

Discussing How To Restore The Early Church

Returning Intimacy and Power to the Father's Children

*"I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for,
it will be done for you by my Father in heaven.
For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them."*
(Matthew 18:19,20)



SECTION 5 - LESSON 42

THE HOME

The Basic Building Block For Spiritual Growth:

• *Godly Parenting*

1. Children: Success Without Successors is Failure
2. Children: Born With A Sin Nature—Destined For Eternity



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Introduction

In this Lesson and the next two, we want to discuss one of God’s vital goals for marriage: raising godly generations. To do this we need to go back to our father in the faith, Abraham.

Our heavenly Father told us to call these truths we’re sharing “**The Hebraic Restoration.**” Both of these words are significant! First, as we’ve noted in previous Lessons, the Covenant we now embrace in Jesus is *Hebraic*. That covenant relationship was promised to the first *Hebrew*, Abraham (Genesis 12:1-3) with the same parameters that we as followers of Jesus have: to *live by trust* and to *be faithful* in Him.

The Good News was made known to Abraham *two thousand years* before the Incarnation of Jesus (see Galatians 3:8)! The joyous message must have filled the man with hope beyond imagining: ALL NATIONS would be blessed because this one man trusted God and was willing to sacrifice his son at God’s command.

THAT’S the sort of trust that God counts as righteous! And because of that unwavering trust, Abraham is the father

of ALL who put their trust in Jesus (Romans 4:16).

God specifically selected Abraham because “*he [would] direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD*” (Genesis 18:19). The *way of the Lord* connotes a life journey of obedient trust that aligns itself with the commands of God. (We’ll address this topic further in our discussion of *successors*.)

The way in which that trust is lived out is being restored to followers of Jesus today. For too long Christians have ignored the Hebrew Scriptures from which Jesus and the apostles drew their teaching and instruction. Within those pages are the *prophecies* which He fulfilled, and the *teachings of God*, commonly called the Law, which He and His disciples recognized as from the mouth of God.

The Jewish religious system had perverted God’s Word into a system of fences around an obedience-laden relationship with Him. Most had lost sight of His eternal purpose of a *love relationship* in which His Beloved would bring reconciliation with Himself to the nations.

Today, the centuries of influence of Greek philosophy and Roman organization on Christendom have also perverted the way of our Lord into a system of religious practices.

However, you can’t miss the foundation of *God’s heart relationship* with those who call Him LORD! He loved the Israelites so much that He made clear

how they should live in the Land He'd promised their forefathers. *How much more* should we who are indwelled by His Spirit rejoice to follow His commands out of obedient gratefulness!

The **way of life** we're called to choose encompasses a pattern of loving God, and evidencing that love by obedient trust—a design which God intended to be passed along to the next generations:

So choose life in order that you may live, you and your descendants, by loving the LORD your God, by obeying His voice, and by holding fast to Him; for this is your life [the purpose for which you live] and the length of your days, that you may live in the land which the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give them (Deuteronomy 30:19b,20).

There is an eternal, generational purpose for why God is restoring the obedience factor of trust that's been lost to a religious culture smitten with *law-lessness*. Shoving God's commands and instruction under a bushel and calling it "grace" has *absolutely nothing* to do with the way of love-grounded, obedient trust commanded by both Jesus and His apostles.

Tucked within the Bible is the written record of God's divine purposes for His people. Jesus didn't *do away* with the commands God gave Israel. On the contrary, He came to give these words of God *full meaning*.

A seamless continuity flows from the Older Testament to the Newer, an interconnectedness that has been ignored for so long that much of western Christianity has evolved into a powerless social system of feel-good religion. Our Father has been calling us and many others to

restore the obedient trust of Abraham so that followers of Jesus will walk in His commands as their *way of life*.

Whoever is wise, let him understand these things; Whoever is discerning, let him know them. For the ways of the LORD are right, And the righteous will walk in them, but transgressors will stumble in them (Hosea 14:9).

These lessons will flesh out what that *way of life* looks like for you as a parent, a grandparent or as someone who has loving contact with children. Our purpose is that your child will be welcomed at the Judgment Throne.

Because our Lord examines the intent of your heart rather than your actions alone, we'll focus on helping you to guide your child's **heart motivation**. How effectively *you* walk in His truth yourself will determine how deeply you'll impress that truth on your children.

The way of the Lord in their life is what your children need when they leave home. Through YOU our Father wants to reproduce His way in the life of your children.

The character of Christ which our Father wants to produce in your marriage is the same character He wants to be formed in your children. As our Father is changing you in His sanctifying process, your children will be observing those changes. The more of Christ they see in you as a couple and as parents, the more prepared they'll be to follow that pattern when they themselves marry and raise children.

Probably the most important point about your responsibility to our God as

you parent is not *what you do*, but **why you do it**. In this light we need to look at the foundations to a Hebraic marriage. You and your spouse are the best role models for your children to understand what God will require of them as marriage partners and parents.

