

Bringing Up The Child

by
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The Family In The Bible

Have you ever wondered why there is no description in the Bible of the home life of a believer?

We shall be studying about what is involved in bringing up a child. The child begins by being born into a family. The significance of the family rests upon the very nature of man. Man was created in such a way that he needed a family. The first comment made about him was: "It is not good for a man to be alone." Man was to have dominion over the earth, and when woman was created she was to be a helpmeet for him, equal to him. We read this statement concerning man: "Therefore shall a man leave his father and mother and shall cleave unto his wife and they shall be one flesh."

As we think about that it is clear that in marriage each gives his or her individuality in order that they might attain common mutuality. The union of these first partners resulted in the birth of Cain and Abel. Thus emerged the first family. These brothers were unique; they were different from each other. The difference in the two appears in their dealing with sin. Each had sin. But each dealt with his sin in his own unique way. In our time we talk about genes and chromosomes that are in the original cell of the living thing, the child. We understand that each person has his own constitution, each is different. The actual differences between Cain and Abel showed up not so much in their innate characteristics as in their conduct, and those differences were seen in their dealing with sin. Cain did not control his sin; Abel did control his. Because Abel controlled sin, he was favored. Cain was envious. Because he was envious, he hated his brother; and because of hate he became violent and killed his brother. This was evil.

There are important truths about persons revealed in this first family which we need in our thinking. We are interested in bringing up a child and it is important that we think about what has been revealed about children. We can keep in mind that each child is different. We should also note there is a greater difference than the innate, native characteristics. This shows up in the way they act. The fact of the personal difference between Cain and Abel was far more significant than the fact of their being born as brothers.

This truth was further demonstrated in the incident with Ham, son of Noah. In this incident with Ham it is noticeable that it was the sinful conduct of the grandparent that resulted in a different status of the children. Ham's son was Canaan, and it was Canaan who was cursed as a result of the conduct of Ham. It will be helpful to remember that the use of this word "curse" does not necessarily imply that Almighty God flew into a rage over what Ham did, nor even that Noah was furious. All that Noah did was to announce that Canaan would experience certain consequences because of the conduct of his father,

Ham.

In recent years I have thought many times that that announcement was made by Noah with pain and regret. I don't think that Noah would have any pleasure when this happened to Ham and his children because of Ham's conduct. But Noah was a godly man. He simply announced what was true: the conduct of Ham in acting without love toward his father resulted in a different status for his children and his grandchildren. "A servant of servants shall he be."

We dwell upon this incident that we might bring to our minds the profound truth that so far as children are concerned, social differences in their later lives can be the consequences of the conduct of their parents, their grandparents and their great-grandparents. This may indeed be the case among groups of people. It is an obvious fact that some groups of people do not seem to be as fortunate as other groups of people; and sometimes certain families do not seem to get along as well as other families. I will not say that this is the only factor involved but I do feel there is clear indication in this incident with Ham that the conduct of the grandparents can actually have something to do with the status of the grandchild.

Indiscriminate choosing of mates has often preceded great wickedness. In the case of the people who were in the world before the time of the flood (Genesis 6:1-5), when "the sons of God" took from "the daughters of men" wives as they would, the record goes on to say there was great wickedness upon the earth in the form of moral deterioration. Could it be there is a connection between the fact that when the sons of God saw the daughters of men and took them wives as they would, the next fact recorded is that the whole earth was filled with wickedness? This seems to be what happened when Abraham, who was from the family of Shem, married Hagar, who was from the family of Ham. Their child was Ishmael and he was born a violent character and an aggressor. His hand was against every man's hand and every man's hand was against him. This is a difficult area in which to see clearly all that is involved so far as children are concerned. But there are definite impressions that seem to imply that children are actually the heirs of parental conduct.

The record of the lives of the patriarchs: Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, exemplifies family living. Their family affairs can be studied for guidelines to living by faith. We study their conduct to learn procedures that would be acceptable to God. This can be seen in the word God says about Abraham:

"For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him" (Genesis 18:19).

There is much in that statement. God said about his man: "I know him. He will command his children and his household after him." Perhaps here is the reason the faith of Abraham was found in Isaac. There is no record about Abraham talking to Isaac to encourage him to believe in God. There is likewise no record about Isaac teaching Jacob that he should believe in God. Yet Isaac believed in God the way that Abraham did, and Jacob believed in God the way Isaac did. This may have happened because of that very situation of which it is recorded: "He will command his children after him." Commanding his children after him would not be merely telling them to go to church or to bow their heads in the presence of God. That is hardly the way a parent commands a little child: it is not that we command the little child by talking to him: it is by walking before him.

There was that about Abraham in the way in which he conducted himself that his children and his servants learned certain things from Him. Ishmael lived there until he was about fourteen years of age. When he was sent away from home and was in the desert, about to die, word came to Hagar, "God hath heard the voice of the lad." It would seem that Ishmael believed in God and knew about praying. Did everybody believe in God? No. Then why would Ishmael believe in God? Because he was Abraham's child. Would that be because he was Abraham's child physically? No. That was because he was Abraham's child in Abraham's family. He was brought up that way. Here is the truth that we can see based on this aspect of Abraham's conduct: parents can inculcate their faith in their children by deliberate conduct

before them. I realize this may be different from the ordinary public impression but we should look at it carefully because this seems to be grounded in Scripture.

Parents can inculcate their faith in their children by deliberate control of the situation in which the children are growing up. Principles of deliberate control can be seen in the lives of the patriarchs. First of all, there was the control of marriage. This is so important because the fact is that by the time the child is born, much about that child has already been settled. When a father and mother come together they have already settled pretty much of what that child is going to be: because that child will have in him what that father and mother were.

The principle of deliberate control by parents can be seen in the incident when Abraham sent his servant to find a bride for Isaac. He did not want Isaac to marry any of the people where he was living at that time as a stranger, and he sent his servant back among his own people to find a bride for Isaac. That was deliberate control. Rebekah sent Jacob to the home of her brother, Laban, that he might marry someone from that family. That was deliberate control. This truth is emphasized by the record about Esau, who married two princesses from the Hittite people. The Scripture says they were a grief of mind to Isaac and Rebekah, and because of this, the mother did not want Jacob to do the same, when he married.

Such deliberate control insofar as the control of marriage is concerned, is directly related to the matter of commanding the children and the household. It was involved in the life that these patriarchs lived. Someone might say, "Who wants to live like a patriarch?" The answer is easy – "Anyone who wants the blessing of God on his family."

In the second place, the faith of parents can be exercised on behalf of children yet unborn. I realize it is too late for many of us to be thinking about this now, but it needs to be understood. Does this refer to prenatal influence? I will not say this absolutely, but there is some evidence in the record. Abraham and Sarah had definite dealings with God about Isaac before he was born. Isaac may have been only a human being with faults and failings, but from the time he was born he was headed on the right road to please God.

Similar evidence is to be seen in the case of Rebekah when she sent Jacob, her favorite son, to the home of her brother, Laban, to get married. There he found two wives, Leah and Rachel; both of whom were good women. Then again we could look at Manoah and his wife, dealing with God for some time before Samson was born, just as was the case of Zacharias and Elisabeth in the New Testament. Zacharias was serving God as a priest, when an angel came to him and told him about John the Baptist before he was born. Hannah, in her classic prayer to God before Samuel was born, is another demonstration of the truth we are considering. These instances are the illustrations in Scripture where people actually dealt with God before a child was conceived. The result in every case was that of a person who walked in the ways of God. The very people who should hear this truth are children who are twelve or thirteen years old, or their parents, before the children begin deciding with whom they would want to share their lives. It is probably too much to expect that such children will listen, so the very persons I can think of who might benefit by listening are the parents and the grandparents. It is extremely important that the older people in any family situation interest themselves in what the younger people are doing about selecting their life partners.

