of his stupidity!

2. The semi-literate child. This is the child in whose home two languages are spoken, but he has learned neither of them very well. Thus, he is not "bilingual"—he is semi-literate. He may be so incapable of expressing himself that he rarely makes a sound unless compelled to talk. His progress in an English school will be an uphill struggle throughout his childhood.

3. The underachiever. This is the child who is bright but unself-disciplined and unmotivated to work. His school assignments are usually late, missing, sloppy, or foolish, leading him to draw the same weary conclusion: "I'm dumb!".

4. The culturally deprived child. This is a youngster from an impoverished neighbourhood. He has never visited a zoo, ridden on a plane, or been fishing. His daddy's identity is a mystery, his mother works long hours to support five little children. His vocabulary is minuscule, except for an astounding array of slang words, and he has no place to read or study at home. He knows he isn't going to make it in school, and this fact is already influencing his personal evaluation.

5. The late bloomer. This is the immature child (usually a boy) who starts school before he is ready and experiences early failure. Though he may catch up in maturity later his lack of school success may handicap him throughout his school career.

It is appalling to recognize that the children in these five categories actually outnumber those students who feel successful in school.

Q: It is obvious that you think the attitudes and reactions of parents play a key role in the self-esteem of children.

A: Children are extremely vulnerable to the subtle attitude of their parents. That's why adults must learn to guard what they say in the presence of their children. How many times following a speaking engagement have I been consulted by a mother regarding a particular problem her child is having. As Mom describes the gritty details, I notice that the subject of all this conversation is standing about a yard behind her. His ears are ten feet tall as he listens to a candid description of all his faults. The child may remember that conversation for a lifetime.

It is clear that parents often convey disrespect to a child whom they genuinely love. For example, Mom may become tense and nervous when little Jimmy speaks to

guests or outsiders. She butts in to explain what he is trying to say or laughs nervously when his remarks sound foolish. When someone asks him a direct question, she interrupts and answers for him. She reveals her frustration when she is trying to comb his hair or make him 'look nice' for an important event.

He knows she thinks it is an impossible assignment. If he is to spend a weekend away from the family she gives him an extended lecture on how to avoid making a fool of himself. These subtle behaviors are signals to the child that his mother doesn't trust him with her image—that he must be supervised closely to avoid embarrassing the whole family. He reads disrespect in her manner, though it is framed in genuine love.

My point is that parents should be sensitive to the self concept of their children, being especially mindful of matters pertaining to physical attractiveness or intelligence of the kids. These are two primary soft spots where boys and girls are most vulnerable.

Q: What are some of the factors that hinder parents from building their child's self-esteem?

A: In a very real sense, we parents are products of the society whose values I have condemned. We have systematically been taught to worship beauty and brains, as everyone else, and so have our grandmommas and grandpoppas and uncles and aunts and cousins and neighbors. We all want superchildren who will amaze the world.

Let's face it folks: We have met the enemy, and it is us. Often the greatest damage is unintentionally inflicted right in the home which should be the child's sanctuary and fortress.

Furthermore, I have observed in working with parents that their own feelings of inferiority make it difficult for them to accept gross imperfections in their children. They don't intend to reject their sons and daughters and they work hard to conceal these inner thoughts. But their "damaged" child symbolizes their own personal inadequacies and failures. Thus, it takes a very mature parent to look down upon an ugly child, or one who is clearly deficient in mentality and say, "Not only do I love you, little one, but I recognise your immeasurable worth as a human being."

The first step in overcoming this bias is to examine your own feeling even being willing to expose those guilt-laden attitudes which may have been unconscious heretofore. Are you secretly disappointed because your child is so ordinary? Have you rejected him, at times, because of his lack of appeal and charm?

Do you think he is dumb and stupid? Was he born during a difficult time, imposing financial and physical stress on the family? Did you want a girl instead of a boy? Or a boy instead of a girl? Was this child conceived out of wedlock, forcing an unwanted marriage? Do you resent the freedom you lost when he came or the demands he places on your time and effort? Does he embarrass you by being either too loud and rambunctious or too inward and withdrawn?

Quite obviously, you can't teach a child to respect himself when you dislike him for reasons of your own! By examining your inner-most feelings, perhaps with the help of an understanding counselor or doctor, you can make room in

your heart as a loving parent for your less-than-perfect youngster. After all, what right do we have to demand superchildren when we are so ordinary ourselves!"

Q: You have talked about the attributes or characteristics which are most highly valued in the Western culture. But what is the source of self esteem itself?

A: Feelings of self-worth and acceptance, which provide the cornerstone of a healthy personality, can be obtained from only one source. It cannot be bought or manufactured. Self-esteem is only generated by what we see reflected about ourselves in the eyes of other people or in the eyes of God. In other words, evidence of our worthiness must be generated outside of ourselves. It is only when others respect us that we respect ourselves. It is only when others love us that we love ourselves.

It is only when others find us pleasant and desirable and worthy that we come to terms with our own egos. Occasionally, a person is created with such towering self-confidence that he doesn't seem to need the acceptance of other people but he is indeed a rare bird. The vast majority of us are dependent on our associates for emotional sustenance each day. What does this say, then, about those who exist in a state of perpetual isolation being deprived of loving, caring human contact year after year? Such people are virtually certain to experience feelings of worthlessness, accompanied by deep depression and despair.

Q: You say beauty and intelligence are the most critical factors in shaping self-esteem and confidence. What other influences contribute to the child's level of confidence?

A: Let me list some of the more common variables that relate to self-worth in our culture:

1. Parents have a remarkable power to preserve or damage the self-esteem of a child. Their manner either conveys respect and love or disappointment and disinterest.
2. Older siblings can crush the confidence of a younger, weaker child. The little one can never run as fast, or fight as well, or achieve as much as his big brothers and sisters. And if words are perpetually matters of scorn, he can easily conclude that he is foolish and incapable.
3. Early social blunders and mistakes are sometimes extremely painful, being remembered throughout a lifetime.
4. Financial hardship, depriving a child of the clothes and lifestyle of his peers, can cause a child to feel inferior. It is not the poverty, itself, which does the damage. Rather, it is the relative comparison with others. It is possible to feel deprived when you are truly rich by the world's standards. Incidentally, money is probably the third most important source of self-esteem in our culture. In the materialistic eyes of society, for example, a pimply-faced teenager on a bicycle is somehow considered less worthy than a pimply-faced teenager in a Datsun 280Z.

5. Disease, even when unapparent, may represent the child's "inner flaw". A cardiac condition, or other disorder, which forces Mom to nag and beg him to slow down can convince a child that he is brittle and defective.

6. A child who has been raised in a protected environment such as a farm or a foreign missionary outpost, may be embarrassed by his underdeveloped social skills. His tendency is to pull inward in shy withdrawal.

7. Embarrassing family characteristics, such as having an alcoholic father or a mentally retarded sibling, can produce feelings of inferiority through close identification with the disrespected relatives. Unfortunately, this list could be almost endless. In working with the problem of inadequacy I have drawn this conclusion: whereas a child can lose self-esteem in a thousand ways, the careful reconstruction of his personal worth is usually a slow, difficult process...(p.166-170)

Q: What are the prospects for the very pretty or handsome child? Does he usually have smooth sailing all the way?

A: He has some remarkable advantages, as I have described. He is much more likely to accept himself and enjoy the benefits of self-confidence. However, he also faces some unique problems which the homely child never experiences. Beauty in our society is power, and power can be dangerous in immature hands.

A fourteen-year-old nymphet, for example, who is prematurely curved and rounded in all the right places may be pursued vigorously by males who would exploit her beauty. As she becomes more conscious of her flirtatious power, she is sometimes urged toward promiscuity. Furthermore, women who have been coveted physically since early childhood, such as Marilyn Monroe or Brigitte Bardot, may become bitter and disillusioned by the depersonalisation of body worship.

Research also indicates some interesting consequences in regard to marital stability for the "beautiful people." In one important study, the more attractive college girls were found to be less happily married twenty-five years later. It is apparently difficult to reserve the "power" of sex for one mate, ignoring the ego gratification which awaits outside the marriage bonds. And finally, the more attractive a person is in his youth, the more painful is the aging process.

My point is this: the measurement of worth on a scale of beauty is wrong, often damaging both the "haves" and the "have-nots"...(P.164)

Q: You have convinced me that beauty, brains and materialism are false values that demoralise the self-esteem of kids. But what will take their place? What values do you suggest that I teach to my children?

A: I believe the most valuable contribution a parent can make to his child is to instill in him a genuine faith in God. What greater ego satisfaction could there be than knowing that the Creator of the universe is acquainted with me personally? That He values me more than the possessions of the entire world; that He understands my fears and my anxieties; that He reaches out to me in immeasurable love when no one else cares; that His only Son Jesus, actually gave His life for me; that He can turn my liabilities into assets and my emptiness into fullness; that a better life follows this one, where the present handicaps and inadequacies will all be eliminated—where earthly pain and suffering will be no more than a dim memory!

What a beautiful philosophy with which to "clothe" your tender child. What a fantastic message of hope and encouragement for the broken teenager who has been crushed by life's circumstances. This is self-esteem at its richest, not dependent on the whims of birth or social judgment, or the cult of the superchild, but on divine decree...(p.170)

Q: I have a nine-year-old daughter who lacks confidence and respect. What can I do to help her?

A: One of the most productive means of instilling self confidence is teach methods by which the child can compensate. Compensation occurs when the individual counterbalances his weaknesses by capitalising on his strengths. It is our job as parents to help our children find those strengths and learn to exploit them for all the self-satisfaction they will yield.

And this brings us to a very important concept to be grasped: Inferiority can either crush and paralyse an individual or it can provide tremendous emotional energy which powers every kind of success and achievement. Remember that the same boiling water that hardens the egg will soften the carrot. Everything depends on the individual's reaction to stressful circumstances.

The question is, will your daughter collapse under the weight of inferiority, or will she use her emotional needs to supercharge her initiative and drive? The answer may depend on the direction you can provide in identifying compensatory skills. Perhaps she can establish her niche in music—many children do. Maybe she can develop her artistic talent, or learn to write or cultivate mechanical skills. or learn to cook or raise rabbits for fun and profit...

Regardless of what the choice is, the key is to start her down that road early...right now! There is nothing more risky than sending a teenager into the storms of adolescence with no skills. no unique knowledge. no means of compensating. When this occurs her ego is stark naked. She cannot say, "I may not be the most popular student in school, but I am the best trumpet player in the band!" Her only source of self-esteem comes from the acceptance of other students—and their love is notoriously fickle.

Q: Can you explain the process of compensation in greater detail? How does it relate to feelings of low self-esteem?

A: The unconscious reasoning of a compensator goes like this: I refuse to be drowned in a sea of inferiority. I can achieve adequacy through success if I work hard at it. Therefore, I will pour all my energy into basketball (or painting, or sewing, or politics, or graduate school, or gardening. or motherhood, or salesmanship, or Wall Street—or for a child, elementary school, or piano playing, or baton-twirling or football).

This kind of compensation provides the emotional energy for virtually every kind of successful human behavior as described earlier. In a famous study by Victor and Mildred Goertzel entitled *Cradles of Eminence*, the home backgrounds of four hundred highly successful people were investigated. These four hundred subjects were individuals who had made it to the top. They were men and women whose names you would recognise as brilliant or outstanding in their respective fields

(Churchill, Gandhi, F. D. Roosevelt, Schweitzer, Einstein, Freud, etc.). The intensive investigation into their early home lives yielded some, surprising findings:

1. Three-fourths of the children were troubled—by poverty; by a broken home; by rejecting, over-possessive, estranged, or dominating parents; by financial ups and downs; by physical handicaps; or by parental dissatisfaction over the children's school failures or vocational choices.

2. Seventy-four of eighty-five writers of fiction or drama and sixteen of twenty poets [came] from homes where, as children, they saw tense psychological dramas played out by their parents.

3. Handicaps such as blindness; deafness; being crippled; sickly, homely, undersized, or overweight; or having a speech defect [occurred] in the childhoods of over one-fourth of the sample.

It seems very apparent that the need to compensate for their disadvantages was a major factor in their struggle for personal achievement. It may even have been the determining factor. There have been thousands, perhaps millions, of inadequate persons who used compensation to achieve esteem and confidence.

Perhaps the most classic illustration is seen in the life of Eleanor Roosevelt, the former First Lady. Being orphaned at ten, she underwent a childhood of utter anguish. She was very homely and never felt she really belonged to anybody. According to Victor Wilson, Newhouse News Service, "She was a rather humorless introvert, a young woman unbelievably shy, unable to overcome her personal insecurity and with a conviction of her own inadequacy".

The world knows, however, that Mrs. Roosevelt did rise above her emotional shackles. As Wilson said, "...from some inner wellspring Mrs. Roosevelt summoned a tough unyielding courage tempered by remarkable self-control and self-discipline..." That 'inner wellspring' has another appropriate name: compensation!

Obviously, one's attitude toward a handicap determines its impact on his life. It has become popular to blame adverse circumstances for irresponsible behavior: i.e., poverty causes crime, broken homes produce juvenile delinquents, a sick society imposes drug addiction on its youth. This fallacious reasoning removes all responsibility from the shoulders of the individual. The excuse is hollow. We must each decide what we will do with inner inferiority or outer hardship.

Admittedly, it requires courage to triumph despite unfavorable odds. Compensation takes guts, for some much more than others. The easier path is to wallow in self-pity—to freak out on drugs—to hate the world—to run—to withdraw—to compromise. Regardless of the ultimate course of action however, the choice is ours alone and no one can remove it from us. Hardship does not determine our behaviour but it clearly influences it.

Parents can and should open the door to responsible choices by giving their children the means by which to compensate, beginning during their middle childhood years...(p.173-175)

Q: What can I do to help my middle child, who suffers from low self esteem?

A: I would recommend that parents take steps to insure the identity of all their children, but especially the child in the middle. That can be accomplished by occasionally relating to each boy or girl as individuals, rather than merely as members of the group. Let me offer two suggestions that may serve as examples that well illustrate what I mean.

1. It is meaningful for Dad to "date" each child, one at a time every four or five weeks. The other kids should not be told where they are going until it is revealed by the boy or girl in retrospect. They can play miniature golf, go bowling, play basketball, eat tacos or pizza, or visit a skating rink. The choice should be made by the child whose turn has arrived.

2. Ask each offspring to design his own flag which can be sewn in canvas or cloth. That flag is then flown in the front yard on the child's special days, including birthdays, after he has received an A in school, when he scores a goal in soccer or hits a home run in baseball and so forth.

There are other ways to accomplish the same purpose. The target, again, is to plan activities that emphasise one child's individuality apart from his identity within the group...(p.178-179)

Q: What causes sibling rivalry.

A: Sibling rivalry is not new, of course. It was responsible for the first murder on record (when Cain killed Abel) and has been represented in virtually every two child family from that time to this. The underlying source of this conflict is old-fashioned jealousy and competition between children. Marguerite and Willard Beecher, writing in their book, *Parents on the Run*, expressed the inevitability of this struggle as follows:

It was once believed that if parents would explain to a child that he was having a little brother or sister. he would not resent it. He was told that his parents had enjoyed him so much that they wanted to increase their happiness. This was supposed to avoid jealous competition and rivalry. It did not work. Why should it? Needless to say, if a man tells his wife he has loved her so much that he now plans to bring another wife into the home to "increase his happiness" she would not be immune to jealousy. On the contrary, the fight would just begin—in exactly the same fashion as it does with children.

Q: If jealousy between kids is so common, then how can parents minimize the natural antagonism which children feel for their siblings?

A: The first step is to avoid circumstances which compare them unfavorably with each other. Lecturer Bill Gothard has stated that the root of all feelings of inferiority is comparison. I agree. The question is not "How am I doing?" it is "How am I doing compared with John or Steven or Marion?" The issue is not how fast can I run, but who crosses the finish line first. A boy does not care how tall he is: he is vitally interested in "who is tallest". Each child systematically measures himself against his peers and is tremendously sensitive to failure within his own family.

Accordingly, parents should guard against comparative statements which routinely favor one child over another. This is particularly true in three areas.

First, children are extremely sensitive about the matter of physical attractiveness and body characteristics. It is highly inflammatory to commend one child at the expense of the other.

Suppose, for example, that Sharon is permitted to hear the casual remark about her sister. "Betty is sure going to be a gorgeous girl." The very fact that Sharon was not mentioned will probably establish the two girls as rivals. If there is a significant difference in beauty between the two you can be assured that Sharon has already concluded. "Yeah, I'm the ugly one." When her fears are then confirmed by her parents, resentment and jealousy are generated.

Beauty is the most significant factor in the self-esteem of self-esteem children, as I attempted to express in Hide or Seek. Anything that a parent utters on this subject within the hearing children should be screened carefully. It has the power to make brothers and sisters hate one another.

Second, the matter of intelligence is another sensitive nerve to be handled with care. It is not uncommon to hear parents say in front of their children. "I think the younger boy is actually brighter than his brother." Adults find it difficult to comprehend how powerful that kind of assessment can be in a child's mind. Even when the comments are unplanned and are spoken routinely, they convey how a child is "seen" within his family. We are all vulnerable to that bit of evidence.

Third, children (and especially boys) are extremely competitive with regard to athletic abilities. Those who are slower, weaker, and less coordinated than their brothers are rarely able to accept "second best" with grace and dignity...(p.212-213)

Individual families are similar to societies in their need for law and order. In the absence of justice, "neighboring" siblings begin to assault one another. The older child is bigger and tougher, which allows him to oppress his younger brothers and sister. But the junior member of the family is not without weapons of his own. He strikes back by breaking the toys and prized possessions of the older sibling and interferes when friends are visiting. Mutual hatred then erupts like an angry volcano, spewing its destructive contents on everyone in its path.

Nevertheless, when the children appeal to their parents for intervention, they are often left to fight it out among themselves. In many homes, the parents do not have sufficient disciplinary control to enforce their judgments. In others, they are so exasperated with constant bickering among siblings that they refuse to get involved. In still others, parents require an older child to live with an admitted injustice "because your brother is smaller than you." Thus, they tie his hands and render him utterly defenceless against the mischief of his bratty little brother or sister. Even more commonly today, mothers and fathers are both working while their children are home busily disassembling each other.