Our Lord uses marriage to prepare you for specific service as you mature in years. As you ponder these purposes, ask yourself which areas you're effectively modeling for your children, and which need greater focus:

For Men

- To become a sacrificially-loving, wise elder—a man of prayer who depends on God and who represents fatherly concern for God's people. Any lesser goal will impede the process of your sanctification. (See James 3:13.)
- For your character to grow in Christ-likeness so that you will be Jesus-in-the-flesh to all you meet. (See Colossians 4:5,6.)
- For your wife to experience the love of Jesus through you. (See 1 Peter 3:7.)
- To perceive your home life as our Father's means to teach you the humility, love and servanthood you need to lead others. (See 1 Timothy 3:4,5.)

For Women

- To become the wise wife of an elder (see Proverbs 31:10-31)—a woman of prayer who depends on God and who walks peaceably as an *ezer*, the life companion and helper suitable for your particular man. Any goal less than this will impede the process of your sanctification.
- For your character to grow in Christ-likeness so that you will be Jesus-in-the-flesh to all you meet. (See Colossians 4:5,6.)

- To manifest a loving, submissive spirit and grow in Christ-likeness so that you'll be able to teach younger wives how to love their husband and children. (See Titus 2:3,4.)
- To be, as your husband's best-suited helper, our Father's primary human means for him to learn the humility, love and servanthood he needs to lead others. (See Ephesians 5:24.)

As these ways of the Lord are walked out in obedient trust through the Holy Spirit's power at work in each of you, you're also preparing yourselves for that joyous welcome before our heavenly Bride-groom.

Keep that ultimate eternal purpose at the forefront of your heart as you wrestle through the inevitable trials of parenting:

As a family of sojourners on earth, do all you can to ensure you'll be together with Jesus in heaven. Is there any goal more important?

THE HOME

The Basic Building Block For Spiritual Growth: *Godly Parenting*

1. Children: Success Without Successors Is Failure

"For I have chosen [Abraham], in order that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing righteousness and justice; in order that the LORD may bring upon Abraham what He has spoken about him" (Genesis 18:19).

Our spiritual father Abraham's trust in God was credited to him as righteous-

ness. Trust in the shed blood of Jesus to reconcile us with our Father counts for our righteousness today.

Yet Abraham was specifically chosen by God because He could entrust to him a vital responsibility: to *raise successors* in his faith walk (Genesis 18:19, quoted above). God knew that Abraham would role model for and instruct his children and all who dwelled with him in the way of the Lord.

The Psalmist reinforced the understanding of developing successors to trust and serve our Lord:

We will not hide them from their children; we will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the Lord, His power, and the wonders He has done. He decreed statutes for Jacob and established the law in Israel, which He commanded our forefathers to teach their children, so the next generation would know them, even the children yet to be born, and they in turn would tell their children. Then they would put their trust in God and would not forget His deeds but would keep His commands. (Psalm 78:4-7).

At any point in time a particular generation has contact with three or four other generations. Your parents may still be living at the same time your children or even your grandchildren are still alive. The potential for the chain of influence to connect the generations is powerful!

But everyone dies at some point. The opportunity to connect with that individual's place along the chain is gone unless they've passed along a legacy that can be shared even after their passing.

As our society has moved away from the farming culture in which the generations often had close contact, *succession*, or who will "fill the boots" of the

departed ones, has been forgotten. Except for those in some family-owned businesses, few of us think about succession and what we'll pass along to the generations to follow us.

Yet God wants His people to be diligent about the *spiritual inheritance* we leave to succeeding generations. He desires that each generation "*bring up [their children] in the training and instruction of the Lord.*"

The young evangelist Timothy was blessed to have been trained by two preceding generations to love and serve our Lord. His learning process started early, so that God's Word would be the foundation upon which all other instruction would be built:

[F]rom childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which can give you the wisdom that leads to deliverance through trusting in Jesus the Messiah (2 Timothy 3:15,CJB).

Regrettably, the high divorce rate in Christendom today has severed much of the intergenerational contact through which wisdom and life experience could have been shared. As families disintegrate, the opportunity to role model succession of a vibrant covenant relationship with our Lord is dismantled as well.

Succession was a vital feature in Hebraic society. The oldest son received a double portion of the family inheritance (Deuteronomy 21:17), not to spend on himself, but to maintain the family property and carry on the family estate. As the oldest, he represented the authority of his father in the family.

Succession is a matter of spiritual import for each family and each faith community to consider seriously today.

Scripture points straight ahead to each generation's responsibility to prepare the next to fulfill God's purposes. Therein lies protection from the alternative—following the impulses of the inherent sin nature.

The path of life leads upward for the wise, That he may keep away from Sheol below (Proverbs 15:24).

Think about these questions in regard to preparing your own children as servants in the Kingdom: "Who will *succeed* the current leaders in our extended spiritual family? How well are these potential successors being *trained to lead*?"

Moses understood well the importance of succession. For many years he trained Joshua to succeed him. The succession was complete when Moses passed on the mantle of leadership and authority to the younger man in front of the whole nation:

Then Moses summoned Joshua and said to him in the presence of all Israel, 'Be strong and courageous, for you must go with this people into the land that the Lord swore to their forefathers to give them, and you must divide it among them as their inheritance (Deuteronomy 31:7).

Yet it wasn't long after the people entered the Promised Land that their failure to follow through with generational responsibilities became painfully clear: "After that whole generation had been gathered to their fathers, **another generation grew up, who knew neither the LORD nor what he had done for Israel**" (Judges 2:10).

