

Goals in Training Children

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This paper gives some general ideas about the goals parents can set in child training. You will probably have your child in the home for about 18 years, and during that time it is your responsibility to see that the child is educated, trained, and brought to enough spiritual maturity to make the transition into Christian adulthood.

You can set up a life “curriculum” for your child, for every year of his life, which will enable him to reach his potential in God’s plan for his life. The principles laid out in this paper will give you a “syllabus” for organizing your child’s Christian education (edification).

The following are the main principles found in the Bible dealing with parental responsibilities:

- Children are a gift from God to parents. There are both privileges and responsibilities resulting from this gift. Gen. 48:9; Psa. 127:3; Isa. 8:18
- The chief responsibility of parents is the teaching and training of their children. Deut. 6:6,7; Prov. 22:6; 2 Cor. 12:14; Eph. 6:4; Col. 3:21; 1 Tim. 3:4,12; Tit. 2:4; Deut. 4:9; 31:13
- Parents’ duties include providing for children’s physical needs. 2 Cor. 12:14
- Parents are expected to administer correction involving discipline. Eph. 6:4; 1 Tim. 3:4; Deut. 4:9; Prov. 19:18; 22:15; 23:13

In all eras of Bible history, parents brought their children to public Bible teaching. Josh. 8:35; 2

Chron. 20:13; Neh. 12:43; Prov. 8:17,32; Matt. 21:15; Psa. 34:11; Prov. 3:1

See related passages also in Josh. 1:8; Heb. 3:13; Acts 2:46,47; 5:41,42; 16:4,5; 17:10,11

The Word of God is administered to children in large doses. 2 Tim. 3:15; 1 Sam. 2:26; Luke 1:80; 2:49

Parents must realize that children who, in later life, dishonor their parents, bear heavy consequences as the result of divine discipline. Deut. 21:20; 27:16; Prov. 15:20; 30:11; Micah 7:6; 2 Tim. 3:2; Matt. 15:4; Isa. 45:10.

A Set of Biblical Goals

The following goals are derived from Scripture context, and they relate to the spiritual development of a Christian of any age. You would like to see your child advance as far as possible toward these goals during his childhood and adolescence. Each of the goals stated arises from a specific Bible promise relating to God’s plan for the Christian Way of Life and productivity during the believer’s lifetime.

- Christian parents want salvation for their children. Many Christian parents lead their own children to Christ.
- Another goal for children is that they have the ability to live in fellowship with God, through Biblical confession of sin, to support daily growth in the spiritual life.

- You want your child to have inner happiness, the peace of God that passes understanding, and great inner joy that doesn't depend on the details of life. Isa. 26:3; Psa. 128:1,2; Prov. 3:18; John 13:17, etc.
- You want your child to be mentally stable and psychologically normal. A child can be fully adjusted to circumstances whether they are pleasant or adverse. This requires learning to have a relaxed mental attitude which results from claiming the promises of Scripture, executing the commands, and learning doctrine.
- Another goal is that your child have respect for authority, of all kinds: parental, political, spiritual. As a child observes his mother's submission to his father, or his father's submission to legal authority, he will have a very positive object lesson in proper response to authority. Eph. 5:22; Col. 3:18
- Your child can have a mastery of the details of life, such things as money, job, health, status, friends, social life, possessions, entertainments, etc.

Mastery of the details of life means:

- (1) having the ability to enjoy the details of life without being a slave to them, and
- (2) having perfect inner happiness in the absence of one or more details of life.

While there are differences in how much parents can provide in actual details of life for their children, any parent can train a child so that he does not seek his satisfaction in those things or make them objects of a search for happiness.

- An important goal is teaching a child about the production of divine good, the lifelong production of "gold, silver, and precious stones" rather than "wood, hay and stubble". A life of witnessing is included in this, as well as the exercise of spiritual gifts, regardless of vocation.
- A child must learn as early in possible the means of having victory over sin, from the standpoint of staying in fellowship with God and in developing freedom from chronic, fear, worry, cruelty, bitterness, envy, hatred, maligning, gossiping, judging, revenge seeking, and so forth. Along with this is the freedom from the need to sublimate through alcohol, drugs, or fornication.

The result of victory over sin patterns in the life is the freedom from divine discipline and from the

self-induced misery caused by sin with and the accompanying neuroses and psychoses brought on by chronic sin.

- In all phases of life, your child should develop a set of Bible standards by which to make decisions which come from divine viewpoint.
- A child can develop the ability to give and receive love, first of all to love and be occupied with the Lord Jesus Christ, then to have a genuine impersonal love for others, and to be able to exhibit true rapport love for friends, family, and spouse.

Along with this is your desire that your child will have the wisdom to be able to distinguish God's choice for marriage partner. This includes an understanding of biblical principles of Christian courtship and marriage, the ability to distinguish true love, and the knowledge of how to set the pattern for a successful marriage, even during the dating years and engagement period.

Help in the Project of Training Children

There is no question that parents have the responsibility for training children, but there is a lot of help available, especially in the local church. The church provides opportunity for parents and children to be trained in the Word of God with doctrines essential to family life and Christian living. Both the pastor's public teaching and the ministry of other mature believers in the church, some of whom have "faithful children, not accused of riot or unruly", are sources of help to parents in achieving the goals stated above.

A parent can sometimes delegate academic education responsibility to school teachers whom he regards as competent, people who will reinforce with the child the doctrines and standards he learns in the home and at church. The Christian school, for example, can help parents by providing competent academic instruction in an environment parents with which the parents can be comfortable. The Christian school also provides a format for the sharing of spiritual gifts of teachers along with academic expertise which parents may not possess. This type of school has administrators and teachers whose orientation to life and to doctrine is similar to the parents' and that provides reinforcement of the divine viewpoint taught at home.

Where suitable public or private schools are not available, the parent must consider educating the

child at home. Again, there are usually many resource people in a local church who can help with curriculum, tutoring, and management of the academics.

Results of Failure to Follow Biblical Practices in Raising Children

When parents fail to stay in God's plan for the Christian Way of Life, they will not be in a position to lead their children in obtaining the goals listed here. Therefore, the rest of this paper is a warning to parents who are tempted to be "dropouts".

When parents fail to commit themselves to a consistent routine of Bible study and Christian growth, accompanied by the consistent control of the Holy Spirit, a condition will occur described in the Bible as "darkness in the soul" or "blindness in the soul", Eph. 4:17,18. When this happens, the following progressive negative results are observed, all of which have an enormous negative impact on children, as you can see.

- Soul darkness leads to a breakdown in the faith system of acquiring wisdom, a lessening of the understanding of God's point of view, and a cessation of spiritual growth.
- In the place of divine standards come human standards, criteria, programs, false standards. This results in subjectivity, unhappiness, frustration.
- Without a true source for happiness, the believer's frustration leads him to a frantic search for happiness through the details of life. He becomes a slave to those details.
- The believer also begins to produce his own misery. God's chastisement is compounded daily. Neuroses and psychoses are developed from chronic mental attitude sins. And all this is aggravated by his having no defense against the attacks of Satan. The Christian is still in the battle, but he doesn't

have his armor on. He becomes a casualty in the spiritual conflict.

- Meanwhile, arrogant self-righteousness replaces the righteousness of God, Rom. 10:3. This leads to systems of pseudo-spirituality in which the believer sets up his own system for pleasing God and obtaining His blessing. At the same time he becomes even more alienated from the Word of God, which is the only solution to his downward slide.

When parents are alienated from the Lord, the results in the lives of their children are, of course, catastrophic.

- First, the child adopts the negative viewpoint of his parents toward the Word of God; so he doesn't get into his own program of doctrinal intake.
- Then, his parents' human viewpoint becomes his own; he adopts their standards, their criteria, their doctrine, their methods, etc.
- Further, his parents' pursuit of happiness through the details of life influences his value judgments, his career plans, his orientation to God and God's Word. So children are sometimes further isolated from Bible teaching than are their parents because they never achieve the initial momentum with which their parents may have started.

This is the progression of sin which the Bible says is visited upon the succeeding generations of children.

- The only ray of encouragement in this description is that a child has his own volition and may at some point in his life become positive to Grace on his own. He can certainly recover from his parents' backsliding, but he will experience the effects of poor child training all of his life.

There are many principles for parents to learn from the Bible about avoiding the pitfalls in child training and to help their children make rapid progress in the Christian way of life. I hope that this paper has whet your appetite to follow through on the responsibilities God gives you.