Another significant action by the patriarchs was the dedication of infants to God. Abraham began the rite of circumcision. It became the practice of those people whenever a man-child was born to have him circumcised while still an infant, because they wanted to dedicate that child to God. The notion that is so popular today to wait and let the child decide what he wants to do about God, is not the way the patriarchs acted.

Another feature of the family life of the patriarchs was the training of the children to expect the promises of God. Abraham received a promise that he would receive the land of Canaan to be his own. That promise was renewed to Jacob and to Isaac. Would you think that in each of these cases it would be

necessary for God to make a repeated announcement of His promise? Would you not think that Abraham taught Isaac, and Isaac taught Jacob? It seems that Abraham would bring up his children to understand that Canaan was to be their land, the Lord was to be their God, and the will of God was to be their guidance. We can be sure this is what Abraham, Isaac and Jacob would teach their children. This would be inculcating the traditional promises.

In our own time this is what we do as believers with our children. From the start we talk to them about God, about the Lord Jesus Christ and about Heaven. In any home where the parents are believers the child will have the idea when anyone in the home has passed away, when death has occurred, that that person went to be with God. The children will say, "Aunt Mary, or Uncle Bill, went to Heaven." We should note here that Abraham trained his servants to keep in mind what God had promised to do for him and for his seed. It seems that today parents are oftentimes careless about whom they call in to take charge of their children. It is a marvelous thing if those who take care of the children – the nurses and teachers – are believers in God. They will help to shape the children in the right direction. When Abraham's servant was sent to find a bride for Isaac he prayed to God and was led of God in response to his faith to find Rebekah. Another aspect of the deliberate control of these parents in the Old Testament is the supervision of what we would call playmates and social contacts. No doubt many have wondered about the action on the part of Sarah, when Isaac was old enough to be weaned. Sarah saw Ishmael making fun of Isaac and she knew at once that would not be acceptable. She told Abraham he would have to put Ishmael and his mother out. Abraham did not want to do it; he loved Ishmael. But God told Abraham to "Hearken unto the voice of Sarah thy wife;" so Abraham arose early in the morning and sent Ishmael and Hagar away, though it grieved him to do it.

What can this mean to believing parents today from the standpoint of deliberate control so far as children are concerned? This will arise in the supervision of playmates. Should we think there is something wrong when parents are careful about the companions their children have? Or should we think it is all right to let our children run around with anybody? That would be like saying that we do not need quarantine. It would be as if we allowed everybody to play together: so that if anybody has measles, we would let them all get measles. Oh, no! Actually this matter of supervision, of carefulness and of protection of the children, is part of intelligence.

There are several important matters that should be further mentioned here. It is a moving record of what happened when Abraham offered up Isaac, or when Hannah offered up Samuel. Parents can actually turn their children over to God. This is also a matter of deliberate control. Another practice we can note, as we think about the deliberate control of parents over their children, was the telling of the narratives of their history, recalling to the minds of the children the things that have happened which are important. In Deuteronomy 6:20-25 Moses told the children of Israel they were to do certain things in a certain way, so that when their sons asked why they did this, the parents should tell the child that his fathers were slaves in the land of Egypt and were delivered by the power of God. We use symbols that way, as when we display the sign of the cross. The cross is to be seen here and there and it always brings out the idea of the death of the Lord Jesus Christ.

In the same way we have special days, such as the Sabbath. A child can learn about Sunday possibly even before he can walk, but certainly by the time he runs around he can know about Sunday. Some things we do on Sunday, some things we don't do on Sunday. Some places we go to in a special way on Sunday. A baby can learn that, and in all these various ways parents exercise a certain control over children by way of inculcating in them the faith they themselves have toward God.

Family In The World Today

Do you realize that conditions in the world make it more difficult now to maintain home life?

Our interest just now is in the general problem of bringing up a child. We will be thinking of the home and the family into which the child is born. We recognize the truth that the baby has parents who may already have done much that will affect the child. The baby cannot choose its parents or grandparents. The baby cannot even choose the community nor the culture nor the times in which it lives. In many respects significant factors and elements surrounding this child are already settled. Sometimes one gets the impression that it is as if many babies have two strikes against them when they are born. We are not yet ready to sketch what could or what should be done. We are still analyzing this situation and evaluating and describing it as it is. The baby has parents – generally a family, commonly a home – in the world as it is. That is what the baby faces. Now, let us focus our attention upon the family and the home. The baby has one father and one mother, regardless, and these "twain have become one flesh." This is true in the whole universe and absolutely fixed, no matter what else may happen. That is where the baby came from. It would be ideal for the father and mother of the baby to be married, and to be married permanently, and to be living in a family. Marriage can be seen as the foundation of the home, but we have to recognize that today the foundations are shaken. Divorce is more and more common and it is more and more easy. That affects people. It affects their outlook. Marriage is grounded in love. Divorce is grounded and prospers in selfishness. The opposite of love is not hate – it is selfishness. It is a case of expanding the ego.

We oftentimes say it takes two to make a marriage. That is right, but I can say from the experience of having been a pastor, and now a friend of a great many people who talk to me and write to me, that it takes only one to make a divorce. The breaking up of the home is devastating to the child. Let us ask ourselves this question: why is divorce more common? Why is the breaking up of the home easier now than ever before? Is it because people are more wicked? I don't think so. I am inclined to think that they are wicked and they are evil; since there is no man who sinneth not. All have sinned and come short of the glory of God. But there is nothing conclusive to show that people living nowadays are just born worse, who have some inward sinfulness that is more wicked than ever before. It isn't the people themselves, but the conditions that have changed.

When we look at the conditions in our society today we see that circumstances prevail today which weaken family bonds. It used to be that many of the circumstances that surrounded people tended to keep them together. They needed to be together for practical reasons. Nowadays it seems that the circumstances strengthen the tendency to separation. Let us admit offhand that it is probable most anybody at times would like to go off alone. We just have a tendency within us to want to withdraw. At the same time it is in ever body to want to have friends, and being alone is terrible. That is also true. It seems that under certain circumstances the disposition to break off and be separate is more easily acted upon because of the situation.

Let me point out what some of these things are. I would say, in a general way, that the changing function of the family and society is a very important factor. The vital functions for living, things that are needed for daily living, are no longer centered in the family. Let us consider the matter of food. There was a time when all of the preparation for food was done in the family kitchen. Now most of it is done in the factory and products are placed on the supermarket shelves where people go to get their food. Much of it is processed, much of it precooked, much of it ready to serve.

The same is true of shelter. Formerly a home was needed because persons had to have a place to stay. Today there are many places to stay that are not considered a home. A person can go downtown where there are many situations where he can spend time instead of being at home. This applies also to clothing. The woman of the house at one time would do the sewing and mending, and that was the way

a person was clothed; but today we go to the store to get what we need.

Companionship was once found in the home. That is where people met and lived, and there became accustomed to the same people over and over again, with all their faults and with all their virtues. Today the whole idea of companionship is scattered. The small children go to kindergarten; the older children go to school, then the young people go off to college or they go to work and there they meet a different class of people – a different set of people altogether. All of this takes them away from the home. It gets to the place where actually being with the folks at home is a rarity. This is the unfortunate situation with so many families. People now can find companionship elsewhere. Because this is true, people don't need the family nearly as much as they needed it at one time. This means there is less reason for it from a practical point of view.

There has also been a change in moral standards. Morals have not changed: it was always wrong to steal; it was always wrong to lie, to kill. The Ten Commandments are eternal, but people have their own customs and practices; and we know that today the way we live we tolerate many things that are not moral. Today people who are not married live together in what we call promiscuity. That goes on all over and, by the way, it is tolerated. This laxity affects people. It affects the air in which we live. Divorce is made easy. People can be divorced today without any stigma attached to them. Self-indulgence is condoned.