I will say it again to parents: one of your most important responsibilities is to establish an equitable system of justice and a balance of power at home. There should be reasonable "laws" which are enforced fairly for each member of the family. For purposes of illustration, let me list the boundaries and rules which have evolved through the years in my own home.

1. Neither child is ever allowed to make fun of the other in a destructive way. Period! This is an inflexible rule with no exceptions.
2. Each child's room is his private territory. There are locks on both doors and permission to enter is a revokable privilege. Families with more than one child in each bedroom can allocate available living space for each youngster.
3. The older child is not permitted to tease the younger child.
4. The younger child is forbidden to harass the older child.
5. The children are not required to play with each other when they prefer to be alone or with other friends.
6. We mediate any genuine conflict as quickly as possible, being careful to show impartiality and extreme fairness.

As with any plan of justice, this plan requires:

- (1) children's respect for leadership of the parent,
- (2) willingness by the parent to mediate,
- (3) occasional enforcement or punishment.

When this approach is accomplished with love, the emotional tone of the home can be changed from one of hatred to (at least) tolerance.

PRE-SCHOOL YEARS: PREPARATION FOR LIFE

Now it's time to take a more in-depth look at the various stages of childhood and how to nurture and develop children through each of these stages of their upbringing. I'd like to now quote again from the WCG brochure "The Plain Truth About Childrearing" and the article "Pre-School Years: Preparation For Life".

Parenting begins with that wonderful moment you first hold your baby in your arms. It is then that the educational process starts that molds and shapes the child into what he or she will be in later life.

Make no mistake about it—the early months and years are the most critical in guiding and rearing of children. Here is how you can make the most of this vital period of time.

Talk to Your Child

Beginning right after birth, talk to your baby. As much as possible avoid baby talk. Use clear speech. Talk while caressing him, bathing him, dressing him, changing him. Hearing the sound of your voice and the language you speak is necessary to his development.

Changing the position of the baby's crib from time to time is important, too, as he begins to distinguish differences in seeing as well as hearing. He begins to become familiar with different colors and shapes. By the time your child is 8 or 9 months old you will notice that he has more of an understanding of what you are saying. When you see this spark of enlightenment, fuel it! Use carefully selected words and phrases—but speak normally.

Don't use baby talk that will only have to be unlearned later. Remember, a child will revert to early learnings, and any faulty constructions you have instilled will come out later—to the child's embarrassment in front of classmates.

Work on your own grammar. You are your child's first teacher and you are transmitting the language with which your child will think and express his ideas. You surely want to transmit it as thoroughly and as correctly as you can. It is wise also to avoid the other extreme—once the child can comprehend. Some parents talk above the child's level of understanding. If this happens the child may "switch off," later impairing concentration in school.

Encourage Curiosity

Don't confine your baby to a playpen for overlong periods. It may be more convenient, but it can curtail interest and curiosity—and curiosity is essential to learning. As your child is crawling, he learns by feeling the surroundings. Muscles and coordination are being developed. Coordinated movements early in life have a critical role in the development of the brain.

All dangerous things should be put out of baby's reach, but allow for a certain amount of minor mishap. Don't be overprotective. Limits in certain areas should be set for the child's own good. Refrain from saying "no" continually, but set definite limits to establish self-discipline early. Remember that children will test their parents and will push to the limits they can go. But they will accept authority if parents are firm.

Character Development

The child's character traits, personal values and personality are decided basically by the home environment. Parents are the prime teachers—or should be! But often the development of character is left to the school in hopes that teachers will impart to the child the discipline and respect the parents couldn't.

A parent should realize he or she has a host of advantages with which to succeed. Young children will unquestionably believe a parent. They have a strong desire to please parents who are truly interested and excited about their accomplishments.

Parents must show the child how to give and share. The child must not be allowed to snatch toys away from others. He must learn not to take anything that isn't his. He must not shade stories to his own advantage.

Above all else is the parental model for these traits. This will determine the child's character. And character is the real key to later success in school and life. Character and good study habits are what every parent first needs to be teaching his children at home.

A child needs to be learning order and organization. No boy or girl should be brought up in household confusion. A neat, ordered home with regular mealtimes will help develop order, trust and confidence in a child.

Praise builds confidence in your children. Don't talk demeaningly to others about your children's faults and inner feelings. If a child knows that what he or she reveals to you from the heart goes out to others, the child will stop being open with you. Don't lay the foundation for a generation gap. Begin building family loyalty now.

Activities—not necessarily expensive activities—when done together are the concrete, personal experiences that draw parent and child to each other. Such shared experiences will also develop right self-confidence in children—a positive eagerness toward new opportunities, rather than a withdrawing, doubtful, discouraged inferiority complex.

Children should be learning cleanliness from the home environment. They should be learning friendliness by social contacts and events—from group outings to home entertaining to dining out. They should be building confidence, enthusiasm, a happy, positive approach. By their actions, they should be displaying a deep honoring of parents and respect for all elders.

They should be learning to follow instructions by completing household chores and tasks. At their level, they should be learning to work for results, staying with a task until it is completed successfully. Children should be taught to accept criticism. Your child will need your comfort when criticized, but he or she must learn to make necessary correction when wrong and forget the sting of criticism. Your love and encouragement will help.

If parents let down in these areas, the child will become unresponsive both to his parents and his teachers at school. He'll become an expert at tuning out—he'll ignore directions and adjust poorly to situations.

Be Highly Interested

Parents should be highly interested in their child and all his interests. This shouldn't be just a casual display—young minds quickly discern the difference: When "Daddy, will you play with me?" is asked, the response, too often, is usually a weary, "Not now, I'm too tired." Or "In a minute, son," hoping some other interest will soon occupy him. Take time to play with your child. It shows your child that you love him and accept his world. Also, you can see the progress he's making—on a regular basis.

Children should be allowed to play near you when you are working, even though this leads to interruptions. Our job as parents is to teach and train our children. Answering their questions is a necessary part of this God-given responsibility.

When the questions come at a moment that you cannot answer, have the child wait. This is valuable training for school and later life. It develops patience and control. It is good, too, because the child has to remember the question, which is excellent preparation for school. If, however, these questions are left unanswered, we have let valuable learning experiences go by.

Children of all ages benefit by being included in the day's regular activities. Shopping, painting the fence, visiting friends, planting the backyard garden are all helpful educational experiences.

Personality and Language Development

As time goes on you will notice your child's personality developing. At age 2, some children are capable of using expressive language. Building compound and complex sentences can be handled at this age, though some youngsters do take a bit longer. At age 2, a child has a speaking vocabulary of about 200 words, but during the next three years it can reach 2,000. This shows the steady, rapid progress that can be made during these crucial preschool years.

Help your child put immature responses into words. Don't let him get away with nodding or pointing. Have your toddler speak in correct, full sentences. In all teaching, remember: A child will strive to live up to our expectations. If we have a low standard, the child will settle for that. If it's a high one, he will reach for it.

Teach and train in a positive, happy, warm, loving way. You shouldn't allow yourself to get so overburdened with other tasks that impatience sets in. Have time for laughter and fun. Make family life enjoyable.

Your Child's Play

Play is the child's work! It is important in his or her life and development. Far from being an extra, it is vital to growth. From the earliest days, play experiences help develop coordination, tastes, maturity and personality. Character is largely formed in early play experiences.

Through play a child rehearses patterns of living. Play doesn't always have to include toys. Teaching your child to perform household chores can be equally fun and constructive. If proper play experiences are offered, a child is likely to transfer much of the pleasure of play into what adults call work.

Toys are important, though. They are a child's tools for learning. They can be used to develop a strong, healthy body and an alert mind. They can help form a child's personality and creative skills. When purchasing toys, parents should select those suitable for the child's age, sex and temperament. Up to one year children enjoy and profit from toys they can look at, feel, safely chew on, hold in their hands and drop. They should be washable and unbreakable and have no sharp edges.

One-to-two-year-olds often like toys they can take apart and put together again, and toys they can push and pull around. Balls, blocks, little airplanes, cars and dolls would generally interest them. For toddlers and younger children, toys that can be assembled, that give children the chance to learn different colors, and help them learn to count, are good.

As a child grows older, he likes to turn pages (teach him how) and experiment with newly discovered abilities. Nontoxic modeling clay, safe vegetable dye paints, various balls (which help coordination, timing and agility) and construction sets are good, depending on the child.

If a child has difficulty catching balls, toss things to your offspring, such as soiled laundry to put in the hamper. Girls enjoy dolls that can be dressed and have underclothes changed. Boys, too, should be familiar with the procedure.

The manipulative skills of 4 and 5-year-olds need toys that stimulate their coordination and mental abilities, speed and accuracy. Trains, hobby materials in arts and crafts, construction or model sets, tricycles and games that can be played out of doors are appropriate here. Outdoor play is excellent for health and coordination. A swing, jungle gym, outdoor tub (under your supervision) are good, as is a sandbox, replete with shovel, bucket and sieve.

Good educational experiences and toys should involve active personal participation. This is essential to the whole pattern of development. Be sure the toys are safe and durable.

Some suggestions of the U.S. National Commission of Product Safety include:

Test doll heads. Twist and turn the head, as well as the arms and legs, as a child might. Look for sharp edges. Make sure the eyes and ears of toy animals are firm. If a toy comes only in a package ask the retailer for a sample you can examine. Be wary of electrical toys. Get assurance that paint on toys is nonpoisonous. Above all, use good common sense! Remember—children are your priceless gifts from God. Make their playtime safe.

Toys do not have to be the purchased variety exclusively. Some can be made from wood or cans with plastic tops. Children enjoy cardboard boxes too—they make fine trains and buses. Creative toys provide the child the excitement and satisfaction of learning. They challenge the child to use his imagination in a constructive and creative way.

Scissors should be round ended, but really cut. This is the time to teach proper use of sharp objects, and your child should soon be quite safe with them. (If giving pencils you should observe how the child is holding the pencil and forming letters.) From your cloth remnants have your child cut odd bits of material and match the pieces, feeling as well as seeing the differences. Don't expect perfect results from your child's craft activities. It is the activity that counts at this time, not the result. Be sure to have your child clean up and put toys away. That is each child's responsibility—in having toys one must learn to take care of them! Failure to do so is allowing a breakdown of character.

In games with others, a child should be taught the importance of sharing and that winning is not as important as being a good sport. Games will help teach good sportsmanship and how to face disappointment gracefully. A child should be taught to always put forth his best effort and to cheerfully cooperate with others. These points should be learned early!

Television

Many preschoolers are practically weaned on television, in some cases spending more than half of their waking time with eyes glued to their "teacher". In the United States, before reaching age 5, a child may have already spent more time in front of a television set than the average student in a liberal arts program spends in the classroom throughout the entire four years of college attendance!

Quickly changing scenes and the rapid-fire delivery of television shorten the attention span of children. Many children who watch television extensively tend to lose their powers of imagination. The electronic video thinks for them so often, they become unable to think for themselves. (The simplest of toys and a vivid imagination entertained before television was available.)

Upon entering school, children reared on television find their "training" catching up with them! With the children accustomed to being entertained, teachers find it difficult to hold their pupils' attention for any length of time. Add to this possibly weakened eyes from staring at one point (sometimes without blinking for long periods, whereas the normal eye movement is from side to side).

Television should not fill the vacuum created by a parent's neglect. It should not be a baby-sitter. Children need to be talked to and listened to in their formative years. The television set itself, however, is not the problem—if control is exercised. Watch good programs together. Parents can then comment on any fallacies for wrong actions that can creep into "good" programs.

The Importance of Listening

Children need to come to school with the habit of giving their undivided attention to the teacher—or any elder who is speaking. This is far too often not the case, as we have said, because of the impact of television, and because parents themselves are failing to set the example. The child's future is thus already at a very sad disadvantage.

Listening is a vital key to learning. Start developing this skill early. It will take work, diligence and self-discipline, but your child's future success depends on it. Have your child sit still and be quiet at certain times of the day. Start by having him or her listen to you for a minute or two at a time. Make sure the child's eyes are on you. Then ask a question concerning what you have just covered.

Praise the child with: "What a good boy (or girl) you are! Those ears just catch every one of Mommy's (or Daddy's) words!" A big hug will be in order.

You will develop by experience the ability to know how much your child is able to take in and reiterate in answer form. Add information when you feel it's too easy for him, always expanding your offspring's knowledge and understanding: Extend his listening time to several minutes by the time he's about 5 years old.

Literature for Reading

In teaching to listen, read to your child! Take your child to the library even by age 2. A love of books will begin to develop by so doing. Choose books that have proper information. Avoid too many talking animals and fairy tales. Keep to subjects relevant to your children experiences and interest. Through books your child's vocabulary will increase and he will learn the flow and rhythm of words. Synonyms and antonyms will enter his ears. Nouns and adjectives will parade before his mind.

Poetry is important for the rhythmic pattern children enjoy, and for speech development (by repeating words that may initially be difficult to pronounce). Have your child learn several from memory. Memory work aids in the proper

development of mental organization. Be sure the selections cover a wide spectrum of facts and experiences. Introduce your child to the rhythm of language with all its richness and beauty. Show your child how you read. As you read, use expression—make the story or poem exciting, interesting. Use inflection and vocal color—but be balanced!

Don't continue reading something in which your child has no apparent interest at the time. He has so many of his own interests going, build on these. His knowledge in these subjects will rapidly increase and other areas will open from this. Open the world to your child—teach, instruct, nourish, add to the ideas and interests he or she has. Try to look at the world through a child's eyes. View the folded rosebud, the billowing clouds, the tiny twigs of trees. Appreciate and enjoy God's creation with your child, and you will be teaching him "while you're walking by the way."

Don't Rush Reading

Don't be a parent who is over anxious to get his child reading! Parents often like to put great emphasis on this while leaving other more valuable preschool work undone. Children often can "read" before they go to school, but have poor comprehension and eyesight and can do little else. They have learned to identify words, but without the depth of meaning that takes added maturity and life experience to comprehend.

To some parents, other areas are not so obvious or readily tangible as reading, and therefore are overlooked. These are the important attitude areas covered earlier. This is the foundation upon which everything else will rest. Reading at a very early age can be accomplished, but it is not necessary. If your child does show interest in reading before his first year at school, expose him to familiar words all around us—"STOP," "TELEPHONE." In a natural way, have your child point out signs as you walk and ride. He or she will have such pleasure in recognition! Select books to read that contain these words. It is much easier for a child to understand ideas that are familiar than a book in which there is little interest.

Have your child tell you a brief story. Using large dark letters, print what he or she has said. You can snake up a book this way, using large sheets of paper. Praise your child for each word recognized. If you choose to buy your child books, make book buying a real event. Buy one at a time. With this incentive, a child will not only experience joy in reading, but may want to try out writing.

Preschool Writing Development

Again, remember it takes tremendous coordination to write. This can be developed by picking berries, folding napkins, sorting out Daddy's nails and bolts, work with Mother. Encourage your child to do much cutting and pasting. Cut out pictures and paste them by topic in a scrapbook or montage. Use cardboard upon which to paste a picture and cut into shapes—an endless supply of jigsaws!

These activities develop strength in hands and fingers. Good penmanship begins here. If your child strongly favors use of his left hand, make no issue of it. Be sure to teach your child not to write in books that should not be written in.

Mathematics

Preschool years offer a made-to-order situation for teaching elementary mathematics. Have your child measure how many times a certain toy will fit on a chair, how many steps it is to certain objects. Have your child set the table and count out the spoons, forks, knives and plates needed.

Make a clock using numbers found in magazines. Have your child gather acorns, stones, pebbles, sand, shells, and weigh them against each other on a scale. On shopping trips, have your child find round and oval fruits and vegetables, rectangular packages. Let him or her have experience with proper handling of money, especially small change.

Music

Acquaint your child with music. From earliest days let him hear a rich variety of music in the home. Play recordings, both classical and children's, along with a rich selection of other types, including ethnic compositions from around the world. Include music that is majestically inspiring, peaceful, pleasurable, joyous—and even sad.

Have background music at special meals. Point out the instruments of the orchestra. Let your child participate in making music and keeping time to it. Let him or her sing, dance, skip, jump, march and learn left and right by so doing. Through rhythmic activities a child gains coordination, confidence, social skills and knowledge. Music helps in discipline and development of creative skills. Be careful not to ridicule or in any way put down the musical attempts of your child. Encourage and help instead. Make music fun. Enjoy it as God intends.

The Important First Day at School

As your child gets closer to school age, prepare for that important first day. See that he or she has been playing with other children, is having contact with other adults who have authority—and responds to them.

Talk positively about your child's school. Problems of excessive shyness can be avoided if the child is allowed to stay with relatives and later a close friend or two for the odd morning or afternoon during toddlerhood or soon after.

Some experience of a well-supervised and structured playgroup for a morning or two (avoid more than this) can help prepare the child for the school setting. Build it up as a joyous experience—a place where he or she will meet new friends, new challenges and have a lovely time. Take your child to visit the school before enrolling.

As your child enters on the first day, and all succeeding days, he or she should enter without you, have a cheery "Good morning" for the teacher, put the lunch pail neatly in the space provided, walk in an orderly manner to the desk and sit quietly, waiting for the class to begin.

Then the teacher speaks, a child should respond instantly not when he's ready to! He should not wave his hand frantically when asking or answering a question. He should be trained in finishing lunch within a half hour and sit properly during it. He

should have been independently toilet-trained and not embarrassed to ask a teacher for permission to use the toilet in emergencies.

Any questions or misunderstandings you have should be directed to the teacher directly, not through your child. You will be laying groundwork for an effective future relationship with the school. Uphold the teacher in your child's eyes. If you don't, you are undoing principles you have already taught. When school and home work together, progress is steadily and rapidly made. To help reassure your child, be sure to be prompt in picking up him or her at dismissal time.

With God's principles as a foundation, your child will have the start of a giant blessing that will grow day by day. He or she will please all who come in contact with your family, reflecting your training and, by extension, God's truth, for "even a child is known by his doings, whether his work be pure, and whether it be right" (Prov. 20:11).