Even men who have walked faithfully before God in holy boldness themselves may fail to properly train their

children to walk in that holiness. Samuel was confronted by the elders of Israel because they did not want his corrupt sons to succeed him:

They said to him, 'You are old, and your sons do not walk in your ways; now appoint a king to lead us, such as all the other nations have'" (1 Samuel 8:4,5).

The consequences of his failure to train up successors was profound. Because the people had no confidence in the prophet's sons to lead them in God's ways, they opened a door for a plethora of monarchs to come—most of whom would turn away from the God of Israel.

Unlike a tangible inheritance that is passed along regardless of the heir's qualifications, succession in the faith demands the development of **judgment**, **maturity**, and **wisdom**. Succession in a family or faith community emphasizes understanding the **way of the Lord** and putting it into practice if spiritual leaders in succeeding generations are to be skillfully prepared.

Those who succeed the previous leaders must bear *at least* the same concern for the welfare of the family or faith community as those who are passing on the "mantle." If not, the family or the faith community will suffer for that neglect.

Leaders need to make sure that those who look to them to serve have suitably prepared successors after their leadership stint is complete. This personal example may bring clarity:

As the time drew near for Mike to return to the U.S. from his first of three shipboard deployments to Vietnam, the enlisted men in his detachment came to him with a serious concern. Mike's soon-to-arrive replacement,

Gerry, had a reputation as a man who would claw his way to the top no matter what. The men feared that Gerry would care more about his own advancement than for their welfare. Mike knew that what they were saying was true.

Gerry met the ship in Hong Kong. On their last night in port, Mike took him to a viewing deck on top of a hotel that overlooked the harbor. Grabbing Gerry by his shirt collar, he hung him out over the edge.

As the startled man gaped at the street some thirteen stories below, Mike rebuked him. "My men are afraid that you're going to push to advance your career even if it costs them their lives. I want your promise right now that you'll care for them as I have. If you don't promise, I'll drop you." Realizing that his own shallow, self-serving motives had been exposed, Gerry gave Mike his word.

Months later the entire detachment returned to the States. The enlisted men couldn't rave enough about what a fine officer Gerry had been. Gerry came to Mike to thank him for the tough love he'd shown him. That rebuke had altered his entire outlook and persuaded him that an officer should put his men first. (But he never did ask Mike if he really would have dropped him!)

Now scrutinize your own role as a father who has been entrusted to walk in the authority God has given you as your home's servant-leader. How are you fulfilling your responsibilities to foster and nurture godly character in the generation that will succeed you?

The overall purpose of biblical authority in your home is to equip your children to be your successors in the faith and to follow the way of the Lord. You can help them prepare for this

through including, excluding, commending and correcting that which aligns with the Bible-based lifestyle that you model.

The first Hebrew, Abraham, trusted in the God Who made him the father of all who put their trust in Jesus (Romans 4:16). This man and his trust-filled heart of obedience stirred God to enter with him into an eternal Covenant through which the whole world would be blessed.

Our Father chose Abraham to be our spiritual predecessor because he was a man who would train up his children to be holy and just. (See Genesis 18:19.) Abraham and his wife Sarah trusted God to fulfill both His promise and His purpose for their marriage.

*Has not the LORD made [a married couple] one? In flesh and spirit they are His. And why one? **Because he was seeking godly offspring. So guard yourself in your spirit, and do not break faith with the wife of your youth** (Malachi 2:15).*

The call to produce successors who will keep the **way of the Lord** is repeated often in the Bible. You get a sense by that expression that He wants parents to instill in their children a heart determination to live a life that both pleases Him *and* blesses others.

Earnest cooperation is needed by *both* parents in order for this goal to find fruition in their children. But most parents can't do this alone! That's why our Lord has planted His children among **extended spiritual family** within His Body: to come alongside with very real support to help parents raise and prepare a godly generation to love and serve Him.

Following is a lengthy passage which Moses proclaimed to the children of the Israelites just before they entered the Land God had promised their forefathers. It has significant insights for parents today. Two key factors in particular stand out: the **intergenerational** context of responsibility, and the **due diligence** needed to impress God's commands on the succeeding generations.

*These are the commands, decrees and laws the LORD your God directed me to **teach you to observe** in the land that you are crossing the Jordan to possess, so that **you and your son and your grandson** might **fear the LORD** your God, to **keep all His statutes** and His commandments, which I command you, all the days of your life, and that your **days may be prolonged** (Deuteronomy 6:1,2).*

Our Lord intended that His called-out ones purpose themselves to be set apart from other peoples by their **fear of Him** as their only God. Just *knowing about* God's commands wasn't enough. When they carefully **walked in all His ways**, they'd receive His blessing.

Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts.

- **Impress them on your children.**
 - **Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.**
 - **Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads.**
 - **Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.**
- (Deuteronomy 6:5-9).

That which differentiates *legalism*—slavish obedience to God's laws to earn approval—from *obedient trust* in Him is the LOVE element. If all that your children and grandchildren learn about God is a list of do's and don'ts from you, then you're passing along a burden of slavery.

God's commands are GOOD because they emanate from a loving God! He is first of all *worthy* to be praised and honored and worshiped from our HEARTS. Anything less is human effort to bring about human goals.

