

# CHILDREN

## HOW TO RAISE GODLY CHILDREN

Titus 2:4

Ephesians 6:4



What Kind of  
Child are  
You Raising?

# Children

## Course Overview

How to raise a happy, healthy child is not something most parents are taught. In fact, many just stumble through the entire process, albeit with the best intentions. Consequently, it is all too common to find an unhappy state of affairs in families, with constant friction between parents and children.

It is not a natural state of affairs. In fact, it can be avoided entirely. Our church developed many methods to bring out the best in a child—and its parents. In this course, you will read about some of these methods and discover how to raise a child without breaking his spirit, how to have a child who is willing to contribute to the family and how to help a child quickly get over the daily upsets and tribulations of life.

Raising children should be a joy. And can be. In fact, it can be one of the most rewarding of all human experiences. The application of Christian principles to the bringing up of children can ensure that they are happy, loving and productive, and that they become valued members of the societies in which they live.

### **RAISING GODLY CHILDREN (5 Keys)**

#### **Key #1: Purpose: Parents Must Set Goals**

If you are a parent, you must have proper goals, and you must work diligently toward those goals. Whether you like it or not, if you have children you must recognize that you are responsible to raise your children properly.

Too many parents simply don't want to accept their responsibility as parents. They expect others to raise their children: the government, schools, church,

babysitters, day-care centers, or their friends or relatives. Meanwhile the parents pursue other interests.

Some fathers think they will leave the children to the mothers to raise (or vice-versa). Some divorce and leave the home or otherwise desert their children. Some spend too much time away from home pursuing other interests. Some simply don't bother. This is unacceptable.

### **You Brought These Children into the World.**

When you participated in the act that produces children, you accepted the responsibility to care for any child that was conceived. Your children did not ask to come here. You brought them here. Now it's your job to take care of them.

You may say that a child was "an accident" - you did not intend to conceive. But the fact is that, if you chose to participate in the act that may result in a child, then you are responsible for any child that results.

The government did not bring your child into this world. You did. So don't expect the government to raise your child. Likewise, for the church, the schools, the day-care center, and your parents or relatives - none of them brought your children into this world. Caring for them properly must be your goal.

### **God Holds You Responsible for Raising Your Children.**

Titus 2:4 - Young women should be taught to love their children. Love requires caring for them. This is something that can and must be learned. Women who do not learn it will cause God's word to be blasphemed (v5).

Ephesians 6:4 - Fathers are commanded to bring their children up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. You cannot leave this up to others, including your wife (though, of course, she is responsible too). You are responsible. You have no right to shirk this duty or try to shift it to others.

Genesis 18:19 - God approved of Abraham, because he commanded his children to keep the way of the Lord. He did not leave this duty up to others.

1 Samuel 3:12-14 - On the other hand, when Eli's sons became corrupt, God held Eli accountable. God rebuked Eli, not the schools or the government or even just Eli's wife.

Parents must accept the goal of raising their children properly and must diligently work toward that goal. They must not leave this to others.

Some parents may emphasize goals that are of little importance and could even become problems: physical beauty, athletic achievement, popularity, etc. But there are other goals that parents ought to pursue for their children:

- \* We should meet our children's physical needs.
- \* We should provide a good education.
- \* We should prepare them for life, so they can have a happy marriage and be good citizens and neighbors.
- \* We may even provide some recreation, entertainment, and enjoyment.

1 Timothy 5:8 - If any does not provide for his own, and especially for his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever. Christians should provide wholesome benefits for our children (Matt. 7:9-11).

However the Main Goal is to Train Children to Serve God so they can receive Eternal Life: Genesis 18:19 - Abraham commanded his children to keep the way of the Lord, to do righteousness and justice. This should be the goal of all fathers who are truly faithful to God.

## **Key #2: Purpose: Planning**

If we wish to succeed in any important, difficult endeavor, first we must determine our goal. Then we must develop a plan for reaching our goal. Often we fail to reach our goals because we fail to develop a clear plan for our children to reach.

Here are a listing of things your children may confront before they reach the age of eighteen in America.