Continuing on the theme of developing children in their preschool years, I'd like to again quote some questions and answers from "Dr Dobson Answers Your Questions". Dr Dobson writes:

Q: What is the most critical period in the spiritual training of young children?

A: I believe the fifth year of a child's life is the most critical. Up to that time, he believes in God because his parents tell him it is the thing to do. At about five or six years of age he comes to a fork in the road: either he begins to reach out and accept the concept as his own, or he does not. At that point, he may "buy it" and put his feet down onto a more solid foundation—or he may start to doubt it, laying the basis for rejection.

I certainly don't mean to imply that parents should wait until the child is five or six to begin spiritual training. Nor are subsequent years unimportant. But I am convinced that our most diligent efforts in the home and our best teachers in Sunday school, to be applied to the child of five or six years. There are crucial crossroads after that but this is the first important one...

Q: Parents have been commanded in the Bible to "train up child in the way he should go." But this poses a critical question, "What way should he go?" If the first seven years represent the "prime time" for religious training, what should be taught during this period? What experiences should be included? What values should be emphasised?

A: You've asked an excellent question. It is my strong belief that a child should be exposed to a carefully conceived, systematic program of religious training. Yet we are much too haphazard about this matter. Perhaps we would hit the mark more often if we more clearly recognised the precise target.

Listed below is a "Checklist for Spiritual Training"—a set of targets at which to aim. Many of the items require maturity which children lack and we should not try to make adult Christians out of our immature youngsters. But we can gently urge them toward these goals—these targets—during the impressionable years of childhood.

Essentially, the five scriptural concepts which follow should be consciously taught, providing the foundation on which all future doctrine and faith will rest. I encourage every Christian parent to evaluate his child's understanding of these five areas:

CONCEPT 1: "And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart" (Mark 12:30 KJV).

1. Is your child learning of the love of God through the love, tenderness and mercy of his parents? (most important)
2. Is he learning to talk about the Lord, and to include Him in his thoughts and plans?
3. Is he learning to turn to Jesus for help whenever he is frightened or anxious or lonely?
4. Is he learning to read the Bible?
5. Is he learning to pray?
6. Is he learning the meaning of faith and trust?
7. Is he learning the joy of the Christian way of life?
8. Is he learning the beauty of Jesus' birth and death?

CONCEPT 2: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" (Mark 12:31 KJV).

1. Is he learning to understand and empathise with the feelings of others?
2. Is he learning not to be selfish and demanding?
3. Is he learning to share?
4. Is he learning not to gossip and criticise others?
5. Is he learning to accept himself?

CONCEPT 3: "Teach me to do thy will: for thou art my God (Psa. 143:10 KJV).

1. Is he learning to obey his parents as preparation for later obedience to God? (most important)
2. Is he learning to behave properly in church—God's house?
3. Is he learning a healthy appreciation for both aspects of God's nature: love and justice?
4. Is he learning that there are many forms of benevolent authority outside himself to which he must submit?
5. Is he learning the meaning of sin and its inevitable consequences?

CONCEPT 4: "Fear God and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man" (Eccles. 12:13 KJV)

1. Is he learning to be truthful and honest.
2. Is he learning to keep the Sabbath day holy.
3. Is he learning the relative insignificance of materialism.
4. Is he learning the meaning of the Christian family, and the faithfulness to it which God intends?
5. Is he learning to follow the dictates of his own conscience?

CONCEPT 5: "But the fruit of the Spirit is...self-control" (Gal. 5:22-23 RSV).

1. Is he learning to give a portion of his allowance (and other money) to God?
2. Is he learning to control his impulses.
3. Is he learning to work and carry responsibility?
4. Is he learning the vast difference between self-worth and egotistical pride?
5. Is he learning to bow in reverence before the God of the universe?

In summary, your child's first seven years should prepare him to say, at the age of accountability, "Here I am. Lord, send me!" ...(p.37-40)

Q: I understand how society evaluates the worth of a child on the basis of his physical attractiveness. But how does he learn of that assessment so earlier? By what mechanic does this cultural attitude get transmitted to preschool kids?

A: They can hardly miss it in the world around them. It's a dull child who fails to notice that the ugly do not win Miss America contests; the ugly do not become cheerleaders; the ugly seldom star in movies; the ugly may not get married; the ugly have fewer friends; the ugly are less desirable! Furthermore. In examining the traditional literature of childhood, I am amazed to see how many of the age-old stories center around physical attractiveness in one form or another. Consider these examples:

The Ugly Duckling. Here is a familiar story about an unhappy little bird who was rejected by the better-looking ducks. The ugly duckling was disturbed by his grotesque appearance. Fortunately for him, however, he had a beautiful swan inside which surfaced in young adulthood. (The story does not mention the ugly duckling who grew up to be an ugly duck!) How many children wait patiently for their beautiful swan to appear, seeing things go from bad to worse during adolescence?

Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer. Rudolph had a weird nose which caused him to be rejected by his fellow reindeer. This story has nothing to do with reindeer: it has everything to do with children. This is how they treat the physically peculiar. They are rejected and ridiculed.

The only way the world's "Rudolphs" can gain acceptance is to perform some miraculous feat, symbolized by the gallant sleigh ride in the snowstorm.

Dumbo the Elephant. Dumbo was ridiculed for having big floppy ears, until he used them to fly. The theme is remarkably similar to the plight of poor Rudolph. It appears repeatedly in the literature of the young because of its common occurrence the lives of children themselves.

Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs. The evil queen asked fateful question, "Mirror, mirror on the wall, who's the fairest of them all?" I am still awed by the crassness of her question considering all of the possibilities to which a magic mirror might respond! Yet the motivation behind her request is clear: the fairest of them all was the most noble, worthy person in the land. Perhaps she still reigns.

Cinderella. The primary difference between Cinderella and her two wicked stepsisters was a matter of beauty. Any illustrated story of Cinderella will reveal that fact. Sure, Cinderella was ragged and uncombed but the basic ingredient was there. It wasn't the pumpkin and the mice that shook up the prince when Cinderella arrived at the ball. You can bet she was a pretty little thing.

My point is that we are incredibly effective in teaching very young children the importance of personal beauty. All children learn it shortly after babyhood! We could do no better if our best educators convened to design a fool proof instructional system.(p.162-163)

Before we move on to have a look at the in-between years of childrearing I'd like to quote an article entitled, "A Generation at Risk" written by Jeff Patton in the June 1996 issue of the World Ahead magazine. Jeff writes:

A Generation at Risk

"Some crimes stun the mind, others sear the soul. In Richmond, California...townspeople were agonizing over the savage beating of a one-month old baby. Ignacio Bermudez Jr. was dumped from his bassinet, pummeled with fists, kicked and possibly hit with a stick, leaving his skull cracked. His alleged assailants? Twin brothers, age 8, and the suspected ringleader, a boy of 6, who were playmates of Ignacio's siblings" (Time, "From the Fists of Babes," May 6, 1996).

Was this an isolated, uniquely American aberration? Consider this news from Corby, England, about 90 miles north of London: "Two girls ages 12 and 13 were accused of kicking a 13-year-old girl to death in a fight at a fairground...The slain youth reportedly was trying to stop a fight Monday when she was surrounded by about 30 girls and beaten" (Los Angeles Times, May 2, 1996).

A Los Angeles Times editorial, pondering the future of such violent, heartless children, commented, "We can only hope it is not too late to save them—or ourselves" ("When Kids Do the Unspeakable," Apr. 26, 1996).

Mass murders in Scotland and Australia have prompted new calls for more restrictive gun access laws. How effective will those governments be in stemming the rising tide of juvenile violent crime? What has happened to our young people? Why are they becoming our oppressors? What are we doing wrong?

Developing Young, Plastic Minds

A human brain is a human brain, isn't it? Or can it change from one generation to another? Is the thinking mind plastic: "formative; mouldable; modifiable; capable of permanent deformation...pliant; supple"? (Chambers Concise Dictionary; The Oxford Encyclopedic English Dictionary).

Today's teachers—frustrated by their students' declining abilities to listen, read, reason, write or clearly express themselves exclaim, "Kid's brains must be different these days!" Could they be right? Education professionals have clearly noticed the "growing discrepancy between what children were apparently [able] to do and what teachers thought they should be capable of doing.

The College Board, which issues the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT), has documented a steady decline in verbal and math scores from 1964 to the mid-1980s. Since then math scores have leveled off, but verbal scores are continuing to decline. Teachers of the youngest children, claiming they see more pronounced negative changes every year, warned that we haven't see anything yet!" (Dr. Jane M. Healy, *Endangered Minds*, Simon & Schuster, 1991, p. 15). Is there a connection between declining academic abilities and rising moral problems among the young?

The subtle neurological differences from generation to generation may be difficult to quantitatively measure, but due to research currently available, neuroscientists would agree today that a child's experience—his environment—profoundly molds the supple neural structure of the young, growing brain.

When a baby is born, its brain weighs approximately 330 grams, about one-fourth of an adult's. The infant's brain has billions of neurons, relatively few of which are needed to be "hardwired" into neural circuits performing such "housekeeping" chores as regulating heartbeat, breathing, reflexes or body temperature. Most of these neurons are like "the Pentium chips in a computer before the factory preloads the software. They are pure and of almost infinite potentials, unprogrammed circuits that might one day compose rap songs and do calculus, erupt in fury and melt in ecstasy. If the neurons are used, they become integrated into the circuitry of the brain by connecting to other neurons; if they are not used, they may die. It is the experiences of childhood, determining which neurons are used, that wire the circuits of the brain as surely as a programmer at a keyboard reconfigures the circuits in a computer " (Newsweek, "Your Child's Brain," Feb. 19, 1996, p. 56).

"'Early experiences are so powerful,' says podiatric neurobiologist Harry Chugani of Wayne State University, that 'they can completely change the way a person turns out.' By adulthood the brain is crisscrossed with more than 100 billion neurons, each reaching out to thousands of others so that, all told, the brain has more than 100 trillion connections. It is those connections—more than the number of galaxies in the known universe—that give the brain its unrivaled powers" (p. 56).

It seems that different segments of the brain are "wired" according to a predetermined order—during critical windows of opportune development.

Once "wired," neural circuits are only changed with difficulty. We all know that it is hard to teach an old dog new tricks. "The implications of this new understanding are at once promising and disturbing. They suggest that, with the right input at the right time, almost anything is possible. But they also imply, too, that if you miss the window you're playing with a handicap" (p. 56).

The neural circuits regulating muscle-motor control are mostly wired up by a child's fifth birthday. Emotional control, social attachment and vision circuits are primarily linked up by age two. Math and logic functions are set by year four. The brain's language-ability window of prime neural development closes by about age two and one-half for vocabulary. Foreign language and musical abilities are primed for development by age ten.

What to Teach When?

Does this mean society should assign sports coaches to have toddlers run pass patterns, drill three-year-olds with math and language flash cards or push the Winnie-the-Pooh set to practice their piano lessons for endless hours in an effort to create a new Mozart?

Not at all! "External pressure designed to product learning or intelligence violates the fundamental rule: A healthy brain stimulates itself by active interaction with what it finds challenging and interesting in its environment. The environments that we provide for children, the stimuli with which we encourage them to interact, and the ways in which we demonstrate for them the uses of a human mind [our personal example]—these are the means at our command for shaping both their brains and our cultural future" (Healy, pp. 81-82).

We can't cram education into our children in an effort to stuff their brains like so many sausages. But neither should we abdicate our parental responsibilities to nourish and encourage, thinking our kids will pick up what they need from thin air. "What does it mean to 'educate' a 4-month-old? Nothing fancy: blocks, beads, talking to him, playing games such as peek-a-boo" (Newsweek, p.61). Educational experiences must be developmental-appropriate—and active parental interaction is the key.

The issue of educational "readiness" is critical! Why can't babies study arithmetic and elementary school children calculus? The brain wires neural circuits together by axons (output parts of neurons). These axons "gradually develop a coating of a waxy substance called myelin, which insulates the wiring and facilitates rapid and clear transmission.

"At birth, only the most primitive systems, such as those needed for sucking, have been coated with myelin. Myelin continues to develop slowly all during childhood and adolescence in a gradual progression from lower to higher level systems. Its growth corresponds to the ability to use increasingly higher-level mental abilities" (Healy, pp. 66-67). This myelination process continues into a person's twenties, and sometimes even longer. "The schedule of myelination appears to put some boundaries around 'appropriate' forms of learning at any given age...Some of the skill deficits of today's schoolchildren, in fact, may have resulted from academic demands that were wrong either in content or in mode of presentation—for their level of development."

Inappropriate educational methods and goals, and the frustration they cause students, may be one major reason why students drop out of school and drift on the margins of society. But our modern, haphazard and often callous disregard for laying the appropriate neural foundation in the rising generation's brains is really the bottom-line reason why today's children—tomorrow's teenagers—will be the way they are prophesied to be.

Who's Teaching Deficient Thinking?

Dr. Healy writes, "Language shapes culture, language shapes thinking—and language shapes brains...."

"The brain is ravenous for language stimulation in early childhood but becomes increasingly resistant to change when the zero hour of puberty arrives. Severe deprivation of language during early years guarantees lasting neural changes that noticeably affect speech and understanding.

"More subtle forms of language deprivation do not show up in such dramatic ways, but may ultimately affect abilities to think abstractly [as per religious and moral issues], plan ahead and defer gratification [avoiding illicit sex and drugs], control attention, and perform higher-order analysis and problem-solving—the very skills at issue in American schools today" (p. 86).

Dr. Healy warns, "The brains of today's children are being structured in language patterns antagonistic to the values and goals of formal education. The culprit, which is now invading all levels of the socioeconomic spectrum, is diminished and degraded exposure to the forms of good, meaningful language that enable us to converse with others, with the written word, and with our own minds" (p. 86).

Why is this generation of children at risk? "Too much television is stunting the language development of middleclass children as well as those from deprived inner-city areas, according to a leading speech therapist. Dr. Sally Ward, who is considered the... [United Kingdom's] leading authority on the speech development of young children, believes babies under one year old should not watch television or videos at all. Children of two or three should watch for no more than an hour a day...

"All the evidence showed, said Dr. Ward, that children whose language was below standard at the age of three could be set back for life. They are likely to be educational failures and failures in all sorts of ways. They will go to school with depressed language levels and the whole educational progress is held back" (Manchester Guardian Weekly, "TV Exposure Damages Children's Speech," Jan. 21, 1996).

Is there some connection between children's violence and television viewing? California's Attorney General Dan Lungren said, "Children do not emerge from their mother's womb hating and killing. There's something in our culture. We're making it a badge of courage, a status sign to be involved in violence. It's rampant in our movies and in our television. We're probably more uncivil in the language we use than at any time in our history. Listen to the disparaging, insulting messages...the shock jocks, the rap, the Saturday morning cartoons and even the Internet. We've debased our culture" (Los Angeles Times, May 2, 1996). According to newspaper columnist Georgie Anne Geyer, "Language tells what a people thinks about itself and

its destiny," but "television's abominable grammar has tarnished the beauty of the English language" (Healy, p. 88).

Most estimates note that children and adolescents watch more TV than perhaps any other activity in their lives except sleeping. The average elementary school student watches 25 hours per week, the normal high school student views 28 hours weekly! In fact, the tube is on for an average of 7 hours daily in most American homes.

"Kids" shows are the most violent part of television, with 20 to 25 certifiably violent acts per hour—much more than adults see in prime time. Add to that a recent study by the Washington D.C.-based American Psychological Association, which found that kids who've watched violent TV are more likely to commit violent acts, and you have some cause for concern" (Child, "Kids and TV," Oct. 1995, p. 17).

By substituting the vicarious experiences of the violent, visual media for the real experiences of one-on-one interaction with concerned and caring parents, we are undermining the next generation's ability to have the language skills, problem-solving abilities, patient persistence and proper role models required for moral decision-making. Speaking for teachers everywhere, Dr. Healy writes, "Our job is getting increasingly difficult, however, because we seem to be standing in the way of an avalanche of brains that are misfitted to our educational objectives. A teacher can easily become engulfed trying to reconcile administrators' demands for 'achievement' with today's language and attention patterns. Unless the adult community decides to help us wrap these growing brains in the mental garments of language, reflection, and thought, I fear we will continue to see increasing numbers of children categorised 'educationally sick'" (Healy, p.150).

An Effective Solution

The solution is simple, but difficult—challenging all parents to take a long, hard look at the learning environment they are providing for their children. Actually, there is nothing new in this challenge. In fact, the solution to morally and intellectually "sick" kids was discussed about 3,400 years ago!

Just before the Israelites were to cross over the Jordan River to claim their Promised Land, their human leader, Moses, assembled everyone to explain the official moral education policy that all the responsible adults in the community were to adhere to. "Moses convened all Israel, and said to them: Hear, O Israel, the statutes and ordinances that I am addressing to you today; you shall learn them and observe them diligently" (Deut. 5:1 NRSV). This was not passive teaching or boring head knowledge!

God expected the adults of that generation to internalize His instruction and to teach it to their children by active example, oral discussion and the written word.

"Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart. Recite them to your children and talk about them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise. Bind them as a sign on your hand, fix them as an emblem on your forehead, and write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates" (Deut. 6:6-9 NRSV).

When a parent diligently teaches his child the Word of God, the child's brain will receive a foundation of wisdom, both spiritually and intellectually. "The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul; the decrees of the LORD are sure, making wise the simple" (Ps. 19:7 NRSV).

In several scriptures, the Bible points out, whether explicitly or implicitly, how highly valued God considers a parent who teaches His ways to the rising generation. "For I have chosen him [Abraham, the father of the faithful], that he may charge his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing righteousness and justice; so that the LORD may bring about for Abraham what he has promised him" (Gen. 18:19 NRSV).