Generally speaking, if anybody today spends money on himself we are inclined to feel it is his money and he can do as he pleases. It is his business. Thus it is acceptable, and this kind of thing affects people. All of which means that people are not nearly as much bound together to support morality, as they once were. Insofar as the children are concerned, today we are acquainted with "permissiveness." It is the spirit of the hour to give them what they want and let them do as they will. The only thing we hope is that they do it some place else and to somebody else. All of this has tended to weaken the significance of the home. If we have a home of any kind we introduce certain standards, but when these standards are gone, there is not much point in being together.

The larger family ties are also disappearing today. There was a time when we had family – father and mother and the people who lived in our home; then there were uncles and aunts; there were neighbors. There were cousins and all these people together represented a sort of larger family relationship that tended to keep each one in line. Without that family support it is much easier to become careless.

No doubt years ago the disposition to want to get away from each other possibly existed many times in husband and wife relations, but they did not act on it because in the family that was unthinkable. Today the family ties are disappearing. It is true that nobody decided that such changes should occur. Then how did it happen? Among other things we travel so much, even in my own family. We are a rather large family: one is in Texas, one is in Indiana, one is in Florida and another is in South Carolina, while we, the father and mother, are in Georgia. Yet I am happy to say that my family is a very real group. We are knit together; we have dealings with each other. But even so it is not nearly the same as it would have been if father and mother lived here, brothers, and sisters lived nearby, so that all were grouped together. Today, even when people try to have family reunions, it is very difficult to get the members together. I suspect in a number of families the idea of family reunions has largely been dropped. We are trying to understand how this affects the child. All this means, of course, that when the child is growing up it does not have the setting, the situation that would ordinarily give it something to depend upon. The child is far more exposed to the shifting changes that occur among strangers.

Another factor that has helped to weaken the family is in the matter of individual responsibility. Economic support by the family is no longer needed for each individual. There was a time when the people in the family needed each other because there was only one pocketbook and that was where the money came from. Now each one has his own; even the children get their allowances and they seem to move independently. Social control – who will take care of these children, who will watch over these young people – is no longer the family function. We turn to the school and to local institutional organ-

izations and expect them to take care of our young people.

Also it can be said that, generally speaking, the influence of parents is being undermined. The reaction to what has been noted about these things could be: "He is painting a black picture." But do you feel it is true? Why should we think about these conditions? Because we want to understand the child. What we have been talking about is actually the situation into which the child is born. Radio and TV programs, generally speaking, weaken parental control. Many times in these programs parents are not always presented as being honest, and oftentimes, they are exposed to ridicule. Then again, the theatre often emphasizes many things that are breaking up the home; the press with its publicity of accidents and all the troubles that occur; and the comic papers in the way which they present things – all these things together weaken the influence of parents. Even the school and youth movements take young people and the children away from their parents.

Thus we have seen there are many hindrances to family life in our culture. The reason families are not as strong as they once were is not because of any change in the disposition of people necessarily; but rather it is because of circumstances. In addition to changes already noted, among other things mechanical inventions and scientific procedures have actually changed the situation in our homes. In the matter of industrialization the wage earner is taken away from the family. He leaves early and returns late at night. Nowadays, with the woman working, she has often also been away all day.

Another hindrance to family life is urbanization – with most people moving into the city. People live in congested living quarters which is very difficult for a child. Actual family life itself is absorbed into the community more and more, as there are many vital tasks we used to take care of in the family which are now matters of public utility. All of this weakens the situation in the family. There is scarcely anything for the boys and girls to do at home.

We have developed specialization in the control of our health. The schools examine the child: they check their teeth, they check their vaccination and all arrangements are made there for inoculation against sickness. The public health services take care of that. So far as religion is concerned, we don't teach it at home anymore. We send the child to the Cradle Roll, then to the Sunday School, then to the Young People and then to the church.

There is less actual need of the home in our society today. Companionship is no longer found only or even mainly in the home. The social supports we have talked about are gone and the moral imperatives – father saying it should be like this, mother saying it will have to be like that – have become dim. The practical advantages of a home today, or a family, are actually dubious. Isn't it true that the average child spends its first days in a hospital, nursing a bottle, and then has a baby sitter? In the matter of the child's faith in God (we would ordinarily use the word "religion" here) this is no longer a matter of what is done in the home. Even if the child is taken to the church very young it probably is placed in a nursery. Actually, the child is kept away from other people and can grow up with scarcely anyone with whom to play. Often we find that even before the child is out of the crib it is moved into the room where the television is, and the cartoons are turned on to entertain the baby. There is no chance in all this for the child to learn how to live by seeing older people living in actual surroundings. The TV programs might be very realistic and the radio programs might try to be true to life, but you and I know these things are arranged. That is after all not the way we live. Yet in spite of all the things we have said which handicap the family, it is still the child's world. And there is yet some hope in the fact that the Christian, the believing person, can recognize these things intelligently and take certain steps to overcome them to the benefit of the child.

We want to point out again that the family – father and mother, older brothers and sisters, uncles and aunts and other people living in the home – is the child's world. This is the baby's only chance to learn about authority. Someone needs to say "this way" and "that way." The baby needs to learn very early the meaning of "No. You can't do that." By the way, it should be kept in mind that this does not always need to be explained. In this world many things will happen which Almighty God controls and for which an

explanation is not always obvious. God has His way of controlling things and in Providence things work out so that we oftentimes wonder why, but the Heavens do not open up and tell us. So far as the baby is concerned, it needs to learn this is right and that is wrong. Explanation is not important, and a long argument will not be of help. When the child does wrong, there should be punishment; and when the child does right, there should be reward.

The whole system of punishment and rewards is related to, geared into human nature under God. I recognize from the standpoint of the Gospel that this is the Law, but we must remember the Law is the schoolmaster to bring us to Christ. As long as the child is young, this is needed.

The child will also learn about Providence in the family. There are many things we receive from God for which we have not even asked, and for which we certainly do not pay, but which we need. Likewise, the baby does not ask the parents to provide all it needs, nor can it pay the parents; but the child can learn in experience that these things are provided. In the matter of comfort, the baby learns that comfort is available in the arms of the mother and on the breast of the mother. The child can learn this there if given a natural chance.

The same is true with reference to judgment of conduct – the law of the harvest. "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." Fathers and mothers have the responsibility to see to it that the baby will learn this very important truth. If I do things that are wrong it will be bad for me, and if I do the things that are right, it will be good for me; the bad and the good should become obvious in the experiences the parents should control.

A child should learn that it is dependent because if the child realizes that it is not in control of things, it is getting ready to understand that God is the Lord and He is the One in control of all things. A child can learn from the time it is a baby that there is such a thing as prayer, and such a day as Sunday. The child can learn about God's house; and from the time it first knows anything at all about death, the child can learn about Heaven. All of this will come to the child normally in its experience in the family, and as difficult as it is to maintain the family today, it is still very important because all of these things we have referred to could be learned by the child in its preschool experience.

Family And God

Can you understand how God could deal with a family even though the members of that family are not as yet believers in Jesus Christ?