But followers of Jesus are people of the Spirit. And because Jesus first loved us, our relationship toward Him must also be a love motivation which is empowered by His Spirit.

With love as your jumping off platform, then the ways in which our Lord's commands are followed will be a natural point of discussion with your successors. Talking about Him as the Lover of your soul will flow readily from sunup to sunset, whether at home or along the way. That which you *live* as well as speak will be impressed on the hearts of these younger ones as a signet upon malleable clay.

From Mike especially for men:

I hope you paid particular attention to the scriptural emphasis for "**you and your son and your grandson**" to fear our LORD and walk in His ways all the days of your life.

Grandfathers, both biological and spiritual, have been given a multi-generational responsibility to develop adult men and responsible fathers out of young, foolish boys. We shared in an earlier lesson that a male is changed by **role modeling** and **confrontation**, but not at all by **education**. By accessing both fathers and sons through these biblical means, *zakens* (wise, older men) can

make a huge difference in guiding their life decisions.

While at the retreat center we'd encourage men to bring their sons along on men's retreats. These boys gleaned a lot of wisdom from hearing about the trials and challenges the older men had encountered in life.

It was also a great opportunity for fine-tuning deference in the boys. In fact, afterwards many of them asked if they could spend more time with the men when they were back home. Being farmed out for youth activities in their congregations had lost its appeal for these young guys!

Over the years I've become a spiritual father to many young men, and a spiritual grandfather to even younger men and boys. It's a privilege to watch them grow in their pursuit of Kingdom living!

“Children's children are a crown to the aged, and parents are the pride of their children” (Proverbs 17:6).

The crown of any generation is the *grandchildren* they produce. Did you get that? The true reflection of any generation's influence is their grandchildren. This is why grandparents need to be involved the spiritual and moral development of their families in order to offer their grandchildren the advantage of their wisdom.

That which *you* have taught and continue to teach your own children will become the foundational principles of what they pour into *their* children. As a grandparent, knowing that generations to come can be impacted by the path *you choose* should prod you to make whatever adjustments are necessary for you to closely follow the ***way of the Lord***.

As you're being sanctified on your

pilgrimage to salvation, you can share the lessons the Spirit teaches you with your biological as well as spiritual “sons” and “grandsons”, as Moses put it. Your willingness to share openly and vulnerably may help them avoid the pits into which you once stumbled.

If you're a grandfather or father, the core of everything you'll do as you train your successors should follow Abraham's pattern:

He taught them the way of the Lord.

Make the phrase *the way of the Lord* your guide as you help your next generations be welcomed at the Judgment Throne.

From Sue especially for women:

While older men exercised authority as elders within their faith communities, older women played an important role among the people as well.

The biblical pattern of a righteous woman of virtue was found in Proverbs 31:10-31. This passage was recited every Sabbath in the homes of both Jews and Jewish followers of Jesus to affirm a wife as a vital part of a man's reason for existence.

Just as every devout man aspired to the wisdom of an elder or sage, so every righteous woman looked to the Proverbs 31 matron as her role model of an older, virtuous woman. That this passage refers to a senior lady is indicated by verse 23: ***“Her husband is respected at the city gate, where he takes his seat among the elders of the land.”***

Since the man referred to is an elder among the people, his wife is most likely an older woman who has earned the respect of her community: ***“She speaks with wisdom, and faithful instruction is on her tongue”*** (Proverbs 31:26).

To expect a young woman with toddlers to fulfill the many responsibilities that were designed for a mature woman of means would be cruel and unrealistic. However, as a goal in her spiritual development, the passage was encouragement for her future purpose and meaning.

The widows and older women of each faith community whose husbands served as elders were the likeliest candidates to come alongside younger mothers to guide and encourage them. However, other older women who had turned away from sin and responded to the Spirit's call on their lives had wonderful purpose as well.

How strengthening were Paul's instructions to the evangelist Titus to bring dignity to older women to walk uprightly and teach their successors to follow Jesus:

*Teach the **older women** to be **reverent** in the way they live, not to be **slanderers** or **addicted to much wine**, but to **teach what is good**. Then they can **train** the younger women to **love their husbands and children**, to be **self-controlled and pure**, to be **busy at home**, to be **kind**, and to be **subject to their husbands** so that no one will malign the word of God (Titus 2:3-5).*

Please take special note of the word "train" in the above passage. This word translates a Greek term which means to "voluntarily place limitations on their own freedom." What a valuable insight for each of us who is married or who has a relationship with younger women!

The powerful influence our Lord has given us as wives depends on our willingness to show our love for Him by walking in self-control. Limiting our own freedom out of obedient trust in our

Lord and the goodness of His ways releases His power to us to serve and to bring Him glory.

I hope you can see the connection here with godly submission. We're not prisoners to someone else's will, but willing "*daughters of Sarah*" because of our trust in the One Who has called us to submit!

Each one of us is given the same 24 hour day and the same opportunity to choose how to use that time according to our life responsibilities. Even more importantly, the *attitude of heart* with which we use our hours is key!

How needful it was in biblical times (and even more essential today!) for gals to have access to older, spiritually mature women who were willing to speak lovingly and forthrightly about righteous and obedient lives so that the name of our Lord not be brought down.