Another prime example is that of the human parents of Jesus of Nazareth, Mary and Joseph. God could have selected anyone He wanted, but He chose Joseph as head of the household because he was a righteous man (Matt. 1:19), meaning he lived by Israel's official moral education policy. Mary, too, was chosen because God was sure she would be a good mother to Jesus (Luke 1:28-38), teaching her baby the fundamental cognitive, emotional and spiritual lessons He would need to learn to fulfill His divine calling. Of course Jesus as a child had one advantage that most people don't have—the Spirit of power, love and a sound mind from conception (cf. 2 Tim. 1:7; Luke 1:35)!

Joseph and Mary patiently took the time to talk with and teach Jesus. By age 12, Jesus' thinking was deep and His reasoning was clear. He could express Himself with tact, incisiveness and clarity. How do we know this? "Now every year his parents went to Jerusalem for the festival of the Passover. And when he was twelve years old, they went up as usual for the festival. When the festival was ended and they started to return, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but his parents did not know it... After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers" (Luke 2:41-47 NRSV).

Two others of Mary and Joseph's children, James and Jude (cf. Matt. 13:55), also became great spiritual pillars in the Church of God. In fact their writings were considered so important that they were included in the Holy Scriptures.

In her conclusion, Dr. Healy observed, "Human brains are not only capable of acquiring knowledge; they also hold the potential for wisdom. But wisdom has its own curriculum: conversation, thought, imagination, empathy, reflection. Youth who lack these 'basics,' who cannot ponder what they have learned, are poorly equipped to become managers of the human enterprise" (p. 346).

To alter the structuring of a rising generation's minds and thus the destiny of the world, we must restore parents to their critical, rightful role of teaching and nourishing their children in the basics of true spirituality, which is the foundation of moral and ethical values. This will require a profound shift in present social and economic attitudes. In today's world, parents are gambling with their children's minds if they allow electronic influences such as TV to structure those young, plastic, moldable brains.

But it is not enough to suppress harmful influences. Parents today must themselves implement God's moral education plan. They must learn it and observe it themselves first. Then they can effectively talk about it at home and when they are away, when

they lie down and when they rise up. "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; all those who practice it have a good understanding" (Ps. 111: 10 NRSV).

THE OVERLOOKED IN-BETWEEN YEARS

Now for the next stage of a child's life – the in-between years between preschool and the teen years. I'd like to now quote again from "The Plain Truth About Childrearing" and the article "The Overlooked In-Between Years":

The preschool years are crucial in a child's development. So are the earlier school-age years—roughly ages 6 to 12. These are the preadolescent years, just before the stressful time of puberty when a child begins his or her transition from childhood to adulthood. The preadolescent years lay the foundation for the teen years. It is an important time that in large measure determines the course for subsequent years.

At this age, children are still young and pliable. You, the parent, will at this time set them on the road to either success or failure. When children become teenagers, it will be much more difficult to alter already established patterns of behavior. By instilling right habits in your children before they become teenagers and young adults, you will make it easier on them and on yourself—later on.

It's Never Too Late to Start

If you have neglected your childrearing responsibilities up to this point, NOW IS ABSOLUTELY THE TIME TO START! Your responsibility has become a serious one. Possibly the most important aspect of child rearing at this or any age is proper communication. The need for effective communication cannot be overemphasised!

In this chapter we focus on selected areas of concern in preadolescent childrearing and show how these principles can be specifically tailored to this age group. We will examine the areas of communication, general education, sex education and character morals.

"No one listens." "No one understands." "No one cares." These are the prevalent feelings of most children and teenagers today. And such attitudes can be a great barrier to a parent's child-rearing efforts. Parents must foster an atmosphere of openness and approachability.

Children must not be made to feel afraid to come to you as a parent. Establish contact with your children. Don't let job, activities, selfish interests or other matters interfere with this need. This is too often neglected—with disastrous consequences!

Communication must be two-way. Parents usually communicate to their children, but not with them. Your children have their own ideas, dreams, plans and goals. Some are right. Some are wrong, or inadvisable. If your children develop the habit of coming to you with their thoughts, you will be able to direct and advise them in their thinking, and often prevent problems before they arise.

Answer honestly: Do your children come to you for advice? If not, you need to begin talking more with them. Ask them questions about school, their friends, their interests, problems they might be having. Not in a prying manner but in an attitude of genuine interest and concern. Show them that you are interested.

Be understanding. Be fair. Let them know that they can always come to you, even if they've done something wrong. Soon your children will want to take you into their confidence and share their problems, joys and sorrows.

Do you really listen to your children's viewpoints? Don't automatically close your mind to their views. Youngsters won't always agree with parents about what's best for them, but if you give them a fair hearing and genuinely consider their views, they will realize that you have been fair.

Help them understand why something is either wrong or inadvisable. Don't just say "No!" and leave it at that. Provide instruction and guidance. Take time to reach. If they choose to do what is inadvisable let them learn the lesson. Don't rub it in by saying, "I told you so."

Occasionally have an evening of family discussion, a round-table in which all are involved. On such an occasion, allow each member of the family to air his or her views and make suggestions about possible change that might need to be made in various areas of family life. This will be an excellent time to get to know your children and how they are thinking—and for your children to get to know you.

Get to know your child at this age. If a pattern of open communication is established in these years, you'll be on a much better footing when the teen years arrive. Don't let a generation gap develop in your family. Close that gap by communicating with your children!

Educating the Whole Person

One of the most tragic developments of our time has been a rather general declining quality of education. The foundation for educational success is built in the elementary years—and before. If proper attention and guidance are given in the early years, those years that follow will be much more productive and rewarding. Instill a desire for education in your child. Help establish right attitudes about school. Show enthusiasm over his homework and school achievements. Be concerned and interested in your child's progress—and show it.

Establish a dialogue with his teacher. Discuss his progress periodically. Listen to the teacher and take the instruction to heart. If there are problem subjects requiring additional attention, help your child in these areas. Don't allow your child to simply coast through school, doing just enough to get by. Be actively concerned. It will pay off handsomely in so many ways.

Remember, too, that your child's education doesn't begin and end, with the school day. Education takes place throughout one's waking hours. There are many ways of fostering this continuous learning process. One of the important roles of a parent is that of teacher!

Instill in your children a love of books and reading. Take them occasionally to your public library. Help them select interesting and informative books on a wide range of subjects. Go through these books with them, as time allows.

Create an atmosphere of dynamic interest in the huge world around us. Encourage them to want to know more about it—about its people, places, wildlife, history and so on. Read with them. Set an example by letting them see you reading.

Television can also be an effective tool for education, if used wisely. Supervised viewing of educational and informative programs can add a visual dimension to learning and stimulate additional interest and understanding. Be careful not to allow indiscriminate use of the set. There is nothing wrong with occasional viewing for entertainment, as long as wrong influences are guarded against, by proper supervision. Point out wrong values and actions on television. Discuss what is going on in the show. Remember, television is a privilege, not a right.

Family trips can also be a valuable method of education. Take your children to museums if any are accessible. Museums hold a great fascination for young people. Planetariums are also of great interest to children. They can open wide vistas of interest in the universe and the world in which we live. Trips to historical sites or natural points of interest can also provide valuable learning experiences. Such experiences at an early age leave lasting impressions. Your children want and need family activities of this nature.

The more a child knows, the more he or she will want to know. Helping to develop an inquiring mind in your child is one of the most important efforts you can make during preadolescent years.

Sex Education

During the preadolescent period questions about sex inevitably arise. Children at this age want to know the simple answers to their questions—and they will find out—one way or the other! Parents often don't know how to go about telling their children the facts of life. They become tongue-tied and embarrassed when confronted with their children's sexual questions. They become uncomfortable and uneasy. They grope for words or they change the subject. Most children are thus left to pick it up on their own, to put two and two together for themselves. More often than not, they pick it up in the proverbial gutter, usually from classmates in the form of dirty jokes or magazines.

Don't allow this to happen to your child! You should have begun teaching your child in the preschool years, while he is still young, about birth, the nursing of babies and sex before he hears it from misinformed sources. Educate your child in stages about birth and sex as early as possible, before other influences come to bear. Do not allow other children to play the role of sex educator for your child!

How should you proceed? First, make sure you are sufficiently versed on the subject to be able to provide simple, but correct and accurate answers to their questions. It is often surprising how much parents don't know about their bodies and the reproductive process!

Create an atmosphere of open communication. Candidly and openly answer according to a child's level of understanding. Don't worry that children will be embarrassed or frightened by explicit answers, thoughtfully presented. The embarrassment and apprehension are usually only on the part of the parent! And don't wait until your children ask about sex.

Almost all want to know, but some are too shy to ask. If they don't inquire, don't assume they have no interest or are not old enough to deal with the subject. Take the initiative and teach them when they are young before wrong attitudes develop because of outside influences.

Be careful not to associate human sexuality with feelings of guilt or shame. Let your children know that sex is sacred and wholesome. Don't convey—consciously or unconsciously—a negative view of the opposite sex. Regardless of your own innermost feelings, don't create wrong attitudes in your child. Attitudes acquired early in life tend to be retained. Impart the right kind of wholesome, responsible Bible-based attitudes about sex to your children.

A few books, carefully chosen, can also be helpful. Go through a simple book about sex with your children. Photographs of the human body and explicit diagrams can often help clarify what words sometimes fail to convey.

There has been much controversy in recent decades about sex education in public schools. If sex information is imparted first in the home, the negative aspects (if any) of the school's presentation can be overruled. When your child's teacher covers human sexuality in class, your child will be able to take that information and view it through eyes that have already been trained to discern good and bad according to the Bible's value system.

Remember, too, that a large portion of your child's understanding of sex and love in marriage will come from their viewing the relationship between you and your spouse. If you are unaffectionate with your spouse—if your child never sees you hug, kiss or hold hands with each other—chances are that he or she will grow up to be an undemonstrative and unaffectionate adult. Set the right example! A levelheaded approach to sex from the early years will produce an adult able to handle his or her sexuality wisely and responsibly.

The preadolescent years are also a time when attention must be given to developing right attitudes about being a boy or girl, attitudes that will carry over into adulthood. Possibly the most important aspect of such teaching is strong example. Young people want and need someone to copy. If parents are setting the right examples of masculinity and femininity, most of the battle is already won.

If a father treats his young daughter with respect as a feminine young woman opening doors for her, respecting her privacy, treating her with love and kindness—this is the type of behavior she will look for and expect in a man later on. If her father does not show love and fatherly affection and concern toward her, she will have no standard by which to judge proper masculine behavior.

Mothers, too, must exhibit the proper kind of feminine character traits to their sons—traits that they would like to see in their future daughters-in-law. Young men are often drawn to women who remind them of their mothers whom they dearly loved and admired. As the song from yesteryear observes: "I want a girl, just like the

girl, that married dear old dad." If a mother fails to set a proper feminine example, her son may later have difficulty in evaluating and choosing a suitable mate.

In single-parent families, it is important that the children—regardless of their sex—be exposed to adults representing the sex of the missing parent, adults who can set a right example of masculinity or femininity to the children. Such adults can be relatives, friends, coworkers, neighbors. Single parents must not neglect this important aspect of their child-rearing responsibilities.

A girl needs to understand what she is and her potential as a woman. She has to be taught to exhibit those characteristics that make for true femininity—characteristics such as virtue, industry, outgoing concern for others, generosity, understanding, helpfulness. She should be taught how to conduct herself in all situations as a lady.

Instruction in etiquette and manners is essential. If slovenly conduct and deportment are allowed to flourish in these early years, it will be difficult to break those bad habits later on. Begin early to set right standards! Work now to mold your daughter into a woman of personality and charm.

Practical skills such as cooking, sewing and cleaning can also be taught beginning in these early school-age years. Do not wait until the high school years, or hope that home economics classes will do the job for you. Give your daughters a head start by early instruction at home.

Proper grooming habits should also be established at this age. Mothers should take time to instruct their daughters in hair care, proper dress and personal hygiene. The habits of proper diet and a regular program of exercise should be stressed in these early years.

Your children will thank you for it later. Your daughters are the wives and mothers of tomorrow. They will be the examples for your grandchildren. Be diligent to give them—and future generations the right start!

Boys must understand that the purpose of being a boy is to become a man. Today, one finds far too many teenage boys and young men who are out-of-condition weaklings—sallow-faced, sunken-chested and wimpish. This should not be. Boys should be motivated and taught to develop courage and strength, to be fit physically.

They should be encouraged, as should girls, to take an active part in sports and athletic programs to get in shape and stay that way. Basketball, tennis, soccer, softball, volleyball, swimming, jogging—the possibilities are endless. Such physical activity will develop strength and coordination and stimulate mental agility.

Boys should also be provided with chances to work. They should be taught to work diligently and conscientiously at whatever job they are given and to enjoy it. Hard work is a trait that has been rapidly on the decline among young people—but one that is an essential for later success as an adult.

Boys should also be trained in proper etiquette and grooming. Manners and a clean-cut appearance are essential. Mothers should help their sons develop

good habits of neatness and cleanliness. If a mother constantly picks up after her son, he will not learn the habit of personal cleanliness. Encourage in him the habit of hanging up his own clothing, of keeping his own room neat.

Both boys and girls should be given chances to develop an appreciation for good music. Music today is a big part of every child's life. Children should be encouraged to develop their musical abilities, vocal and instrumental.

Finally, it is helpful to supplement parental example with biblical examples. Read to your children examples of real men and women from the Bible. Discuss with them why these men and women were examples of true masculinity and femininity. And read also the bad examples, explaining why those men and women failed.

Developing Character and Morals

The home is an essential element in the instilling of right character and morals. You can have a profound effect on how your children will conduct their lives after they leave home. Children want guidelines. Most young children earnestly desire help from their parents. It gives them a sense of security. They know you are concerned for them if you give them guidelines. Let children know how you expect them to behave. Give them clear standards of conduct.

When it comes to instilling character and morals, realize again that example is of paramount importance. Your actions speak louder than your words. Do you lie, cheat, swear, follow a double standard, gossip, complain, criticize? Your children see it! How can a parent expect to be credible to his children if he does not follow his own advice?

Other forces, however, are also trying to shape your children's character. Television, radio, music—these are powerful influences. Any potential wrong effects of these forces need to be offset. It will take time and effort to successfully do battle with them when necessary. But it is worth it. Teach your children to respect you, their teachers, their elders, the laws of the land and the rights of others. Be sure, too, that you are personally living your life in such a manner to deserve their respect and honor.

Develop within your child the belief and practice of proper values. Explain the positive and negative results of right or wrong actions, in language your child will understand. Vividly paint the picture. Explain the bad results of smoking, lying, drug use, too much television, degrading music, the wrong kind of friends, laziness, self-pity and irresponsibility. Help him realize why certain actions and conduct are wrong and harmful.

Parents should teach their children that there are absolute, living, spiritual laws that govern all life, and that these laws exact penalties if they are broken. Teach your children obedience to God and his laws. Teach them the Ten Commandments. Explain how they apply to everyday life, to situations your children encounter in their day-to-day existence. These great laws of life summarize the way of giving, the way of outgoing concern to fellowman and of honor to God.

Bible study should be a part of every family's schedule. Underscore the principles you have been teaching your children with examples from the Bible.

Show them examples of right behavior, explain why this behavior pleased God, and point out the blessings that came from such behavior. Also illustrate the consequences of wrong behavior with examples from the Bible.

As a parent, you must be alert to the times. Don't live in a dream world. Don't assume things are the same as when you were a child. This is a fast-changing world, a much different world than when you were young. Children have a natural desire to conform, to do what their peers are doing.

As a parent, you must be informed about today's youths and their concerns and preoccupations. Talk to your child; talk to other parents; talk to teachers; read newspapers and magazines. Keep your fingers on the pulse of the world. If you fail to understand the influences bombarding your child, you may be helpless to counter them.

Watch for wrong attitudes in your children. Be on guard against attitudes of anger, selfishness, dishonesty and rebellion. Inquire why your children feel the way they do. Guide them to understand why any such attitudes are harmful to themselves and to others. Instruct them in the proper responses to situations, and why such responses work for the best in the long run.

In the same vein, encourage the right attitudes of love, giving, sharing, understanding, obedience and forgiveness. Show your pleasure and appreciation when they act responsibly. Of course, it will at times be necessary to discipline wrong conduct. When such occasions arise, act with wisdom, love, compassion, mercy—and with firmness. Be strict in things that are wrong. Don't be a permissive parent. Correct in a firm yet loving manner.

Help them understand why their actions were wrong, and why discipline is necessary. Exercise the proper judgment in deciding what type of correction to administer. Often a simple predetermined denial of privileges for a period of time can be an effective form of discipline for the removal of bad habits. When physical correction is administered, remember that it should never cause injury to the child. Child beating causes permanent physical and—even more importantly—emotional damage to a child.

Any correction should fit the infraction. Use wisdom in correction. Bear in mind that children are not adults and should not be expected to act completely like adults when they are young. Be realistic. Don't overreact or overcorrect. Strive for the proper balance. Discipline in love, not in anger. If you are emotionally out of control, wait to cool down before administering correction. Don't let your emotions cloud your judgment.

Remember, too, that mercy can sometimes be as effective in teaching the lesson as administering actual discipline. The display of a forgiving attitude on the part of the parent ("I'm not going to punish you this time, but...") will impress your children with your fairness if they did not fully understand the problem. Never harbor a lingering grudge against them. Let them know that you corrected for their own good, and that the matter is now over. Give them a chance for an immediate change of heart or action.

Also, it is important to reward good conduct. Positive reinforcement for right action is as effective a teacher as discipline for wrongdoing. Praise your

children when the situation calls for it. Comment on your pleasure at seeing their right conduct. Commend them for their helpfulness and consideration. Such rewards will lend powerful support to your teaching that right conduct brings happiness and harmony. Praise does work wonders.

In summary, remember that your preadolescent children are young and full of energy. They are inquisitive, impressionable and pliable. Establish contact with them. And help them to establish contact with God and he will help them.

Get to really know your children and understand them. Be interested and concerned. Be encouraging. Lay a firm foundation in these crucial years. Your efforts now will pay eternal dividends!

