

PARENTING

Ages 0 - 24

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**“I have no greater joy than this,
to hear of my children walking in the truth.”**

3 John 4

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According to modern trends, it is probable that one-third of a child’s life will be directly under parental training and one- third will be under indirect parental training and one-third will be involved with parental care (Ephesians 6:1-4; 1 Timothy 5:4).

The booklet, Parenting, will study five age-groupings:

- ◆ **Infancy** (0-1 year)
- ◆ **Pre-school** (2-5 years)
- ◆ **Elementary school** (6-12 years)
- ◆ **Adolescence** (13-17 years)
- ◆ **Young adults** (18-24 years)

Each of these five age-groupings will be studied with the same four headings, an exercise page for approaching problems, and a page for fragrant memories.

It is important to read each verse and study its relation to the principle in the lesson. This booklet on parenting has been designed for study and not for lackadaisical reading.

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“Hear, my son, and accept my sayings, and the years of your life will be many. I have directed you in the way of wisdom: I have led you in upright paths. When you walk, your steps will not be impeded; and if you run, you will not stumble. Take hold of instructions; do not let go. Guard her, for she is your life.”

Proverbs 4:10-12

INTRODUCTION TO PARENTING

A Parent's Joy

"I have no greater joy than this, to hear of my children walking in the truth."

3 John 4

Parents are a child's first learning source in life.

This learning experience can have a positive and negative effect upon a child's development as a person.

Some psychologists believe that a person's core personality is developed by age 6. "50% of a child's character is formed by the time he is 3 years old and 75% by the time he is 5 years old." (Understanding the Male Temperament by Tim LaHaye, pg.19). This study is intended to minimize the negative effect upon the child's development. "There is a critical period during the first 5 years of a child's life when he can be taught proper attitudes. These early concepts become rather permanent." (Dare to Discipline by Dr. James Dobson, pg.9). As the twig is bend, the tree is inclined.

Christian parents are warned about damaging the core personality of their children (Colossians 3:21). As a pastor, I counsel many adults who suffer from damaged core personalities as children (Ephesians 4:22).

A child's initial personality development and sense of self-worth and well-being is a reflection of parental training. It is the initial instructional foundation of the child's development as a person.

How a child perceives himself through the eyes of others imprints him as an adult. This study is designed to help parents build a strong foundation in a child's life. Parents are possibly the strongest single human influence upon a child's personage. Therefore, it is important that parents have some basic understanding regarding the training of their children through five age-groupings.

It is possible to fail in the training of one age group and recover in another, if you understand how to implement a few Biblical parenting skills (Hebrews 4:12).

This series of lessons are not designed to answer all parenting problems. However, this series of lessons is designed to help parents evaluate their present training methods and to offer constructive advice. It is our intention to offer some biblical parenting skills in each of the five age-groupings to encourage parents to look to God and His word for spiritual guidance in parenting children.

Proverbs 4:10-13 is an example of a biblical parenting skill. Solomon was explaining to his child the importance of faith cycling of bible doctrine in his life.

We will study Prov.4:10-13 by a four-point homiletical outline: Promise (10); Parenting (11); Problem-solving (12); and Prize (13).

WISDOM OF GODLY PARENTING

Wise and Loving Counselor

“Listen my son, to your father’s instruction and do not forsake your mother’s teaching.”

Proverbs 1:8

The Bible places the primary responsibility of the training of children upon parents, grandparents and great-grandparents (Proverbs 13:22; 17:6; Exodus 13:14; Psalms 78:3-5).

Mothers or fathers can rear children *without* the other parent, but they need God. All of them need to teach children about God’s wonderful grace plan that will be their spiritual heritage. 2 Timothy 1:5 and 3:15 give an example of a single parent doing a good job. The Christian parents have the responsibility to evangelize and bring their children to spiritual maturity through the proper study of God’s Word.

It is the responsibility of *godly parents* to guide the spiritual development of their children. Parents should bring children to take responsibility for their behavior (Luke 2:21-24; 2:40-46-52; 4:16; Proverbs 22:6). Christian parents should diligently teach their children Bible doctrine in conversation, playtime, shopping and bedtime (Deuteronomy 6:4-9).

The first four age groupings (infancy through adolescence) are the ideal period for the spiritual development of children. Most are converted by the age of 25; 75% are saved by the age of 14; 19% by the age of 19. However, 70% of the 18 through 24-year olds are absent from church.

Children can grasp spiritual training at every age group. However, parents need to teach and review. Parents need to ask the child, “Did you understand what I said?” and “What did you understand I said?” This will enable you to know if the child has understood the teaching (2 Timothy 1:5; 3:15; 1 Timothy 4:11-16).

Christian parents are the initial role model whether good or bad for their children (2 Corinthians 3:1-3; Hebrews 10:21- 25; 1 Timothy 3:4-5, 12-13; 2 John 4; 3 John 4).

The way children are reared has a serious effect upon the early development of their person and the direction of their lives. *“Fools despise wisdom in the Lord.”* Therefore, it is important to give children godly guidance.

The best textbook for rearing children is the Bible. The best book in the Bible for rearing children is the book of Proverbs. Christian parents need to be in a good relationship with God to be in a good relationship with your children (Deuteronomy 6:7; 11:18-21; Ephesians 6:2-3; Proverbs 1:1-6).

“And that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.”

2 Timothy 3:15

THE GIFT OF CHILDREN

0-1 Year (Infancy)

Psalms 127:3-5

“Behold, children are a gift of the Lord; The fruit of the womb is a reward, like arrows in the hand of a warrior, so are the children of one’s youth. How blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them; They shall not be ashamed, when they speak with their enemies in the gate.”

This passage will be divided into a three-part outline of THE GIFT OF CHILDREN.

- ◆ Children are **fruits of the womb** (verse 3)
- ◆ Children are **arrows in the hand of a warrior** (verse 4)
- ◆ Children are **blessing** from the Lord (verses 5)

Therefore, Christian parents should understand that they are spiritual guardians of their children.

This lesson will address the **0-1-year-old** child. This age group is unique because it actually has two halves. The first half is the 0 to 1 and the second half is 1 to 2 years. We will study **INFANCY** by a four-point outline: **reasonable behavior; retention; relationship; and rules and consequences.**

Reasonable Behavior

Reasonable behavior for 0 to 1 year has been described as crib, creeping, and crawling. While reasonable behavior for 1 to 2 years has been described as the clinging, crying, and climbing period. In the infancy period, the child goes from mouth and grasp reflex (grabs and won’t let go), which is natural, to spitting and spilling. The parent goes from no-no to naughty-naughty as the child begins to explore his self-awareness and gropes for independence. This is when the child’s old sin nature is manifesting itself.

This is a good time to teach the crawler to get his own toys when they are reasonably nearby, for it develops right lobe learning activities. As part of the child’s learning, begin teaching the toddler to put up the toys that he gets out.

Parents should be aware of the manipulating crying towards the eight month, especially at bedtime. It is important for both parents to recognize the difference between a hurtful cry and a harmless one. The primary caregiver is the best one to identify the difference. If not corrected in love during childhood, the behavior can be retained all the way into adult childish behavior.

Retention

Infancy is an enormous human growth period. It has been estimated to be as great as 200%. If this growth period were carried over into adulthood, a person would be 200 feet tall and weigh 10 tons. Visuals and sounds are important areas of learning. *Touch, taste, and teach* is an important method for learning—ball, big ball, red ball, roll the big red ball.