### **Entertainment: Television, Movies, and Music**

Suppose your child had three good friends who continually attempted to persuade your child to accept all the following practices:

- \* Drug and alcohol abuse
- \* The occult - witchcraft, Satanism, astrology, sorcery, etc.
- \* Oriental religions - Hinduism, Buddhism, reincarnation, etc.
- \* Violence, murder, suicide
- \* Sexual promiscuity - fornication, adultery, homosexuality, immodesty and nudity
- \* Profanity, cursing, obscenity
- \* Rebellion against parents, government, God and the Bible

Suppose your child was spending several hours every day visiting these friends and listening to them justify these ideas. Would you want your child to continue that relationship or would you try to break it off? If "running with a bad crowd" can corrupt your child's good morals, how can they not be influenced by close relationships with such evils?

Yet many children of Christians have three friends who are just like we have described. Those friends are named television, movies, and music.

## **Television**

The average American watches TV 50 hours per week - ten hours more than the average work week.

A study of 58 hours of prime-time TV revealed: 5 rapes, 7 homosexual acts, 28 acts of prostitution, 41 examples of sexual relations between unmarried people. But this study was in 1983!

It has been estimated that, by the time the average child reaches age 18, he will have witnessed more than 15,000 murders on TV or in movies.

In 1991 the National Coalition On Television Violence estimated that, if TV violence had never been introduced, each year the US would have 10,000 fewer murders, 70,000 fewer rapes, 1,000,000 fewer motor vehicle thefts, 2,500,000 fewer burglaries, and 10,000,000 fewer acts of larceny. Crime rates would be half what they are now.

## **Movies**

Many Christians think nothing of letting children attend PG or PG-13 movies. Here is a survey of the contents of PG and PG-13 movies in a year:

Nearly 1/4 have the "f-word."

61% take God's name in vain.

71% contain vulgar references to excretion, intercourse, or genitals.

50% imply sexual intercourse.

13% show intercourse.

30% show explicit nudity.

75% include moderate or severe violence.

74% depict alcohol or drug abuse (via Citizen, 1/89)

To raise children the Bible is God's Guide for raising Godly Children. And then we must Learn from Winning Parents. Father and Mother should discuss their

Plan for the children and sign a covenant to agree with how their children are going to be raised. Furthermore, the Plan must be accompanied by Prayer.

Too many parents let their own children manipulate them. "I just don't know what to do with them." We need to learn to out-think our children. Our duty as parents requires us to study God's word and apply it so we know how to raise godly children.

The Devil often defeats us, not because it is impossible for us to defeat him, but because we are not fighting him effectively. We either are not aware of the danger, or else we are simply too indifferent to fight. By the time we realize our mistake, it is often too late. But we can win the battle, if we follow God's will and prayerfully develop a plan based on the principles it teaches.

For each child, you only have one chance to raise him/her properly, and that opportunity will so quickly be gone. When one is almost grown, it is too late to go back and start over if you haven't done it right. To succeed, we need a plan based, not on human wisdom, but on prayerful study and application of God's will.

Do you have a plan for raising your children? Is your plan based on God's word? How often do you discuss with your spouse the principles on which you act? How diligent are you in your effort to fight Satan and his evil influences on your children? Love your children by Planning for your child.

Above all be an example for your child; Practice what you preach; Remember Repetition is a good mode of training and begin Early! Have regular, Organized Study times at home. Teach formally and informally when the opportunity presents itself.

### **Key #3: Purpose: Authority (Control)**

Authority is the right to give instructions and require obedience.

Our age generally rejects and even despises the concepts of authority, rules, law, and duty.

People insist on doing their own thing, being their own person, and having their own way. As one man said, "I don't want anybody telling me what to do."

So people demand "freedom" from restrictions. They object when government is firm with criminals or when schools enforce strict rules toward children. They

want to loosen the application of God's laws: they object when strict obedience to truth is taught and when those who do not obey truth are rebuked and disciplined. They even object to the concept of a firm God who hates evil and punishes evildoers!

This rejection of authority is especially obvious in the modern concept of the family. How often do you see TV shows, books, movies, or cartoons that portray a father as a capable, responsible family leader? Generally, either he shares authority equally with the wife, or else he is a bumbler, dominated and manipulated by his wife.

Likewise society denies that children should be required to submit to parental authority.

Parent Effectiveness Training, introduced by Thomas Gordon, advocates that parents give up all use of authority. Family conflicts must be resolved by finding a course that is mutually agreeable to both parent and child. Neither is permitted to "impose" his solution on the other.

The Children's Liberation Movement leads young people to rebel against parents like the Women's Liberation movement sometimes led women to rebel against their husbands.

