

you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.” In the New Testament, regarding children, fathers are instructed to “bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord” (Eph. 6:4). We can conclude that it is each family’s responsibility to teach their children spiritual truths.

Jonathan Edwards had the right idea back in the 18th century when he wrote, “Every family ought to be a little church consecrated to Christ and wholly influenced and governed by His principles.”

But what about us in the 20th [21st] century? In this day when secular attacks on God’s Word are increasing, this duty of teaching our children has become of even greater importance than in the past. No doubt about it. It is a challenge as Dr. Howard Hendricks so graphically states: “The following through with biblical standards is like building a fire in the rain. It requires willful determination against all odds, to do what seems impossible. It calls for expertise – know-how which understands the nature of the child and the nature of the hostile world. It demands a stubborn perseverance to keep fanning the flickering flames, to keep protecting the hot coals.”

Many of us have heard the verse in Proverbs 22:6, “Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it.” We all know this is what we should do, but how do we begin?

Parents start out with the same handicap. Parents have never raised children before. Parents lack wisdom. But thanks to the Lord’s brother, James, we have a starting place, “If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him” (James 1:5).

So we can start where we are. We can ask God for His wisdom, guidance, and

creative ideas to teach our children spiritual truths. God has endowed parents with special abilities to be used for His glory within the confines of our unique families. Our particular situation is tailor-made just for us and our abilities. Evelyn Christensen in her book *What Happens When Women Pray?* aptly describes it as “a sphere of influence that belongs only to you.”

But you may say, if you only knew my situation – how impossible it is. God knows all about it. He wants us to accept our particular situation and thank Him for it. An old preacher, F. B. Meyer, put it well, “God chose for you your lot in life out of myriads that were open to Him . . . otherwise God would have made you different from what you are. He chose your lot with its irritations, its trials, its difficulties – all the agony that eats out your soul. He chose it just as it is, because in it, if you will let Him, He can realize for you the fairest life within your reach.”

We can ask the Lord for wisdom in teaching our children spontaneously; that is, in the everyday circumstances of life that are unique to our family units. God wants to meet us where we are. He will enable us to model a biblical lifestyle before our children. Mothers play a strategic role in forming the spiritual well-being of their children. Her attitudes permeate every aspect of life. How she responds to the realities of life will be the way her children ultimately respond. Psychologists tell us that attitudes are taught best by example. If we as parents accept the circumstances in life from His loving hand, no matter what they may be, our children will learn to accept the circumstances in their lives. Chuck Swindoll gives us some guidelines to keep our attitudes in check,

“Nothing touches me that has not passed through the hands of my heavenly Father. NOTHING. Everything I endure is designed to prepare me for serving others more effectively. EVERYTHING.”

One family practices spontaneous teaching whenever a spat arose between the children. They called it “Instant Replay.” Mother would unravel the situation to its beginning, and then give the “replay” situation. She would work through each one’s role and attitude until the children learned the right way. Then they would “replay” it together. The next time a similar situation came up, they would recall the correct way to respond. It was not a 100% deterrent, but it was a positive and biblical alternative to the usual, “You-know-you-shouldn’t-do-that”/“If-you-ever-do-that-again” syndrome. Let’s begin to trust God to give us creative alternatives and ideas for our own unique family. Let’s buy up each opportunity to relate the Bible to our daily lives.

We can look beyond our own four walls to the needs of others – as a family. Is someone sick? Each family member can bring a portion of a dinner to the home. Is someone in need? Involve the whole family. Borrowed something? Return it in better condition than when the item was borrowed. Wronged someone? Go apologize. If one of our goals is to have our children trust God in every area of their lives, it must start with us—trusting God in every area of our lives. Many times we are concerned about a certain weakness in our children. However if we take a look at ourselves, we will usually find the same weakness. So, perhaps we could ask the Lord to deal with those weak areas in our own lives first, before we try to effect a change in our children. “Lord, deal with any area in my life that is adversely affecting my children.” Can we pray that? Are we really that concerned for our children? We must remember that we are to *live* principles into our children – not beat them in.