It is easy to get the impression that believers are inclined to think God deals only with them. It may be true in many cases that God deals in a special way with His believing people but we need to remember that God is Creator of all men, the Keeper of all men and the Judge of all the earth. God deals with everyone, even though He does deal in a special way with those who are in Christ Jesus. So God deals with every family according to His benevolence, even in the matter of marriage. God is attentive to, He is concerned about every marriage, and especially is that true when the marriage is that of believers in Christ Jesus. You see, the believer in Christ Jesus is not his own; he has been bought with a price. That is supposed to mean something. When the believer has accepted Christ as his Saviour and Lord and is expecting to be saved unto eternity, he has yielded himself to the Lord. We read in one place, with reference to a woman who is a believer, "She is at liberty to be married to whom she will, only in the Lord" (I Corinthians 7:30) because He is concerned for her and has given Himself for her. The Lord has purchased her with His own blood. Now it is true, so far as marriage is concerned, that if only one of the parents is a believer the child is yet related to God in a special way. Revelation shows the will of God for the wife:

this is not only for the wife of a believer, but would be for any wife. Believers would be ready to receive this, even if unbelievers ignore it.

"Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let wives be to their own husbands in every thing" (Ephesians 5:22-24).

Paul set forth the same thought in writing to Titus:

"That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed " (Titus 2:4-5).

Peter discussed the same truth somewhat more at length:

"Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives; while they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear. Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; but let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price. For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands: even as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord: whose daughters ye are- as long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement" (I Peter 3:1-6).

These passages indicate what is revealed in the Word of God about what God's will is so far as the wife is concerned. In this connection it will be helpful to note what God has to say to the husband:

"Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it" (Ephesians 5:25).

Though this was written to believers and is guidance for them, it is not for believers exclusively. This is God's will for everybody. Believers are inclined to honor Scripture because they have in them the Spirit of the Lord Jesus Christ, who came to do the will of His Father. This is God's plan in the marriage situation for all men. When unhappiness and frustrations in married life occur it is because these guidelines have not been followed.

". . . that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church: for we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church. Nevertheless let everyone of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband" (Ephesians 5:26-33).

There is nothing here exclusively for believers. Everybody is guided in this way. The believer is moved to obey because he has in him the Spirit of the Lord Jesus Christ.

"Young men likewise exhort to be soberminded. In all things showing thyself a pattern of good works: in doctrine showing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity, sound speech, that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you" (Titus 2:6-8).

It could be said this passage does not say anything about marriage. But the fact is that if a man will live like that in the house the marriage will be very fortunate. This is the point: the whole business of being married is just a matter of living; it is living under God. Peter had this broader view in mind when he wrote:

"Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honor unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered. Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous: not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing. For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile: let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue it" (I Peter 3:7-11).

Again, it could be said this is general instruction for ordinary living, anytime. Exactly! That is the kind of living that should be going on in the home – living as though you were in the presence of God. Let us remember there are no special guidelines for unbelievers, no special privileges because a person is an unbeliever, no special responsibilities because you are a believer. This is God's plan. It is true that the believing man and the believing woman who have denied the ego in them selves can demonstrate for all men what is possible when the woman in love yields herself to the man she loves, and the man in love protects and takes care of the woman he loves. With such parents you can be very sure that the child will be conceived and born in sweet trust in the goodness of God.

Children are to be guided, directed, by parents. They are to be instructed. Nowhere in the Bible is the idea fostered that a child is to be turned loose in this world to explore, experiment, discover and make choices for himself. That is not Bible talk; that is public talk. That is natural man's talk. That is the way some think as human beings, but when you want to know the mind of God you should turn to Genesis and see how God felt about Abraham:

"For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him" (Genesis 18:19).

God blessed Abraham and made him a blessing, because of this very procedure in Abraham's life.

The entire family should be brought together in response to the will of God, as interpreted by the one who is responsible, the man in the house. As the parents command the children and the household, children will learn reverence to God, respect to their superiors and charity to the poor. This seems to be the clear teaching of Scripture.

When Moses was leading the children of Israel out of Egypt Pharaoh, being finally moved by the plagues to decide that he would be wise to let them go, made certain offers to compromise with Moses. One of the proposals was that Moses and all the people were to go but they were to leave the children. This Moses refused to accept. Pharaoh said, "But it is a long way and hard traveling and you will be in trouble." Moses replied, "The children are going, too." Here is our guidance with reference to things that happen in the home, children must share with their parents. As they are growing up they should be briefed in the great works of God. They would not know things that have happened in their family before they were born. So it was when Israel came out of the land of Egypt.

"And thou shalt show thy son in that day, saying, This is done because of that which the Lord did unto me when I came forth out of Egypt. And it shall be for a sign unto thee upon thine hand, and for a memorial between thine eyes, that the Lord's law may be in thy mouth: for with a strong hand hath the Lord brought thee out of Egypt. Thou shalt therefore keep this ordinance in his season from year to year" (Exodus 13:8-10).

Children are to learn from their parents what God has done. We were never among the people who were in Egypt but we are among the people who are in the world, and we were in sin and we know what it is to turn to God. We should tell our children, "Once I was an unbeliever, wandering away from God, but He won me and showed Himself and I came to Him, and now you are coming along with me to Him." We find very much the same idea in what Moses was telling the new generation of Israelites that they should do:

"And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sit test in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates" (Deuteronomy 6:7-9).

This truth that we have been setting forth is demonstrated for us in a rather negative way with a bad example, in the case of Eli, the priest, and his sons:

"For I have told him that I will judge his house for ever for the iniquity which he knoweth; because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not" (I Samue13:13).

Eli had failed in his responsibility to control his children; they had suffered and God was dishonored.

The teaching of children requires controlled social conditions. If children are to be taught in the home, that home will have to be kept the way it should be. Parents have to be careful about playmates, about servants. I am not unaware of the fact that living in this day makes it practically impossible to control all. Yet the child is influenced by the conduct of the parents. The child will notice whether or not his father obeys the law; the child will know what the father's attitude toward the police is; the child will understand whether or not the parents pay attention to what the doctor says. The child must learn consideration for equals. This is a very difficult thing to do because equals are many times rivals, or competitors. Oftentimes the child wants what they have, and they want what the child has; and this can cause contention between equals. Still the child must learn consideration for others regardless of what relationship may exist. The only way the young child can be trained into consideration for his equal is for the child to be trained to say "no" to self. There must be self-denial and self-control. The child must learn charity to the poor, and this can best be done by example in the home. Because, all of this is true, under God it is God's plan that the family should maintain certain practices that could be called religious, because they are maintained in the conscious presence of God. The family should be united with the church.

The family should be grounded upon a marriage performed by a preacher. There should be a dedication of the child to God. There should be family worship in which the family is brought together to honor God by Bible reading and prayer. Returning thanks to God at meals should be practiced.

Very early the child can learn about the Bible, noticing when it is read. The child will see the parent going to church. The child will notice when the parents observe the Sabbath, when they respect the Lord's day. And the child will know whether or not they tithed their money. A child knows about money – it is money that gets the baby ice cream cones. It is with money he buys balloons.

The child will see consideration for others in the way parents treat them; they will see respect for superiors in the daily conversation in the family. They will know whether or not the parents gossip about other people. They will see how they treat the servants whether they are humane. They will see their attitudes toward their neighbors. In all these things nothing need be said about worshipping God. The child will learn that by the grace of God.

The Child And The Family

Have you ever realized how significant for a child is his family, his home and his community?

As we continue in our study of the general problem of bringing up a child I want to talk now about the child and his family. Paul wrote to Timothy:

"Greatly desiring to see thee, being mindful of thy tears, that I may be filled with joy; when I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also. Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands" (II Timothy 1:4-6).

Timothy had a strong faith that Paul appreciated and Paul was encouraged to remember that this faith was first in the grandmother and in the mother, and also that Timothy had received from Paul, himself, certain blessing that enabled him to maintain his testimony and his ministry.

