

“Effectively Training Children”
Trinity Baptist Church Discipleship Training
(June, 2013)

Introduction:

The purpose of this study is to consider some of the basic principles for raising children.

I. Foundational Considerations

1. Parenting is a high responsibility – demands great commitment
Parenting involves active leadership in the lives of your children – this is why effective leadership in the home is one of the qualifications for both pastors and deacons
 - a. Pastors:
1 Timothy 3:4-5 NAU - "*He must be one who manages his own household well, keeping his children under control with all dignity* ⁵ (but if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of the church of God?),"
 - b. Deacons:
1 Timothy 3:12 NAU - "good managers of *their* children and their own households."
2. *You* are responsible for *your* children
 - a. While it is a blessing to be in the covenant community of the church the responsibility for your children rests upon you.
 - b. Father's are the head of their home and thus bear a greater responsibility for their children.
3. Parenting is a life-long commitment – but there are different seasons
 - a. The early years are of great importance. These are years of great sacrifice for the parents.
This season is constantly changing. Young children and older children have different needs. You have different expectations for younger and older children but you are always pointing them to Christ; always preparing them to become responsible, and hopefully, Godly adults.
 - b. After the child leaves home the relationship and involvement changes. They are adults making adult decisions. But the parents are still patiently guiding and directing, sometimes giving counsel of correction.
 - c. Parents, especially fathers, should be very much involved in the process of helping their children in choosing their mates.
 - d. After the child marries the parent enters into yet another season. The son is now managing his own home and parents are available for counsel without interference.
The daughter is now under the headship of her husband. Great care must be taken not to infringe upon this relationship.

- d. And then there is the season of grand parenting—a season of reaping the joys of the fruit of their labors, but also a season of continued diligence in helping their parents win their hearts and point them to Christ.
Proverbs 17:6 NAU - "Grandchildren are the crown of old men,
 And the glory of sons is their fathers."

II. Raising children is about guiding the heart

1. Some wrongly see raising children and discipline as a matter of control. If we can control their church, their schooling, their friends, their television, their computer use, etc. they will grow up to be good, faithful, respectful children. While parents provide direction in all of these areas, simply controlling these things does not deal with the ultimate issue of the heart.
 How many fathers complain, "I can't understand why my child has turned out so rebellious. We had him in church every Sunday."
2. Raising children is about guiding, training, shaping and nurturing their hearts. There is a close relationship between the words *discipline* and *disciple*.
 The writer of Proverbs pleads:
Proverbs 23:26 NAU - "Give me your heart, my son, And let your eyes delight in my ways."
 - a. This is the goal of Godly parenting – to gain the hearts of our children and for their hearts to be given to Christ.
 - b. We want our children to give their hearts to both their earthly father and their Heavenly Father.
 - c. This is a far greater work than just controlling their behavior.
3. This is a work of training—of shaping hearts.
Proverbs 22:6 NAS - "Train up a child in the way he should go, Even when he is old he will not depart from it."
 - a. The word for "train" can also be translated "dedicate"
Deuteronomy 20:5 NAS - "The officers also shall speak to the people, saying, 'Who is the man that has built a new house and has not dedicated it? Let him depart and return to his house, lest he die in the battle and another man dedicate it."
1 Kings 8:63 NAS - "And Solomon offered for the sacrifice of peace offerings, which he offered to the LORD, 22,000 oxen and 120,000 sheep. So the king and all the sons of Israel dedicated the house of the LORD."
 - b. Training children demands shaping their heart and thus making it dedicated to the right path—not in the way it *would* go but in the way it *should* go.
Ephesians 6:4 NAU - "Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord." ("bring them up" = nourish)
4. The hearts of our children are corrupted by sin.
 - a. To simply restrain them does not deal with the sin. Discipline must deal with the heart
Proverbs 22:15 NAS - "Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child; The rod of discipline will remove it far from him."

- b. God deals with our heart in conversion. He captures our heart. This is the great distinction between the Law and Gospel. The Law cannot make us Godly because it cannot change our heart. The Gospel alone has the power of God's transforming grace.
- 5. The wise parent recognizes heart issues
 - a. Screaming in anger at a sibling is really no different than striking them
 - b. Words of disrespect to the parent reveal a sinful and rebellious heart
 - c. Fighting off efforts to spank reveal an stubborn and unrepentant heart.

III. Training children begins at birth

Charles Bridges – “The gardener begins to graft in the first rising of sap. If the crooked shoots of self-will and disobedience are not cut off, their rapid growth and rapidly growing strength will greatly increase the future difficulty of bending them. Present neglect occasions after risk and perplexity. We may begin our work too late, but we can scarcely begin it too soon. Never let the watchfulness to check the buddings of evil, and to cherish the first tenderness of right feeling, be relaxed.”

- 1. A well-ordered home should be a priority
 - a. Children thrive in an atmosphere of structure
 - They should immediately be put on a schedule – set times of feeding, sleeping, etc. This structure should continue.
 - Children feel secure when they know what to expect
 - Consistency is at the heart of effective child training
 - b. The good relationship of Mom and Dad is essential
- 2. We must take advantage of the tender hearts of their youth. Our hearts only grow harder when left to our own sinful inclinations. It is hard to shepherd a heart long hardened by sin.
- 3. Children should be given clear expectations of behavior with clear expectations of censure for failing to meet those expectations.
 - a. It is wrong to punish a child when he hasn't been given a clear rule
Colossians 3:21 NAS - "Fathers, do not exasperate your children, that they may not lose heart."
 - b. It is also wrong to allow a child to disregard a rule without consequence. First time obedience is a must; otherwise, children know they can disobey at least once and get away with it.
 - c. God's Law gives us both a clear standard as well as a clear penalty
You must always be honest and fair.
Ephesians 6:4 NAS - " And, fathers, do not provoke your children to anger; but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord."
 - d. Parents should also encourage good behavior in their speech and by example.
1 Thessalonians 2:11 NAU just as you know how we were exhorting and encouraging and imploring each one of you as a father would his own children.
 - e. Teach them what the Bible says good behavior looks like and praise them when they are obedient. We want to teach children that godliness is as much about who we are as it is about who we are not.