We want the power to determine our own destiny. We want the immediate end of adult chauvinism ... Age might once have led to wisdom, but the old have proven themselves unable to deal with present reality ... the young must take the lead... - "Youth Liberation."

Child welfare agencies are often staffed by social workers who believe these modern views. They try to convince parents that they have no right to exercise firm leadership and will be subject to government prosecution if they do!

As a result, many children have their own parents "buffaloed." Parents are afraid that, if they cross their children, they will throw a fit, run away, get into drugs, report them to the government, or be taken away by government agencies. The children, not the parents, end up being the dominant influence in the home. Nevertheless, we affirm that proper use of authority is an essential key to successful parenthood. Read the text:

Proverbs 29:15 - A child left to himself (unsupervised) will cause shame. But the rod and reproof will give him wisdom (gained from the parents).

Proverbs 4:10-12 - Because of his parents' instructions, the child is wiser. He can avoid problems and mistakes he might otherwise have.

Parents, you are trying to raise **godly** children. The ultimate goal of your authority is to teach your children respect for **God's** authority. **You should expect your children to obey you like God will expect them to obey Him.** Do they?

Do your children obey promptly, or do they procrastinate, make excuses, manipulate, and seek to evade your instructions? Do they obey with an attitude of love and good will, or do they groan, complain, and whine? Do they obey exactly, or do they try to bend the rules and justify partial obedience? Do they obey when you are not watching or only if they know they will get caught?

What kind of obedience does God expect of us? If your children have not learned to obey you like they should obey God, then you have work to do. God says it is your job to teach it to them!

#### **Key #4: Purpose: Punishments and Rewards**

Parents would prefer that their children simply obey them without chastisement. But in practice this does not always happen. Often the child's will conflicts with that of the parent. Then, if the child is to learn respect for authority and do what we believe to be best for him, we must still get them to obey us. How can we lead a child to obey when he would rather not?

The answer is that parents must motivate the child to obey. Whatever reasons they have for not obeying, we must give them stronger reasons to obey! This is done by rewards and punishments. When the child obeys, we make him glad by giving him a pleasant experience. When he disobeys, we make him sorry by giving an unpleasant experience. He eventually learns it is to his advantage to obey.

Psychologists call this "reinforcement." It is used in training animals. Obedience leads to a pleasant result; disobedience leads to an unpleasant result. We are dealing, not with animals, but with children who have intelligence and emotional needs. Above all they have a spirit in the image of God and will eventually receive an eternal destiny based on their conduct before God. This is why we already emphasized love and instruction. Nevertheless, the principles of rewards and punishments are useful and Scriptural.

Some parents act as though controlling children is entirely a matter of punishment. They never give rewards and sometimes speak as though they think



it is wrong to do so. But consider a Biblical defense of using rewards in raising children.

Luke 10:7 - The laborer is worthy of his wage, but lazy, negligent workers do not deserve to be rewarded. (See also Matt. 25:14-30; 20:1-15; James 5:4; 1 Cor. 9:6-14; 1 Tim. 5:17,18; Eph. 4:28; 2 Thess. 3:10).

One way to reward a child is by letting him work for physical things he wants: money or some item he wants. But this does not mean the child should be paid for everything he does. His parents are already providing him with food, clothes, shelter, etc. If the laborer is worthy of his reward, then the child already owes it to the parents to work in return for all that the parents do for the child! And especially in spiritual matters, children need to learn the value of deferring their reward till judgment day, not necessarily expecting immediate rewards for serving God.

### **Acceptable Substitutes**

If a child has been corrected for some wrong or has been forbidden to do something unacceptable, you may offer him an acceptable alternative rather than leave him disappointed or tempted to do wrong despite your instructions.

If he cannot ride his tricycle because it is raining, suggest some inside game or activity.

If you teach him not to go to the prom, offer him some alternative: a night out with the family or a banquet with other Christian friends.

God uses this method with us. He does not just forbid sin, but tells us the good we should replace it with (Eph. 4:22-32). This approach leaves the child with much less temptation to do wrong, and also teaches him to have a positive outlook and be content even when he cannot get his way.

### **Withholding Privileges**

Rewards are given only to those who deserve them. When a child misbehaves, withholding a privilege or reward may be an appropriate punishment. Usually such punishments are most effective if the connection between the punishment and the crime is fairly obvious.

If he doesn't finish his homework (or other job), he can't go out to play but has to finish the homework.