In our study we have been looking at the family, which determines much of what is found later in the child. We are going to consider directly now the child in the family. There is much truth in the old saying, "blood will tell." It does make a difference what family a child is born into. I appreciate the comment that if a man wants to be a success he should be careful in choosing his grandfathers. In a very real sense the home, the family, the community constitute a larger womb for the incubating child. The baby lives for nine months in the mother, surrounded by the mother's body, where it grew. When it is born the child is just as helpless as when it was in the mother's womb but now it can begin its adjustment to new environment. That new environment closed around it when the baby was born, loving hands took care of that baby, loving eyes watched over it and loving hearts cared for it. The child was kept and led as it grew older, and became more experienced and more developed in the general surrounding of the home, the family and the community. Any situation in which the child receives what it needs for living, where it receives food, shelter, clothing, care and protection as well as fellowship and companionship, is what I mean by the family. Many children today do not have a normal family: it may be there is no father in the house; it may even be there is no mother to care for the child. The family is a vital stage in the child's life.

It has been said there are those who boast, "Give us your child for the first five years and you can have him after that because he will never get away from what we teach him; he will never change," That may be overstated but it does stress a very important thing. Many schools of psychology who approach their study through research agree that the first few years are the most determinative in the development of the child and the bearing of the past upon the child is shown in three words: heredity, which the child is born with; heritage, which the child is born into; and environment, in which the child lives. As a matter of fact, the child cannot get away from anyone of those three things.

By heredity is meant all that the child gets when the body is born. It is a big mistake to think that a baby's birth is the beginning. Oh, no. This is only another phase of life. In heredity the child gets its sex, and that makes a big difference. It is there that he gets his physical frame: he will be tall or short, vigorous or frail, healthy or a weakling, all of which traits he inherits from his parents. something else determined here is the rate of metabolism. Metabolism refers to what happens in the tissues of the body; it concerns the cells of the body and the changes in those cells. With some the rate of metabolism results in the body being quick, and in others it results in the body being slow.

There are people who are born with a naturally bright alert approach to things and there are people who are slow, with an almost lethargic approach to things. This distinctive trait is quite important but it is by no means final or absolute in its effect. The quick ones do not always get there first. There is a significant old story of the hare and the tortoise. Nevertheless, some of us are called bright and some of us are called dull. It helps some to remember that either one of those can be modified. That bright person can neglect himself so much that he gets nowhere, and that slow almost dull person can actually apply himself so much that he can go a long piece. So far as the child is concerned, it is either one or the other – not absolutely all the one or all the other – there are shades in between, as between black and white.

What does all of this amount to? Much of what is in the child's body is received by heredity and little can be done to alter that, but none of that is absolute. Any part of it can be modified by personal self-control. Nevertheless there are innate traits of character that will show up. There will be certain combinations of what we call genes and chromosomes in the individual personal constitution, in the very cells of

the body, that do make a difference, causing each individual to be a unique person. These are all acquired from the parents, but they are all amenable to alteration by training and self-discipline.

By heritage is meant all that the child gets from the family, the neighborhood, the country in which he lives, e.g., his language. The baby will speak English if the parents speak English. It will speak German if the parents speak German. It is always fascinating to me that babies can speak Chinese. They do in China. Why do I stress this? If a baby can learn to speak English, Russian or Chinese, a person can learn the Bible. He can learn it and he doesn't have to have it translated in fifty-seven different ways. A person can get to know what it means if he wants to learn it, just the same as he can learn Spanish if he wants to. If I wanted to learn Spanish and learn it well, I would probably go to Mexico if not to Spain, because I would be among people who speak it.

My reason for making that comment is that I want to emphasize that if you want to learn about the Bible you should go where somebody believes it and where you will find out what is in the Bible. Language and habits are in the child's heritage. Customs and standards belong to everyone, including the baby. Values and goals that are in the community are important. I used to wonder if such would ever have any spiritual significance. In one of Paul's writings, the book of Titus, I noted that he comments on certain people to whom Titus was preaching because of the community in which they grew up and because of the kind of people they were.

"One of themselves, even a prophet of their own, said, The Cretians are always liars, evil beasts, slow bellies"
(Titus 1:12).

That was a whole culture, pointing out that everybody in that culture was like that. Paul goes on to say, "This witness is true. Wherefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith " (Titus 1:13).

Someone may wonder why this should be brought up now in the study we are making. The fact is that a child born in our country will have a certain way of looking at how people live and will form an outlook and appreciation of marriage and the home. A child living in this day and time will have a different view of marriage from that which prevailed three generations ago. Not long ago it would have been thought that in order for a person to achieve anything worthwhile he would have to be virtuous: today virtue, in many instances, is like a forgotten word. The presence of Christians in the community can affect the community. Our country has been blessed with outstanding, believing people in generations gone by.

I would not want to go so far as to call any country a Christian country, but this country in which I now live has been greatly blessed because of certain people in its history. However, this principle applies both ways, not only are good traits transferable to oncoming generations but evil traits are also transmitted to future generations. What we pass on is not only what we mean to pass on, it is not only what is organized in overt training as in school, but we pass on a great deal we never think of, about which we are unconscious. Oftentimes the most effective transmission takes place when it is casual, a matter of ordinary procedure. A child picks it up just like it is.

What is meant by environment is all that is possible wherever the person is, in the situation in which he lives in the natural world about him, and in the culture he has. All that is part of his environment. In this day and time one of the dangerous elements in our social environment is a general principle of permissiveness. We seem to have the idea that everybody should be free to do "his own thing" and if anyone were to say, "What about God?" that would be considered out of date. Mature persons may only be irritated by these tendencies, but think about the children! They have nothing settled in their hearts; they will go where the wind blows. They may agree or disagree, but the dominating influence will be from the community in which they live and the situation in which they are.

All that I have outlined so far is not final; it is not conclusive. Such influence could be altered. Some will wonder if it isn't true that all of this is largely involuntary, impersonal. Then is there any direct influence the family brings to bear upon the child? At this point someone may ask about prenatal influ-

ence: can the father and mother together do anything jointly or singly before the child is born that will afterwards affect this child? Here again there is no positive judgment that we can teach or preach. There are certain instances on record. There was the case of Hagar with reference to Ishmael, and perhaps it is worth looking at again because sometimes such things are easily ignored.

"And the angel of the Lord said unto her, Behold, thou art with child, and shalt bear a son, and shalt call his name Ishmael; because the Lord hath heard thy affliction. And he will be a wild man; his hand will be against every man, and every man's hand against him" (Genesis 16:11-12).

That is the kind of person Ishmael turned out to be, and at the time that was told to Hagar, Ishmael had not yet been born. We could think again of Rebekah with reference to Esau and Jacob. The record is that when she wondered why these twins were having such a struggle with each other in her body, she inquired of the Lord about it and He told her, "You have two nations in your womb. They will be two different people and they will contend with each other, and the elder shall serve the younger." (Genesis 25:23).

We can recall Hannah with reference to Samuel. Hannah went to God in prayer and made a covenant with Him before Samuel was conceived. When he was born Samuel willingly went right along the line that his mother had laid out in her vow to God. We can think of Jeremiah with reference to his life work. When he was called to undertake the work of being a prophet he said, "No, I don't know enough. I am too much of a child." And God said, "Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee" (Jeremiah 1:5).

All this evidence points to this positive conclusion: things can happen between the parents and God before the child is born that may profoundly affect the child. Having noted the strong presumption that the actions of parents can affect the unborn child some may say, "Oh, I hope not." Why should the public reaction be one of dismay? Must such influence necessarily be evil? I think we make an unnecessary concession all the way through; we have such little confidence in ourselves. The fact is this line of thought opens up to believing parents the wonderful possibility that by the exercise of their faith they could affect the child to have the disposition to turn to God and to obey Him.

On the other hand Ezekiel proclaims that each soul shall have the privilege to turn to God.