THE TEEN YEARS

Now to move on to the final stage of a child's development – the teenage years. I quote now from the article "The Teen Years" that concludes the brochure on "The Plain Truth About Childrearing"

Without a decent set of parents, a kid doesn't have much of a chance in this society," says California juvenile court judge Joseph N. Sorrentino, author of the book *The Concrete Cradle*. At no time during a child's development is that statement more true than during the wonderful, crucial, turbulent teenage years.

Teenagers need active, proper guidance from good, strong parents if they are to mature into successful adults. Think: This world in which we all live is a pulsating pressure cooker—a constantly changing and challenging, even threatening, environment. And teens are faced with this world just at the most volatile period of their lives—when they are trying to come to grips with their energy and emotions, when their personalities and habits are being solidified, probably for life.

Why Frustrations?

Is it any wonder that the path from adolescence to adulthood has been called an obstacle course? Here's what one youth, overburdened with the problems of this world, said: "What's the use of trying to learn anything or be anybody? The world's going to blow up in a couple of years anyway. Why not just have a good time and enjoy life however you can while you can?"

This seems to be the attitude of many young people today. And can you really blame them? Can the average teenager help resenting a world filled with fights not of his making—problems not of his creation—frustrations beyond his solving? Feeling betrayed by home, school and church, they too often just give up and drop out—living only for the moment in a destructive whirl of drugs, sex, crime and violence.

Obviously, there are dozens—even hundreds—of intensely personal reasons why young people defy authority, reject parents, fight police. But the one biggest reason is that they simply do not like this world the way it is, and deeply wish it could be changed. The plain truth is that God Almighty is soon going to intervene in the affairs of this world and save humanity alive, ushering in a new world of peace, prosperity and happiness for everyone (Mic.4:14). That knowledge gives us tremendous hope—encourages us to overcome the obstacles in our lives and be the

best we can be. It propels us to learn and live God's way of life—the only way to true happiness.

It is this knowledge and motivation, ultimately, that must provide the solution to the problems of teenagers today. But exactly how can parents help their teenagers right now, in practical, down-to-earth, effective ways?

Almost every parent wants his or her children to succeed. It is one of life's greatest joys to see them do so. As one man said, perhaps the one reward a parent gets in child rearing is to see his or her son or daughter become a success in life. On the other hand, it is one of life's greatest heartaches for a parent when children go the wrong way. And make no mistake: There is a battle raging between you and this world—a battle for your teenager! At birth, the battle began, between you—the parent—and Satan. The spoil is your child.

If you truly want your teenager to succeed, now is the time to continue decisive action. Next to the years of infancy and early childhood, these teenage years will most influence your youngster's development for life. You, as a parent, must help. How sad it is that many parents simply choose not to fulfill this duty. Said Dr. Amitai Etzioni, professor of sociology at Columbia University: "An increasing number of parents have resigned their responsibility for the character of their child. It's as elementary as that." And that, in essence, is what we are talking about here—how given the knowledge of God's truth and the understanding of the spirit in man, by which humans differ from animals, a parent can instill right character in a child.

Don't make excuses! Of course, every teenager is different and must be dealt with individually, but there are some broad principles that apply during this special period of a young person's life— principles that can help a parent give a teen the best possible chance in life. Whether you have teenagers now or will have someday, this information can greatly benefit your childrearing. Let's examine these special areas of concern applying to teens.

Strengthen Family Ties

The foundation of a healthy society is the home, and a good home is built around a strong family. When a child loves and respects God and his family—feels a deep sense of loyalty to them—he will not want to bring shame or problems upon God or his family. He will watch his conduct so that it does not reflect negatively upon God, his parents or others in the family. He will do what is best for members of the family—he will try to please them.

Developing a strong family unit requires authority in the home. Children must be taught to respect parents, with the father as the head of the home (Eph. 6:1-3, 5:22-23). Children who learn to respect their parents can relate to respect for God and human government in general.

Many parents, influenced by faulty modern psychology, have made the mistake of trying to be their children's friends instead of their parents. This method does not work. Children derive a sense of security—strong support—from knowing there is a trusted, reliable authority in charge. Children need someone to look up to—models from whom they can learn to develop strength of character, right confidence and emotional balance.

Strengthening family ties requires spending time—quality time—together. Eating together, constantly conversing, being entertained in a happy and fun-filled atmosphere at home rather than outside the home all the time—all these elements are important.

Communication

Families should talk. Teenagers especially need to communicate with parents during this challenging and potentially traumatic period in their lives. Many parents do not take the time to talk with their teenagers. Even fewer take time to listen. They have their own interests and pleasures—business to take care of, friends to spend time with, television shows to watch. They reason: "My teens don't want me there. They want to be by themselves." "We just don't have the same interests." "I have more important things to do. I can't bother with these little matters on the kids' minds."

How tragic! Have you as a parent forgotten what it was like to be a teenager? The matters you now think are little were certainly not little when you were your teen's age. How many parents set aside a certain amount of time each day to talk with their children? When parents don't know what is going on in their children's lives, serious problems result.

You've known of cases in which everybody—brothers and sisters, other relatives, friends, neighbors—everybody but the parents knew a young person was smoking or running around with the wrong crowd or involved in some wrong activity. Why were the parents in the dark—the last to find out? Because they never asked! Their children probably came to feel that they didn't care.

How many times has your teenager come home with a serious problem on his mind, actually wishing he could talk it over with you, and you gave him no chance? How many times after a date has your daughter come home wishing to talk with her mother about certain things, yet was afraid or ashamed to because you have made it clear that you don't want to listen ?

Do you ask your children about their activities? Their dates? What they did? Whom they were with? Not in a prying grill session, with suspicion in your voice, but with open, friendly, warm, loving interest. Do you ask them what happens at school each day? Where they have been? Do you try to find out how they feel about certain things—what their viewpoint is on life and its problems?

You must! Proverbs 29:15 points out that "a child left to himself brings shame to his mother" (Revised Authorized Version throughout)

Many parents, to their chagrin, learn only too late what was going on in their teenagers' lives. Show loving, compassionate, sincere, warm interest in your teenager, and he will open up to you. You can help him before it's too late. And be honest in your communication. Uncertain answers make young people uneasy. They need a solid foundation to stand on—rules to play by. This means being generous with praise. If you compliment your teenagers they will be more able to accept constructive criticism. They want you to tell it like it is.

General Education

God intended for humans to receive instruction through the family— from father to son and mother to daughter, down through the generations (Prov. 1:8-9, 2:1-5). Many of the problems in teenagers' lives today are the direct result of their parents not following their parental advice. They didn't learn from the experiences, and yes, mistakes, of previous generations.

You, as a parent, need to be integrally involved in every facet of your teen's education—moral, spiritual, emotional and intellectual. It is interesting to note the Hebrew word for train in Proverbs 22:6 ("Train up a child in the way he should go"). The root meaning of chanak, from which train is translated, is "to narrow." Training our children involves narrowing the choices they have to make, instead of accepting the vast array of deceptive, negative life-styles this world offers (Matt. 7:13-14).

Your example is paramount in educating your teenagers. Teenagers will follow parents' examples more than parents' words. Do you keep your word? Do you say nice things to other people's faces and then speak critically of them in private? Setting the right example for teenagers includes showing affection, displaying good work habits, taking care of your health and personal appearance and providing properly for your family's needs.

A major responsibility you have in educating your teenagers is instilling within them a knowledge of and respect for God's laws and way of life. Notice the last half of Ephesians 6:4: "Bring them [your children] up in the training and admonition of the Lord."

The average parent today is totally unaware of the basic principles by which to help teenagers. Yet God's revealed Word is plain about the way children should be taught to go: "You shall teach them [God's commandments] diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up" (Deut. 6:7).

Sometimes parents know their teenagers are not doing what is right, but are afraid to tell them. Why should parents be afraid of their own children? Why not call your teenager aside and have a good, serious talk with him? You may simply have to lay it on the line. Tell him just where he is headed if he will not obey. Tell him again who is the head of the house. Let him know what his obligations are. Make him understand! Thoroughly explain again God's Fifth Commandment: "Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the Lord your God is giving you" (Ex. 20: 12). Again, in Proverbs 20:20, God gives the same principle: "Whoever curses his father or his mother, his lamp will be put out in deep darkness."

Teach your teen responsibility and emotional balance. As Lamentations 3:27 says, "It is good for a man to bear the yoke in his youth." Or, as one father told his son when he claimed he didn't know how to do a certain job, "You'll never learn any younger!" This applies not only to physical chores, but to developing important character traits also.

The book of Proverbs contains much sound advice on achieving true success and building happy human relationships. Read through the Proverbs—and encourage your teenagers to do so—or, better yet, read through them together in a different

translation this time. The Proverbs apply to everyday situations and are easy to understand, especially if you read in a modern translation. You may be surprised at the wisdom you find in them.

Learning from instruction, such as that found in the Bible, and from the experiences of elders, is far better than being educated in the school of hard knocks. As a parent you can no doubt vouch for that. At this time in life, your teenager will be interested in several special areas that you should be aware of in terms of his or her education. These areas include music, sex and marriage preparation, career education and different forms of recreation.

Music

You've probably seen, in comic strips or on television, humorous representations of the seemingly eternal war between parents and teenagers over the type of music the teens listen to. But the subject, in reality, is not really one to be laughed at. As a parent you need to take particular interest in the music your teenager finds enjoyable—again, not from a negative, vindictive, condemning standpoint, but in an attitude of helpfulness in steering your child in the right direction. Much of popular music today, with its themes of violence, illicit sex and rebellion against authority, is simply not good fare for entertainment.

In considering the music your teenager listens to, think: Since music is one of the most powerful instruments for good or evil that the world has ever known, the music your teen selects can make a big difference in the attitudes and behavior patterns he or she develops. Encourage your children to be cautious and to ask questions before being swept away by any kind of music. Is it constructive and uplifting to mind and body? Or does it tend unnecessarily to shock and upset and lead listeners in moral and emotional directions they shouldn't go?

It can be a lot of fun exploring the many different musical styles other than the one your teen may be locked into—or the one you may be locked into yourself! Why not make some positive musical discoveries—together?

Sex Education

Before you deal with questions about love, sex and marriage preparation—and you will, as a concerned parent, have to guide your children in this area—we would encourage you again to refer to our free, full-length book *The Missing Dimension in Sex*. You would do well to guide your teenager to and through specific sexual information, fully discussing areas such as premarital sex, birth control, abortion and marriage planning.

Many parents are concerned about teen dating—when to allow it and under what conditions. Parents are the very ones who can do the most to develop right dating attitudes and habits in their children. Sponsoring quality group activities for your young people can do a lot to defuse the premature pairing off and going steady that can take place when your teens are forced constantly to find their own special outlets. Most important, get to know the friends they have.

Career Planning

The area of career planning is important to any teenager. Help your teenager make right choices by encouraging him or her to seek full information on the wide variety of occupations available. Numerous books, tests and counseling services are available to help your teen learn more about his or her aptitudes and interests. Get your teen thinking about the future and help avoid the frustration that may come from taking any job that comes along.

Recreation

The same advice would apply in the area of recreational activities. Provide, as much as you can, for your young person to explore many different types of sports, hobbies and travel opportunities. These will help develop your teen into a well-rounded, balanced adult.

And participate right along with your teen in many of these activities. No one can take the place of a parent. It's all too easy to excuse ourselves from spending time with our children. But no parent has a valid excuse not to be actively involved in the lives of his or her children as they grow from infancy through the teen years into adulthood.

Although the individual interests of teenagers can vary as widely as they do with adults, taking the time to show a true concern will show your son or daughter that you really care. True, it takes time to learn about photography or skiing. Roller-skating with your kids or going with them to an amusement park may not be the most fun thing you ever do. But putting forth the energy to involve yourself in a realistic way can benefit you, the parent, in building bridges between you and your children. This type of bond cannot be bought with money.

An ideal way to create this bond is to develop interests and hobbies as a family (more fully explained earlier in this publication). These can offer areas of mutual interest when your children reach their teenage years. The point is that parents should strive to share in the interests of their children, regardless of their ages.

Teens Need Discipline, Too

As a young person grows older, discipline well may take the form of denial of privileges. Proper discipline gives a young person a sense of security. To the surprise of some parents a "code for parents" drawn up by a group of young people stipulates:

"Be strict and consistent in dishing out discipline. Show us who's boss. It gives us a feeling of security to know we've got some strong supports under us.

"If you catch us lying, stealing or being cruel, get tough. Let us know why what we did was wrong. Impress on us the importance of not repeating such behavior. When we need punishment, dish it out. But let us know you still love us, even though we have let you down. It'll make us think twice before we make the same move again.

"And make it clear that you mean what you say. Don't be wishy-washy. Don't compromise. And don't be intimidated by our threats to drop out of school or leave home. Stand firm. If you collapse, we will know we beat you down, and we will not be happy about the victory. Kids don't want everything they ask for."

Above all, in every area where you deal with your teenagers, be positive. Show them that you deeply care, and encourage them in every way possible to succeed. Ask yourself: "Am I for my sons and daughters? Am I interested enough to get involved in their lives during one of their most crucial and potentially traumatic periods of development?"

Let's be sure we understand our parental responsibilities. Let's set the example of caring about our teens by knowing them and being involved, in a positive way, with them.

Dr Dobson in his book "Dr Dobson Answers Your Questions" has some of these questions and answers that relate to childrearing during the teenage years:

Q: I am thirteen and I feel miserable about myself. Is there anything I can do?

A: First, you need to understand that you are not alone. Begin observing the people around you and see if you detect hidden feelings of inferiority. When you go to school tomorrow, quietly watch the students who are coming and going. I assure you, many of them have the same concerns that trouble you. They reveal these doubts by being very shy and quiet, by being extremely angry and mean, by being silly, by being afraid to participate in a game or a contest, by blushing frequently, or by acting proud and "stuck-up."

You'll soon learn to recognise the signs of inferiority, and then you'll know that it is a very common disorder! Once you fully comprehend that others feel as you do, then you should never again feel alone. It will give you more confidence to know that everyone is afraid of embarrassment and ridicule—that we're all sitting in the same leaky boat, trying to plug the watery holes. And would you believe, I nearly drowned in that same leaky boat when I was fourteen years old?

Second, I advise you to look squarely at the worries that keep gnawing at you from the back of your mind or from deep within your heart, causing a black cloud to hang over your head day and night. It would be a good idea to get alone, where there is no one to interfere with your thoughts. Then list all the things which you most dislike about yourself. Nobody is going to see this paper except the people to whom you choose to show it, so you can be completely honest. Write down everything that has been bothering you. Even admit the characteristics that you dislike, including the tendency to get mad and blow up (if that applies to you).

Identify your most serious problems as best as possible. Do you get frustrated and angry at people and then feel bad later? Or is it your shyness that makes you afraid when you're with other people? Is it your inability to express your ideas—to put your thoughts into words? Is it your laziness, your unkindness to other people, or the way you look? Whatever concerns you, write it down as best you can. Then when

you're finished, go back through the list and put a mark by those items that worry you the most—the problems that you spend the most time thinking and fretting about.

Third, think about each item on the list. Give your greatest creative thought to what might be done to change the things you don't like. If you wish, you might share the paper with your pastor, counselor, parent, or someone in whom you have confidence: that person can then help you map out a plan for improvement. You'll feel better for having faced your problems, and you might even find genuine solutions to some of the troublesome matters.

Now, we come to an important step. The key to mental health is being able to accept what you cannot change. After you've done what you can to deal with your problems, I feel you should take the paper on which the most painful items are written and burn it in a private ceremony before God. Commit your life to Him once more—strengths and weaknesses—good points and bad—asking Him to take what you have and bless it. After all, He created the entire universe from nothing, and He can make something beautiful out of your life...

Q: What would you do if your eighteen-year-old son decided to become a social dropout and run away from home?

A: It is difficult for anyone to know exactly how he would face a given crisis but I can tell you what I think would be the best reaction under those circumstances. Without nagging and whining I would hope to influence the boy to change his mind before he made a mistake. If he could not be dissuaded I would have to let him go. It is not wise for parents to be too demanding and authoritative with an older teenager: they may force him to defy their authority just to prove his independence and adulthood. Besides this, if they pound on the table, wring their hands and scream at their wayward son he will not feel the full responsibility for his own behavior.

When Mom and Dad are too emotionally involved with him, he can expect them to bail him out if he runs into trouble. I think it is much wiser to treat the late adolescent like an adult; he's more likely to act like one if he is given the status offered to other adults. The appropriate parental reaction should be: "John, you know I feel you are making a choice that will haunt you for many years. I want you to sit down with me and we will analyze the pros and cons: then the final decision will be yours. I will not stand in your way." John knows that the responsibility is on his shoulders. Beginning in middle adolescence parents should give a child more and more responsibility each year so that when he gets beyond their control he will no longer need it.

The Gospel of St. Luke contains an amazingly relevant story of a young dropout. It is commonly known as the parable of the prodigal son. Read the story in Luke 15 and then note that it contains several important messages that are highly relevant to our day. First, the father did not try to locate his son and drag him home. The boy was apparently old enough to make his own decision and the father allowed him the privilege of determining his course.

Second, the father did not come to his rescue during the financial stress that followed. He didn't send money. There were no well-meaning church groups that helped support his folly. Note in verses 16 and 17, "No one gave him anything...he finally came to his senses" (TLB). Perhaps we sometimes keep

our children from coming to their senses by preventing them from feeling the consequences of their own mistakes. When a teenager gets a speeding citation he should pay for it. When he wrecks his car he should have it fixed. When he gets suspended from school he should take the consequences without parental protests to the school. He will learn from these adversities. The parent who is too quick to bail his child out of difficulty may be doing him a disservice.

Third, the father welcomed his son home without belittling him or demanding reparations. He didn't say, "I told you you'd make a mess of things!" or "You've embarrassed your mom and me to death. Everyone is talking about what a terrible son we've raised!" Instead, he revealed the depth of his love by saying, "He was lost and is found!" ... (p.26-27)

Q: At what age should a child be given more freedom of choice regarding his religious beliefs and practices?