How you live out the many passages that specifically address godliness in women requires the development of personal *halakhahs*. The older women in a faith community can help the younger ones explore and apply Ephesians chapter 5, 1 Peter chapter 3, Proverbs chapter 31 and all the other passages that specifically deal with women. And then, of course, there are all the other passages directed at followers of Jesus in general!

With all of this kind of scriptural guidance shared in relational love, each woman can incorporate the specific areas of *application* that God is prompting in her spirit.

If you're an older woman, are you willing to be accessible to younger wives and mothers who are floundering on the shoals of selfish worldly values and standards? *Proximity* is key. If you are spending all your free time with your peers, are you removing yourself from availability

for God's greater purpose for your life?

Consider how Peter's mother-in-law set an example for her daughter by eagerly waiting on the Messiah Who had just healed her! Think of the spiritual conversations the two women probably shared while Peter was on his preparation journeys with Jesus, and how equipped that younger woman was to later accompany her husband on his missions for the sake of the Gospel (see 1 Corinthians 9:5)!

Don't underestimate the powerful influence of an older saint to lovingly role model and instruct in righteousness a willing younger woman who yearns to follow Jesus in Spirit and in truth.

Describe what you consider both the good and bad character qualities and attitudes you picked up from your parents.

What do you think about the principle of succession? How much have you considered succession as you've raised your own children? What key character qualities do you want them to receive from you?

If you're a grandparent, your responsibility (cf., Deuteronomy 6:2; Titus 2:3-5) to spiritually instruct succeeding generations is mentioned repeatedly in Scripture. What are you doing to spiritually impact your grand-

children? Do you have access to young people who could be "spiritual" children and grandchildren for you?

If you're a woman, how does the definition of "training" younger woman (or being trained) to "voluntarily place limitations on your own freedom" strike you?

THE HOME

The Basic Building Block For Spiritual Growth: *Godly Parenting*

2. Children: Born With A Sin Nature—Destined For Eternity

"He has given human beings an awareness of eternity" (Ecclesiastes 3:11).

"The LORD saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time" (Genesis 6:5).

If you want to be the kind of parents our Lord calls for, you need to maintain an *eternal perspective* of the children He gives you. At conception something far greater occurs than just a sperm uniting with an egg. A pilgrimage to eternity is set in motion.

That developing embryo who is your child receives:



1. A **spirit** from God that will ultimately spend eternity either with Him in heaven or apart from Him in hell.
2. A **soul** from you (his parents) that encompasses his mind, will and emotions as well as his sin nature.
3. A **body** with the genetic traits of you, his parents.

This is how our Lord sees every child who is conceived, and this is how parents need to understand conception. Think of the awesome event taking place in a woman's womb. As David, a man with a firm grip on God's heart, could extol, *"I will give thanks to Thee, for I am **fearfully and wonderfully made; Wonderful are Thy works, And my soul knows it very well**"* (Psalms 139:14,NAS).

Your responsibility to your child begins as he or she is being knit together, long before birth! When that child is born, will you as parents be ready to guide him on the pathway to heaven?

It is critical that you keep this in mind: **Every child is born with a *sin nature*, an active force that will stir him to live contrary to the way of the Lord.**

Beginning with conception a parent is imparted responsibility that will impact the eternal destiny of that developing embryo. For that child to be wel-

comed into heaven, he'll need to be trained to resist his sin nature and to heed the Spirit's call to seek Jesus.

Our Father knows even before your baby is conceived whether he or she will respond to His grace in Jesus. But your pregnancy gives you an opportunity to prepare *yourselves* to parent a child who will be ultimately be welcomed at the Judgment Throne.

The Psalmists understood the importance of parental influence on their children from their earliest days of life. Seriously consider their realization of God's faithfulness to seek out a responsive heart:

*Yet You brought me out of the womb; **You made me trust in You** even at my mother's breast; **From birth I was cast upon You; from my mother's womb You have been my God... From birth I have relied on You; You brought me forth from my mother's womb. I will ever praise You** (Psalms 22:9,10; 71:6).*

From birth you can nurture your child with an understanding of God as he or she sees the reality of our Lord's place in your daily life. Keep in mind, because of your eternal spirit within you our God has placed an awareness of eternity in the heart of each and every person (see Ecclesiastes 3:11).

That initial spiritual awareness doesn't come later in life; you're born with it! That's why parents need to be prepared to nurture their child's spirit right from birth.

Perhaps this innate "God-perception" is why so many little children have a readiness to pray and to learn songs that praise God. A person's *spirit* is able to grasp eternal things far earlier in life than his *mind* can.

Yet this eternal awareness is only the first step of discovering the wondrous love of God and His means of securing reconciliation and fellowship with us in Jesus. THAT part of the awareness framework is your responsibility as a parent.

In order for your children to recognize their need for new life in our Lord Jesus, you need to **confront the sin nature** in their soul. It's not enough to just make your children aware of their sinful propensity. You also need to help them "fill in the ruts" of their sinful inclination with that which is righteous.

To keep them from becoming self-righteous or proud of their own obedience, it's even more important that you **guide their motivation**. When your children seek with pure hearts to please our Lord as they please you, they'll be able to grasp the *why* of their relationship with Him rather than focus on the *what* of good behavior.

All throughout life your children will face a battle of who will rule them: the Holy Spirit through their spirit, or their sin nature through their soul.

The battle of Who or what will rule your children's lives will go on until the day they die (see Galatians 5:17). There is no "Christian Nirvana" here on earth in which you can rise above the struggle against sin and never confront temptation again. Your love for Jesus and the joy set before you, however, can make resisting or fleeing sin far easier!

As a parent you have the privilege to role model and instill a Spirit-controlled life of loving, obedient trust in your children. You can delight with them in your victories and in theirs, and model for them the importance of repentance when you give way to sin whether

through behavior or attitude. Humility is a lesson that always needs to be exercised!

We'll discuss **guiding your child's ambition** in a later lesson, but keep this truth in mind because of its importance for your children as they mature:

Part of your worship of God is found in the joy He gives you in your occupation and vocation. Remember, God gave Adam work to do before the fall to endue him with purpose and meaning. The sanctity of work that is done with gratefulness of heart is summed up by this: the Hebrew word for both work and worship is the same: avodah.

Christendom in the United States has been heavily influenced by Hellenist philosophy which considers self-focus and self-achievement to be mankind's highest goal. Even within the Christian community there is little appreciation for the opportunity to work and to cooperate as part of God's provision for themselves and their families.

The Bible, however, represents the *God-centered view* of man's highest goal, which is captured in Deuteronomy 6:5 and repeated by our Lord Jesus: "**Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength**" (Mark 12:30).

Diligence to follow through with the work that's assigned is a very necessary character trait for parents to inculcate in their children. However, that can only be caught by boys and girls whose parents value the ability to work themselves.

Because there is no dichotomy between matters of the spirit and the

physical realm, Paul repeats the *essence* of the greatest commandment so that our purpose and meaning in life will serve God's will and purpose:

Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving (Colossians 3:23,24).

Self-gratification has been one of the bitter fruits of counterfeit *man-centered* *gospels* that focus on trying to find heaven's pleasures here on earth. Many who call themselves "Christian" have lost the joy of God's purpose and meaning for their lives. Many labor at jobs only for material gain; they fail to discern God's deeper purpose for giving them that particular job—to serve our Lord and His objectives.

Shopping malls are full of people purchasing aimlessly—believing the lie that acquisitions will bring them joy. No wonder an incessant "gimme" mentality gnaws at the hearts of this generation of children!

It takes concerted prayer and effort, parents, to counter the pervasive sin nature-run-amok that personifies this culture. Make it your aim, for the sake of your children, to agree with Paul's exhortation for motivation as well as action:

And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him (Colossians 3:17).

To conceive a child is an awe-inspiring responsibility that has eternal consequences. Perhaps you're not aware that

fewer than 23% of children from Christian homes follow their parents in the faith. In effect 77% of these parents are committing *spiritual abortion*.

One reason for this tragic situation is that negligent parents are like the *unproductive soil* of which Jesus speaks in His parable. Their values are like those of the world. Their children are embracing exactly what they see their parents esteeming:

The seed that fell among thorns stands for those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by life's worries, riches and pleasures, and they do not mature (Luke 8:14).

The "*seed of God's truth*" doesn't stand a chance among the distractions of the world that sap their focus and potential for His purposes. No spiritual fruit is born, and any interest in following Jesus is choked off.

A special warning comes to mothers who work outside their home. Their role modeling a way of life that points their children to the values of this world as their priority. Those with the world's priorities become enemies of God (see James 4:4). Isn't that *spiritual irresponsibility*?

Your young children are open-hearted and trusting to see the face of Jesus in you, their parents. But if that image is clouded by worldly ways and priorities, their view of Jesus will be tainted. Jesus severely warns against violating a child's perspective of Him through word or deed:

Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it is better for him that a heavy millstone be hung around his neck, and that he be drowned

*in the depth of the sea. **Woe to the world because of its stumbling blocks! For it is inevitable that stumbling blocks come; but woe to that man through whom the stumbling block comes!*** (Matthew 18:6,7,NAS).

You may be among those who concern themselves with religious issues *outside* their home but neglect their God-given responsibilities to their own children. For example, far too many parents are so involved with abortion protests or volunteer meetings that they have little time or energy for meaningful interaction with their kids.

These people need to take the log out of their own eyes (Matthew 7:5) for the sake of the spiritual and emotional needs of the next generation.

Have no doubt about what happens to your child if you let him go his own way uncorrected and undirected: *“Even from birth the **wicked go astray; from the womb they are wayward and speak lies**”* (Psalms 58:3). The sin nature will inevitably overcome a child’s awareness of God if you allow that to happen.

Within this Atomistic culture even much of Christianity has bought into the Secular Humanist lie of the basic goodness of mankind. But according to God’s Word, every human being has been saddled with an inherited sin nature. Which path do *you* believe?

Parents, your children are *not* inherently “good”, nor will they seek out God on their own if He’s of no real importance to *you* on a day to day loving-dependence basis. At your child’s birth you’re given the privilege and the responsibility to guide your child down one of two eternal destinations.