If he misbehaves with his friends, then he cannot visit with them for a period of time. If he does not come when he was supposed to, he is "grounded" and can't go anywhere for pleasure for a while.

An older teen who uses the car improperly (as by not caring for the car responsibly) may have use of the car withdrawn for a period of time

### **Apology**

Matt. 5:23,24; Luke 17:3,4 - When we wrong other people, the Bible teaches us to go to those people and apologize. Parents should teach children to practice this principle. When the child wrongs another child, an adult, or the parents themselves, the child should be made to apologize.

This also constitutes a good form of discipline because it is not easy to face one we have wronged and admit we were wrong. The child is not likely to soon repeat the act that led to this consequence.

### **Natural Consequences**

Some acts naturally lead to unpleasant consequences that teach the child a lesson without the parents' having to punish them.

If a child torments a cat and the parent warns him to quit, he may continue till the cat scratches him.

If the consequences are very severe and if the child would learn the lesson from a lesser punishment, we should prefer a lesser punishment (for example, spank the child instead of letting him burn himself on a hot stove). But sometimes a child simply won't learn from the parents' teaching.

Luke 15:14-17 - The father of the Prodigal Son allowed his son to suffer the consequences of doing wrong. The boy reached the bottom, but nobody bailed him out (including his father). The result is he "came to himself" and repented. Modern parents need to learn this lesson.

Sometimes this method is the only one children will listen to. They may have to learn some lessons the hard way. If they won't listen to us, we should not protect them from the consequences of their wrong.

If a child makes a foolish debt, make him pay it off.

If he misbehaves at school, don't take his part against the teacher or school authorities. Let them punish him.

If he misbehaves toward a neighbor (as by damaging their property), make him go face the angry neighbor and fix what he broke.

If he breaks a law and the judge fines him, make him work to pay off the fine.

Many parents "bail out" their children when they get in trouble, and the children never learn to be responsible and avoid the foolish conduct. Sometimes the best punishment is to let the child suffer for his error and don't protect him from the consequences.

### **Divine Corrections for Sin**

When the child's conduct is sinful, we should use the same methods for correcting him that we should with others. This includes:

#### **Use God's Word to instruct and rebuke them.**

2 Timothy 3:16,17 [4:2-4] - Use the Bible to show them where they are wrong and warn them of the eternal consequences of such conduct.

Make clear that you are acting for the child's good. Don't lead the child to think the Bible is a weapon God provided for parents to get their own way. Show them that this is God's will and they must obey God.

#### **Cooperate with other Christians and the church, when they rebuke the child.**

Galatians 6:1 - Sometimes Christians know our children has sinned, so they try to talk to them about it. Parents in such cases may become defensive and try to protect their children. Instead we should realize that this is good for the children, and we should appreciate people who care enough to help. Remember the father of the prodigal, who allowed his son to suffer the consequences of his sin till the son repented.

2 Thessalonians 3:6,14,15 - If the child is a Christian who sins and the church exercises Scriptural discipline, we cooperate with the church and respect its decision. The Old Law taught parents to actively participate in congregational punishment of erring children (Deut. 21:18-21; 13:6-11; Zech. 13:3). New Testament discipline takes a different form, but the principle is the same. If the child sins, and we defend them in opposition to those who Scripturally reprove him, we become a partaker of his evil deed - 2 John 10,11.

## **Pray for the child to do right.**

James 5:16 - Confess your faults to one another and pray for one another. When the child acknowledges he has done wrong, pray to God and ask God to help him do right. If he is old enough to be a Christian, then his disobedience to you was also a sin against God. Have him confess the sin to God and pray for forgiveness. (Acts 8:22; Matthew 6:12; 21:28-32; 2 Corinthians 7:10; 1 John 1:8-10; Proverbs 28:13)

Parents may find other means of motivating children, in addition to those mentioned here. But the principle always is: give pleasant consequences for good behavior, unpleasant consequences for bad behavior.

## **Generally Children Should Be Disciplined in Private**

Sometimes a child misbehaves in public places, other people's homes, or in the presence of company. Disciplining him around other people may embarrass him, you, and the other people. And in today's society so-called child advocates may harass you. But if you don't discipline the child, he soon learns he can misbehave around other people without consequences.

One solution is to call the child to you and inform him as privately as possible what you want (whisper, etc.). If firmer measures are needed, find or ask for a private room. (This could be a rest room, a bedroom, a car, etc.). Take the child there and proceed to discipline as you would at home. If he is old enough to understand, you may tell him you will discipline him when you get home.