Tender loving care (TLC) is important in infancy. It is the period of carrying and caring. Holding and reading is a great learning experience for both the child and the parents. Both parents should be involved in the rearing process of this age. During 0 to 1 year, holding and reading develops a quiet time. During 1 to 2 years, it will require more for a child to be quiet This is an energetic age. Infancy (baby world) is a period for word association, simple vocabulary, and tone- orientation identification.

Relationship

This is a new relationship period for both the child and parents. It is especially new for the father who has most likely been a spectator to this point. The mother should work daddy into child-care parenting. Parents must remember that this child is a distinctively different member of the family with his or her own personality identity.

This is a time for special distribution of the parents' time between all members of the immediate family. Other siblings must not be neglected by parents or by other close relatives of the family. Infancy is a family event. Other siblings don't understand why the baby is getting gifts and attention and they are being ignored and neglected.

It is also important to keep your marriage relationship in good shape during the last 3 months of pregnancy and the first 6 months of the child's life. During this period the marital relationship often gets neglected. **This Should Not Happen!** A solid marital relationship is an essential foundation for the addition to the relationship of a child.

Breast-feeding is very important during the first three months for many reasons. (For information, contact the local La Leche League.) 0 to 1 year is an important period for bonding with the mother and 1 to 2 years is important for bonding with the rest of the family. This is a time of "burn-out" for the mother. She needs periodic breaks from the child during age 8 to 18 months.

Rules and Consequences

Remember that your child begins life minus a developed mentality. This means that the child has no developed frame of reference for his new word association. Word association vocabulary comes before sentences. This means that there is no developed memory center for recall. Therefore, you must be careful how you approach discipline during infancy. They understand pain, but they may not understand why. Don't worry about spoiling this age group.

0 to 1 year should be a year of grace. I believe our heavenly Father treats us in just this manner (Matthew 18:1-6). The child's right lobe is not developed well enough to comprehend training by spanking as opposed to the hurt and confusion by pain.

During the crawling and tone-orientation stage, voice inflection of no-no training can be used effectively. However, it should be used sparingly for discipline/instructive training to prepare the child for parental authority. Parents tend to over use it and then it becomes ineffective. Then they feel forced to go to stronger methods, which they usually feel uncomfortable. Often, parents over use the "no-no" method out of frustration. You will know when you are using it too much because you will unconsciously say it to your mate or the child starts saying it. During the crawling- creeping period, child proof your house; put your valuables out of reach of the child. Exploring his new world is a child's natural curiosity. It is a natural and important learning experience of child development. Guard the safety of your most valuable asset, your child.

During the latter infancy period, when voice commands are no longer working, you might introduce finger thumping to get the child's attention for verbal instructive teaching. Again, it introduces the child to a parental authority, which does not threaten his relationship with his primary caregivers.

When taking the child to family-oriented restaurants or shopping, it should be a short trip and take a favorite toy and reward the child when he does a good. Go only when the child is rested and have a plan for when things don't go well. From eight months to one year, train by substitution. If the child grabs your hair or glasses, hand him a toy or keys to make him let go. Build a grace foundation into the first year of your child-parent relationship.

THE SIXTY MONTH WONDER

2-5 Years (Pre-School)

Deuteronomy 6:5-7

“And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart; and you shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up,”

When I was in college, I remember writing a paper in Child Development class on the five-year-old. I wanted a catchy title and after studying the pre-school child, I was so impressed with his development in just sixty months, that I wrote on that subject. The fact that a child's rate of accelerated growth steadily declines over these sixty months from 200% to 30% makes this child even more of a Sixty Month Wonder. In *Child Development*, Santrock commented that one death of every three in the world is the death of a child under the age five (Pg. 175). Child mortality is still a major issue.

Deuteronomy 6:1-7 is a key passage on divine instruction for training children. This passage will be divided into a three-part homiletical outline to introduce this lesson:

- ◆ God's **first commandment** is with a promise (Deuteronomy 6:1-3; Ephesians 6:1-3)
- ◆ God's **foremost commandment** is love (Deut. 6:4-6; Matthew 22:34-40)
- ◆ God's **family commandment** should be taught diligently with patience (Deut. 6:7; Eph. 6:4)

You are to love your children, as you love God—with our entire mind, soul and strength. We must learn to love your children by first learning to love God. Learn to talk TO your children rather than AT them. Talk to them at their level so they will be able to understand your instructions. This age group enters this period with about 100 words and leaves it with up to 14,000 words.

Reasonable Behavior

The average child grows 2-1/2 inches in height and gains between 5 to 7 pounds a year during early childhood (Pg. 161, *Childhood Development*, by Santrock). Researchers have found that the three-year-old has the highest activity rate of any age group in the entire human life span. Therefore, they tend to fidget a great deal. This is normal behavior of the age group. Every child is hyperactive in this age group. Therefore, do not punish this behavior. However, you can do a home test to determine whether the activity may be beyond normal behavior. If a child 2-3 years cannot sit and watch a favorite TV program for 20-30 minutes or a 4-5-year-old cannot watch a program for 40-60 minutes, you may need to have the child tested. You should not feed 2-5-year old's "fast or junk" food; it is bad for their bodies and makes the children more hyperactive. One way you can learn what is normal behavior is to observe other children of the same age. Work with the age group in church and you will have the opportunity to observe it.

This is the time for the surfacing of the child's ego, "the Me". However, it is a fragile ego and parents must be careful how they handle it. Bend but don't break it (Ephesians 6:4; Colossians 3:21). It can be cute and fun in its early development. At 2 years, they are very strong-willed and focused on one thing, "my way". The child is into everything and authority is rarely unchallenged. With the development of the "I" personality, comes self-assertiveness the "No!" with voice inflection. At the age of three, the sort of curiosity learning emerges with the "whys?" Often, behind the "whys" are fears; pay attention to the child's questions. Don't over answer their questions.

If there are other children, there will be rivalry. Siblings of the same sex fight more and with more hostility. It is normal for siblings to argue but should not be allowed to become physical. "Toy" disagreement can teach privacy of property, cooperation of playtime, and how to resolve problems. There is the establishing of independence with other peers or siblings where you may hear "Mother, make him stop!"

Give simple chores to ages 3 to 4, but never give more than the child can do at his age. You can orient the child to family life by having him feed the pet. At first it will be fun, but later it will become routine and he will not want to do it.

Never compare ability of one child to another. They are all created unique. This period begins with what is called the terrible two's primarily because of the contest of wills. Some child psychologists have dubbed this period as the first phase of "Adolescence". But it is just a phase and age and it too will soon pass. What is important is to always be the loving parent.

Retention for Learning

By age five, the child's brain has reached about 90% of its adult size and weight compared to about 1/3 of the child's body weight. This is an enormous period for learning. The average child learns between 6-10 words a day. They will also pick up nasty words but do not reinforce this by laughing or being too critical. The equivalent to this enormous period of learning in regeneration and spiritual growth from infancy to spiritual adulthood (1 Peter 2:2; Hebrews 5:13-14).