A: After the middle adolescent years (thirteen to sixteen years), some children resent being told exactly what to believe; they do not want religion "forced down their throats," and should be given more and more autonomy in what they believe. But if the early exposure has been properly conducted, they will have an inner mainstay to steady them. That early indoctrination, then, is the key to the spiritual attitudes they will carry into adulthood.

Despite this need to take a softer approach to spiritual training as the child moves through adolescence, it is still appropriate for parents to establish and enforce a Christian standard of behavior in their homes. Therefore, I would require my seventeen-year-old to attend church with the family. He should be told, "As long as you are under this roof, we will worship God together as a family. I can't control what you think. That is your business. But I have promised the Lord that we will honor Him in this home, and that includes 'remembering the Sabbath to keep it holy'" ... (p.49)

Q: I would like to hear your views about disciplining a teenager, especially since you say spanking him is neither wise nor productive.

A: Your only tool of discipline is to manipulate your teenagers environmental circumstances in moments of confrontation. You have the keys to the family automobile and can allow your son daughter to use it (or be chauffeured in it). You may grant or withhold privileges, including permission to go to a party. You control the family purse and can choose to share it or loan it or dole it or close it. And you can "ground" your adolescent or deny him the use of the telephone or television for awhile. Now obviously, these are not very influential motivators and are at times totally inadequate for the situation at hand. After we have appealed to reason and cooperation and family loyalty all that remains are relatively weak methods of "punishment." We can only link behavior of our kids with desirable and undesirable consequences and hope the connection will be of sufficient influence to elicit their cooperation.

If that sounds pretty wobbly-legged, let me admit what I am implying: a willful, angry sixteen-year old boy or girl can win a confrontation with his or her parents today, if worst comes to worst. The law leans ever more in the direction of emancipation of the teenager. He can leave home in many areas and avoid being returned. He can drink and smoke pot and break many other civil laws before he is

punished by society. His girlfriend can obtain birth control pills in many states without her parents' knowledge or permission. And if that fails, she can slip into a clinic for an unannounced abortion. Very few "adult" privileges and vices can be denied a teenager who has the passion for independence and a will to fight.

How different was the situation when Billy Joe was raised on the farm in days of old, living perhaps eight or ten miles by horseback from the home of his nearest contemporary. His dad, Farmer Brown, impressed by his own authority, could "talk sense" to his rebellious boy without the interference of outside pressures. There is no doubt that it was much easier for father and son to come to terms while sitting on a plow at the far end of Forgotten Field.

But today, every spark of adolescent discontent is fanned into a smoldering flame. The grab for the teen dollar has become big business, with enticing magazines, record companies, radio, television, and concert entrepreneurs to cater to each youthful whim. And, of course, masses of high school students congregate idly in the city and patronise those obliging companies. They have become a force to be considered.

Unless teenagers have an inner tug toward cooperation and responsibility, the situation can get nasty very quickly. But where does that voice of restraint originate? It has been my contention that the early years of childhood are vital to the establishment of respect between generations. Without that kind of foundation—without a touch of awe in the child's perception of his parent—then the balance of power and control is definitely shifted toward the younger combatant. I would be doing a disservice to my readers if I implied otherwise...(p.155-156)

Q: I sense that this task of letting go is one of the most important responsibilities parents face.

A: You are right. If I were to list the five most critical objectives of parenting, this one would rest near the top: "Hold them close and let them go." Parents should be deeply involved in the lives of their young children, providing love and protection and authority. But when those children reach their late teens and early twenties, the cage door must be opened to the world outside. That is the most frightening time of parenthood, particularly for Christian mothers and fathers who care so deeply about the spiritual welfare of their families. How difficult it is to await an answer to the question, "Did I train them properly?" The tendency is to retain control in order to avoid hearing the wrong reply to that all-important question. Nevertheless, our sons and daughters are more likely to make proper choices when they do not have to rebel against our meddling interference.

Let me emphasise the point by offering another phrase which could easily have been one of King Solomon's Proverbs, although it does not appear in the Bible. It states, "If you love something, set it free. If it comes back to you, then it's yours. If it doesn't return, then it never was yours in the first place." This little statement contains great wisdom. It reminds me of a day last year when a wild coyote pup trotted in front of my house. It had strayed into our residential area from the nearby mountains. I managed to chase him into our backyard where I trapped him in a corner. After fifteen or twenty minutes of effort, I succeeded in placing a collar and leash around his neck. He fought the noose with all his strength, jumping, diving, gnawing, and straining at the tether. Finally, in exhaustion, he submitted to his servitude. He was my captive, to the delight of the neighborhood children. I kept the little rascal for an

entire day and considered trying to make a pet of him. However, I contacted an authority on coyotes, who told me the chances were very slim that I could tame his wild streak. Obviously, I could have kept him chained or caged, but he would never really have belonged to me. Thus, I asked a game warden to return the lop-eared creature to his native territory in the canyons above Los Angeles. You see, his "friendship" meant nothing to me unless I could set him free and he would remain with me by his own choice.

My point is that love demands freedom. It is true not only of relationships between animals and man, but also in all human interactions. For example, the quickest way to destroy a romantic love between a husband and wife is for one partner to clamp a steel cage around the other. I've seen hundreds of women trying unsuccessfully to demand love and fidelity from their husbands. It won't work.

Think back to your dating experiences before marriage. Do you recall that romantic relationships were doomed the moment one partner began to worry about losing the other, phoning six or eight times a day and hiding behind trees to see who was competing for the lover's attention? That hand wringing performance will devastate a perfectly good love affair in a matter of days. To repeat, love demands freedom.

Why else did God give us the choice of either serving Him or rejecting His companionship? Why did He give Adam and Eve the option of eating forbidden fruit in the Garden of Eden, instead of forcing their obedience? Why didn't He just make men and women His slaves who were programmed to worship at His feet?

The answers are found in the meaning of love. God gave us a free choice because there is no significance to love that knows no alternative. It is only when we come to Him because we hungrily seek His fellowship and communion that the relationship has any validity. Isn't this the meaning of Proverbs 8:17, whereby He says. "I love them that love me: and those that seek me early shall find me"(KJV)? That is the love that only freedom can produce. It cannot be demanded or coerced or required or programmed against our will. It can only be the product of a free choice which is honored even by the Almighty.

The application of this perspective to older adolescents (especially those in their early twenties) should be obvious. There comes a point where our record as parents is in the books, our training has been completed, and the moment of release he arrived. As I did with the young coyote. we must unsnap the leash and remove the collar. If our "child" runs, he runs. If he marries the wrong person, he marries the wrong person. If he takes drugs, he takes drugs. If he goes to the wrong school, or rejects his faith, or refuses to work, or squanders his inheritance on liquor and prostitutes, then he must be permitted to make these destructive choices and take the consequences of those decisions.

In summary, let me say that adolescence is not an easy time of life for either generation; in fact, it can be downright terrifying. But the key to surviving this emotional experience is to lay the proper foundation and then face it with courage. Even the inevitable rebellion of the teen years can be a healthy factor. This conflict contributes to the process by which an individual changes from a dependent child to

a mature adult, taking his place as a co-equal with his parents. Without that friction, the relationship could continue to be an unhealthy "mommie-daddy-child" triad, late into adult life, with serious implications for future marital harmony. If the strain between generations were not part of the divine plan of human development, it would not be so universally prevalent, even in homes where love and authority have been maintained in proper balance...(p.202-204)

Q: I want to avoid the dependency trap you described, but am not sure how it begins or how to head it off with an infant son. Alert me to the key elements in this process.

A: It is probably easier to foster an unhealthy dependency relationship between parent and child than it is to avoid one. Let's examine the mechanism as it often occurs. At the moment of birth a little child is completely and totally helpless. One forgets just how dependent a newborn is—in fact, I want to forget it, just as soon as possible! That little creature lying in crib can do nothing for himself; he doesn't roll over, he can't scratch his head, he is unable to verbalize his thoughts, and won't lift a finger on his own behalf.

Consequently, his parents are responsible for meeting his every need. They are his servants, and if they're too slow in meeting his demands, he is equipped with a spine-chilling scream to urge them into action. He bears no obligations whatsoever. He doesn't even have to appreciate their efforts. He won't say "please" or "thank you", he doesn't apologise for getting them up six times in one night; he even offers no sympathy when at 3:01 A.M. his exhausted mom drives the point of a safety pin through the fleshy part of her thumb (without doubt, the greatest agony in human experience!). In other words, a child begins his life in a state of complete and total dependency on those whose name he bears.

About twenty years later, however, at the other end of childhood, we expect some radical changes to have occurred that individual. He should then be able to assume the full responsibilities of young adulthood. He is expected to spend money wisely, hold down a job, be loyal to one woman, support the needs of his family, obey the laws of the land, and be a good citizen. In other words, during the course of childhood, an individual should progress from a position of no responsibility to a position of full responsibility. Now, how does little John get from position A to position B? How does this magical transformation of self-discipline take place? There are many self-appointed experts on child raising who seem to feel it all should happen toward the latter end of adolescence, about fifteen minutes before Big John leaves home permanently. Prior to that time he should be allowed to do whatever he wishes at the moment.

I reject that notion categorically. The best preparation for responsible adulthood is derived from training in responsibility during childhood. This is not to say that the child should be forced to act like an adult. It does mean that he can be encouraged to progress on an orderly timetable of events, carrying the level of responsibility that is appropriate for his age. Shortly after birth, for example, the mother begins transferring responsibilities from her shoulders to those of her infant. Little by little he learns to sleep through the night, hold his own bottle, and reach for what he wants. Later he is potty-trained (hopefully), and he learns to walk and talk. Gradually, as each new skill is mastered, his mother "frees" herself that much more from this servitude.

Each year he should make more of his own decisions than in the prior twelve months; the routine responsibilities of living should fall to his shoulders as he is able to handle them. A seven-year-old, for example, is usually capable of selecting his own clothing for the day. He should be keeping his room straight and making his bed each morning. A nine or ten-year-old may be carrying more freedom, such as in the choice of television programs to watch (within reason).

I am not suggesting that we abdicate parental leadership altogether: rather, I believe we should give conscious thought to the reasonable, orderly transfer of freedom and responsibility so that we are preparing the child each year for that moment of full independence which must come.

Q: You wrote in one of your books, "All of life is a preparation for adolescence and beyond." Please explain and elaborate on that statement.

A: I was referring, again to this need to grant independence to children and permit them to make their own decisions. Parents could be wise to remember that the day is fast approaching when the child they have raised will pack his suitcase and leave home, never to return. And as he walks through the door to confront the outside world, he will no longer be accountable to their parental authority and supervision. He can do what he chooses. No one can require him to eat properly or get his needed rest or find a job or live responsibly, or serve God. He will sink or swim on his own.

This sudden independence can be devastating for some individuals who have not been properly prepared for it. But how can a mother and father train sons and daughters so that they won't go wild in the first dizzying months of freedom? How can they equip them for that moment of emancipation?

The best time to begin preparing a child for the ultimate release is during toddlerhood, before a relationship of dependence is established. As Renshaw wrote: "It may be messier for the child to feed himself; more untidy for him to dress himself; less clean when he attempts to bathe himself; less perfect for him to comb his hair; but unless his mother learns to sit on her hands and allow the child to cry and to try, she will overdo for the child, and independence will be delayed."

This process of granting appropriate independence must continue through the elementary school years. Parents should permit their kids to go to summer camp even though it might be "safer" to keep them at home. Likewise, boys and girls ought to be allowed to spend the night with their friends when invited. They should make their own beds, take care of their animals, and do their homework. When this assignment has been handled properly through the years, a high school senior should be virtually emancipated, even though he still lives with his parents.

I'd like to now quote from an article by Carl McNair that deals with the subject of developing independence and self-discipline in living God's way of life. The article is entitled "Raising Kids for Independence". Carl McNair writes:

Raising Kids for Independence

Society as a whole has not been taught how to properly rear children. In our modern civilization children are usually left to themselves to grow up—with little instruction and training in self-control and character. They learn to think, reason and make choices on the basis of emotion and peer pressure rather than through proper adult guidance. The family unit, instituted by God from the beginning, was intended to facilitate this guidance. It has served as the building block of society. However, the family has constantly suffered assaults from a world opposed to God and His ways. As a pastor and family counselor for many years, I have witnessed this attack firsthand. It grows progressively worse every year. Even so, there are still some voices among us who champion this time-tested institution as the most important training ground of human experience.

U.S. News & World Report just profiled the well-known Focus on the Family organization led by Dr. James Dobson. "His message is simple: The biblical lessons and values his listeners grew up with are still valid" (April 24, 1995, p. 34). Dr. Dobson "is not a minister—he has a Ph.D. in child development from the University of Southern California—but while working as a teacher and therapist he wrote Dare to Discipline" (p. 39). Soon, Dobson started a popular radio show.

"To his surprise, Dobson found himself filling a huge gap created by a confluence of social trends. No-fault divorce and the 'do your own thing' ethic of the early 1970s had caused marriages to crumble. Psychological theories from Sigmund Freud's to Benjamin Spock's had caused many young parents to 'lose confidence in the traditional wisdom' they were raised on, just as greater mobility isolated them from families and communities. In more settled times, says Dobson, 'when a woman had a baby, mothers and aunts and grandmothers came in and taught her how to discipline and how to feed and how to train. There was a sense of confidence that came from that community support that has been lost'" (p. 39).

Dobson also blames society's child-rearing problems on a culture turned upside down. "There is the economic pace and pressure that eroded the time families spent together: 'Children don't fit into a "to do" list very well.' And when parents tried to teach their children traditional values, Dobson argues, they felt hostility, not support, from the wider culture: 'They never heard their perspective in the national media; they couldn't find it in the sitcoms; they found it contradicted in almost every movie that came out of Hollywood'...But to everyone, he imparts the same advice: Take heart and take charge" (p. 39).

That is good advice! There are steps that we as parents can take to counter the cultural attack on raising our children. These methods are as old as humanity—and they do work. God's Word says, "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it" (Prov. 22:6). This implies, of course, bringing young people up in such a way that they will remain determined to follow the right course even when we (parents) are no longer in the picture. Self determination requires knowing how to discipline oneself. It is this quality of self-discipline that we must instill in our children. Its importance and how to teach it is the focus of this article.

From birth to approximately age 12 is a period of time when children go from total dependence to the beginning of independence. At birth their habits are "socially unacceptable," they are without any self-control. Mothers have lots of work

developing proper habits in their youngsters. At this stage parents must exercise total control. As children grow they must be taught basic control in bodily functions, communication, sleep and other routine habits. Hopefully, a child has developed a measure of self-control by the time they start their formal schooling.

From infancy to age twelve many of the child's learning skills have already been formed. Parents should use this extremely valuable time to instill deep moral and religious concepts in their children's hearts and minds. Few will get a second chance to learn these basics as adults.

During adolescence, ages 12-20, young people experience the urge to spread their wings and test the moral concepts of their parents. This is normal youthful behavior. This period requires parents to constantly train children in the process of thinking, reasoning and choosing good over evil. The ability of making right choices is a learned skill. Children who do not adequately learn decision-making have parents who totally control every decision they would otherwise work out.

Adolescence is a time when wise parents carefully give away control in noncritical instances rather than immediately dictating "yes" or "no." Unwise parents will quickly say "yes" or "no," and "do" or "don't" instead of allowing their children to develop their minds by making decisions. A wise parent will seek to guide a young person's active participation in this training process.

I am not advocating that all control should be given away. A wise and understanding parent will teach and encourage a child to make right choices by loosening control in noncritical areas first. This is the key: loosening control in areas where a child can make decisions that would not prove life-threatening or exact too severe a penalty or harm others. Children at this stage should be allowed to make choices and learn from some small mistakes.

What Happens When Control Isn't Released?

I have seen it hundreds of times: authoritarian parents coming down on their kids with nothing but rules and lectures. There is the rigid father who sincerely believes that a "good training session" with his children is an eyeball to eyeball lecture, rather than going out and doing things with them—playing with them, spending time with them. He is often accompanied by an over protective mother who "smothers" the children with sympathy.

Such parents often shudder at the prospect of their children making a mistake. Though they seem more attentive to their children, the real reason for their attention is that they are inwardly focused—overly concerned about their children's behavior as a reflection on themselves. Of course, children's behavior often does reflect on the parents. However, parents need to keep in mind that children will make mistakes because they are children.

Dire consequences can result from such overbearing parenting in adolescent years. The most likely fruit to be borne is anger and resentment—perhaps leading to rebellion. Though there may be an initial feeling of security from totally controlling parents, this will dissipate and turn to bitterness as young people see their friends extended more and more latitude and freedom from their parents.

The Bible is not silent in this matter. God says, "Fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" (Eph. 6:4 KJV). You "nurture" a thing by caring for it, feeding it, working with it. Also notice: "Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged" (Col. 3:21). The problem is that we as parents, without realizing what we are doing, cause our children to become angry and upset. We provoke them to wrath or squash their spirits, not understanding that we need to nurture and work with them, giving them some latitude or opportunity to make some decisions and some mistakes, even burning their fingers a little.

The consequence of unbridled authoritarianism is that youths don't develop the skill of making decisions. This will wreak havoc on the maturing process. Sadly, stunted intellectual, emotional and social growth is all too often the result. Young adults in this predicament still rely on their parents for everything they need to know. They can't think for themselves, or are afraid to step out and oftentimes don't know how to properly interact with others.

Don't Let Go Too Much Too Soon

While we must gradually release our control upon our children, we must not release too much too soon. This is inviting disaster.

There must be limits and there must be rules—as long as a young person lives under his parents' roof. These must be reinforced by discipline—mental, moral and physical training to teach an appropriate lesson—throughout adolescence. It is during this period that young people will test the moral concepts their parents have taught them to see if they wish to adopt them as their own.

During adolescence, peer pressure becomes more important than parental acceptance. And it is for this reason that parents must exercise some control over who their kids hang out with—until their kids prove, over time, that they know how to choose the right friends. Even then, parents should remain aware of who their kids are spending time with, sometimes telling the child to avoid a bad crowd or individual.

Some may feel that this approach is too authoritarian. The same criticism has been leveled against Dr. James Dobson. Notice how he responds:

"Naturally, I don't believe that criticism is justified. I have gone to great lengths in all my books to warn parents of the dangers of being harsh and oppressive with their children. One of those books, *Hide and Seek*, is dedicated in its entirety to the fragile nature of a child's spirit.

"Nowhere in my writings will you find a recommendation that mothers and fathers disregard the feelings of their boys and girls, or that they use excessive punishment for childish behavior. What I said is that I believe in parental leadership—that children should be taught to respect the benevolent authority of their parents and teachers....

"All I can say in response is that my own children grew up in an atmosphere of freedom, which was made possible by mutual respect between generations. That two-sided coin is clearly supported in the Scripture, which instructs children to obey their parents and then warns parents not to provoke their children to wrath. I like

that combination" ["Dr. Dobson Answers Your Questions," Focus on the Family magazine, Feb. 1995, p. 5].

I applaud Dr. Dobson's answer. Notice, also, what family psychologist Dr. Kevin Leman said in the same issue of Focus on the Family magazine (article excerpted from his new book, *Bringing Up Kids Without Tearing Them Down*):

"Two major issues bring parents and their children to my counseling office: authoritarianism and permissiveness. Authoritarians tell the child, "My way or the highway." Permissive parents say, "Have it your way, Honey. Can I drive you anywhere?"

"Both approaches leave children feeling unloved, insecure, not belonging, unapproved of and unrecognized—and operating in an independent, irresponsible way. Both approaches erode children's self-image or sense of self-worth. When used to extremes, both approaches lead straight to a seriously dysfunctional family.

"Within the firm-but-fair approach, however, is a great deal of flexibility—and freedom to fail...When children feel they can never fail, they're hampered and become afraid to try, risk, create, grow and learn. When parents are understanding, they can turn a failure into a good learning situation" ["What Makes a Functional Family?" p. 12-13].

Dr. Leman is exactly right. While we parents must not be authoritarian mini-dictators, neither must we be permissive subjects of our own children—letting them run rampant over us. We must strike an authoritative balance and rule them in love, gradually granting them more authority over their own lives. And we absolutely must allow them the opportunities to make their share of mistakes. Mistakes and failures, in fact, are invaluable in the process of learning how to make one's own choices.

Newspaper columnist Ann Landers accurately stated in 1968, "What the vast majority of American children needs is to stop being pampered, stop being indulged, stop being chauffeured, stop being catered to. In the final analysis it is not what you do for your children but what you have taught them to do for themselves that will make them successful human beings" (*Columbia Dictionary of Quotations*, 1993).

How do we go about properly building self-discipline in our children? The answer is that we must constantly help them to learn lessons—to carve them into their very being with the chisel of their own experiences. This is the way to teach them right moral values and principles of virtue in general. And it is these values and principles that we wish our children to learn to discipline themselves in. But, first, we must have taught these values and principles.

God explains how: "You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up" (Deut. 6:7). In other words, we should be taking every opportunity with our children to apply what is happening in their lives to God's principles and laws. Over time the lessons stick!

One area that can serve as an excellent school of hard knocks for young people is that of spending money. For example, let's say your child has a few dollars saved in

your care and he sees an advertisement or an item in a shop and says, "I want that," and comes to you asking for his money. You might be inclined to snap back with, "Well, why would you buy that?" or "Why would you waste your money on that?" But the child has to learn how to judge value at some point in life.

This is a wonderful opportunity for us to teach. We should simply say, "Now look at this carefully. Evaluate it and compare. Be sure that you are getting something of value that you really want." Then let the child make the decision. Let him go ahead and buy an item because of the initial appeal of it or because of the packaging. Let the child go ahead and waste his few dollars if that's what he decides to do. If it turns out to be a bad choice, be sure and reflect on it with him when he realizes it. This process teaches children how to make right choices through a little pain.

Another area of decision-making that can serve as a training ground for the future is that of school activities such as sports and band activities. Before undertaking a new activity it should be made clear to the child that, if he decides to begin an activity that is to last a semester or school year, that he cannot back out of it part-way through—that he must develop the self-discipline to honor his commitments.

Such freedom to make choices should gradually extend to more important areas. If a small mistake is in the works, let it happen. However, it should be recognized that there are times you must intervene and prohibit certain choices—if they would lead to calamitous circumstances.

As our children go through the process of testing the morals we have taught them, we must not let their peers be the only ones who evaluate the process with them. Otherwise, they may convince each other away from right conclusions. We must constantly be around to help our children evaluate their testing of established moral guidelines. That does not mean that we pick on and nag them. It means that we help them to consider and judge their own actions. The point is that, as we let go of control, it must still be with a great deal of involvement and connection.

How do you "raise kids" for independence? Remember to incrementally release control over your children's lives to enable them to learn how to make right choices. By this means, you will help your children develop self-discipline in obeying the moral principles you have taught them from the Holy Bible and traditional family culture.

Never underestimate the importance of example. "Parents fail to realize that how they live each day speaks volumes about what they really value. The choices they make, the words they use, the TV programs they watch, the way they treat others, the way they obey or disobey the law—all are sure-fire communicators of what they think is really important" (Leman, p. 13).

If we don't start walking the walk and not just talking the talk when it comes to the moral values we want our children to discipline themselves with, they will perceive us as hypocritical. Not only will they lose trust in us, they may emulate our hypocrisy. As American author James Baldwin wrote in 1960, "Children have never been very good at listening to their elders, but they have never failed to imitate them" (Columbia Dictionary of Quotations). So let's make sure we are fulfilling our responsibility (World Ahead, May 1995, p.20-23).

Continuing on the theme of developing our teenagers I'd like to now quote from a March 1981 Good News article entitled "Parents – Show Your Teenagers You Care!" which focuses on developing your teenagers socially. Richard Rice writes:

Parents – Show Your Teenagers You Care

"It is Monday morning at the local high school in a midwestern U.S. town. As Susie, 15, walks to her locker, she is surrounded by several jubilant friends. They are all excited about the weekend just past.

"Oh, Susie, you should have been at the football game Friday night!" they exclaim. "We won! And the party afterwards was a real blast. Some really neat guys were there from out of town!"

Dejected, Susie trudges to her first period class. "Why is my life so dull?" she ponders. "Why can't I have an exciting life like my friends? I don't want to break God's Sabbath or go out with guys in the world, but Mom and Dad don't seem to understand that I need recreation and excitement.

"Since we came into the Church, our lives have become so dry and boring. We seldom do anything as a family, and Mom and Dad don't want to bother taking me and my brothers to Church socials." Could your teenager take the place of "Susie" in this scene? The above experience is not uncommon in God's Church.

Double responsibility

Though many parents don't realize it, their teenagers are harboring deep resentments because they are deprived of recreational opportunities and regular social experiences. These teens are developing negative attitudes toward God's Church, not through any fault of their own, but because Mother and Dad have neglected their responsibilities.

Mark well this fact: Whether or not our teenagers stay in the Church and remain true to God's way depends largely on how well we present God's truth to them and relate its benefits to their lives.

The world seems to offer such tantalizing fun and glitter, and our children are naturally drawn to its perverted influence. Therefore, we have a double responsibility to not only point out to them the evil of Satan's society, but also to provide the kind of wholesome activities that properly represent the better way of God.

Every father knows that it is his duty to supply the basic necessities of life for his children—food, clothing and shelter. Likewise, every mother knows that she's responsible for providing nutritious meals, clean clothes and a neat, attractive home.

But, how many parents realize that in addition to providing these basic needs, they are equally accountable to God for their children's social life? God's way of life is happy, exciting, abundant!

But too many parents seem to have overlooked their duty to present this aspect of God's way to their children. Thus, their kids may have become self-conscious social misfits, lacking poise and confidence and devoid of a proper, healthy respect for God and the Church.

Paul wrote, "Fathers, stop exasperating your children, so as to keep them from losing heart" (Col. 3:21, Williams). Paul also states in 1 Timothy 5:8, "But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel." While this verse basically means caring for the physical needs of a family, in principle it also means providing for their social, cultural and spiritual development.

God wants our teenagers to grow up to be intelligent, well-adjusted, happy men and women. Therefore he levies on us as parents the sacred trust of providing a rich and fulfilling life for them, so they become responsible individuals and an attractive light to the world. "And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" (Eph. 6:4).

Never too late

Some kids were already teenagers when their parents were called into God's Church, and because of this the parents reason that there is little they can do to win the children over to God's way. Others who have been in the Church for years may not realize they are about to lose their teenagers to the world because the kids have been robbed of fun and excitement.

It's time to awaken to the seriousness of your responsibilities and realize it is never too late to change! Teenagers have natural, healthy social drives that cry out for fulfillment. Therefore, working with your teenagers should not be looked upon as a burden or an impossible task, but as a wonderful new challenge and opportunity. Granted, changing old patterns and approaches may require much sacrifice, time and prayer, but the end result will be abundantly worth it!

Start by building a new relationship with your teenagers. Sit down with them and have a heart-to-heart talk. You might begin by reading and discussing this article with them, and telling them you are making a new commitment as parents. Taking the initiative may seem awkward and embarrassing at first. But it's necessary—it's your duty as a parent. And it will break the ice that has perhaps been there for years.

Draw your kids out and get them to talk about their feelings. Don't criticize or react negatively when they are honestly expressing their views. You want to know how they really feel about their family life, and they must be able to tell you without fear of rejection or recrimination. You want to get their total input as to how the situation in your home can be improved.

Ask for suggestions on what activities they'd like to participate in. Encourage open give-and-take communication while stressing God's wonderful way and the necessity to obey our Creator.

Plan activities

In these family discussions—of which there should be many—you and your children should plan small group activities with other teenagers in the Church. Include both

boys and girls, so that they have the opportunity to interact with the opposite sex in a proper, wholesome environment.

Remember, we're not necessarily advocating single dating. Nor do we encourage building cliques. It is important, therefore, for your children to be exposed to a variety of friends. The purpose for these activities is to broaden their horizons and build their social skills.

There are several ideas you might work into your schedule as time, money and opportunity permit. These are activities you personally can plan, so as not to depend solely on the Church to fulfill your teenagers' social needs.

- Saturday night parties. Saturday night is an ideal time to plan get-togethers. Transportation problems and the soaring costs of gasoline can be minimized. Those who live in distant areas could plan to stay over from the Sabbath. Some types of activities you might consider are: card games, board games (Monopoly, Careers, Risk), sing-alongs, Bunco, Spoons, Charades or limited dancing.

Serve simple refreshments such as punch, popcorn and cookies. Perhaps the guests could chip in to help cut costs. It is necessary to maintain proper supervision, but don't let your presence dominate the atmosphere. If the kids invite you to take part in the action, by all means do so in fun and courtesy. But allow the kids to be themselves.

Occasionally, invite an out-of-town family with children the same ages as your kids' to spend the night. You could have a potluck dinner or some other special event on that evening. After you've approved a given activity, let the kids do most of the planning and preparation. With most teenagers, anticipation is just as meaningful as the activity itself. But be available to lend your support.

- Sports and games. This category could involve limitless possibilities: volleyball, softball, croquet, basketball, badminton, soccer, dodge ball. You and your teenagers can no doubt think of many more. If you don't have space in your yard or immediate neighborhood for these games, check out a nearby park or school.

Again, the emphasis should be on group involvement to give your sons and daughters an opportunity for social mixing. Your direct participation in this type of outing may be especially helpful in bridging the gap between parents and youngsters.

- Church activities. Let your children get involved in church socials, dinners and outings. And get more involved yourself! Throughout the year the Church will have several Youth Opportunities United (YOU) functions. See that your children attend if at all possible. Share transportation with other families. Volunteer to chaperone occasionally, if needed. Let your kids know that you really care and are concerned about their happiness and welfare.

- Miscellaneous activities. Because of factors of distance, time and expense, some activities can and should only be held occasionally. But these outings should be included somewhere in your calendar of events: beach parties, hiking trips, overnight camping trips, all-day picnics, trips to the zoo or an amusement park. Occasionally take in a special movie, play, concert, ice show, museum or art gallery or go sightseeing or skating.

Some of the above suggestions may seem complicated or financially out of reach, but with careful planning and forethought workable solutions can be found. If all parents in the Church cooperate and share responsibilities, no one family will need to suffer.

Suppose Susie had 10 to 12 of her friends in the Church over for a Saturday night party. If the parents of each of these friends in turn invited Susie for an activity, no hardship would be imposed on anyone too frequently. To finance some of the more expensive outings, several children could launch a fund-raising activity. In all fairness, the teenagers should be made aware of the needs of the entire family and not make unreasonable or selfish demands.

Have regular talks

It's imperative that you have frequent talks with your teens in these crucial, formative years. It is vital to keep the lines of communication open to build a close family relationship. Your love for your children should be so strong and so obvious that they will want to come to you with all their personal problems and will not feel compelled to seek only the counsel of their peers.

Be kind, patient and empathetic when they approach you with their hang-ups, fears and frustrations. Be a good listener—don't rush in with advice until you've heard the whole story. Treat them with respect, and as individuals. Consider their feelings. Be generous with praise in those areas where they are making progress.

Reinforce their good behavior by pointing out their strengths and successes. Gently correct their weaknesses. For example, if a son or daughter is expressing a bad attitude in a sports activity or pouting about losing a game, bring this out during one of your talk sessions. Continually encourage them to venture out socially in order to grow in confidence, culture and self-esteem. Teenagers need exposure and experience to round out their lives.

The more opportunities your kids have to interrelate with other teens in proper activities, the more well adjusted they will be as youngsters. And as adults, they will know how to conduct themselves with maturity and responsibility in most situations.

God has given a serious charge to us as dutiful, loving parents. We need to teach God's truth to our young people in the most appealing way possible. Whether or not our teenagers survive the pressures of this world and respond to God's eventual call depends on how effectively we fulfill our responsibility to them now.

Let's prove to our teenagers that we really care!

THE ART OF GRANDPARENTING

We've looked at parenting and how to guide our child through the various stages of childhood. Before a concluding article summing up our look at childrearing, I'd like to look at the subject of grandparenting. The following is from an article by Ron Kelly entitled "The Art of Grandparenting" from the WCG brochure "Love, Marriage and Sex." Ron Kelly writes:

How quickly the years roll by. It seems only yesterday, you were young and carefree, living at home under the care of parents. Then came the college years or you decided to work full time. Next was marriage. Then children. Before you realize it they are grown, off to college, settled into jobs. They are married and you are in-laws. Then one day you receive the momentous notice you are about to become grandparents. Such are life's cycles.

Being grandparents, though can be one of the most inspiring times of life. Unfortunately, in many segments of Western societies, the art of grandparenting has been lost.

In today's highly mobile society so many young families move away to pursue careers far away from home. At this time grandparents can fulfill a very needed role of stability and provide a connection to hereditary roots. It is important to take advantage of their experience, love and concern. The Bible teaches respect for age and its accompanying wisdom. God instructed through Moses, "Rise in the presence of the aged, show respect for the elderly and revere your God" (Lev. 19:32, New International Version throughout).

What a shame when society rejects this important spiritual principle. Take for example riding a crowded subway of Tokyo, Japan. When an elderly man or woman boards, often a younger person offers the older his place rather than see the elderly remain standing. In most societies that kind of respect is rare today. Young people crowd onto public transportation and seldom assist the elderly when a bus or train is crowded.

With this declining respect for age comes an attendant lack of regard for experience and wisdom. It is a wise young person who takes advantage of his grandparents' knowledge.

Don't Forget the Past

Our 12-year-old daughter spent last summer with her grandparents in Texas. They are all in their 70s now and have lived through and experienced the many changes of the 20th century. My job has required several moves and we are now living some 1,500 miles from our parents. But we know the importance of grandparents and their influence.

On my wife's side of the family there are 20 grandchildren. As patriarch and matriarch of the clan, her parents have set a fine example and standard, not only for their seven children, but for their grandchildren as well. My mother has a special love for our five children. Since I am an only child they are the only grandchildren she has.

Our children have been able to stay with one set of grandparents or the other at least one summer. So this last summer was our youngest daughter's turn to spend the summer with her grandparents. We found a book in the bookstore prepared especially for grandchildren to interview and record interests and experiences of their grandparents.

She took her book and has written stories from her grandmother's younger years. She heard things her parents had not heard. Maybe we just never took the time to sit down with our parents to hear them.

So many of these marvelous experiences would have been passed over and forgotten had our daughter not recorded them.

The remaining years will pass quickly. So we are now making plans for a future visit to tape record a few hours of the interesting times and experiences of some of the generation that have lived through the most rapidly changing time in all human history. Maybe many of you might be inspired to do the same.

A Grandfather's Advice

Several years ago our oldest daughter went to spend the spring school vacation at her grandparents. It was her senior year of high school and she was experiencing the agonies of making decisions about her future.

Should she stay at home and attend a university nearby? Should she live near her grandparents and go to a junior college? Should she attend Ambassador College in California, where her grandfather and both her father and mother had graduated?

It was weighing heavily on her mind. She wasn't sure she wanted to move away to California (we lived in another state at the time). My wife and I were trying not to interfere—we wanted the decision to be hers.

One night during the visit, her grandfather took her out to dinner to discuss her future. He calmly and lovingly directed her to think about the pros and cons of each possibility. But having a deep love for Ambassador College he said, "Whatever the faults and flaws you may feel about Ambassador College, it is a better place for you than any other institution."

Those words of wisdom hit home. Even though she had applied to and been accepted at one or more other colleges, she came home from that visit to her grandparents determined to attend Ambassador College. It was a decision she has never regretted. She completed four years of college, graduated, met her future husband at college and is now very happily married.

When the wedding took place last summer the grandparents were all in attendance. My daughter and future son-in-law had asked me to perform their wedding ceremony just as her sister who had been married a year earlier had done.

It is a special privilege not only to walk down the aisle to present a lovely young bride to the bridegroom, but to step around and officiate the ceremony. As you can well imagine it is a time of great emotion. There was some concern from my wife that I would not fully maintain composure—that my voice might crack or a tear might come to my eye. She was certain she would be sitting in the front row holding back the tears (of joy, of course).