"Yet say ye, Why? doth not the son bear the iniquity of the father? When the son hath done that which is lawful and right, and hath kept all my statutes, and hath done them, he shall surely live. The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him. But if the wicked will turn from all his sins that he hath committed, and keep all my statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, he shall not die. All his transgressions that he hath committed, they shall not be mentioned unto him: in his righteousness that he hath done he shall live. Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? saith the Lord God: and not that he should return from his ways, and live" (Ezekiel 18:19-23)?

Whatever may be the possibilities of the child being born with liability, by the grace of God this child can be saved.

When the parents are obedient believers the child is blessed. The quiet, assured emotions of the pregnant mother allow the child to develop in undisturbed calm, and that is good. The mother will look upon the child as a gift from God and will try to keep ungodly elements and influences away from the child. Parents will discipline themselves to keep their conduct right before the child. They have confidence in the Scriptures, and when parents believe they will pray for the child. We remember how it was with Abraham and his nephew Lot:

"And it came to pass, when God destroyed the cities of the plain, that God remembered Abraham, and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow" (Genesis 19:29).

What a challenge that is to us!

One common characteristic of behavior in the baby that needs to be recognized is random activity. The child has energy and vitality, and is active, but there is no direction in what it does. A child must learn

to do everything. We have seen them learn to take something in their fingers and manipulate it. They also learn by imitation and from memory. To help the child learn the good and the useful, parents may institute a training program, usually by developing a system of rewards and punishments.

"And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons. Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness. Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby" (Hebrews 12:5-11).

In a system of rewards and punishment an outline of the things that are good for guidance would normally be the Ten Commandments which would tell what is right and what is wrong. The law cannot compel the child to do right but it can be very helpful if the child wants to do right. It is a guide to the willing and a warning to the wayward. The child can learn that way and parents are responsible to arrange things that will help the child to learn, to provide what the child needs and to protect the child as it goes along. Parents are responsible to bring the reality of God to the child and that is what will next be considered. In all of this we have been seeking to understand what the actual problem is, when we set out to bring up a child in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

The Child And The Worship Of God

Can you understand why it is easy for a child to worship God?

"But Jesus said, Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 19:14).

One of the sweetest aspects of public worship occurs when little children praise God. Everyone's heart is made glad. I often wonder if this is because their behavior is so obviously sincere on their part, or is it because perhaps unconsciously there is no question of any mental reservations; they are not holding out anything. They may be taking part in a haphazard fashion only from time to time, but what they do is genuine.

Does this mean the child was born with prenatal knowledge of God? I would say "No." The child is born without words. It has no ideas, because ideas require words; it has no knowledge because knowledge requires words. The child learns all it ever knows about God after it has started learning. Since He is invisible, the truth of God must be shown to the child, and this is done by overt, outward conduct, by religious activities on the part of the parents. The appropriate response of man to the reality of God is reverence, and this is His due. Since He is my Creator, it is proper for me to bow down my heart in His presence.

The public schools use various methods to teach children respect for the flag. There are ceremonies in which the flag is featured and there is the oath of allegiance to our country when the flag is used as a symbol. The same is true with reference to the national anthem. Children learn to do certain things when the national anthem is played and in so doing they are transferring some of their feeling about the anthem to their country.

How would adult conduct reflect reverence in the heart that children could recognize in that fashion? Children are influenced by what they see older people do and this shows why parents need to be very concerned about who is living with them in their home. It is obviously a good thing for anyone living in the home of others to respect the wishes of the parents. How would anyone know by watching an adult in the home that he had reverence toward God? This would be, first of all, in the use of His name. If the name of God is used in any kind of excited comment on occasion, that is not wholesome. If an older person must say something in an irreverent way, he should not use the name of God nor use the name of Heaven. He should find some other expression to use. Again, when the adult honors the Lord's Day a child will soon learn that Sunday makes a difference. The child will know that Sunday is the day to go to Sunday School and church. They learn this from seeing how the parents act on that day, what they do. In our own home we made it a point, so far as we possibly could, apart from an emergency not to buy anything on Sunday. One thing we could do without was buying ice cream or root beer. We found a stand where we could purchase it for the adults and receive a little glass free for any child. Buying six glasses of root beer was something our budget couldn't stand but we could buy three glasses and receive three small glasses free, and that would take care of all six of us. One Sunday we were riding along as we were going to visit certain friends and in so doing we came closer to the root beer stand. All the commotion in the back seat quieted down and we knew right away the children were getting ready for root beer. As we were driving by I felt a little hand tapping me on the shoulder: "This is the place." Then I told them as kindly as I could: "This is not the day." I had to tell them that on Sunday we do not do this. Naturally, they were disappointed, but I can tell you disappointment is far easier for them to take when they are three, four and five years of age, than when they are thirteen, fourteen or fifteen. And such distinctions must be made somewhere along the line, if children are to learn the reality of God, and the proper reverence toward Him. On another occasion we drove by the same place and again it was on Sunday and people were there. The children didn't say anything that time. They knew we were not going in, but one of the boys said as he looked at the customers: "Bad people." Then I had to give a little sermon. I said, "No, not bad people. Just different people." After all, some of our church members were there, and we couldn't very well call them bad people. On one occasion an elder came by our home on a Sunday, as he was making a call. He asked our older girl to come with him for a ride: she was delighted. He bought an ice cream cone for her, and when she came home she was all aglow in front of the other children. Some time later on a Sunday the question came up again because we occasionally had ice cream, and someone brought up the fact that they all wanted to have ice cream on that day. We reminded them it was Sunday. Right away they told us Mr. Brown bought Miriam an ice cream cone on Sunday. Then we had to very gently and kindly say, "That is different. You know he wears a different suit than I do and this also is just different." It was not easy to convince them. I am talking about these things at some length because I can illustrate what I have in mind by referring to smaller things. In the bigger things I will not try to outline the particular procedure you might use. It will be most important however that you make sure the children see that you treat Sunday differently.

In the matter of sharing in the service of the Lord, the children will soon know whether you tithe. They also see how the adults conduct themselves when they are in the church sanctuary. I think, generally speaking, quietness is good when going into the sanctuary and children should never be allowed to run around there. The child notices too how the adult handles the Bible: is it buried beneath other books and periodicals, and allowed to collect dust? Is the Bible spoken of and treated with respect?

The community I grew up in was a very fine place, with superior people, but they were not Bible reading people and they did not practice praying aloud. Our high school was outstanding in honor and integrity, but we did not think Bible reading nor praying aloud were important. We were wrong but we did not know it. If children are to have any consciousness of God there must be praying to God in their homes. This need not be too difficult. There can be returning thanks at meals, family worship, and there can be

private prayer. It would be helpful if the child could hear hymn singing in the home. It might not be necessary to rule out popular music; after all, the child is living in this world: there may be no need to shut out every sound, but parents can make sure the home hears the right sounds.

The little child will know if the parents go to church. It will not be enough to send the child off to Sunday School. The matter of posture is important: the child could see the parents in their act of kneeling. It would be good if parents would encourage the child to learn to kneel. This again is not hard to do: it may be a little hard to get up but it is not so hard to get down.

On one occasion my wife and I were entertaining some prominent church men who were in our community. Two of them spent the night in our home. The next morning we had our breakfast, and as was customary for us after breakfast we had our morning worship. We read the Scripture and then we prayed. It was the custom in our family to kneel. I had to learn that as a grown man, and I have always felt more or less self-conscious about it. Because these two men were there, and because they were strangers and prominent men, I felt very self-conscious about kneeling. In a way, in my heart I feared they would think I was showing off, so we sat while we prayed. Afterwards my wife said to me, "Why didn't you kneel?" I had to tell her shamefacedly that I was scared, which was really the case.