The child of this age group has a great imagination and may have an imaginary friend. He or she may sometimes blame things he did on imaginary friends or pets. This is also a period where word association becomes images and symbols in conversations and drawings. This is a period of short memory spans for learning new information. The right lobe of mentality is developing the frame of reference, memory center, and vocabulary. Therefore, repetition is necessary, but avoid nagging. "Burn-out" for parents is a very big problem at this age. The French have a proverb; "a baby is an angel whose wings decrease as his legs increase".

This is a good time to introduce children to educational games and the computer. This age child can begin to solve simple problems by intuitive reasoning. They know what they know, but don't know why they know it. This is a good time for choices for the child, such as: Do you want grapes or an apple?

Parents should be aware that the more children watch TV, the more they are likely to become overweight. This is probably due to inactivity and overeating. Parents should be aware of identifying learning problems caused by physical disabilities (eyes, ears). This is the period for toilet training. By age three, 84% are dry during the day but only 66% are dry during the night. This should be a happy experience and not a stressful experience for either child or parents. It requires patience and time on the part of parents and the child. If toilet training is overly strict before the proper age, it can produce what psychologist call "anal personalities" in adults. The anal-retentive personality overemphasizes neatness, cleanliness, etc., and the anal expulsive personality overemphasizes messiness, disorganization, and difficulty relaxing (American Academy of Pediatrics, vol.3, # 1, 99).

This is the period for non-nutritional thumb sucking. The child makes a natural transition from nutritional to non-nutritional sucking. By ages 3-4, 85% are still sucking their thumbs. By age 5, 45% are still sucking their thumbs. Teach your child how to use his/her hands and fingers for creative things such as painting, coloring, playing ball, combing the dolls hair rather than for sucking. You might get hand puppets for you both and play games with them to teach the child to do this whenever they get the urge to suck the thumb. Find a positive distraction that the child likes.

Relationship with Family

This is a time for family and friend's orientation. Weekly family special time is important for this age group. It may seem difficult to manage because of busy schedules, but it is essential. It will require one of the parents to establish an agreeable weekly family time. This time may vary from week to week. It may be a special hour at night just before bedtime. It may include special weekend activities such as, Friday night eating out, Saturday working in the yard, Sunday Church and afternoon activity. It requires planning, cooperative, and commitment as a family. The family who plays and prays together stays closer together. During this age group, parents must understand that a house is a home to be lived in by a very energetic child. Therefore, parents should come to an agreement on the difference between messy and dirty. Then learn to relax and enjoy rearing your child through this tornado period.

A child needs both parent's attention and affection. A parent's attention and affection should be given as a gift to the child. The child should never be made to feel he must earn a parent's love. Our heavenly Father teaches us this principle in Matthew 6:7-8, Luke 11:11-13, and Romans 5:8. This is an important time for parents to become personally involved in their child's spiritual life (Deuteronomy 6:7). **Take** them to church rather than **send** them to church.

Rules & Consequences for Discipline

Because of the short memory span, a ten-minute delay in discipline instructions can disrupt the whole thing (such as a phone call). You must address it immediately or it is lost until the next time.

This age group can comprehend the repetition of simple rules and consequence boundaries. They need boundaries. These boundaries are important for this age because they are exploring the bigger world around them, which can be very dangerous (such as playing in the street). This age group has a 1 in 1000 chance of dying by an accident before he reaches 16.

This is a time when the child may whine to manipulate you. The child can be taught that this is unacceptable communication. You might teach this to him by whining on occasions when he is talking to you normally. Otherwise, he feels that you are mocking him, and it can affect his developing ego. Don't mock him while he is doing it. However, you can tell him that whining is unacceptable communications and you will answer him when he stops. You could use static of a radio to explain how whining sounds when talking. Explain that you don't understand what he/she is saying because all you hear is static whining.

Parents often begin their children in children's sports at this age. This can be both a positive and negative experience. It can be positive if it is fun, exercise, developing natural physical skills, learning cooperation and competition and friendships. It can help the child learn to play by rules and regulations. But, it can be negative when undo pressure to achieve or unrealistic goals or physical injuries or parental interference with a play time sport. Then it becomes all work and no fun. A parent must be careful not to allow the child to lose normal playtime.

Light spanking with a loosely rolled newspaper for unacceptable misbehavior or violating safety boundaries where physical injury or death could occur is permissible. However, it should not be extreme nor over used. A little pain goes a long way at this age!

Remember these eleven principles regarding discipline of this age:

- ◆ Never use your hands, feet or teeth in discipline!
- ◆ Never yell and yank to get child's attention!
- ◆ Never discipline in anger!
- ◆ Always express parental discipline in love!

- ◆ Always remember you are correcting misbehavior and not punishing! (Instructive Learning)
- ◆ Always be in control of yourself before you try to be in control of your child!
- ◆ Length of time-out is never greater than the age of the child (1 minute for each year of age)!
- ◆ It is important for parents not to get distracted during time-out. They must deal with the child when their time is up. Don't forget the child!
- ◆ It is important for the parent to explain why before and after discipline.
- ◆ Parental love needs to be reinforced to assure the child that it was bad behavior being discipline and not a bad child. He is always an accepted child but with unacceptable behavior.
- ◆ If the child violates time-out by willful defiance, then the child could be spanked. You must instruct before and after the spanking. Don't send him back to time-out because it is over after spanking. Never get in a contest of wills with a 2-5-year-old because you may lose!

Colossians 3:21

“Fathers do not exasperate your children, that they may not lose heart.”

THE EMERGING of the PERSON

6-12 Years (Elementary)

Proverbs 4:1-2

“Hear, O sons, the instruction of a father, and give attention that you may gain understanding, For I give you sound teaching; Do not abandon my instruction.”

This is the age of reasoning and the normal age group for the emerging of the pre-adolescent child. This is also an enormous period of practical learning as the child ventures into school, community, and church activities.

Proverbs 4:1-9 gives three points of instructional advice regarding parenting through these years. They were given by David to his son Solomon regarding the acquisition of wisdom. Three points of homiletical instructions are given in this passage.

- ◆ The acquisition of wisdom requires an **indoctrination** of sound teaching (verses 1-2)
- ◆ The acquisition of wisdom requires **insight** of that teaching (verses 3-5)
- ◆ The acquisition of wisdom requires **influence** from the teaching (verses 6-9)

Proverbs 4:7

“The beginning of wisdom is: Acquire wisdom; and with all your acquiring, get understanding.”

Reasonable Behavior

Age 6-12 is the age of temperament and control. Do not try to change his personality or temperament (you can't), but you can modify them. Teach the child to get along with other people. The child's temperament, which begins with the “Me”, now appears as the “I”. This is referred to as the formation of self-esteem. Self-esteem is the evaluative and effective dimension of the child's self-concept, self-worth and image. You may ask him, “what kind of ball-player are you?” and he might answer, “a good one!” He would be referring to a particular skill which he has as compared to other kids on his team. Abraham Lincoln said, “It is difficult to make people miserable when they feel worth of themselves.”

There are six things which parents can do to encourage a healthy self-esteem in their children.

- ◆ Express **affection** toward your child.
- ◆ Be **available** to show genuine **concern** about a child's view of problems.
- ◆ Create a **harmonious** home.
- ◆ Be **supportive** of family especially your child's activities.
- ◆ Establish **clear** and **fair** rules and consequences.
- ◆ **Praise** and **Compliment** the child's achievements.