4. The matter of corporal punishment
- a. Spanking is sanctioned by God
Proverbs 22:15 NAU - "Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child; The rod of discipline will remove it far from him."
Proverbs 23:13-14 NAU - "Do not hold back discipline from the child, Although you strike him with the rod, he will not die. ¹⁴ You shall strike him with the rod And rescue his soul from Sheol."
Proverbs 29:15 NAU - "The rod and reproof give wisdom, But a child who gets his own way brings shame to his mother."
 - (1) Make sure the offense is clearly known and make them acknowledge the offense. The goal is compliance.
 - (2) It should be done in private – you are not trying to embarrass or shame your child.
 - (3) Spanking should never be in anger. It must never be extreme or abusive. Our children must see our great love for them even during times of discipline. Discipline must be accompanied by words of encouragement and gentleness.
 After the spanking the child should be embraced and reconciled.
 - b. Spanking is not the only form of discipline
 We are dealing with issues of the heart. Sometimes other forms of correction are more effective. The issue is teaching the child of the offense. Perhaps kneeling in the corner or sitting alone for a season.
 - c. Often a verbal reproof is sufficient – provided the parent has the respect of the child and his authority isn't questioned.
 - d. Avoid over use of corporal punishment that can diminish its effectiveness.
 Charles Bridges- "The rod is medicine, not food: the remedy for occasional diseases of the constitution, not the daily regimen for life and nourishment. To convert medicine into daily food gradually destroys its remedial quality."
 - e. We must remember God's tender dealings with us – always out of love and always with a redemptive purpose.
Hebrews 12:5-9 NAS - "and you have forgotten the exhortation which is addressed to you as sons, "My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, Nor faint when you are reprov'd by Him; ⁶ For those whom the Lord loves He disciplines, And He scourges every son whom He receives." ⁷ It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom *his* father does not discipline? ⁸ But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. ⁹ Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them; shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits, and live?"
 - f. Maintain a spirit of joy in the home. There should be a great contrast between the normal ease of the home and the seriousness of discipline.
5. Training children involves seeing the big picture.
- a. It isn't about spanking them and then going about your day. It is about entering into their lives on an intimate level
 - b. Training is as much about encouraging as it is about correcting.

- c. Training includes grieving with your child when he fails and pointing him to the ultimate solution to our own weakness and inability to render perfect obedience.

IV. Parents must give great attention to their own hearts

1. Parents should give themselves sacrificially for their children
 - a. One of the marks of the New Covenant is a change of heart that transforms relationships
Luke 1:17 NAS - "And it is he who will go as a *forerunner* before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers back to the children, and the disobedient to the attitude of the righteous; so as to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."
 - b. Too often parents neglect their children by focusing upon their own needs and desires
 - c. Your children must have YOUR heart before you can gain THEIR heart. They must have your love, attention, commitment, time, affection, concern, involvement, and on and on.
 - d. This may mean giving up your career aspirations, income expectations, and recreational pastimes.
 - It is foolish to boast that you give your child *quality* time even it it lacks in *quantity*. Your children need both quality *and* quantity.
 - If your child does not have your heart he will find some other place to direct his heart—this world is constantly competing for your child’s heart.
2. We must remember that training hearts is a spiritual work
 - a. The works of the flesh includes legal harshness, anger, impatience, and pride.
 - b. The fruit of the Spirit includes love, patience, kindness, and gentleness.
 - c. Training hearts demand much grace and mercy and manifestation of the Holy Spirit’s work in our own hearts.
3. Our goal is to point our children to Christ. Our lives must reflect Him in everything. We must not undervalue the power of our example.
 Charles Bridges: “If the child hears of godliness, and sees but wickedness, this is bringing him bread with one hand, and poison with the other; beckoning him with the hand to heaven, and at the same time taking him by the hand, and leading him in the way to destruction. A child learns more by the eye than by the ear.”
4. All of our training must point to Christ. We must always direct the attention of our children to God’s goodness, to the love of Christ, to His Providential mercies.
5. Richard Phillips writes in his book, *The Masculine Mandate* that we must *Pray, Work, and Play* with our children (Phillips, Richard D., *The Masculine Mandate*, Stanford: Reformation Trust Publishing, 2010 – pages 101-103).
 - a. We must pray with our children.
 Pray for their wicked hearts – that God might replace their heart of stone for a heart of flesh—that their hard hearts might become tender.
 Pray that the Spirit of God might open their hearts to the Gospel.
 And pray *with* them as well as *for* them.

- b. We must work with our children – involved in their lives, their projects, their interests with support and encouragement.
 - c. We must play with our children
Get down on the floor with your little ones - Play with their Legos, run with them, swim with them, play house, pretend cooking, etc.
With your older kids give yourself to entering into their interests. Do things as a family – camping, hiking, bicycling.
6. And the parents must study God's Word with their children being careful to answer all of their questions.