The eventful day came and I remained remarkably composed, I thought. The wedding march started and I escorted my daughter down the aisle. Stepping around in front I began, "There is no more joyous ceremony than this we now enter."

That was all it took. On the front row Grandpa simply could not hold back the tears. In order not to do the same, all I could do was bury my head in the ceremony and read it through. I know the joy of a father presenting his daughters as brides, but Grandpa assures me I have a special emotion waiting when my grandchildren take

that step. Somehow it seemed a proper conclusion to the advice he gave her nearly five years before. Never underestimate the influence of grandparents.

A Call for Grandmother

There is one special time when you absolutely must have a grandmother. That is at the birth of your children. Somehow grandmothers know everything there is to know. And the fledgling new parents seem to know so little even though they may have read more than a dozen books on having and caring for babies.

Probably thousands of new fathers would have nearly starved had Grandma not come to take care of the household after the new baby arrived. When we had our first child, Grandma came to spend the first week. It was so pleasant to have her that she had to come and spend at least a week at our home for the birth of our next four children.

One time Grandma and Grandpa were part of the whole process. When our third child, and only son, was born, we were living only a few miles from the grandparents. About 4 o'clock in the morning my wife jarred me awake saying, "Honey, wake up, wake up, the baby is on the way." This was happening a few days before "dueday." I jolted out of bed and called the doctor. "Oh no!" his wife exclaimed, "My husband has gone fishing. There would be no way to find him on the lake."

I called the nurse. But she lived about 45 minutes away. "How far apart are the pains?" she asked. I rushed back to the bedroom to find out. "You'd better hurry," my wife urged, "the pains are two minutes apart." "Two minutes," I reported to the nurse. "I'd better get right over," she hastened.

Most expecting parents have read books on what to do in such emergencies. But you never feel you'll have to use the knowledge. This time I had to. Of all the times for a fast delivery, my wife had to choose this one. Our first child had been about a seven-hour labor and the second was eight or nine hours. I naturally assumed I had plenty of time, that the nurse would arrive and even the doctor would return from his morning fishing and be in attendance.

I called Grandma and Grandpa and told them the baby was on the way. They said they would be right over—it would take maybe half an hour. Forty-five minutes from the first pain, the baby was on the way into the bright world. There I was alone trying to keep calm and keep my wife calm. It really went smoothly and out came the bouncing baby boy.

About the time I had taken him up, Grandma and Grandpa burst into the room. "What do I do now?" I asked in a borderline desperate voice. "I think you'd better give him a gentle swat on the bottom," Grandpa quickly replied. I did. He squalled. Grandma took over caring for Mom and the newborn infant.

By the time the nurse arrived everything was in order. (By the way, the doctor didn't make it back till late that evening.) And the rest is history. Our son is now almost 20 years old, about 6 feet 3 inches tall and attending Ambassador College. And I assure you his grandparents have been a great influence in his life—in his case from his very first breath.

Record Your Experiences for Posterity

I would encourage you who are entering the autumn years of life to record your memories and experiences for your children and grandchildren.

One of my favorite books is one a caring and considerate father and grandfather wrote to his offspring. But millions of others have enjoyed and profited from it. It is *The Autobiography of Herbert W. Armstrong*, the founder of Ambassador College and late editor in chief of the *Plain Truth* magazine.

Born in the last decade of the 1800s, Mr. Armstrong had seen the changes from horse and buggy to space flight. He observed the marvelous technological advances, but noted the paradox of a society that cannot solve its human problems. He certainly learned a great deal from a varied, busy and active life.

But you don't have to be a professional writer to record your own experiences. So many of you who are grandparents have much to pass on to the next two or more generations. I hope while there is yet time you will write or tell as much as you can of the many lessons you have learned. That's part of the lost art of grandparenting you might want to recapture.

Building an Inheritance

The importance of grandparenting is perhaps best captured in Proverbs 17:6, "Children's children are a crown to the aged, and parents are the pride of their children." In those latter years of life, perhaps the greatest joy of all is seeing the grandchildren grow to maturity and take their place in the world.

If you have spent time with them, shown them their heredity and influenced their decisions, you can complete those years knowing you have made a significant contribution to the lives of your children and grandchildren.

It is not always possible in our complex modern world, but one great blessing grandparents can provide is the building of an inheritance to pass along, not only to their children, but their grandchildren as well.

Solomon also wrote, "A good man leaves an inheritance for his children's children" (Prov. 13:22). There is much to be said for laying up an inheritance. The years of hard work and accumulation of whatever worldly goods can be passed on from generation to generation. Too much of our modern society has become the throw-away type. We buy it, use it, discard it when it is worn out—which usually doesn't take too long.

But many families have beautiful heirlooms, antique furniture or family jewelry that can be divided among the children and grandchildren. Perhaps property has been in the family for several generations. I have a good friend who lives in a lovely remodeled farm home originally built by his great-grandfather after the American Civil War. The homestead exudes history and charm. How nice it is when such things can be retained in a family for generations.

But perhaps the most valuable asset of all that grandparents can pass along is their experience. Life is filled with many lessons. A wise person it is who will learn from the experiences of others rather than make all the mistakes himself. And these

experiences need not all be great lessons of accumulating wealth or making multimillion dollar business decisions. They can be some of life's simple yet often overlooked everyday lessons.

The apostle Paul wrote to older women, "They can train the younger women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled and pure, to be busy at home, to be kind, and to be subject to their husbands, so that no one will malign the word of God" (Titus 2:4-5).

At first glance that might not seem earth shattering in importance. But if you take time to observe our hectic modern society, you will find those are some of the very qualities most lacking.

Young men often don't know how to be loving, understanding husbands, exercising proper leadership. Young women often don't know how to be properly motivated wives and mothers, how to be submissive. Is it because they have not been taught by or have not listened to the older generation? Perhaps that is at least part of the answer.

Yes, there is a true art in being a grandparent. Many of you who are reading this already are grandparents—even great-grandparents. Many others who are parents are going to become grandparents in the not-too-distant future. Even our young readers who are not yet married will find the years passing swiftly and the time rapidly coming upon them when they likewise will enter those exciting and productive years.

At all ages and levels there are few people more important to the family structure and even the fiber of a nation than the generation who are grandparents. It would do us all well to turn our attention and respect to that marvelous class of individuals who have so much to contribute— GRANDPARENTS.

OBEDIENT CHILDREN ARE NOT ENOUGH!

For a final summary of what we have learned here about childrearing I'd like to finish off with article entitled "Obedient Children Are Not Enough!" by Robert Fahey". Robert Fahey writes:

Some parents are making a fatal mistake in their child rearing and heading for heartbreak in the years ahead. You could be one of them. If making your children obedient is your only goal, you will probably find yourself with an uphill battle for 10 to 20 years, ending with disappointment and a generation gap.

What do you wish to accomplish in training your child? Have you ever stopped to consider? What overriding goal do you have in mind as the ultimate end point of approximately twenty years of feeding, clothing, protecting and teaching your offspring from infancy on through childhood and the teenage years? Unless you can see and consciously work toward the right goal, good results cannot be guaranteed.

What is the Right Goal?

The overall purpose of your child rearing should be to develop your children into balanced, happy, mature, well-adjusted, godly adults. They will need to become capable, reliable persons prepared for the responsibility of adulthood and the problems of adulthood.

Ideally they should be able to take their place in society without the hang-ups and complexes you have had to fight all these years! That should be your overall goal.

So how would you approach such a goal? Obviously the best of all examples to look to is that of your spiritual Father. God Himself is the ultimate Master in right child rearing.

More Than Just Punishment and Obedience

Some parents seem to think their only job is to discipline. They seem to feel the only thing that counts is obedience. Why? Actually it's often because they are so selfish. Such parents just want their children to stay out of their hair—to not "bother" them. Others may strive to have obedient children for vanity's sake. When friends or relatives visit, they show off. "Sit down!" "Go to your room!" they bark. Their children obediently trot off to bed. Guests are supposed to be impressed.

But what if the only way God worked with you was through discipline? What if every error received a sound whack? What if every wrong thought, selfish act, foolish mistake resulted in so many swats? What if not one sin passed unnoticed, and there was no warmth, no love, no evidence that God was concerned for you, except for a continual rain of swats, spiritual spankings, and a constant stern "no" booming in your ears?

You would become so discouraged, so despondent and terribly unhappy, that if you didn't openly rebel, you would turn inward, and your personality would shrivel up. You would feel that you could never really accomplish what your Father expected of you. And so you would probably quit trying—except just enough to keep from getting "swats."

Your children will react the same way if treated that way! And you will someday wonder why your children, who seemed so obedient as youngsters, have become so distant, so heartless and unfeeling, as adults. Discipline alone will not work! Some parents have tried it and ultimately have come to say something like this: "I have spanked him till I am blue in the face and he still doesn't obey me." Something important is lacking.

Your spiritual Father is known for His love and mercy. Even when He punishes. He doesn't give you what you really deserve. Rather, His heart is turned toward you. He forgives. Do your children think of you as merciful, like your heavenly Father? Is your heart turned toward them and their hearts toward you, with warmth, trust and affection?

A prophesied characteristic of God's end-time Work, bearing to the world the last warning message before Christ's return and preparing the way for His appearance, is expressed in the prophecy of Malachi 4:6: "And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers.... "

Is your son's or daughter's heart turned toward you? Is yours turned toward him or her? If not, your basic approach to child rearing is wrong. God gives you more than mercy. He constantly works to encourage you. He makes you laugh joyfully. He rewards your efforts with blessings, leading you gradually along the right way. This is the way you must lead your children.

Childrearing is synonymous with love and character building. Discipline is part of both. But so are encouragement, affection, listening and positive instruction. If temporary obedience is your goal, and you use only discipline to get it, your children may flee from you when they are able, just as the inmates of the concentration camps fled from their Nazi persecutors whenever they had the chance.

Many children have run away from home because of the intolerant behavior of parents. Each week thousands of children run away from their homes all over the world. Don't push your children into making a similar mistake which they'll regret later. Don't make discipline your only form of child rearing!

Training in Making Decisions

When your child is a baby, you must make all his decisions for him. You decide what he will eat, what clothes he will wear, where he will go and when. As he gets older, you can give him more freedom in these areas. Still maintaining overall supervision, you should gradually widen the area in which you let him make decisions.

Let your child decide what colors to use in his coloring book. Then, what clothes to wear. Still later, give him a chance to decide how to spend part of his savings or allowance. Let him even decide to buy something, occasionally, that may be a waste of money. Better for him to waste a little when he is young and learn from it than to lose much more when he is older, with the responsibility of a wife and child of his own. Unfortunately, many have not learned the right use of money until the stakes are so high that permanent damage is done to their marriage and financial security.

God is teaching you to decide on your own. He calls it building character. He guides you, giving you the principles involved; warning you that obeying His laws brings blessings, and not obeying them brings curses. He gives case studies in His Word. He even commands you to choose His way. But the final decision is in your hands. As God's son or daughter, you must decide—and bear the consequences of your decisions.

So teach your children to make decisions. When they start school, they will have to decide with which friends to spend time, what books to read, and later, whether to engage in premarital sex and drug use. You will not be there to guide them at each crucial, decisive moment. They will have to decide by themselves. Equip them for that ahead of time! Give them practice now in making sound decisions.

The key is to have areas in which your child can feel free to make up his own mind. You decide whether he should put his hand into a fire. You dictate to him about going into the street. Those areas are not for him to decide for himself. But is it really so crucial which playsuit he wears'? Or which toys he plays with, as long as they are suitable for the time and place'?

Your daughter may feel she has invented a new way to sew. You know it won't work. Explain it to her. Show her why it won't work, without mocking her for coming up with such a childish idea. If she doesn't feel you know what you are talking about, let her try it! When it doesn't work for exactly the reasons you said, she will learn more than sewing.

And she will see you aren't as ignorant as she might have thought— which will be crucial for her when she is seventeen and deciding about avoiding drugs or sex before marriage—or whether to marry Freddie anyway when you tell her it would be a bad match. But leave off the "I-told-you-so!" which only serve to tickle your vanity and widen the gap between you and your child.

Main Principle of Rulership

You are the ruler of your child. But you need to realize the cornerstone principle for God's type of rulership. "Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them," said Jesus Christ. "But it shall not toe so among you. but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant" (Matt. 20:25-27).

Have you ever thought of it this way? You are your child's servant. You are to serve him by preparing him for adulthood-not like a demagogue who will not tolerate any difference of opinion, nor any delegating of decision making, but like a wise teacher, instructing your child in the ways to make proper decisions. He can only learn that by practice. And practice implies some mistakes. Your job is to make sure they are little mistakes, not life-shattering ones.

How much better it is to serve the children God has given you by helping them to learn that they do need their parents' advice as they walk the road of life. How much better that they learn that when mom and dad say "no," there is usually a very good reason. They have seen the proof. Let them get used to admitting, "I was wrong," without shame or jeering.

If you rule your children Christ's way, they will want your rule. They will learn it is for their good: They won't feel fettered by it, as if bound in a straitjacket. They will be free in it. They will respect you for it. And God will guarantee them a long, happy life for respecting their parents (Ex. 20:12; Eph. 6:1-3).

What To Teach Your Child

There are many other things to teach your child to prepare him to be a godly adult.

First, teach him to express himself. You can do this by letting a smaller child go over the day's events before bedtime. Sure, listening to him recount an event that happened while you were at work can require patience—but it's often profitable to the storyteller.

You should also teach your child to express himself by listening to and answering his questions—not squelching them. Treat his "foolish" questions with respect. A question that sounds nonsensical to you must have been in his mind before it came out of his mouth. And if it was there, it needs an answer!

Also, one question lays the groundwork for others. Sometimes the proper answer to one of these questions, if heeded, will save the child untold trouble. Too many parents squelch the "silly" questions, so they never get a chance to hear the big ones!

Second, teach your child to do things. Ever see a young boy standing awkwardly beside a swimming pool while all his friends are swimming enthusiastically? He can't swim. He is self-conscious. An outsider. And very unhappy. He is also losing valuable leadership training.

Avoid allowing inferiority and other personality complexes to form—teach him to develop talents and abilities, such as swimming. Give your children opportunities to engage in sports, recreational activities, etc. that will give them confidence within their peer groups. Teach them to make things, such as cookies and doll clothes for the girls and model airplanes and boats for boys. Go on hikes, picnics; buy a kite and help them fly it; take them to sports events.

Third, develop your child's interests as fully as you are able. His whole life will be richer. He will be able to mix with all kinds of people and realize his full leadership potential.

Fourth, teach him the proper use of power. Money is a form of power. Your child should learn how to use it wisely. A car is power. So is a boat, roller skates, BB gun or a bicycle. Children will misuse these unless trained.

Fifth, teach your child to face trials bravely. A broken toy can be a major crisis if you're four. So can a dead pet. Take time to put these "trials" into perspective. A broken toy can open the door for you to explain the importance of buying quality items, or proper care of possessions, or even principles of maintenance and repair. The dead pet is different from a dead human. Teach your child the difference. Just sitting down and explaining the overview will take much of the sting out of the "trial." It also helps narrow any potential generation gap.

Your own example in facing your trials is also important. If you are dressed to go out and your child spills milk down your best outfit—you have a trial. If an otherwise calm and composed mother suddenly becomes a screaming witch, hurling abuse at a glass-shattering pitch, her child will learn by example not to face trials bravely. He will also tend to fly apart in the face of trials. Actions speak louder than words. If you expect your child to stand firm in a crisis, you must stand firm first.

Teach Them to Face the World

You should also teach your children that there are problems in the world—horrible, heartrending problems. Then demonstrate that God has the answers.

If someone becomes ill or involved in an accident, there are reasons—usually easily defined. Teach your child. Show him the principle of cause and effect. Show him how to avoid the effect by following God's way of life in the first place. Older children will see pregnant girls drop out of school. Show them the effect on the girl, her family, the boy and his family, and even on the unborn child itself.

But take care! All children are idealistic. They view the world through rose-colored glasses, and it's a good thing they do. If any of us could see all the evil,

and all the trials and problems ahead of us, at once, we would feel defeated before we start. The rose-colored glasses gradually have to go. But remove them gently; don't rip them from a child's face.

If you tell your child how rotten the world is, he will likely not believe it is so bad. And there is no purpose served by shouting, "You wait till you have to earn your own living. It's tough out there!" What you say is true. But you will make more progress by positive instruction. Show the fruits of the wrong way. When all the facts are presented in an atmosphere of reason, few children will knowingly and imperiously choose the automatic curses of the wrong way.

It is up to you to maintain an atmosphere of reason. If you continually discourage your child, he will become bitter and resentful. Then he will become more susceptible to wrong influences. You must maintain an atmosphere of reason by being reasonable and fair yourself. God says—and let's always remember it—"Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged" (Col. 3:21).

How to Teach Obedience

Finally, you should teach your children obedience mainly by setting them an example of respect for the laws of God and man. Teach them to respond quickly when instructions are given. Be sure you have your child's attention, then tell him what you want him to do. Back up your words with discipline if necessary—in love.

Above all things, don't constantly use the phrase, "How many times do I have to tell you...?" or "Do you want a spanking'?" or "If you don't do as I said, I'm going to..." That is not effectively teaching obedience. Instead, you are encouraging delayed response, teaching the psychology of last-minute escapes and the deathbed repentance syndrome. You should teach your children the principles behind obedience. In your regular Bible studies, point out the clear lessons of what happened to those who obeyed God and those who disobeyed. Always stress this vital principle so that the lesson is driven home.

Remember your real goal is long-term, willing obedience. It is not something short-term like getting your child to go to bed. You certainly cannot expect real lasting obedience to God or man if you take such a shortsighted approach.

Keep your long-term goal in mind. Solomon described it: "My son, if thine heart be wise, my heart shall rejoice, even mine. Yea, my reins shall rejoice, when thy lips speak right things" (Prov. 23:15-16). Solomon saw the proper goal was more than temporary obedience.

When your child is no longer a child; when he reaches maturity and enjoys a life of happiness, balance, wisdom and sound judgment, without the cares and kickbacks of disobedience, then you can say that your child training has been a success. You will have accomplished the real goal of child rearing!