About a year later I was in a meeting among a group of church leaders and one of those two men was talking about sharing in worship. In the course of the general discussion as he was making a point, he said, "I want to tell you of one of the most wonderful experiences I have had in recent years. I had the privilege of being in a home that had an old-fashioned family altar." He then described how we read the Scripture and how we prayed. He commented on our procedure, how in prayer we named each member of the family. Then he said, "There was only one thing that was different. In my boyhood days we kneeled." I don't think I have ever gotten over that. It had been the only time in years in our home that I had not kneeled. Let me encourage you to do this sort of thing. It is good for the soul for you to go to your knees.

When our older boy at eighteen was in the Navy and was on a stretch of duty in the Pacific during the war, I asked myself, "What is that boy going to have to help him? How can he get help?" I knew we would pray for him. Then one day the thought occurred to me, "He knows that each day at breakfast time our family will be on their knees and he will be named, and he will be prayed for." This gave me real comfort. And it is a tremendous thing for you to do for your child.

On Sunday when we all went to church, we had another rule in our home. We made it a rule that the biggest piece of money the child handled during the week was the money he took to Sunday School. Our children did not have many big pieces of money but they sometimes handled a quarter, so this was what each took to Sunday School. Someone might ask, "Why would you do that?" Perhaps one reason was that I remembered in the days when I was a new Christian, how I appreciated the young people on the streets who would seek help for their service to the Lord. I was never quite satisfied in my heart and spirit when I gave only a nickel or a dime. I remember so well when my good wife on one occasion put some money into a kettle, and the man said, "God bless you. May He be kind to you," and many more such words. Then she exclaimed, "All that for fifteen cents!" I think this matter is more significant than is commonly recognized. I realize that not everybody has much money to give, but I do think that something happens to the child, when he is given a dime for an ice cream cone and only a nickel for Sunday School. I am seeking to share with you these things that can be helpful in teaching the child about the worship of God. Someone may say, "You haven't said anything about what you would tell him." That is just the point: you don't tell him – you sell him. You show him how these things are done.

Another thing happened in my experience for which I wasn't really prepared. One of my children did this for me one day: on my birthday the little girl presented me with a little cross made of plastic, that was luminous. That luminous cross stood on my dresser top for years, and often when I chanced to awaken in the night that shining cross did something for me.

A child loves to hear stories and to tell them. When telling a story I must remember to be accurate:

if I have told that story once and then tell it the second time, I must repeat it exactly as it was told the first time. If I don't get it right, the child will straighten me but. I recall how one of our little girls loved to tell stories and how one time her mother told her the story about a certain king who promised to give a big reward to the person who would tell him the longest story. A man came to tell the king the longest story, which was something like this: Once upon a time there was a big pile of wheat and an ant came along to get a kernel of wheat and carried it away, and another ant came and got a kernel of wheat and carried it away, and another ant came and got a kernel of wheat and carried it away, and this went on and on. Finally the king said, "How long is this story going to be?" The man said, "There is a whole bin of wheat and only a little bit is gone." Our little girl wanted to tell the whole story and her mother had to listen. The little story-teller loved to get to the part that said, "And one ant came and took away one grain of wheat, and another ant came and took another grain of wheat, . . ." This finally became tiresome and so my good wife thought to head it off, so she interposed, "And then the end came." The little girl repeated, "And then the end came." She waited a moment then added, "And the end went away and then another ant came and took another grain of wheat . . ." You have seen something like that happen; that is characteristic of children. They love to hear stories: tell them the Bible stories.

My wife bought some inexpensive prints of famous pictures of Bible scenes, and only on Sundays the children could see these pictures: they were kept as something special. She would take about forty prints in her hands, face down, and each child in turn could choose one. The picture was then held up in front of the four youngsters, and the child who identified the picture would have the privilege to tell the story of that picture. It had to be true to the Bible because the others were listening. This was something to which they really looked forward. When the child who picked the print had finished telling the story of the event in the picture, each of the others in turn could contribute one other point the first child and the others had omitted. This obviously fixed Bible stories in their memories, and incidentally made Sunday afternoon a time of special privilege.

In the atmosphere of the home a child can learn about worshipping God. The time for a child to learn these things about God is when the child is young, and that means in the situation in the home.

The Child's Faith In Jesus Christ

Do you have any idea how old a child should be before accepting Jesus Christ?

If we had been interested only in bringing up a child to take his place in society, or in bringing up a child so that he will be able to take care of himself as a growing person, we could have done it in much less time. But we are thinking of bringing up a child in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. We are interested in this child eventually becoming a believer in Christ Jesus; and there are certain things the child has to learn first. The child must, for example, come to believe in the reality of God, otherwise there would be no point in asking him to believe in Jesus Christ. He must also believe in the law of God, in God's fairness and justice, since apart from that he would not have any sense of sin. He must also believe in the judgment of God; he must have in mind that God is going to deal with everybody; otherwise he would have no fear of anything happening to him, even though he had sinned.

In order that he might accept Jesus Christ the child must learn the plan of salvation. This has been referred to in a rather vague fashion because the child would not be able to recognize the details even if they had been set forth, but somehow the child needs to understand that salvation will be given to him, that it will be a gift because Christ Jesus died for him. Salvation is something he doesn't earn but which will be given to him because of the grace of God.

In presenting this to the child, how would it be done? The evidence for the reality of God is in the world around the child and there will be no need to lecture. The child can become aware of the world as it is. "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth his handiwork" (Psalm 19:1). The child will naturally be able to believe that, and to become aware that all things were made by God. I remember a conversation between two of our children when they were quite young. Because he was a little over four, the brother knew a great deal more than the sister, who was about three. They were under my window and I heard little sister say, "John, what makes the leaves move?" He, in a bored way answered, "The wind." After a bit the little girl said, "What makes the wind move?" Again from him, "God." That boy by now is a specialist in space engineering, electromagnetics is his field. He is dealing with power all through the universe but I think if you were to ask him right now, penetrating through the sophistication of his mind, what makes the wind move, he would still say, "God." He would be referring to the evidence which is all around us.

The law of God is commonly called the Ten Commandments. It might be said that a baby could not possibly know about that. But the fact is that as soon as a baby has a feeling of consciousness, it has what the law of God is all about. Paul speaks about those who do not have the law as it is written who show the work of the law in their own hearts, their own consciences are accusing or excusing themselves (Romans 2:14-15). How early does a child have a conscience? Consider, "How early does a baby know it is wrong to throw the spoon on the floor?" It is because the baby knows that throwing the spoon on the floor makes you angry that it does so. As soon as you find a child hiding anything, or seeking to deceive you, you have a child in whom a conscience is already working. And that is the law of God. I know it is not specifically and exactly the law as revealed in Scripture, but it is the work of the eternal law of God and every person has it in his heart. No one need teach that – it will just come out.

How can the child learn the judgment of God? The only way is for parents to act fairly and squarely, and to render judgment whenever anything comes before them. The judgment of God can be felt in the fate of things that men undertake to do, and in the last analysis, in death itself, because a child will soon know that people die. The judgment of God is felt in the state of all that is mortal, anything that is temporary. Even the flowers wither. The birds die. The cat and the dog will die. As the child finds out about these things and gets the impression of fate, this is the conception of the judgment of God.

How is the child going to understand that it can be saved or forgiven? This must be told. There is nothing in nature that will indicate the Gospel. No one can go to nature to find out. It becomes obvious upon reflection there is no kindness, no mercy, in nature. The fate for the bird with the broken wing is that the cat will get it; the fate for the rabbit with a broken leg is that the wolf will get it. We must tell the child stories from the Bible which indicate how people did wrong and then God helped them, because He wanted to do it. This will be new and wonderful!