As a result of humanism’s influence, correction and discipline of children are considered harmful to a child’s self esteem and are to be avoided if possible. Fearful of repercussions from neighbors, school authorities or social services, many parents are failing in their responsibilities to **correct** wrong behaviors and attitudes, and to **exclude** sinful influences and companions. As we mentioned in a previous lesson: A person who excuses wrong in others is hiding sin in their own life.

Yet, when parents give in to the rebellion of their *own* sin nature, their children will see through the hypocrisy of being told to walk uprightly when the parents don’t.

Children may be pressured to conform to right behavior while under their parents’ authority, but they won’t incorporate the humble ownership of their sin’s guilt and repent in their heart for wrongdoing. Rather, as soon as they’re away from parental supervision, they’ll tap into their old sin nature and cast “right behavior” aside.

Godly parenting uses whatever correction is necessary to assist a child to resist his sin nature and develop Christ-like character.

Learning to resist the lure of our old sin nature is a lifelong endeavor. While followers of Jesus are no longer enslaved to sin, our Adversary is always waiting to fan its ashes into life if we persist in sinful pursuit. Remember God’s warning to Cain: *“If you **do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must master it**”* (Genesis 4:7).

Correcting your child is God’s way for you to help him resist temptation the next time. Through parental correction

you help your child gain wisdom to put into practice God's ways. He also learns to deny gratifying his sin nature in the future because the consequences of sin are inevitable and unpleasant.

With this understanding you can better grasp the intent behind the proverbs that view the *eternal consequences* of shirking parental responsibility:

- “*Discipline your son, for in that there is hope; do not be a **willing party to his death***” (Proverbs 19:18);
- “*Folly is **bound up in the heart** of a child, but the rod of discipline will drive it far from him*” (Proverbs 22:15);
- “*He who spares the rod **hates his son**, but he who loves him is careful to discipline him*” (Proverbs 13:24).

If you have an aversion to these commands, then the **exclusion** and **correcting** portions of your authority are being avoided. If this is your mindset, then you're becoming a *willing party to your children's death*. Your irresponsibility makes you a **spiritual murderer**. That's how intense your responsibility for your children is to God for the eternal destiny of your child insofar as it depends on you.

You may be asking yourself, “Do they believe in spanking? How did they correct their own son?” The issue is *not* to establish a general technique that's suitable for all of your children. Correcting doesn't have a “one size fits all” solution.

God wants you to truly know each of your children well in his or her uniqueness and individuality. We'll explore the importance of this discernment when we discuss guiding your children's ambition.

The type of godly correction you use according to what each child needs will

help them avoid the attitude or action that displeases our Lord. Some children just need a “look” from a parent to regret their wrongdoing. The hurt in their heart may be enough to help them resist temptation the next time. Others may need a spanking to help them remember to resist the temptation, particularly if it's prompted by rebellion.

Keep in mind that you need to discern between childish ignorance and defiant resistance. Your child's *motivation* determines whether your correction concerns foolish immaturity or an intentional affront to your authority as a parent.

Whatever means of correction you use, you are obligated to God and to your children that your discipline was the biblically best way to help them resist their sin nature the next time.

Always remember the way of the Lord:

The foundations to the godly way of life in which your children succeed you must be role modeled for them by you as their parent. The guiding principles that you need to impress on your children are as follows.

1. Each of your children is a treasure, greatly beloved by our Lord to fulfill His purposes and to enjoy fellowship with Him through His Spirit. Show them by example, both individually and as a family, that this relationship needs to be nurtured through prayer and obedient trust so that their spirit will grow sensitive to His prompting.
2. Each child should be *quick to repent* when the Holy Spirit convicts them. Out of love for one another, they should feel the hurt that their sin or

wrongful attitude or action toward others has caused. When they confess their sin, there should be **hope** in the offended person that the perpetrator's heart is truly repentant and that they have a deep desire to change.

3. Your children need to embrace the "altar experiences" that comprise the sanctification process of our Lord in their lives. Their altar experiences should result in greater joy and gratefulness to our Lord that He cares enough to purify and cleanse them. In its fullest sense, their pilgrimage of sanctification is:

- **A lifelong process during which their character and motivation are changed.**
- **Their many life "altar experiences" are the means by which they can offer their old sin nature to Jesus, the Heart Circumciser.**
- **With each death to aspects of their old sin nature, they will experience increased conformity to the character of Jesus.**

Help your children to begin early to spiritually safeguard their journey with Jesus so that they'll endure to the end:

- Prepare them to cooperate with the Holy Spirit in that which He desires to circumcise in them. Impress upon them the wonderful process of being set apart to be made holy in Christ's likeness.
- Engrain in them a diligence to put His Word into practice. In this way they can discern error and avoid deception as they learn to walk in holiness.

4. Show them by example that their **pilgrimage to salvation** is a cooperative endeavor (Philippians 2:12,13) involving mutual loadbearing as the spiritual gifting of each works together.

5. Remind them of the key gender responsibilities and differences with which God created males and females. Begin early to prepare them for the possibility of marriage. Train your sons in particular to be responsible, never blaming or giving excuses. Raise your daughters to value a quiet and submissive spirit as they walk in obedient trust.

Remember, as your kids' parents, both commending and correcting have a place of responsibility in your heart. You need to be equally willing to do whatever the situation requires, making sure that your child always realizes that correction as well as commendation are signs of your love for them.