We can also ask the Lord for wisdom in teaching spiritual truths to our children structurally. That is, setting apart specific times to learn about God’s Word. We are all familiar with the family altar where the family reads and

prays together. But there are other ways to teach our children creatively in a structured situation.

One mother wanted her children to become familiar with the different individuals in the Bible. She invented a little game where her children would learn the Bible heroes by name. Matching pairs like Jacob and Esau, Mary and Martha, Cain and Abel, etc., they learned much about these characters as they played. It was all in fun and they enjoyed competing with their parents. All the while, the people in the Bible were becoming their friends. The children were developing a special love for the Word because it was becoming a part of them.

When our own children were small, we developed first-name acrostics. The idea originated from the Hebrew custom of having Scripture verses corresponding to each letter of the child's first name. Our oldest daughter's name is Lori. The first letter "L" was given the verse, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. . ." (1 John 2:15, KJV). Lori memorized first the "L" verse, then the "O," "R", and "I" verses. The homemade plaque hung on her bedroom wall as a daily reminder. Several years later when Lori was facing a decision as to the direction of life, her "L" verse came to mind, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world." It had a life-changing effect. She called from a thousand miles away to share her special experience. God does direct parents to creative ideas in teaching spiritual truths to their children.

Jesus promises that His Holy Spirit will lead us into all truth. Let us ask Him to prevail in our hearts and minds. Many parents do not have any confidence in teaching spiritual truths to their children. They have been intimidated for so long by the professionals. Too many voices are telling them what to do and how to do it! They need to trust the Lord and the

Lord's direction. They need to follow through – to go with their own instincts and ideas. Dr. Henry Brandt, a well-known Christian psychologist, expresses faith in parents when he says, "I'll put my hopes on the judgment of any parents who walk in the Spirit."

God promises **wisdom for the asking**. We need not totally rely on the professionals. Let's ask Him for wisdom, believe Him, spend time in His Word, and get going! Your children will love you for it! And it won't stop with them. It will have far-reaching effects. Psalm 78:5-7 aptly states it, ". . . he commanded our forefathers to teach their children, so the next generation would know them, even the children yet to be born, and they in turn would tell their children. Then they would put their trust in God. . . ."

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Spiritual Wisdom's Checklist

"If any lack wisdom, let him ask of God who giveth to all men liberally.

(James 1:5 KJV)

"But the wisdom that comes from above is first of all

- _____ pure
- _____ peace loving
- _____ gentle (at all times)
- _____ willing to yield to others
- _____ full of mercy
- _____ full of good deeds
- _____ shows no partiality
- _____ always sincere.

"And those who are peacemakers will plant seeds of peace and reap a harvest of goodness"

(James 3:17-18 NLB).

Show Me How



[Wisdom For the Asking]

Bev accepted Christ as a young mother. New desires to teach her children about Christ surged within. However, in scanning a list of books available on the subject, she felt overwhelmed. She did not know where to begin or which one to choose. She thought, "If I read all these books, I'll never have any time to teach my children!" The Lord in His wisdom and perfect timing sent along a Christian friend who encouraged her to ask the Lord for wisdom and guidance each day and in every situation. "In 20 years," her friend suggested, "when your children are grown, you can write your own book and add it to the list!"

Many people rely on professionals for the spiritual teaching of their children. Undoubtedly, Christian books, Sunday schools, day care centers, Christian schools, and youth clubs are good and helpful. But these were never meant to replace the responsibility of parents. God has endowed parents with the necessary equipment to carry out their responsibilities of teaching their children spiritual truths. God by His grace has enabled parents physically to bring children into this world – will He do less for them spiritually? Do parents have to put their children up for spiritual adoption? Parents need to be motivated to trust God daily for wisdom in teaching their own children spiritual truths. In the Old Testament the Israelites were commanded to give special instruction to their children. According to Deuteronomy 6:7, they were to teach their children diligently the Scriptures. The command was repeated five chapters later in Deuteronomy 11:19, "Teach them to your children, talking about them when