The truth of the grace of God needs to be brought into the mind of little child. The stories of Jesus of Nazareth will help the child to see how He went about doing good. These things must be brought to the mind of the child. How can this be done? By telling Bible stories and being careful to tell them exactly as they are written. There are many books of Bible stories on the market, but parents must be very careful about such books. Some authors try to edit events in the Bible stories, thinking the child will not understand if the story is told as it is written. They will protest, "We must tell the story so that the child can understand it." But let us face a very simple question: does anybody understand God? No. But should we not know about God? Yes. Well, if we should know about God and we don't understand Him, why not tell children what is true about God? What if they don't understand it? You don't either. This is God! What I am emphasizing is this: there are certain aspects of those Bible stories the children need to hear. If they don't hear those stories from the Bible they could never guess those things, and they will be without the Word which they could believe to the saving of the soul!

The children should learn very early the story of creation, that everything was made in six days.

Let them wonder about it: God is wonderful! When you are telling about Adam and Eve in the garden, tell it just the way it is, and don't leave out the serpent. Don't let it sound as if it were only some bad notion they had. No! No! The serpent was an enemy. The child won't understand all about that, but it should be told. And you won't help anything by using the word "snake" or "reptile." The Bible uses the word "serpent." When the child says, "Well, I didn't know that a serpent could talk," neither do you; but let it stand just exactly as it is. You don't know how that was done. You don't know by what means the serpent communicated. Don't argue about it, tell the story like it is. The child will get the impression. When telling the story of the flood, and about putting those animals in the ark, don't fix it up in any attempt to make it smooth. Leave it like it is. When you tell the story of Jacob at Peniel, wrestling all night with the angel while he is asking for the blessing of God, don't embellish it. That man's leg was broken and he kept on wrestling. Out of that is going to come the fact that God will bless the man who would not quit even when he was crippled.

In the story of Moses and the burning bush, point out to the children that bush was burning but never burned up. It was never consumed. This is something they never saw, it is different. You may say to me, "They will get to where they can't believe it." Listen: they didn't believe it before you talked. Remember that. They were not born with faith. Faith will come but first you must plant the seed. The seed is in these stories of which I am speaking.

In the story of the Passover Lamb let them think about that angel of death passing over, and "when he sees the blood he will pass over" that house. Don't get "hung up" explaining things to children. They don't need their stories explained; they want stories told. Let them marvel at those stories: the crossing of the Red Sea; the falling of manna from Heaven; the experience of Gideon when he, with three hundred men, overcame a large company; the story of Samson when he pulled the theater, so to speak, down on himself; the story of David and Goliath and the way in which David overcame Goliath; and the story of Daniel in the lion's den. Let it be the same with the miracles of the Lord Jesus Christ and the story of the resurrection: tell them exactly as they are. He walked on the water; He fed five thousand with a few loaves and fishes; He opened the eyes of the blind. When you come to the ascension, tell that story of His body being taken up in full view of all.

In addition to using Bible stories, sing the songs of the church. Do you realize that songs may have the Gospel in them? Every now and again we see some modern songs that are made up for our children, but I am always sorry when the children do not have some spiritual truth given to them in the songs they sing. One that comes to mind is "Wide, wide is the ocean, high as the Heaven above; deep, deep as the deepest sea is my Saviour's love." If the children go through that with the motions they will remember it as long as they live. I am thinking of one spiritual in particular, "Lord, I want to be a Christian, I want to be a Christian, deep down in my heart." The children can learn that, it has a melody that will catch their attention. Then the songs of the Gospel that we have in church; the "old time" songs if you want to call them that: you would be surprised how early the children will learn them and although they won't know about Emmanuel, they will recognize "the fountain," and they will remember that "sinners plunged beneath that flood lose all their guilty stains." I used to hear my mother sing "Come to the Saviour, make no delay, here in our midst He is standing today, tenderly saying, Come," and I have been blessed for years by that memory.

We are considering how the little child can get the general idea of the Gospel as we present the things of the Lord Jesus Christ. Let us keep in mind the Bible teaches: "When you are sitting down, when you are standing up, when you are lying down, when you are rising up, when you go in, when you go out, one thing you do, talk about these things." You can arrange your mottoes on the wall, songs that you sing and books that you read, that they will all speak about the unseen world.

The first impression a little child gets about God is that He is another Person. What about Heaven? It is another place. The child probably thinks this other person is just out of sight, and Heaven just a little

piece over the way which you can't see just now. When he is older he will have in mind that Heaven is the place where God is, and sooner than we think, he will come to realize that Heaven is the journey's end for fortunate persons.

Children will ask questions when there is talk about God. They will reflect their human orientation. We should not blame them. They were born children into this world and they are living with people in this world. I think of questions that have been asked of me in the course of my life. One time a minister called on the phone to "get help"; a child in his congregation had asked a question he did not know how to answer. The question was "What does God have for breakfast?" I was so glad I could tell him, "I don't know. " That is all you would need to tell that child. If the child then asks: "What do you think?", you can say you don't think He had anything because He doesn't need it. The child may be amazed but you couldn't tell him any more, anyway. Another common question I have been asked many times by people is: "Where did God come from?" That is easy to answer: "He didn't come." "Oh? Why? How is that possible?" "He was always here." The child's eyes will get big and he will think you don't know; and you don't, either. Let him be amazed; it is God. You can't put God down into a child's mind you can't even put God down into a professor's mind. God is God, away up and beyond and over anything we know about; if the child wonders and wonders, good!

When you are talking about Heaven the child will ask, "Where is Heaven?" "Right here. Heaven is all round about you." The Lord Jesus Christ said He was the One who came down from Heaven and even now is in Heaven (John 3:13). If they are old enough to think about that, tell them something like this: "Heaven is where God is." Then you could ask, "What do you think we understand about where God is?" While very young they know that God is everywhere. Then they will know God is here, and Heaven is here. You don't have to go a long way to find God: He is closer than hands or feet, and it is important for the child to realize that no one can hide from God.

Angels are real beings; demons are real beings. You don't have to dwell upon that. Let them get the idea there are evil spirits and recognize that this world is not a nice, sweet place; they might as well realize this is a danger spot we are in and Satan is real. You don't have to haunt the child with it. I hope you will never tell the child anything about Satan without also telling him something about the Lord; because the Lord God is greater than, and Jesus Christ has overcome, Satan. The world has disease and death in it and this life is beset with misery. The child will know that children are crippled, some people are blind, some people have only one leg and some people don't have any legs at all.

The child sees these things and if you show him that so far as this world is concerned, it is not perfect, but the world is not forever, he will in time understand there is a better land far, far away. You can tell him that all the way through God's hand is known and felt. The law of God prevails. God made all men, keeps all men, judges all men and the law of God is for everybody, not just believers. Everybody is going to come before God, not just the believers. "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." Let it be understood that the great White Throne, the place of judgment, is the destiny of every man, but those whose names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life won't have to stand there. The child must be told the facts of life and death. We are foolish if we try to avoid these.

Sin is real and all the world is guilty before God but there is the wonderful truth that Jesus Christ came into the world to seek and to save the lost and while we were yet sinners, Christ died for the ungodly. When they get older, repentance will be the first step so far as their personal participation is concerned and repentance will lead to confession and they will come to the place where they will believe in Christ Jesus that they might be saved. Reconciliation will come when they feel alienated from Him, but the little child does not feel alienated. There is no need to talk reconciliation to a child because as long as the child is at the mother's knee and as long as the little boy and girl have father and mother and a home there is no feeling of estrangement. It is when they get older and have done wrong, then they will need to be told that reconciliation is possible and that it will lead to redemption and they can be saved.

I hope your children get used to that word "saved." It is a Bible word. It is a word that concerns our Saviour, Christ Jesus. We should all remember: in ways that go far beyond anything I can describe, the little child can know Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord. In this whole matter of bringing up a child, we should remember the words of the Lord Jesus Christ: "Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven."