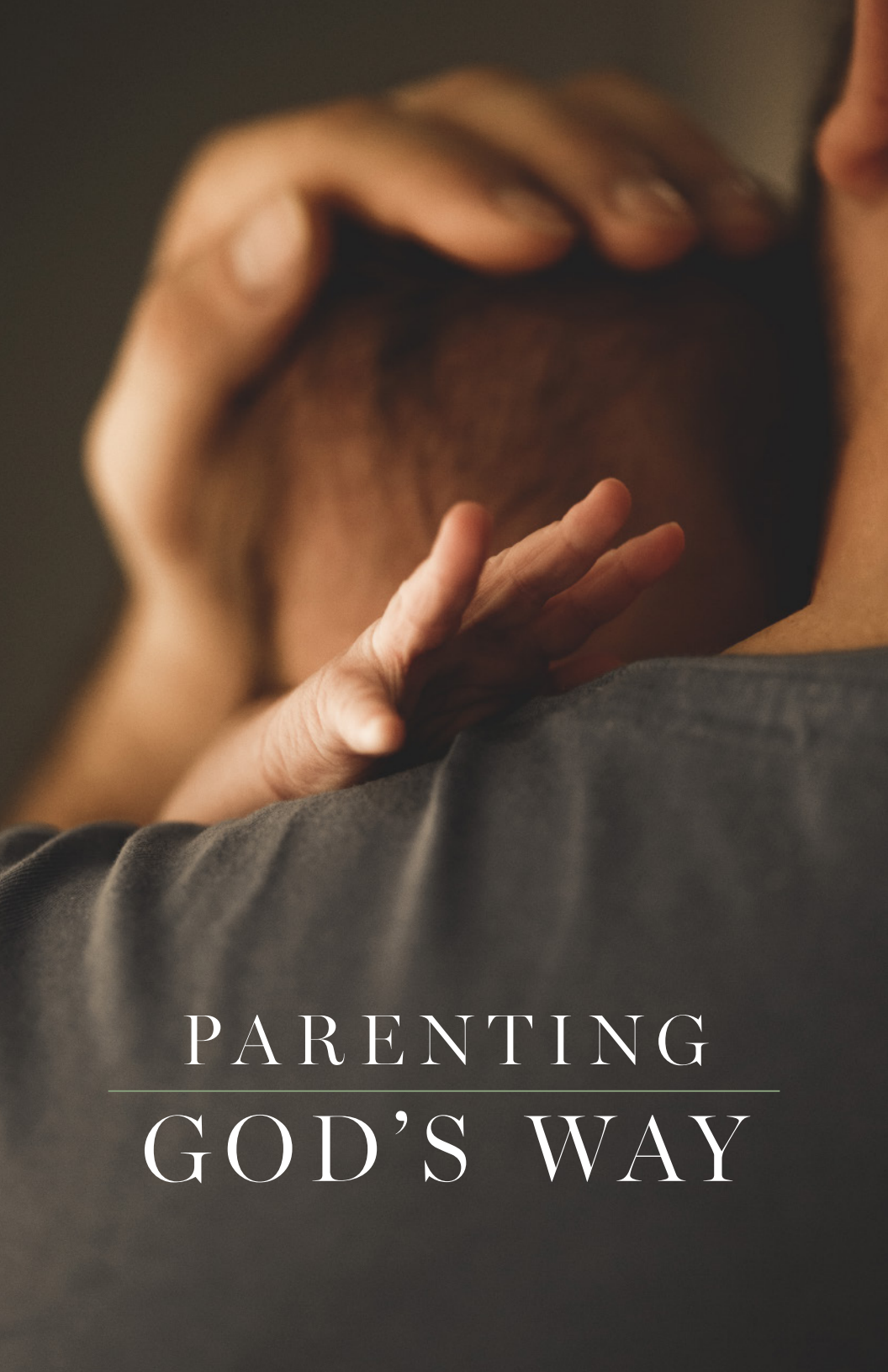




PARENTING

GOD'S WAY

Parenting God's Way



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Practical Tips for Successful Biblical Parenting

Parenting can be one of the most wonderful experiences—but it can also be frustrating. How can we increase the wonderful—and lower the frustration?

From planning and preparing for a baby's arrival to first holding that precious new life in your arms—it is hard to put into words the feelings we have when starting a family!

Then begins the process of taking a little one who is dependent on you for every need and helping him or her develop into an independent, well-mannered and productive member of society.

It is a daunting task, and there are bound to be bumps along that path!

No matter where you are in your parenting “career”—from brand-new, first-time parent to experienced grandparent—virtually everyone feels at a loss from time to time while raising children. This booklet was written to encourage and guide parents at every stage by sharing timeless biblical parenting principles that can bring clarity and balance to the sacred responsibility of raising children.

The world is changing rapidly, but the basic needs of children, from infancy to young adulthood, remain the same. Meeting their physical, mental, social, emotional and spiritual needs are all as important today as ever.

The psalmist likened children to arrows in the quiver of an archer, stating, “Happy is the man who has his quiver full of them” (Psalm 127:5). We invite you to explore the principles, examples and lessons in this booklet so your parenting experience can be more joyful and less frustrating.



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Chapter One

Building Strong Families

What can we do to protect our families from the tide of pressures trying to crush the traditional family? How can we build strong family units?



In 1979 the Pittsburgh Pirates professional baseball team surprised many by winning the World Series. It was a close-knit team, and to reflect this, they adopted the popular Sister Sledge song “We Are Family” to describe their strength and unity. The phrase *The Family* was stenciled on the dugout roof and on signs, bumper stickers and T-shirts everywhere. Family became the team identity.

Similarly, the traditional family can also be described as a team—hopefully a unified, supportive team. However, we all know that some teams are not very good when it comes to working together during difficult times, and it is not unheard of for players to blame each other for ongoing problems.

Sadly, the same can often be said of individual families. What must we do to strengthen and sustain our families?

Marriage and family under attack

Dramatic shifts in the culture and in the definitions of marriage and family have impacted many people today. It wasn’t that long ago that marriage was widely appreciated as an institution uniting a man and a woman as a team to share the task of raising children. Bringing children into the world and teaching, protecting and providing for them were seen as the primary tasks of parents.

But dramatic societal shifts have changed the composition of many families. According to a 2025 Barna report, less than half of U.S. adults are married (46 percent), down from two-thirds in 1950. U.S. census data show 8 percent of adults live with a partner outside of marriage, up from reported near zero in 1970 ([Barna.com](https://www.barna.com)).

These trends have been developing over a long period. Back in 2011, *The New York Times* reported that “just a fifth of households

were traditional families—married couples with children—down from about a quarter a decade ago, and from 43 percent in 1950.”

The impact on children has been dramatic. *The New York Times* article continued, “W. Bradford Wilcox, the director of the National Marriage Project at the University of Virginia, argues that the retreat from marriage is bad for society because it means less security for children. ‘It’s troubling because those kids are much more likely to be exposed to instability, complex family relations and poverty,’ he said” (“Married Couples Are No Longer a Majority, Census Finds,” May 26, 2011).

Because of the frequency of divorce and the various “alternative” family structures, the concept of a strong marriage and family may seem unrealistic or unattainable to many today.

The Aug. 12, 2013, issue of *Time* magazine highlighted some of these trends by featuring a striking cover headline: “The Childfree Life: When Having It All Means Not Having Children.” The article highlighted the significant demographic trend of married couples choosing not to have children, and what that trend means for society as a whole.

According to Barna’s *The State of Today’s Family* (2025):

- Of all U.S. households, only 28 percent consist of married adults with children under 18, while 12 percent consist of unmarried adults with children under 18.
- Census data shows 23 percent of parenting households have a mother only; 6 percent have a father only.
- Today 68 percent of Gen Z parents have never been married.

The shift away from nuclear families corresponds directly with attitudes among young adults, less than half of whom today believe it is wrong to have a child outside of marriage.

So, what does it take to build strong, intact families today?

Strong, loving relationships

Loving connections between family members are a critical building block of the family. With healthy, committed relationships, the entire family is protected and strengthened. When challenges arise, as they sometimes will, the strong family will work together to endure or solve the problems.

The foundation for these strong families is love. The Bible describes love as something that is not provoked, thinks no evil,

doesn't envy, rejoices in truth and endures all things (1 Corinthians 13:4-7). A loving family shares dreams, hopes, possessions, memories, smiles, frowns, success and failure. It provides shelter from the storm—a friendly port when the waves of life become too wild. No member of such a family need ever feel alone.

The resilient family

But too many families today seem to reflect what comedian Robert Orben quipped, “Who can ever forget Winston Churchill’s immortal words: ‘We shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills.’ It sounds exactly like our family vacation.”

However, a loving, committed family is resilient, and a resilient family will work together to bounce back from problems that might shatter other families.

Families can be inspired by the apostle Paul’s description

**Just as in any strong family,
we will be identified as being
in God’s family by reflecting
the character of our Father
and His Son, Jesus Christ.**

of the resilience of first-century Christians who faced crisis: “We are hard-pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed” (2 Corinthians 4:8-9). Paul and these faithful Christians relied on God for strength and help to endure trials, and families can as well.

The power of example

A strong bond among family members can increase the influence of a positive example.

Paul praised Timothy’s family members for their positive example: “I call to remembrance the genuine faith that is in you, which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am persuaded is in you also” (2 Timothy 1:5).

The Bible also records other examples of strong bonds that can be developed. Take Ruth and Naomi, for example. Ruth married the son of Naomi, but he later died. She had the opportunity to return to her own people and seek another husband, but instead Ruth chose to remain a part of her husband's heritage by remaining with her mother-in-law, Naomi.



Ruth saw something in Naomi and Naomi's God that provoked her to say, "Entreat me not to leave you, or to turn back from following after you; for wherever you go, I will go; and wherever you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people, and your God, my God. Where you die, I will die, and there will I be buried" (Ruth 1:16-17).

God wants us to develop strong bonds of family loyalty and love. He wants us to share our dreams, hopes, possessions and memories as a family before Him. He wants us to build strong families and worship and honor Him as a family unit.

So, what are some tools for building strong families?

Critical family strengths

Family Connections, a publication of the North Dakota State University Extension Service, points to seven key strengths commonly found in strong families according to research:

1. "Strong and resilient families express commitment to each other by making time with family members a clear priority and working actively to create satisfying family relationships."
2. "Strong and resilient families willingly and consciously spend family time together and enjoy working [and] playing . . . with each other."
3. "Strong and resilient families practice clear and caring communication with each other. Communication is the lifeblood of family relationships. Healthy family communication involves listening to each other, trying to understand, being respectful of feelings and making a clear effort to explore concerns."
4. "Strong and resilient families cultivate love and mutual respect by sharing compliments, giving expressions of appreciation and support to each other, and helping family members feel good about themselves."
5. "Strong and resilient families work to resolve problems or cope with challenges by pulling together and giving one another help and support in a positive way."
6. "Strong and resilient families are attentive to meeting basic needs of the family, such as financial stability, health of family members, maintenance of the home environment and managing these needs as well as possible."

7. “Strong and resilient families develop shared religious, spiritual and moral values that give them common purpose and direction” (Sean Brotherson, “Building a Strong Family,” *Family Connections*, pp. 5-6).

A spiritual family

God is also in the process of building a family. His family will be identified by similar traits found in the Holy Bible. God desires a large family with all of His children doing their part to contribute to the health and well-being of His family.

As the apostle John explained, “Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure” (1 John 3:2-3).

Just as in any strong family, we will be identified as being in God’s family by reflecting the character of our Father and His Son, Jesus Christ. Being a vibrant part of the Kingdom of God will be our future family identity.

For more about God’s family, be sure to read our online article [“Children of God.”](#)



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Chapter Two

Six Principles of Positive Parenting

Parenting isn't an exact science, and every family is different. What can we do to have the best chance of raising happy, healthy and well-adjusted kids?



When couples are newly married, they often spend a great deal of time talking about their future—including thoughts about having children. They might even analyze—and solve!—all of the child-rearing problems their friends and acquaintances are battling. Many have every intention of being perfect parents! And then, as the saying goes, they have kids!

Happy is the man

It is God's design that having children and families be a joyful and wonderful thing. "Behold, children are a heritage from the LORD, the fruit of the womb is a reward. Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, so are the children of one's youth. Happy is the man who has his quiver full of them" (Psalm 127:3-5). That seems straightforward enough.

No one will be the *perfect* parent, and parenthood may not turn out to be exactly as a young, idealistic couple might envision it.

However, there are some timeless biblical principles that apply to every family and every culture.

Whether you eagerly awaited the arrival of your baby for years or whether the news of your pregnancy came as a complete shock, nearly everyone starts out with the same goal. We all want to be good parents!

Let's look at a few positive parenting principles we can glean from the Bible.

1. Teach your children about God

Let's start with the most basic and fundamental thing we can possibly do—teach our children about God. Our experiences in early childhood impact the rest of our lives. So it is easy to see why

teaching our children—from an early age—about God, His laws and His purpose for our lives is so important. Children need a strong spiritual foundation.

What we learn as children tends to stay with us as we go into adulthood. As adults, our tendency is to fall back on the patterns we saw as children. And our proclivity is to live by the same principles of faith (or lack thereof) we saw when we were children.

God inspired Moses to teach the Israelites to make instructions from and about their Creator a foundational part of their family life.

In Deuteronomy 4:1 Moses told the people to “listen to the statutes and the judgments which I teach you to observe, that you may live, and go in and possess the land which the LORD God of your fathers is giving you.” A few verses later he wrote, “And teach them to your children and your grandchildren” (verse 9).

How can we do this? Certainly, we can and should formally

teach the Bible to our children, but that is not the only way—or always the most effective way—to teach our children about God.

The picture Moses gives is of a family living life and talking about God and His

Spending quality time—and as much time as possible—with our children helps us find and create those valuable teachable moments.

ways “when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up” (Deuteronomy 6:7). Teaching children about God and His ways is to be naturally woven into the normal routines of life.

If it is important to them, moms and dads will find many opportunities to talk about what is true, right and pure in God’s eyes.

As parents, most of us know there are windows of opportunity when our children are especially receptive to learning a particular lesson. We should look for or, when possible, create those precious windows to both show and teach our children the way to live.

Spending quality time—and as much time as possible—with our children helps us find and create those valuable teachable moments.

2. Set a positive example

There is an old maxim about actions speaking louder than words—and it is very true! If we teach our children that they need to be honest and truthful, but they see us lying, what can we expect them to learn to do? The parenting strategy of “do as I say, not as I do” just won’t work.

Children are incredible little mimics. Several years ago, country singer Rodney Atkins released a song titled “Watching You.” The lyrics describe a little boy and his dad, and how the little boy deliberately followed the example of his dad—whether good or bad. It is something all parents should deeply consider.

Often we can connect a child with his or her parent just by watching their mannerisms and the way they walk and talk.

That is how God designed it to be—children naturally absorb the example of their parents.

Paul gave instructions to Titus that are also important for us as parents. “Always set an example by doing good things. When you teach, be an example of moral purity and dignity” (Titus 2:7, God’s Word Translation).

What do our children see in how we speak to or about others? Are we setting an example of integrity, faithfulness and honesty? Is our word our bond? Do our children ever see us praying or studying the Bible? Do they see us applying biblical principles to how we choose to live? They should!

Never ignore or underestimate the power of your example.

3. Administer loving discipline

The word *discipline* almost always brings to mind negative images of punishment or having privileges revoked. Those things may be part of the process, but discipline should be so much more.

One of the definitions in the *Oxford English Dictionary* is “the practice of training people to obey rules or a code of behavior, using punishment to correct disobedience.”

Rules have a purpose, and isn’t teaching our children how to behave and get along well with others one of a parent’s primary responsibilities?

Rules (often called laws when we are adults) are a part of the fabric of life. Children need to understand that concept from the beginning.

So, set fair rules. Clear boundaries are a key to success and harmony in the family. Children instinctively want to know where their boundaries are, and while they may chafe at some of them, they will feel more secure knowing there are limits.

We always want to keep our children safe, especially when they are too young to recognize many dangers. As parents, we must set rules for our children's safety, such as:

- Don't play in the street.
- Don't play with electrical outlets.
- Don't get in a car with strangers.

And there are rules that need to be established for the well-being of the household, such as:

- Put your toys away when you are done.
- Empty your trash can.
- Help clear the table after dinner.

We base our rules on the ages and abilities of our children, starting basic and simple, and gradually increasing what we require as they get older. This way, they learn responsibility, as well as skills they will need when they are grown and taking care of their own homes.

4. Give positive reinforcement

Positive reinforcement is crucial. It is far too easy to point out bad behavior, but then just smile to ourselves when our children do something good. It is important our children get more attention for good behavior than for bad! When they do what you've asked, be quick to give a compliment. If they go above and beyond (they not only cleared the table, but also washed the dishes), be generous with your praise!

Mark Twain once said, "I can live for two months on a good compliment." Our children need to hear encouragement and affirmation regularly.

5. Set fair rules and consequences

However, they won't always do what is right, and this is where correction and punishment must come in. Solomon wrote, "Correct your son, and he will give you rest; yes, he will give delight to your soul" (Proverbs 29:17).

When a rule is clearly explained, and maybe a reminder given, disobedience should be followed with punishment appropriate for the offense and the age of the child. It is for his or her good!

Paul advised, “And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord” (Ephesians 6:4).

God is not saying that we should never do anything to make our children upset. We are to love them, teach them and be fair in all we do. In doing that, godly parents will make sure that fair rules also come with fair consequences for disobedience or forgetfulness.

There is never a time to be cruel in correction. No matter what they’ve done or how we have to respond, our children should *never* doubt that we love them!

Don’t fall into the trap of making empty threats or threatening something you would never be willing to do. Revoking your child’s TV privileges for an afternoon may be reasonable, but selling the TV is probably not.

If children learn that consequences are not consistently enforced, they lose respect for the rule and the parent, often leading to even worse behavior over time.

6. Allow children to experience natural consequences

In our zeal to protect our children, it is natural to want to step in and prevent consequences for bad behavior. But we must ask, does

You Can’t Give Too Much Love!

At one time or another most parents will hear warnings of “don’t spoil your child!” It’s helpful to know the real cause of spoiling—and it isn’t love!

Sometimes relatives or acquaintances express concern that parents are

giving too much to their child. The feared result is a child who is demanding,

such overprotective parenting really help our children and teach the right lessons?

Some teachers have stories of parents storming up to the school to defend their children and object to a poor grade or loss of privileges or after-school detention.

Though it's important that our children know we "have their backs" in situations where they really need protection, much of the time we need to let the natural consequences of their actions take place. Our children need to learn to respect authority, learn from correction and even, at times, deal with unfair judgments.

Natural consequences are necessary for our children to learn to deal with the realities of life.

Parenting—imperfect but positive

None of us will be the perfect parents we might have intended to be, and the job will be more challenging than we could have imagined. If there were "do-overs" in life, every one of us would have many things we would change. There is so much to be learned!

But the ability to have and raise children is a miracle and an enriching experience.

Your children's temperament and personality may require some adjustments. You may have to guide your children slightly differently than other parents guide their children. But these basic biblical principles are timeless and will be beneficial to your family and your precious children.

pampered and self-centered and expects everyone to cater to his or her whims.

Spoiling happens!

We parents take such

admonishments seriously. We've all seen spoiled kids, and we know they're no fun to be around! As well, we realize that, for all they might rake in,

spoiled children do not have happy lives.

For example, consider the sons of Eli, Israel's high priest before the nation had its first human king. Reading the description of them in 1 Samuel 2, one can't help but imagine that they were used to getting everything they asked for.

Eli's timid rebuke had no effect on them at all (verses 23-25), and ultimately God gave this evaluation of Eli's parenting: "You honor your sons more than Me" (verse 29).

Overindulged

Child development professionals have concluded that spoiling does come from overindulging, but it is overindulging in permissiveness, low standards and lack of restraint. It comes from parents giving children material things and privileges as a substitute for their time, attention and love.

As Laurence Steinberg, Ph.D., author of *The Ten Basic Principles of Good Parenting*, writes, "I can think of plenty of children who have suffered because their parents were too busy, too selfish, or too preoccupied to attend to their needs. But I've never met a child who was worse off because his parents loved him too much. It is simply not possible to spoil a child with love" (2004, p. 27).

The point is, there is no substitute for time and attention and showing genuine love to your children. Material things are not a substitute, and neither are privileges and lax rules.

Genuine love

How should parents express their genuine love, care and concern for their children? The book of Proverbs has some very good advice:

- Proverbs 22:6: "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when

he is old he will not depart from it.” Genuine love involves time spent *teaching*. When parents truly love their children, they want to see them learn to distinguish right from wrong, practice good behavior and develop good character.

- Proverbs 29:15: “A child left to himself brings shame to his mother.” Genuine love involves *attention*. In a God-centered family, parents show they care for their children by spending quality time teaching them God’s way of life.
- Proverbs 13:24: “He who spares his rod hates his son, but he who loves him disciplines him promptly.” Genuine love involves *correction* and *discipline*. God corrects His spiritual children, and He expects that we will correct—take action

to reform—our children.

- Proverbs 27:5: “Open rebuke is better than secret love” (King James Version). Genuine love is *verbalized and displayed*. We strengthen our family bonds when we express genuine appreciation to our children, and when we care enough to offer gentle correction when they go astray.

Marche Isabella, a marriage, family and child counselor in California, offers this advice: “I’ve never heard of a parent who on their deathbed said, ‘I sure do wish I had bought Johnny Nintendo when he was 9.’ Nor a son grieve for gifts not received—except, perhaps, the gift of time and love.”

Let your children know every day that you love them, that they are special to you and that you appreciate them. We can spoil them with things, but there’s no danger of spoiling them with *love*.



Image supplied by SDI Productions via Getty Images

Chapter Three

Raising Young Children

Your child's first years are a foundational time for growth and character development. These biblical parenting principles can help in raising young children.



These days a trip to the library, a bookstore or an online search will produce an amazing array of books on the topic of raising children. Leafing through the different volumes, it's clear that popular parenting styles have changed (numerous times!) over the years. What's in vogue one decade is seen as outdated and inappropriate in another.

Positive parenting tips

Yet while times have changed, children are fundamentally still the same.

Early childhood involves the same basic developmental milestones, such as the first tooth, the first word, the first step, learning colors and the names of common objects, and learning to share.

Young children have the same basic needs for love, parental time and attention, daily routines and structure, consistent limits and loving boundaries, and foundational training in every aspect of life.

Are there unchanging, time-tested techniques for raising young children that are based on biblical principles? Is there practical biblical parenting advice you can use with your babies and toddlers?

God cares about families

God, who created the vast heavens and everything on earth, is also the Creator of the family. As the ultimate Father, He created people with the potential to become His sons and daughters (Ephesians 3:15; 2 Corinthians 6:18; 1 John 3:1). Our human families are important to God. They teach us about His purpose for mankind, and they help us to understand spiritual lessons about our relationship with God.

God cares about our children, so it only makes sense that He would give us key principles to use in raising them. Here are some biblical keys for helping your child grow during the early years of life.

Raising young children: It all begins with love

While our human love falls far short of God's great sacrificial love (John 3:16), the natural love that God has given parents is fundamental in all that we do in raising children.

Ideally, love should be at the beginning of every new little life. God designed the sexual relationship to be an expression of love within marriage. That love between husband and wife—now father and mother—should continue to be the foundation of their parenting.

As the old saying goes, the greatest gift a father can give his children is to love their mother. Children enjoy enormous comfort and security when their parents have a stable, loving marriage. Strong marriages build strong families. So, while the birth of your baby will mean some major changes in your lifestyle, make sure you remember to nourish your relationship with your mate.

Express love to your child

God wants love to be present in all of our relationships (Matthew 22:37-40; John 13:34-35; 1 Corinthians 13). With rare exceptions, parents have a natural love for their children. But for love to be truly effective, your children must *feel* loved.

Long before children have the vocabulary to understand the words “I love you,” they can sense love emotionally. Parents can fill that need for love through physical touch, eye contact and attention.

All three are important and necessary for your young child to feel loved, from birth through all the growing years.

Give your time to your child

Jesus Christ was not too busy for little children (Matthew 19:13-14; Mark 10:14), so parents should not be either! At birth your little one is totally helpless and utterly dependent on you for everything. When you respond to your baby's cries (for food, a diaper change or simply comfort), your little one develops a sense of security—learning that you can be depended on for help. This is an

important foundation for your role as a parent, teacher, authority figure—and everything that’s to come!

You continue to take care of your child’s needs, but with time they must gradually develop independence. First, they learn to crawl and then to walk and to feed themselves, etc. But don’t forget they still need you! Your involvement and attention are essential.

Mother and father are the most important people in your child’s life, and your interactions with your child will make a big difference in how he or she ultimately turns out. Yes, there will be other influences—peers, other adults, teachers—but none will be as influential as you.

Spend time together as a family, and spend one-on-one time with each of your children. Play with them, talk to them, read to them, do fun things together, show an interest in what they are learning and doing. This kind of focused attention will make them feel special and loved. And this close, loving relationship will make the rest of your parenting much more effective.

Provide routines and structure for your child

God included the regular family routines as the times for parents to talk to their children (Deuteronomy 6:7). Little children do thrive on regular routines. They feel safe and secure when they know what to expect next.

So work to have the same morning, mealtime and bedtime routines. Have set times for sleep, naps and rising. In addition to the security that it can give, a regular bedtime can help your child get adequate sleep and avoid behavior problems caused by being tired and cranky!

An important aspect of giving your child structure is setting rules and limits. In addition to matters of safety, it makes children feel secure to know that you—the authority figures they trust to take care of them—are firmly in charge.

Remember, the goal of raising children is to help totally dependent little babies grow to become independent adults who are good citizens, capable of making good choices. Rules and boundaries—while they begin with you, as parents, asserting your control—actually help your child develop his or her own *self-control*.



As your little one matures, you can encourage a healthy, balanced development of independence by providing age-appropriate, parent-approved options that he or she can choose from.

Set consistent limits for your child

But be forewarned, most children will test the rules you make and the limits you set at some point. You will have to be firm and not give in. Giving in and letting children have their way will teach them that crying, whining or nagging is effective—and you can expect it even more! You made the rules for a reason, and your children need to learn that rules matter.

Your rules should be age-appropriate and flexible enough to be modified as your child grows and matures. Children naturally want to know “why” about almost everything, so be sure you can easily and simply explain the “whys” of your rules. For example, a rule to put away toys when the child has finished playing can be understood by explaining that toys can be broken if stepped on or someone could be hurt.

To be effective, rules should be *consistently* enforced—not just when you feel like it. While there might be flexibility for unusual circumstances (a relative visiting, for instance), your child should

be able to expect that the rules tomorrow will be the same as the rules today and will be enforced in the same way.

Deal with your child's disobedience carefully

God tells us that human fathers correct their children—and He corrects His spiritual children (Hebrews 12:5-6). There are three main ways to help your child correct wrong behavior: explanation, reward for good behavior and punishment. Proper parenting will use all three at various times. While parents might prefer never having to use punishment, without doubt it will be a necessary tool in your parenting toolbox.

For punishment to be effective, it must be something the child finds unpleasant and, once again, you must be consistent. Also, it must be speedily (not hastily or in anger) administered so that a young child makes the connection between the misdeed and the punishment.

The punishment should not only fit the offense—using logical, related consequences as much as possible—but it should also fit the child. Some children respond positively to a light rebuke, while a strong-willed child might require much firmer punishment. One of the benefits of having a close, loving relationship with your child is that it often makes it possible to bring about positive changes with lighter types of punishment.

Keep the end in mind

While it's never enjoyable to have to punish your child (Hebrews 12:11), keep in mind that if punishment is effective and just, your children will be more responsive to your instructions and less in need of future punishment.

Whatever type of punishment you choose, make sure you don't do it in anger. Make sure you are always in complete control of your emotions.

Administer any punishment necessary with love and sympathy. Your child should know that you are sorry that this is necessary but you care about him or her and want him or her to learn.

So that punishment can truly be discipline (the Latin word it comes from meant "teaching" and "learning"), parents should accompany it with a brief explanation of the following:

- What specifically the wrongdoing was.
- What problem it created.
- What could have been done instead of the wrong action.
- What the punishment is.
- That you expect your child will do better the next time.

Teach your child

In addition to the teaching that comes through discipline, God expects parents to instruct their children to make right choices (Deuteronomy 11:19-21; 30:19).

Parents begin by teaching their baby about love, trust and care. Gradually more lessons will be added. Children are little sponges, absorbing what they see and hear around them.

When children are young, parents will mostly teach by modeling good behavior. For instance, parents teach about relationships by treating others with respect, kindness and consideration.

Ultimately, God wants parents' instructions to help their children learn about God and His way. After God delivered the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt, He instructed the parents to teach their children His ways and the amazing things God has done (Deuteronomy 6:6-7, 20-25).

There are many more lessons parents will teach their children, but these basic points have proven to be among the most essential.

As a parent, you have the marvelous opportunity to build on your child's education about God as he or she grows. Help your child develop a personal relationship with God. Help your child see that He is a loving Father to each of us.

Make prayer and stories from the Bible a part of your regular daily routine. Let your children know that you look to God and His Word as your ultimate source for help and guidance.

God wants parents who follow the example of the Old Testament patriarch Abraham. God said of Abraham, "For I have known him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him, that they keep the way of the LORD, to do righteousness and justice" (Genesis 18:19).

Ask God to help you in your efforts in raising your children so that the same can be said of you!

Teach Little Kids About Money

Your child may be too young for an allowance, but he or she's not too young to be introduced to the all-important right approach to money.

Whether you realize it or not, you've probably already begun your child's lessons on finances. Your example as a parent in handling money is the foundation for every other finance lesson you can teach.

From an early age, your child should see you being a careful shopper. Let him or her help you make your grocery list and talk about how these are the things that your family needs to buy. Let your child see that you plan what things you're going to buy rather than buying impulsively. Talk about the difference between needs and wants.

As your child grows, you can ask him or her to help you compare items to determine which is the best value.

And you can model patience in your purchases. Tell your child, "No, I think we'll wait until this is on sale to buy it" or, "We'll

wait until we've saved more before making this large purchase." Remember, if you're frugal and restrained in how you use money, your child will be more likely to learn those traits too!

Money doesn't grow on trees

Another introductory concept to teach is where money comes from. (It's not really as obvious as we think!) Explain to your child that people work and that's how they earn money. And they earn money so that they can buy the things that they need. It's important to explain that God is the One who gives us good health and makes us able to work and produce. The money we earn is related to our effort and diligence (Proverbs 10:4), but ultimately God is the One who gives wealth (verse 22).

As well, you'll no doubt need to clear up misunderstandings about

credit or debit cards, since it's easy for children to think of them as free, limitless money.

Your child should learn that money is a limited resource. It's good for your child to hear you say, "We don't have enough money to buy that." "We can't afford that." Likewise, there should be times when you can say, "We're saving to buy a (whatever)!" Your child should learn that it's okay to spend some money now, but it's also important to save some for later.

Children in the early elementary grades are ready to be introduced to the concept of budgeting. You can illustrate how a budget works in your own home by using "play" money from a game such as Monopoly or Life. Count out a pile of bills to represent what your family earns each month, and then pay out what's needed for rent or your house payment, food, water, electricity, gas for the car, etc.

Some other online resources for teaching your

kids include "**Dollars & Sense: Money Management for Kids**" (Scholastic.com) and "**How to Talk to Your Children About Money**" (MoneyHelper.org.uk).

Remembering to give

Of course, we don't want to raise a little miser. Understanding that selfishness doesn't lead to real wealth (Proverbs 11:24-26), we want our children to learn to be careful with money but also to practice appropriate generosity.

As Christian parents, we want to show our children that we honor God with the money He has given us. This includes tithing—the portion of our income that God claims as His own, since He is the Creator of everything. Teach your child that God is the source of all of our financial blessings and that your family seeks to have Him be your Financial Partner.

See also our online article "**Hands-On Money Management: Allowing for Allowances.**"



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Chapter Four

How to Parent a Teenager

The years in which a young person transitions from childhood to adulthood can be challenging. How should we deal with our children during the teen years?



Teenagers.

Just mentioning the word can cause anxiety for some people. Perhaps it's because of memories of their own trip through the teen years, or perhaps it reflects experiences with their own children during that stage.

For many, those years of not being a child—but not quite being an adult either—are years of uncertainty, insecurity, learning, pushing boundaries and sometimes outright rebellion.

While adolescence has probably always been a challenging transitional time, it was faced very differently in the past. As the world has changed, the teenage experience has changed.

A better understanding of what those changes are can help us and our children better navigate this developmentally important time.

Adolescents in centuries past

Throughout much of history, adolescents were workers. In fact, children as young as 7 years old were often brought into the workforce. Both in towns and on farms, children worked beside their parents, doing what was necessary to support the family. When the Industrial Revolution spread in the 18th and 19th centuries, children began working long hours in factories.

As the standard of living rose in the developed world, educational opportunities began to change. Families were able to survive without their children's financial contributions, so adolescents often stayed in school longer. Young people could now spend leisure time with peers, and this growing sense of freedom affected the way average teens viewed themselves and the world.

And this brought profound changes to the family.

Evolution of the teenager

It may come as a surprise to some, but prior to World War II, the term *teenager* was rarely used. Viewing adolescence as a distinct developmental stage can be traced to the postwar years. This newly defined stage of life came as a result of a greater level of family income combined with other societal changes.

One of those changes in the U.S. and much of the Western world was the availability of the automobile, which provided a degree of freedom and autonomy previously unheard of. Beginning in the 1950s, teenagers suddenly became trendsetters in music, fashion, film and dance.

It became the norm for teenagers to focus on experimentation rather than labor. Teens of the 1960s and 1970s were known for rebellious attitudes and a proclivity for risky behavior that included

illegal drugs,
abuse of alcohol
and a high rate
of sexual activity.
Parents faced
new challenges
in helping their
teenage children
navigate the
world and avoid
destructive
decisions.

We should ask ourselves if we
are being honest, if we are
trustworthy, if we are living by
the moral standards we want
our teens to hold.

But over the years, the behavior of the average teenager has changed. Studies by psychologists like Jean Twenge, professor of psychology at San Diego State University, have revealed profound changes in teenage behavior.

According to Dr. Twenge's research, when compared with teenagers from past decades, 17- and 18-year-olds today are slightly less likely to have tried alcohol and drugs or to have had sex. They are also waiting longer to get a driver's license or move out of their parents' homes. On average, they are waiting longer to get married and to have children as well.

Commenting on these findings, the BBC article "[Why Teenagers Aren't What They Used to Be](#)" states, "By many important

measures, adolescence continues until around the age of 24 to 25” (Feb. 1, 2022).

What do teens face?

According to studies, the rates of sexual activity and drug and alcohol use among teens have declined since the early 2000s. Smoking has declined by nearly 70 percent among teens. Of course, all of this is good news for teens and parents!

But does this mean teens are choosing to refrain from all risky behaviors? Not necessarily.

A slew of studies reveal teen behaviors have changed, but not always for the better. The reality is that today’s teens have the ability to be involved in activities that didn’t exist for previous generations. The digital age has introduced new challenges and temptations for teenagers.

The impact of smartphones on teens

According to a 2025 Pew Research Center report, 95 percent of U.S. teenagers have access to a smartphone. These mobile electronic devices have single-handedly revolutionized teenage life.

The artificial world of social media has created a heightened obsession with beauty and glamour that the average teen feels unable to attain. This has been linked to increased feelings of discouragement and depression among teens. As a result, studies have connected the unrealistic images of life shown on social media with a rise in suicides among teenage girls.

Smartphones have also contributed to automobile accidents. Studies show that a texting driver is much more likely to have an accident, and yet 40 percent of teen drivers report texting when they are behind the wheel!

Access to smartphones has also increased access to pornography. It’s not an overstatement to declare pornography one of the greatest pandemics of our time. The U.S. Department of Justice stated: “Never before in the history of telecommunications media in the United States has so much indecent (and obscene) material been so easily accessible by so many minors in so many American homes with so few restrictions.”

A 2022 survey by Common Sense Media found that 75 percent



of our sons and 70 percent of our daughters have been exposed to online pornography before the age of 18, with more than half having their first exposure before they're 13. Over half of teenage boys reported viewing pornographic videos intentionally, compared to 36 percent of girls.

Another challenge associated with this is the rise of sexting, or “self porn.” Different studies show different statistics about teens who have sent nude images of themselves by text, email or app, but all of the estimates are alarming. Laws against child pornography seem to have a limited impact.

Other issues teens face include AI, gender dysphoria, marijuana and vaping. (See our online articles [“Artificial Intimacy: Why AI Will Never Satisfy Our Deepest Needs,”](#) [“What Does the Bible Say About Gender Identity?”](#) [“Why You Shouldn’t Smoke Marijuana—Even If It’s Legal”](#) and [“Should Christians Vape?”](#))

These are just some of the many challenges that teens face today.

How can a parent respond?

The world of a typical teenager seems far more complicated than in previous generations. So where does that leave parents and teens

who desire to live a godly life? There are several important points for us to keep in mind.

- 1. God's standards don't change.** Parents must keep in mind that no matter where societal trends might go, the solid truth of the Bible never changes! God told the prophet Malachi, "For I am the LORD, I do not change" (Malachi 3:6).

What was sin in the past is still sin today. Our responsibility is to understand the principles our Creator gives us in Scripture and how to apply them to modern challenges. While these challenges aren't named in Scripture, the moral principles they violate are there—and are timeless.

As the digital world expands and brings new challenges, it's never been more important for parents and teens to be grounded in the eternal standards of God.

- 2. Stay connected with your children.** God instructed the Israelites to teach their children about God's ways regularly (Deuteronomy 6:7). This instruction must be a constant part of our relationship with our children.

But when our own lives are flooded with so much to do, how can we possibly keep up with everything our children are doing? School and a wide range of social activities are only a few of the items on their plate. Is it possible for parents to keep up with all of that?

The No. 1 key is open communication.

It's critical to be involved and informed about their lives, their friends, where they go and what they do. Although our relationship with our children evolves over time, we must always endeavor to be parents who have their best interests at heart.

If we want to provide counsel and guidance, we must know what they're facing.

- 3. Set appropriate boundaries.** Teenagers are *almost* adults, but not quite. So, they will continue to require rules and the motivation to follow them. You will naturally adjust your rules depending on the age and maturity of your teen, but it is essential to establish limits and curfews for them. There are also

a wide variety of parental control apps for computers, tablets and smartphones. It would be wise to research and choose tools that will help you set proper boundaries for your teen.

4. Pray for discernment and wisdom. James wrote, “If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him” (James 1:5). Parents of teens know how much they need wisdom to properly guide and teach their children!

5. Set the right example. In addition to taking the important steps listed above, parents, grandparents and guardians need to be certain they are modeling the kind of behavior they want to see from their teens. We should ask ourselves if we are being honest, if we are trustworthy, if we are living by the moral standards we want our teens to hold. “Do as I say, not as I do” doesn’t work with child-rearing, and it most certainly will not work with teenagers.

The teen years are something everyone must go through. The way society has viewed these years has changed over the centuries, and the influences teens face today are different from those past generations faced. But these years need not be so dreadful for teens and parents.

We all need to focus on the never-changing truths of God to form the foundation for our values and behaviors. There will be challenges, detours and difficult times, but parents can use the Bible as their guide to help their children navigate through their teenage years.



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Chapter Five

Stepparenting

Whether you've never been a parent before or you're bringing children into a new blended family, stepparenting can be a rewarding responsibility when entered into wisely.



What do you think about when you think of stepparenting? One popular sitcom from the 1970s told the story of two people who decided to blend their families together into one unit—*The Brady Bunch*. Many who consider becoming stepparents no doubt think about shows like that and the dynamics created within these fictitious families.

But marriage, parenting and stepparenting are not lighthearted entertainment. They are serious business.

When a man and woman are considering marriage, they would be wise to seek premarital counseling about such things as compatibility, family, finances and other important factors. The same principle applies when a person desires to become a spouse and a stepparent.

Before creating a new family

Before becoming a stepparent, consider what you will need to do in order to have a good relationship with all the children in your new family. Patience and understanding are two essential characteristics for a potential stepparent. These two qualities are especially important when it comes to dealing with:

- Children who still hold out hope that their birth parents will get back together.
- Children who have a close relationship with the divorced birth parent.
- Being viewed as a “replacement” if a birth parent has died.
- Being viewed as the one who “broke up” the birth parents’ marriage.
- Building a meaningful relationship with the stepchildren.

New stepparents must realize that close relationships built on trust don't develop instantly. Children of divorced parents may feel they have been deserted or that their parents divorced because of them. These feelings can create a whirlwind of emotions—some of which may not be healthy.

A stepparent who attempts to *buy his way* into the lives of children or to just be a *buddy* is likely in for a painful surprise. Children, especially teens, can sniff out hypocrisy or disingenuous compliments a mile away.

By contrast, children who get to know a potential stepparent before the marriage generally feel less pressure and may thus be able to more easily accept the new relationship when it occurs. If stepchildren know that their new stepparent genuinely cares for them, it will be easier for them to accept the new parent in their lives.

Of course, circumstances vary and every child has his or her own personality and concerns. Some children readily accept the new family, while others take longer to adapt.

How to be a good stepparent

The advice to take things slowly is not something people like to hear today; yet, if you want to become a good stepparent, this is the best formula.

If you've never had children, you are going to have the opportunity to assist the birth parent in rearing responsible children. If both of you are bringing children into a new family (blending families), an amazing opportunity awaits you in establishing and building new relationships between adults and children.

The transition into stepparenting brings with it many variables, which can include not only your new spouse, but also your new spouse's children and your new spouse's ex-partner. Because strong emotions are often involved, moving cautiously, slowly and carefully can pay huge dividends as you assume the role of stepparent.

Your love and caring will shine through as you set a good example for all to see. Just remember that relationships need time to blossom and grow.

Other factors that may impact the transition to stepparenting include:

- How old the children are.
- How long you've known the kids.

- How long you dated before marriage.
- How well the parent you marry gets along with his or her ex-spouse.
- How much time the children spend with you.

New family, same boundaries

A wise stepparent will discuss the rules and boundaries of behavior within the home with their new potential spouse prior to getting married. Whatever the rules, it is important that the children see that everyone is held to the same standard.

Children are adept at sensing and pointing out hypocrisy or favoritism. Being consistent in implementing the rules of the home will help the children's transition to any new or modified rules in the home.

The adults must work together when it comes to the rules. Any disagreements or potential changes should be discussed by the parents in private. And the biological parent should take the lead when it comes to correction. When a stepparent takes a corrective role too soon, the relationships can suffer.

As a stepparent, you should make yourself available to discuss the rules with the children and help them understand any rules with which they may not be familiar. By doing so, you can show you indeed care for the happiness and safety of the children. This is a sign of how much you love them.

Explain the rules in the presence of all the children—those not yours by birth as well as your biological children. Remember, fairness in keeping and enforcing the rules of the home is very important.

Blended families: something old, something new

A stepparent will hear things like “When Daddy was here, we used to . . .” or “When Mommy was alive, each Sunday we . . .” Family traditions are hallmarks of the family unit. Adults and children alike enjoy routines that not only bring the family together, but produce happy and fulfilling experiences to be remembered fondly for weeks and months. Though a stepparent is not a “replacement” for the biological parent, he or she can perhaps find ways to enjoy and share in these special opportunities.

In fact, a newly blended family can carve out new family traditions. Activities like biking, horseback riding, scrapbooking

or hiking can build strong bonds within a new family. Ask the children what they like to do and ask for feedback on activities completed together.