Suppose a child is being noisy or otherwise disruptive during a church meeting. Some people think, if they take the child out, it will be embarrassing or will disturb others. But by not disciplining the child, they make matters worse because the child continues to disrupt other people.

When your child is distracting other people in worship assemblies, take him out and solve his problem. Then bring him back when he is under control so he will not distract others.

## **Talk to the Child Before and After You Punish Him.**

Discuss the incident. Explain why it was wrong and what the child should have done. After the punishment, make sure the child is sorry: make him say he's sorry and make him promise to do right next time. If he has refused to do something you told him to do, take him back and make him do it. Then be sure to tell the

child you love him and you expect him to do better next time, etc. There are many advantages to this.

(1) It helps you keep calm.

(2) It makes sure the child understands why he is being punished and what you expect in the future.

(3) It helps him remember the lesson. You certainly have his attention, so it is an excellent time to instruct him.

(4) It enables you to assure him of your love and concern for what's best for him. You make sure he understands that you care about him, but you must not allow that kind of conduct.

(5) Often your talk will cause the child to feel bad just by the fact he knows he has disappointed you.

Gwendolyn Webb says to "make a spanking an event." She means don't just keep scolding a child and smacking him so the situation gets dragged out repeatedly. Take him out, talk to him, give him a spanking, make him apologize and do what you told him, etc. Make it an event he will remember, so he is not likely to make the same error again.

Romans 11:22 - Therefore consider the goodness and severity of God: on those who fell, severity; but toward you, goodness, if you continue in His goodness.

God is a God of both rewards and punishments. He is our example of a good father. We should consider the principles He uses to motivate obedience and apply those principles in our homes according to the Scriptures.

### **Key #5: Purpose: Consistency**

Consistency is defined as "steadfast adherence to the same principles."

We have already learned six "key" principles we must follow in order to raise godly children. But it is not enough to just understand and be aware of these principles. We must consistently apply them - we must "steadfastly adhere" to them, and we must continually apply the "same principles" without variation. This applies to all six areas we have already discussed:

(1) We must consistently keep our purpose before us and take all actions with that purpose in mind: to raise our children to serve God.

(2) We must consistently plan our actions in harmony with God's word, and put our plan into action.

(3) We must consistently act in love for the whole family, making our decisions according to what is best for all.

(4) We must consistently instruct our children to know God's will.

(5) We must consistently use authority for the good of all, expecting obedience and respect from children.

(6) We must consistently motivate our children to obey us by means of proper, diligent application of punishments and rewards.

We are not saying to just be consistent, regardless of the principles you follow. It is possible to be consistently wrong! We must learn the right principles, then we must steadfastly adhere to them.

Lack of consistency is one of the biggest problems facing parents. We often fail, not because we do not know what to do, but because we are not diligent in applying consistently what we know.

## **Conclusion**

Parents must practice each of the "key" principles that we have studied. But note further that, if we practice each of these "key" principles, we will find that each of them in turn will instill a related quality in our children.

(1) If raising our children to serve God is our main goal, then the children will develop serving God as their main goal.

(2) If we plan our training of the children based on God's word, then our children will learn to plan their lives on the basis of God's word.

(3) If we always act in love for our children, then our children will learn to act in love for everyone around them.

(4) If we diligently instruct our children in God's word, they will develop, not only an understanding of God's word, but also a desire to in turn instruct others.

(5) If we properly exercise authority toward our children, this will instill in them a respect for authority and an understanding of how to exercise authority when they need to do so.

(6) If we motivate them by proper use of punishments and rewards, then they will learn to seek the rewards and avoid the punishments offered by God (and other authority figures).

(7) If we are consistent in applying these principles in training our children, then they will learn to do right consistently. Because we demand right conduct all the time, they will learn to act right all the time, not just part of the time.

Raising children is one of the most awesome responsibilities any human being can face. Our conduct as parents will influence our children, not just for life, but for eternity. You and I will largely determine how our children live their lives and where they will be in eternity.

Yet many parents face this responsibility with far too little concern and far too little understanding of proper principles. We emphasize again that our goal as parents must be to raise godly children. While many people do not know how to do this, there is no need for us to be ignorant. God's word tells us the principles we should follow. To successfully raise godly children, we must understand and practice God's keys for raising children.