Set before you the *eternal* goal for your whole family. Just think of what a family focus on encountering Jesus face to face in heaven can do to redirect their hearts away from worldly values and onto that which pleases God!

After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. Therefore encourage each other with these words (1 Thessalonians 4:17,18).

If you engrain an eternal perspective in the hearts of your children, they'll never view death as an *end* of anything. Rather, death is merely shedding this "earthly tent" and joyously putting on the glorious raiment of imperishability in

our Lord's presence. Can anything else come close to this precious privilege?

Your spirit lives on forever. As a parent you have the wonderful opportunity to introduce your child to the Covenant our Father offers so that *together* you can press on in your pilgrimage to salvation. You can live simultaneously as both parent and child, *and* brother and sister in Jesus. Now that's a real family tie!

Your responsibilities are made much easier if you as a parent have an eternal view of your own life. The foundation for raising a godly generation is an *eternal perspective* that isn't trapped by the desires of this world. This is why followers of Jesus are so strongly warned against the *spiritual adultery* of yearning for the world's values and ways:

*You **adulterous** people, don't you know that **friendship with the world is hatred toward God?** Anyone who resolves to be a friend of the world becomes an **enemy of God** (James 4:4).*

***Do not love the world, nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. And the world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God abides forever** (1 John 2:15-17).*

Yes, you were born into this physical world; but be careful you don't give in to your sin nature and be trapped by earthly desires and goals!

This is the arena in which you earnestly need your father Abraham's perspective of earthly life as transitory, and instill that in your children. Like the

patriarch you too are a sojourner heading for an eternal destination. Earth isn't your true home any more than it was his:

***By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed by going out to a place which he was to receive for an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing where he was going. By faith he lived as an alien in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, fellow heirs of the same promise; for he was looking for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God** (Hebrews 11:8-10; see also 2 Corinthians 5:1-4).*

Our God is calling for parents to instill a way of life in our children that is *pleasing to Him*. His Son Jesus is the Head of all the "*called-out ones*" so that their hearts will yearn to follow Him.

His purpose for our lives has nothing to do with religion. Rather, His Spirit is drawing us to a heart's desire for an intense love relationship. So often, religious activities and busyness draw people away from heart devotion to Him and to one another. That's why you may be hearing Him call you outside the religious system even as He had to go "outside the camp":

***So too Jesus suffered death outside the gate, in order to make the people holy through His own blood. Therefore, let us go out to Him who is outside the camp and share His disgrace** (Hebrews 13:12,13,CJB).*

Our Lord Jesus forewarned us to expect persecution if we were to be true to Him. Our children need to understand that followers of Jesus are *not* popular in this world: "*And you will be hated*

by all on account of My name, but it is the one who has endured to the end who will be saved" (Matthew 10:22; see also John 16:2).

Seeking popularity and **yielding to peer pressure** can't be part of your children's heart's motivation if they're going to follow Jesus. When they're anxiously concerned about what others think, they lose sight of God's appraisal.

Focusing on horizontal opinion rather than Vertical destiny will only hinder their faith journey: "**Fear of man will prove to be a snare, but whoever trusts in the LORD is kept safe**" (Proverbs 29:25).

If you gave in to fear or pressure because of what your peers thought when you were young, you'll need loving courage to help your children live courageously and obediently for Jesus. If you've been immersed in a Nicolaitan system for a long time, it will be all the harder for you to help your children stand alone in their stance for Jesus no matter what the cost.

Why is this so? Numerous studies have shown that many clergy are fearful of anything that disrupts the tranquility of their mini religious empires. Anyone or anything that is perceived to threaten the status quo is removed. So much of the Nicolaitan sermonizing and activity environment they create is intended to be pleasurable and self-satisfying for the participants. The leadership want people to come back!

Tragically, so many people who occupy Sunday-morning pews are being brain-washed into doing whatever is necessary to be accepted by others. Anyone who stands up for Jesus to confront unrighteousness is made to feel like a fanatic. The subtle (or not so subtle) message to those devoted to His love and holiness is to go elsewhere.

So if you've recently left the Nicolaitan system, you'll probably need the Spirit's help to be courageous yourself. Jesus warns us about the type of holy boldness it will take:

Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I came to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother [and to set anyone who would follow Me against those hindering him]... Anyone who loves his father or mother more than Me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves his son or daughter [or his friends or his religious colleagues] more than Me is not worthy of me (Matthew 10:34-37).

Be sure that you yourself are a role model of one who is faithful to follow Jesus before you try to help your children resist peer pressure for His Name's sake!

If you're a parent, how has the reality of your child's receiving a spirit, soul and body at conception helped your understanding of parenting?

Describe the parental focus of your own upbringing. What did your parents emphasize as you were growing up?

As a youth, how did you respond to peer pressure? How important to you was being popular? Do you desire or seek recognition and/or popularity now? How are you helping your children avoid these traps?

Comment on the intensity of your own focus on eternity. Is it strong? Are there things on earth that block it? Ask your spouse and children for feedback.

What responsibilities or activities outside your home interfere with you fulfilling your relational and spiritual responsibilities to your family? Work (travel, overtime)? Religious commitments? Hobbies? Sports?