The child becomes very opinion conscious about himself and life on a small scale. He is concerned about how everyone thinks about him—his ego is emerging. Beware how you label children at this age (the type of names you call him). Parents tend to call children by names at the age of 9-12. *Don't use negative labels* such as lazy, stupid, and bad. Attack the problem without attacking the person. For example, you might say, “Look your grades are slipping, what do you think we should do about it?” Wayne Davenport of our church was coaching a little league football team that was fair to poor in skill and attitude. He did some simple things as the coach that resulted in championship performance from this team. One thing was creating positive labels with each member of the team. He took each individual weakness as a football player on the team and made it into a positive label. One player was slow, and he labeled him flash. Soon everyone was calling him flash and his speed was improving.

He is developing his own sense of humor, pranks and jokes. This is a “silly” age group where everybody has a joke to tell; they love to laugh and giggle. They may even have a little naughty humor to see how you react. You need to let them express things and handle them moderately.

Because of skeleton and muscular growth, this age-group child is growing on an average of 2 to 3 inches and 5 to 7 pounds per year. He will double his body weight and strength during this period. Improvement in fine motor skills can be a source of self-pleasure and accomplishment. Avoid pain-oriented sport at this age unless the child is insistent.

Once again, nutrition and diet play an important part in his behavior and growth. The leading cause of childhood death in the world is dehydration and malnutrition resulting from diarrhea. Approximately, 70% of 40 million children died from this in 1989. You might be surprised how much of your child's behavior is related to food. Smoking parents have children with twice as many respiratory problems.

This is the age for building a playground to match the child's motor and cognitive skills. This is the age group for childish play. This is the childhood you probably have fond memories. Play permits children to work off excess physical energy and pent-up tensions. Parents tend to take the childhood away by putting them in too many outside activities. They no longer have time to come home and just play. Age 6-12 is the age of super-hero play and fantasy; and is the child's final period for play. At this age, my brother-in-law's hero was superman. He had the full superman outfit with cape. One day while playing he went onto the roof of the house to catch the bad guy below. He spread his cape and leaped to capture the bad guys. The rest is medical history. This is the age that Art Linkletter coined the T.V phrase, “Kids do the darnest things!”

This can be a tremendous “burn-out” period for parents when kids have too many outside activities. Don't press children to be over-achievers in these activities. There needs to be a reflection on what the child wants; for example, you may want the child to take dancing lessons, but she hates it.

Retention for Learning

This is the beginning of the achievement stage of learning and a major factor for education. This age child still has a short memory; but during this period, structured memory development begins. This age group adds 22 words per day to the vocabulary through school, community, church and television. This is a period for repetition training; such as: “Take out the garbage.” Although repetition is important, don't nag! Repetitive teaching addresses the personage while nagging attacks it. Parents need to teach common sense to this age group; such as, “We don't do things like this when we get older because etc.” The concentration span is increasing from about 10 minutes to 35 minutes in this age group.

This is the age where the child is shy and withdrawn on one hand and loud on the other hand. By the age of 6, you should have taught them the difference between their inside and outside voice. —Don't holler in the house. Use your outside voice. It is a time of daydreaming and pretending. Eye contact is very important when you are trying to teach them.

Reinforcement and reward for good behavior is an essential part of parental training. Charting the child's activities and good and bad behavior is helpful. This is the beginning of the child's critical thinking. Critical thinking is the ability to grasp the deeper meaning and the ability to organize thoughts to conclusions; in other words, his ability to understand. Abstract learning is still difficult. It is important for the child to finish what he starts—he must learn to complete the task. Short workable goals are good to acquaint him with finishing a task. It is important not to set unrealistic goals or achievements beyond his ability. It will only make the child feel inferior when he is unable to reach the goal.

Parents should pay close attention to learning disabilities at this age (such as glasses). The U. S. Dept. of Education reports that there are 2 million learning disabled children in America between the ages of 3 and 21 years. Reading is very important to the future education of this child. If your child is having difficulty in the area of reading, address the problem as early as possible so that his education won't be hindered.

This is a period of the child's observational learning from the parents. They imitate parental behaviors and often without the parent being aware of it. This is also true of teachers, older siblings, and popular students in the class. In fact, the most imitated person is the popular student. Listen to what and whom this age group is talking about as their circle of influence.

Relationship Ties

Children at this age need and want their parents to watch them perform because they desire to achieve. Praise and compliments reinforce good behavior and the desire to achieve. Do not attach the child's self-worth to performance whether good or bad. Avoid ridiculing his person because of performance and don't compare his performance to other people, but only compare it to his own performance. Anything he does, no matter how minor, is important to him. Be willing to sit through a 30-minute program to see his 2-minute part. Remember that you never get a chance to relive a special moment with your child. The biggest factor of performance achievement is for the child to get to know himself and the activity better.

This is still a period for family orientation with the addition of best friends and slumber parties. Parents should get to know the best friends and their parents before allowing the child to spend the night. Friendships can be helpful for adapting a child to new experiences and environments. This may be the last strong family orientation opportunity. It is important for the family to play together. Never get too busy to play with this age group. They need family playtime, and this mean more than watching television. It is wise to connect with other families with children of the same age group and plan outings or cookouts.

Parents must teach children respect. You must teach the 4-P's all the time at this age.

- ◆ Respect *privacy*
- ◆ Respect *property*
- ◆ Respect *parents*
- ◆ Respect their *person* (grooming)

Ages 10-12 is the time of peer grouping and influence. In a typical school day, your child will interact with his peers 299 times.

This is the age to start teaching a child about how to manage and save money. Open a bank account in the child's name and teach him what is involved with this account; such as: reconciling bank statements, adding interest or deducting service charges.

These are the impressionable years for observation of adults and especially their parent's relationship. This age group loves to be around happy families. When their parents aren't having fun, neither are the kids. Let them see you hug and be affectionate about each other; at times let them share in a hug. It reminds the child that he is a product of that love. However, marital conflict can also have an impact on children. Divorce can be devastating to both the child and parent causing both to need counseling and support groups around them. A child's misbehavior can often be correlated to marital conflict. This is the age when many marriages dissolve. This church is prepared to help in this matter.

You also teach children by the way you behave. If you give your child a gift, never, never take it from him as a punishment. Teach your child privacy by knocking on his door and having them knock on your door before entering. The child should have household chores and should not be paid for all of them to teach

This is an important time for Dad's one on one involvement with the children. Never tell your child you will be at a school play or other event and not show up. Nothing is more important than your family. It is the best investment of your life as a dad. It is important to learn to be a good listener, as well as a good adviser. If you give the child your time, give him your attention.

This is a time for spiritual training of your child. Most conversions to Christianity occur during this age. If we attach our children to the Lord, we have divine help and hope (2 Tim. 1:5; 3:15). Our church included this age group in our summer youth camp (Southeastern Youth Camp) in 1995. By 2001, it had grown to require its own campsite and staff.

Rules & Consequences of Discipline

In Proverbs 22:15, the rod of discipline means that discipline must be administered properly and justly. For rules and consequences to work effectively, there must be cooperation between parents regarding the game plan of instructional discipline and spanking. This is the last stage for effective use for spanking and you must be wise in using it. Use it primarily for willful defiance of parental authority. The key issue in all discipline is not how severe, but how consistent and fair. You must be wise in the use of spanking for it is for learning, not punishment. Spanking should never be used as the final act of frustration when all else fails, but as a normal part of the discipline package. It is important to define very clearly the boundaries of the rules and consequences for what type of behavior that is expected.

Don't make it up as you go. It may be helpful to chart misbehavior to reinforce alternative acceptable behavior. Ask yourself, does learning occur by changed behavior? That is what discipline is intended to accomplish. Discipline is to teach a child that he is accountable for his behavior. During discipline, never withdraw your love from the child—God doesn't (Hebrews 12:6). Being a parent is a very difficult job but rewarding.

Never use just one or two methods for discipline since there are many that could be used for instructional discipline. There are at least six methods that you can carry over into adolescence. These six methods can be incorporated into your discipline package. Save your ace in the hole for big discipline. Always ask, "what do I want to accomplish by it?"

Logical Consequences: it has logical consequences to the poor behavior (study and poor grades); better study habits or tutoring, charting progress. Go talk to child's teacher or have him tested in the subject to determine real expectations.

Natural Consequences: it has natural consequences to the poor behavior (goes outside without shoes when he is told not to and gets a nail in his foot). The natural consequence is the pain of the nail and the shots. Was the natural lesson learned?

Time out Consequences: time is taken away because of poor behavior with the time given (fighting with a friend who is over playing). Time-out **always** comes with a warning before hand; if this continues, your friend will have to go home, and you will have time-out. Chore wasn't done. You ask what the child did with his time instead of the chore and take that activity time away.

Privilege Consequences: special privileges are lost because of poor behavior regarding them (talking on the phone instead of doing chores). The loss of privileges must line up with the poor behavior. Do not take away privileges until you have tried other methods. If you do, you will have

nothing left to use and the child will go wild for he feels he has nothing else to lose. Always have an avenue for the child to regain privileges. Never take away church youth outings as a discipline.

Spanking Consequences: willful defiance of authority. Spanking is not for punishment but is for training. Never spank when you are angry. Do not spank little girl's bottoms; you could cause damage to her female organs - spank her legs. Don't spank with hands. Remember it is not about pain to person but discipline of misbehavior.

Choice Consequences: child must choose between specific options (child doesn't know what to wear and has a little fit). Lay out several outfits and say, "If you have not made a choice in the next ten minutes, I will make the choice for you." then do it in ten minutes.

There are three areas of reinforcements:

- ◆ **Positive Reinforcement** rewards good behavior by adding something to it. For example, you tell the child you want a better grade, establish what grade the child is capable of receiving, chart daily and reward with a star, compliment by reward and praise for doing homework, etc. After 3 weeks, was there a grade improvement? If not, talk to the teacher. If the grade was above what you expected, give the child an extra reward. Do the same at the end of the six weeks.
- ◆ **Negative Reinforcement** obtains good behavior by subtracting something from the child. It becomes worth getting a good grade just to get parent to stop nagging him. It works, but it is not the best method.
- ◆ **Punishment** is the system of no reward and the least attractive method. Bad grade may go up, but bad behavior may show up in other areas. It offers no alternate behavior. If none of these things work, you will need to consult professional counseling.

SPIRITUAL TRAINING of CHILDREN

Family Affair

Proverbs 22:6.

“Train up a child in the way he should go, even when he is old he will not depart from it.”

The Bible places responsibility of the spiritual training of children on Christian parents, grandparents and great grandparents (2 Timothy 1:5; 3:15).

If you come from an abusive home, you can stop it from being passed to the next generation (Proverbs 3:22). A biblical example of this principle is the Second Exodus Generation. They recovered from spiritually dysfunctional families (Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Hebrews 3:7-11; Joshua 1:6-9).

American parents normally have 15 years of maximum influence on their children (Proverbs 17:6). The word of God is to be passed on by Christian parents to their children for as long as the children are under the parent's authority. God will keep the child there until you complete your job. The child is not just there for rooming but for spiritual grooming. God wants children trained under a divinely delegated system of authority. Luke 2:41-48 tells how Jesus at age 12 had very faithful parents; yet, even Jesus needed parents to train Him in discipline, boundaries, and spiritual matters. Luke 4:16 describes Jesus' behavior at age 30, *“as was His custom”*. Please note His parents developed this custom. A child who has had good authority training will have it much easier in life.

Childhood is the ideal period for spiritual training. The Holy Scripture must be taught at home as well as at Church (John 5:39). The primary issue in spiritual training is to connect your child with a relationship with Jesus Christ by believing that Jesus died for his sins, was buried and raised from the dead (1 Corinthians 15:3-4; Romans 1:16). Your children must be taught the importance of faith-based prayer, walking in the Spirit, and using bible doctrine in their decision-making process.

The way children are spiritually trained has a serious effect on the course they choose for their lives. If your child is handling a situation contrary to the Word of God, you need to instruct him (Deuteronomy 6:7). Proverbs 1:1-6 lists six things God promises to your child.

- ◆ To know wisdom and instruction
- ◆ To discern the sayings of understanding
- ◆ To receive instruction in wise behavior, righteousness, justice and equity
- ◆ To give prudence to the naive, to the youth knowledge and discretion
- ◆ A wise man will hear and increase in learning and a man of understanding will acquire wise counsel
- ◆ To understand a proverb and a figure, the words of the wise and their riddles

The spiritual training of children involves discipline in love and instruction in the Lord. Never, discipline your child when you are angry. Discipline in love is intended to correct bad behavior not bad children. Every parent starts out with a good child. When you finish, God still wants a good child. This child does not belong to you; he was given to you from God (Psalms 127:3). You must learn how to train a good child with bad behavior. You must learn to address the misbehavior, without damaging the spirit of the child. For example, never tell the child that he is a bad boy or girl. Don't confuse a good child with his bad behavior. The secret of discipline of love is consistency and fairness. The child who always gets his own way will bring shame to his parents (Proverbs 13:24; 19:15, 20; 2 Timothy 2:24-25).

You can destroy a child's spirit by disciplining normal behavior of his age. The parent's attitude during discipline is as important as the discipline (Hebrews 12:6). If it is done in anger, bitterness, or projection of blame, it neutralizes the object lesson and will have a negative effect on the child. Never use yell and yank discipline upon your children. (Romans 13:1-7, Mark 7:20- 23; 1 Thessalonians 2:11-12; Proverbs 13:24).

THE STORM, THE STRESS, THE STEERING

13-17 Years (Adolescence)

Many cultures have a rite of passage from childhood to adulthood. For America, it is adolescence. Adolescence is THE Latin word for growth. G. Stanley Hall coined it in 1904 for the period between puberty and adult. Because of puberty and the raging hormones, we are referring to this period as “the storm, the stress, and the steering”.

Parents must become creative to keep the home as the center of the child’s influence and interest. Peer pressure has an enormous effect on this age group and often becomes more influential than parental pressure.

Solomon must have had this in mind when he wrote Proverbs 1:8-19. He handed down three pieces of advice from a parent to his adolescent.

- ◆ The first piece of advice was to hear and obey his father’s instruction and to *not forsake* his mother’s teaching (verses 8-9). Parents need to instruct and teach (not nag) their children.
- ◆ The second piece of advice was to *not consent* to peer pressure misbehavior (verses 10-14). The adolescent should never choose the advice of their peers over their parents because he will lose his safety net.
- ◆ The third piece of advice was to *not run with the wrong crowd* (verses 15-19). It only leads to destruction; the narrow path seems less fun, but it is safer (1 Cor.15:33).

The average day in the USA regarding adolescent behavior is: 135,000 will carry guns into schools, 1,512 will drop-out of school, 6 will commit suicide, 7,742 will become sexually active, 2,795 will get pregnant, 1,295 will give birth, 1,106 will get abortions, 372 will have miscarriages. This was a typical day in the life of the American adolescent in 1990.

Reasonable Behavior

The adolescent needs enough rope to skip with, but not enough to hang himself. Adolescence will be divided into two groups: ages 13-15 (without wheels) and ages 16-17 (wheels, working, worldly).

Parents must establish a child’s roots as well as wings. Dr. James Dobson has referred to the adolescence period as arriving with pimples on the face and leaving with a full beard on it. It is another period of rapid growth change because of puberty. Such things as oil, sweat, and odor gland are signaling that adolescence puberty has arrived. The result is that adolescence is one of the largest consumers of shampoo, soap, and deodorant. The adolescent becomes pre-occupied with his body image. This very often results in eating disorders, such as, anorexia and bulimia. Menarche occurs between ages of 10-15. Menarche is the rite of passage for girls and gives the women of the family an opportunity to bond as she goes into womanhood. This is a time when the women of the family can have a special celebration for this rite of passage. This allows them an opportunity to become teachers to the young women.

Girls tend to have a shorter childhood and a longer adolescence’s. As she approaches puberty, talk to her about sexual matters. Girls tend to develop physically and sexually about four years earlier than they do emotionally. Therefore, they go through boy-crazy and fads earlier than boys. They might want to date older boys during early adolescence because boys their age seem silly and immature. This is not a smart thing to do, because emotionally they are not ready to handle the older date.

Boys go into puberty when their voice starts to change, and they start getting warts. This is the time to talk to him about sexual matters. The statistics listed at the beginning are signs of a very promiscuous adolescence in America. In fact, it is the highest of any Western world country. It is two times higher

than England, France, and Germany. It is three times higher than Sweden. It is seven times higher than the Netherlands. American teens are not saving sex for adulthood much less marriage. It is reported that by age 17, 66% of the males and 50% of the females have been sexual. By age 19, 86% of the males and 75% of the females are sexual. 80% of the females who became sexual by age 14 become pregnant by age 18. Parents need to teach abstinence (1 Corinthians 6:18 -7:2). The home should teach their children all about sexual matters.

Because of puberty, this age group is referred to as a period of storm and stress. They are typically moody with nervous habits such as: jittery legs, nail biting, and twisting of hair. Adolescents like loud popular music and long telephone conversations. Attention-getting behavior resurfaces at this age especially during junior high. They have very egocentric personalities. These are normal teens. These things will pass with time and prayer.

Retention for Learning

There is usually a one-year grade slump during adolescence. It occurs most often during the middle school or junior high years. Parents must stay on top of the adolescents' grade level progress. Parents should be aware of the child's achievement test grade level in grades 1, 3, 6 & 9. The child needs to be at grade level or better in every grade. He must not be permitted to get behind it. He may need tutoring and parental guidelines for study and extra-school curriculum.

Severe academic difficulty by the sixth grade is one predictor of delinquent behavior by the ninth grade. 15% of adolescents will drop out of high school. 52% of these dropouts will have a history of unemployment. 34% of them will become part of the welfare society. In contrast, 75% of high school graduates will have regular employment.

By the end of the 10th grade, parents should test their child's educational and vocational future realistically. Not everyone has the aptitude or interest in college. If your child is not college material, now is the time to enroll him in vocational courses offered by his high school.

The nutrient most lacking in the adolescent's diet is iron. This age group commonly experiences iron-deficiency anemia, and this may cause him to appear lazy and lethargic.

This is the time to teach your adolescent to become self-reliant (cooking, cleaning, ironing, grooming, manners, job interviewing, work ethics). This is an extension of the common-sense training begun during elementary school.

Parents should take an active part in influencing their adolescent spiritually. Spiritual training is most important during this age because it enables them to resist peer advice and vice. Never use youth activities of the church to discipline your adolescent! They are designed to help him work through his problems spiritually.

This is a time of abstract thinking about themselves and their world. It is also a time of conflict and confusion regarding themselves and their world. For example, they might have one set of self-descriptive behaviors for their family and church, another for their friends and peers, and yet another for their dating. They can be sensitive and yet insensitive, caring and yet uncaring, nice and yet naughty. They can be a walking contradiction, and this will pass with time and prayer.

Relationship Ties

There are two age groups that stretch parents to their limit: pre-school and adolescence.

The most reported areas of family conflict are chores, grades, sassy-mouth, friends, and social activities (Proverbs 13:1-3; 18:6-7). This is a communication gap during junior high and high school dealing with maturity vs. immaturity. When the teen says, "You treat me like a child," ask him, "What

age?” Parents are training for life and not just for a period. Every day seems to be a day of conflicts and negotiations. It’s a time of challenge of communication skills especially when the child has a lot of “mouth”. How do you deal with sass? Parents need to let young people express feelings and disagreement toward policy and procedures without stamping feet and anger. They must learn diplomacy and considerate of other people. The parent must demonstrate the same thing toward the teen. They should never get in conflicts over wills or fights for control. A parent should tell the child that it’s acceptable to express disagreement against the policy, but not to express anger towards parent.

Proverbs 14:29

“He who is slow to anger has great understanding, but he who is quick-tempered exalts folly.”

Here are four tips for preparing the adolescent for the “real” world

- ◆ Have the adolescent state the problem.
- ◆ Have him state his feelings about the problem.
- ◆ Have him state how the parent can think differently about the problem.
- ◆ Have the parent restate the policy and the reason for it.

Parents: You can’t solve the problem; you are only the listener.

One out of five homes with adolescents have repeated, intense, and stressful conflicts. The key is how you deal with the conflicts so that you mutually resolve the problem without dissolving the relationship.

It is a period of fads and fashion, which often becomes a conflict in the home. Sometimes, the adolescent will choose a negative identity. He will take the identity of the opposite of what is expected of him by his family. Sometimes, this is due to a fad or peer pressure. It’s a fad and will fade with time and prayer. This is a time when he goes through a struggle of autonomy and a search for self-identity as an emerging adult. Bible doctrine can help both of you find great encouragement and wisdom during this time.

This is the time when parents must have a sense of humor! It is a time when the adolescent ventures further away into the community and may socialize with people you don’t know. They will be dealing and maybe dating people you don’t know. You can’t keep up with your children all the time and will live by this prayer, “Father, take care of them, protect with them, and give me the patience to take how you deal with them.”

The typical adolescent spends 103 minutes a day in interaction with friends compared to 28 minutes with parents. Even though it may not appear to be so, adolescents desire to be securely connected to a loving family. In fact, most of this age compares ideal norm and standards to their parents. They are often critical of the parent’s flaws because it bursts their bubble. Divorce is terrible for the adolescent because teens feel family relationship stress more than anyone does.

Parents must work hard to be the center of influence during adolescence; it is the home vs. the world. The home must win this battle. However, to prevent losing him to the world, it will take creative planning on the parent’s part; which includes friends and activities (backyard BBQ; video parties; group picnics; special holiday parties, etc.).

This is a time for dating relationships and parental policies. Parents should begin to talk about them at least two years beforehand. In the U.S.A., the average age for dating is 14-15.

You would be wise to have **three** general policies for dating:

- ◆ Allow social group dating in junior high.
- ◆ Allow double dating the first years of high school.
- ◆ Allow single dating at driving age.

By establishing these policies for dating it allows the parent to relinquish some of the control and allows the adolescent some autonomy based on good decisions with the policies. However, you must have fair rules and consequences with sensible boundaries. Parents should get my booklet entitled, "**Dating, Diamonds, and Diapers**".

Rules & Consequences for Discipline

Parents must remain calm to steer the adolescent through the storm and the stress of growing up. It takes about 11 years for the USA teens to enter adulthood (13 + 11= 24 years). This is why there is another age group of 18-24 years in this series. By understanding the length of time for maturing, the parent can develop a short and long-range program.

There are three problem areas of adolescence which need parental steering because they can be life threatening: alcohol and drugs (illegal, addictive and deadly); sex (pregnancy, STD, AIDS); poor grades and dropout of school (unemployment, delinquency). There must be rules and consequences to cover these things should be clearly spelled out (Proverbs 20:1; 23:17-21).

- ◆ 13 million alcoholics established the habit during adolescence. Alcohol is implicated in most fatalities and maiming auto accidents involving drivers under the age of 21. USA adolescents have the highest rate of drug use among the industrial nations.
- ◆ 1 million teenage girls get pregnant per year. Teen marriages have a three times greater divorce rate than marrying at twenty.
- ◆ 47% of arrests for serious crimes, such as: murder, assault, and robbery occur under the age of 21. The majority of these have delinquent profiles starting in the sixth grade.

Permissive training does not provide stability for either the parent or the adolescent. Either extreme of being too permissive or too strict isn't good. Children need to know that when out of the sight of parents, they are still accountable. They need to know that the eyes of the Lord are in every place (Proverbs 6:21-23; 15:3). Ecclesiastes 11:9 tells young people that it is wonderful to be young. Enjoy every minute of it! Do all you want; take in everything but understand that you must account to God for everything you do.

Parents need to be aware of how to discipline teens apart from spanking. Spanking and physical force for willful defiance is an ineffective method of discipline because all you teach them is an adult form of violence. It does not properly prepare your adolescent for confrontation in the adult world. Spanking is an effective method for the pre-school and elementary periods to prepare the child for adolescence (Proverb 29:15-17).

Avoid verbal battles with your children. Parents are warned not to provoke or arouse anger in a child (Ephesians 6:4). Anger solves nothing and makes the situation worst. You must overcome anger quickly (Ephesians 4:26). You should not suppress, repress it or express anger. However, you should confess it (1 John 1:9). Parents must be quick to listen and understand and slow to speak and slow to become angry (James 1:19-20).

The use of logical consequences, natural consequences, time-out consequences (grounding on a larger scale) privilege consequences, and choice consequences are still applicable. Let the teen be part of the policy making of rules and consequences. Teen discipline of himself is often worse than parent might impose. Make sure the consequence is fair and consistent. Be sure to listen when the child says that you are not fair. Meanness in a child is a learned behavior (Proverbs 19:26-27).

It is important for the parents to identify multiple behavior disorders. Any time two or more of the following behavioral disorders occur in a prolonged period, the parent should seek professional help (School Truancy, Run-Away, Gang Violence, Breaking and Entering, Excessive Fighting, Destruction of Property, Alcohol and Drug Use and Accidents, Attempted Suicide, Willful and Unmanageable Defiance of Authority, and Shop-Lifting). A multiple behavioral disorder describes a delinquent adolescent.

Proverbs 4:10-12

“Hear, my son, and accept my sayings, And the years of your life will be many. I have directed you in the way of wisdom: I have led you in upright paths. When you walk, your steps will not be impeded; and if you run, you will not stumble.”

THE WAY HE SHOULD GO

18-24 Years (Young Adult)

We began this series by quoting Proverbs 22:6, “*Train up a child in the way he should go, even when he is old he will not depart from it.*” Young adult is the period of transition from direct parenting to indirect parenting of an adult child. This is usually a big transition time for both in what has been coined, “the empty nest syndrome”. The child becomes a young adult with his own wings capable of flying away from the home nest. What a child does with his life after he is out of direct instructional care is up to him. He must make his own decisions and live with the consequences.

Solomon had this age group in mind when he wrote Ecclesiastes 11:7-10. He advised young adults to live life to the fullest but not without God and not without divine guidance.

In Ecclesiastes 11:7-8, Solomon tells the young adult that there will be many meaningless days of young adult. These are days that do not necessarily make his life significant for having experienced them. However, they may be enjoyable and uneventful and do not change life one way or another.

Ecclesiastes 11:9

“Be happy while you are young and let your heart give you joy in the days of your youth.” In other words, fly and soar with your young, strong wings but be careful that you do make youthful mistakes which could jeopardize your future happiness.”

In Ecclesiastes 11:9-10, Solomon warns young adults that there could be some hidden dangers in these meaningless days. He warns that they still need guidance. We call this indirect parenting or giving advice. There are hidden dangers because sometimes these meaningless days involve activities and decisions, which result in anxiety and pain from poor judgment. To this Solomon remarks, “*Follow the way of your heart but know that for all these things God will bring you to judgment.*” In other words, the young adult should be held accountable for the consequences of his choices as a young adult. According to Galatians 6:6-7, the inescapable divine law of adult life is that you reap what you sow.

Reasonable Behavior

In America, we traditionally consider graduation from high school as the rite of passage to adulthood. Independence is normal at this age. The young adult desires and demands independence and separate identity as an adult. This occurs for the first time when he leaves home for college or the military or to get his own apartment. Many times, he is ill prepared when the time comes for him to be pushed out of the home “nest”. Therefore, it is important to begin early preparing the young adolescent for his solo flight. This is often an area of conflict because he wants independence without responsibilities. He wants it all—no rules and no rent. He must learn that he can’t have his cake and eat it too.

Training is still going on, but parents are now dealing with adults. The parent can advise but not run the young adult’s business. Parents walk a fine line rearing a young adult. This is a transition time where house rules must change. Now, out of respect for parents, the young adult should tell what time they will be home. Young adults are still responsible for chores around the home such as washing and ironing own clothes, cleaning bedroom and bathroom. A whole new attitude must happen in parents. Parents can’t treat them like little children and expect them to act like adults. Parents must step back and stop trying to rule their lives. If they are making errors in judgment, pray for God’s intervention to bring them back to His will. This adjustment is usually harder for parents than the young adult child. Young adulthood has been described as a ship in harbor ready to set sail on the voyage of life. The young adult could be a prodigal before he leaves home. In Luke 15:11-32, from the parent’s side, a father’s prayer was that God would bring him to his senses. Only a prodigal child can get rid of a

prodigal attitude and life style. The important part of parenting the young adult is to offer guidance and preparation so that he doesn't shipwreck before leaving the harbor. Then, stand back and proudly wave Bon Voyage! This is especially difficult for the mother because of Adam's Curse of Gen. 3:16. The husband will need to be especially sensitive to minister to the wife-mother in love. In 1 Peter 3:7 and Ephesians 5:25-33, the husband is told to love his wife unconditionally and nurture and cherish her.

This is a time when flying and soaring on his own can be dangerous; when a bad decision can have serious and lifelong consequences attached to it. Here are five areas of warning.

- ◆ Alcohol is implicated in most fatal and maiming accidents involving driving under the age of 20.
- ◆ 80% of the girls who become sexually active by the age of 14 become pregnant by age 18.
- ◆ Sexually transmitted disease (STD) among those under the age of 25 account for 3/4 of all reported cases.
- ◆ 75-80% of young adult's experiment with illegal drugs, which impair cognition, distort morals, and result in many types of interpersonal problems.
- ◆ One of every 40 American males will die a violent death between the ages of 15 to 35. They will die primarily from accidents, suicide, and homicide. Blacks are only half as likely to commit suicide as whites but are 6 times more likely to be murdered and 94% of the time by another black.

Additional concerns are:

- | | |
|----------------------------|--|
| ◆ Proverbs 6:12-15 | Con-man thinking (a sucker born every minute) |
| ◆ Proverbs 7:6-27 | Promiscuity |
| ◆ Proverbs 19:15 | Laziness |
| ◆ Proverbs 23:17-21, 29-35 | Drunkenness and gluttony |
| ◆ Proverbs 24:30-34 | Welfare mentality (someone else owes me a living – Dad!) |

Retention for Learning

Parents are usually more concerned with the application of learning than with the capability of learning in their young adult. They are concerned with their getting a job or college education. If the young adult has the academic aptitude for college but is uncertain as to where or why, parents might consider junior college or a two-year vocational career. If he does not have the aptitude or desire for college, you might encourage him to acquire a skilled trade. Skilled labor is very good today and many companies will train young people. Every girl needs to be self-supporting through education and/or job skill. She may one day have to be the sole supporter of her family (illness or death of husband or divorce). The time to prepare for college is in junior high and with the right planning, anyone can afford to attain a college degree.

This is a time of transition thinking from adolescence to adult. The meaning of being an adult is becoming less self-centered and more committed to personal responsibilities. This is the time to advise your young adult five responsibilities regarding money starting with their first job.

- ◆ Earning money
- ◆ Spending money
- ◆ Saving money
- ◆ Security and investing money
- ◆ Spiritual and charity giving of money

Parents need to teach financial responsibility. They should be told, "If you spend all your money today, you won't have any tomorrow, because I'm not lending you any". Parents should be wise when co-signing notes with their young adult children. For example, your young adult may not be a wise financial investment if he does not have steady employment. Parents need to remember the lesson which the young adult needs to learn in this business transaction (he must be responsible for his debts) which will prepare him for the adult world of finances. The young adult needs to know how to make investments for the future and "rainy days" (such as a home, retirement or car trouble, doctor bills, etc.) The secret is to save a certain amount each and every week or month and let your money work for you. They also need to be taught about spiritual giving and connecting God and money. God gives us money to live on and money to invest in God's work and kingdom. God will give us a surplus and we are to share that surplus with others. Surplus could be more than just money. Spiritual giving could also consist of giving clothes and, household goods with the less fortunate. Advise about credit cards and their downfall. They are debts and not money. But it's their decision and you won't bail them out if they get in trouble.

This is a time for serious discussion about marriage and the realities of life associated with it. Christian parents should encourage their children to not marry while in their teens. The divorce rate is two times greater than if they waited until in the twenties. They should be legally independent. Parents should tell them that when they get married he is on your own. "Are you mature enough to be on your own and make by yourself?" The Bible teaches that marriage is a time for children to leave their parents and to be joined to mate (Matthew 19:4-6; Ephesians 5:31-33). It also teaches that Christians are only to marry Christians (2 Corinthians 6:14-18; 7:39). If parents have disagreements regarding the marriage of their children, have your say before the wedding not after it (Matthew 19:6)

This is the time for parents to minister to young adults. Share Bible doctrine that can be applied to their situation. But most importantly, live your doctrine and show by example (Philippians 4:8-9; Ecclesiastes 12:1).

Relationship Ties

Parents must remember that letting go means helping the young adult become responsible adults. Remember also, that they do not have to move away from home to become responsible adults.

This is a time when young adults don't like to be preached at regarding their choices and decisions. They hate being told, "I told you so." It also shuts down communication.

This is a time when parents could see some fruit of their training especially in their child's spiritual life (2 John 4; 3 John 3-4)

Proverbs 23:24

"The father of the righteous will greatly rejoice, and he who begets a wise son will be glad in him. Let your father and your mother be glad and let her rejoice who gave birth to you."

Young adults often feel left out in the Church family. They feel that they are too old for the teens and not old enough for the married adults. This is an excellent time for them to become involved in church service groups such as, Junior and Senior High programs, Christian drama and music ministries, community Bible studies, and camps. We have started a special ministry for young adults. They need to be encouraged and trained for spiritual leadership. Joseph is a good example of this the importance of young adult ministry (Gen. 39:1-6). The Lord was with Joseph and he became a successful adult leader.

Mark Twain described this period when he wrote,

“When I was a boy of fourteen, my father was so ignorant I could hardly stand to have the man around. But when I got to be twenty-one, I was astonished at how much he had learned in seven years.”

Rules and Consequences

As young adults, parents must give their children the freedom to make their own choices. This does not mean that you are necessarily giving your approval but allowing the freedom for choice and consequence. God has given parents of young adults a good example of parenting in the Adam and Eve story of Genesis. The quest for independence and freedom of choice and God’s rules and consequences are sometimes not without confrontation (Genesis 2:16-17; 3:14- 19).

Young adults will make their mistakes and parents must not be too quick to fix volitional mistakes nor too quick to sit in judgment on non-volitional ones.

A good policy for parents might be never say never unless it is Scriptural. Never shut a door that cannot be easily opened from both sides. Remember the story of the Prodigal son (Luke 15:11-32). However, the parent should not pay or support their follies but should be there to help them in their painful recovery.

Proverbs 17:25

“Foolish son brings grief to his father and bitterness to the one who bore him.”

This is a time of family transition and adjustment. One in 5 families engage in and stressful conflict during later adolescence (Proverbs 17:17-20). Do not ever get physical or threaten. As a parent, you may be wondering why you are going through this turmoil. God is trying to teach parents that you can’t parent without Him. This too, will pass with time and prayer (1 Thessalonians 5:18; Romans 8:28; 1 John 5:14-15).

My prayer is that your parental training has prepared your young adult for **The Way He Should Go.**

(Ecclesiastes 12:1)

Solomon was a wise man when he wrote,

Psalms 127:3

“Children are a blessing and a gift from the Lord.”

For parents to appreciate the full meaning of this statement, they need a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. A person enters a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ by faith.

“For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is a gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast.” Ephesians 2:8-9

When a person believes that Jesus Christ died to forgive and cleanse him from all his sins and that Jesus was buried and raised from the dead on the third day to give him eternal life, he enters into a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 15:3-4; Romans 1:16).

“These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, in order that you may know that you have eternal life.”
1 John 5:13

Christian parents are instructed to bring their children up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

“And Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger; but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.” Ephesians 6:4

Christian parents are instructed to not exasperate their children by their method of training.

“Fathers do not exasperate your children, that they may not lose heart.” Colossians 3:21

PARENTING

Ages 0 - 24

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