Stepparenting with respect for all

Whether the child's other birth parent is alive or dead, the stepparent should show respect and be sensitive to the relationship the birth parent had with the children.

In some cases the relationship will continue, and children will continue to visit their birth parent. Wisdom dictates that the stepparent should not dishonor or disrespect the birth parent.

Christian stepparenting

Children require parenting no matter what their age. There are different parenting tools for different ages, but the fact remains—whether you're a birth parent or stepparent, you have a tremendous responsibility to help shape and mold the minds of children.

Will there be bumps in the road at times? Of course! Will children test the boundaries of house rules? Yes. When these and other matters arise in the day-to-day running of a home, the question is, will those responsible for the welfare of the children step up and parent?

Children are looking for good, capable adults to model for them how to live a structured life. A wise stepparent will strive to lead by example and patiently parent for the future benefit of all their children.

For more about blended families, see our online article "[Four Keys to Building a Strong Blended Family](#)."



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Chapter Six

How to Help Your Children Build a Relationship With God

As Christian parents, all of us deeply desire our children to develop a strong, enduring and close relationship with God. What can we do to help them on that path?



As Christians, our relationship with God is the most important relationship we will ever have. As Christian parents, our goal—our hope—for our children is that they learn to build and maintain that relationship as well.

But how do we help our children grow to become truly Christian young men and young women? How can we point them in the right direction?

Talk about God

One of the first things we need to do is begin talking *about* God when they first begin to comprehend. Point out how God created everything—including the food on your table, the plants in your yard and the sunrise and sunset.

As they mature, explain God's instructions on how to live. In Deuteronomy 6:6-7 we find instructions to talk about God's ways when we sit in our house, when we walk, when we lie down and when we rise up. That pretty much covers all of our activities for the day.

The point is that wherever we are and whatever we are doing, we need to take the opportunity to talk to our children about God and His beneficial laws. This should be a natural part of our conversation, born from a deep and abiding relationship that we ourselves have built with God and are maintaining.

Talk about blessings

Talk about the things that God has given to you. Explain to your children the many blessings God has given them and you, and your specific family blessings. Mention some of these blessings when giving thanks before meals.

One couple tried to convey God's beneficence to their children by pointing out things in God's marvelous creation. Occasionally they woke them up to see an especially beautiful sunrise, noting, "There is nothing like that moment of silence as you watch the sky blossom with color as the master artist paints a beautiful picture."

Someone once described some of the amazing things we see in nature as "gratuitous beauty." God has made so much beauty for

us to enjoy. Why not take the time to notice and then share that with your children?

Tell your children about the wonderful blessing He has given them and you by placing

Christians are to be ambassadors of God's way of life to others. Nowhere is that role more important than with our children.

you together in a family. Let them know how thankful you are to have them as a part of your family and how you feel they are a gift God has given you personally. There are many people in this world who have tragically lost their families. Help your children see the blessing that God has given them to be a part of a family.

Another way to talk about God's blessings is to point out situations where God has intervened in your life or the lives of others. He cares very deeply about each one of us, and He does intervene in our lives.

At times, we pray and ask God for healing or something specific, and He provides it for us. Help your children recognize these answered prayers when they occur. These blessings of healings or protection become a part of your family story.

On the other hand, there are also times when we pray about something and do not get the answer we want. At such times, show your children why God may have said "no" or "wait" or "I have something better for you." Sometimes we as parents have to say "no" or "wait" to something our children have asked for. It is not because we don't love them or we want to withhold something from them, but because we can see a bigger picture and realize another answer is better. God does the same thing for us (Romans 8:28).

Talk to God

Involve your children in worshipping and communicating with God. Teach your children how to pray and pray with them. Teach your children how to study the Bible and study it with them. Take your children to church and talk about the message with them afterward.

Let your children see when you study your Bible and share what you're reading and things you've learned.

Daily prayer is a foundational part of a Christian's life, so our children must learn its importance and how to do it. Make praying a normal part of the daily routine of life. A prayer of thanksgiving before every meal is a good place to start. Dad or Mom can start out giving the prayer, but as the kids grow, help them take a turn saying the prayer. Prayer becomes a natural part of family life.

The same thing applies with Bible study. Tailor your Bible study to the attention span and understanding level of the child you are working with. A young child can generally relate to a story—and there are so many great stories in the Bible. After you have read a story, help your child draw lessons that he or she can understand. As your children get older, make sure they have their own Bibles.

Parents need to show their children how to walk through the steps to build a relationship with God, and walk through those steps with them.

We see in Psalm 78:4-7 that we as parents are to make God's law known to our children. It is a kind of heritage that is to be passed from generation to generation. What better heritage can we give our children than a healthy pattern of worship?

Demonstrate godly characteristics

There is an adage that says, "Don't judge a book by its cover." But the truth is, we as humans *do* judge a book—or a person, organization or way of life—by what we see. Our children will do the same thing.

If parents are hypocritical, unethical, immoral or even just lazy in their approach to obeying God, their children will be the first to know! And it will taint their approach to God.

On the other hand, if children see their parents praying and studying and upholding God's standards, they are much more likely to do the same.

Christians are to be ambassadors of God's way of life to others. Nowhere is that role more important than with our children. God wants to use parents as a conduit to teach their children both what to do and how to live.

Your children hear the words that come out of your mouth when you hit your thumb with a hammer. They know whether you turn a movie off because of inappropriate content. They know how much you drink. They know whether you break the speed limit. They know how you apply what you learn at church. They see whether you are ethical in your dealings with other people. They observe how you show respect to your spouse and parents, and how you treat people from whom you have nothing to gain.

Actions really do speak louder than words.

A relationship to last for eternity

Teaching our children is one of the most amazing and important tasks in all of creation. None of us is perfect at the task, but neither can we afford to neglect it.

Of course, it is God who calls each person, and it will be each of our children's personal decision whether to accept that calling. But that does not diminish the responsibility and privilege we have to help our children build a relationship with God that can last for eternity!



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Chapter Seven

10 Ways to Protect Kids From Technology Traps

Technology isn't necessarily bad, but excessive screen time can produce a host of digital dangers. How can you protect kids from technology traps?



Like it or not, today's children are growing up in a digital and increasingly wireless world. Smartphones, laptops, tablets, e-book readers, video game consoles and other electronic devices have become an integral part of their lives—and ours. That's in addition to “old technology,” such as television, which young and old alike still gravitate to.

The Internet, computer apps, interactive video games and TV programs can all be excellent sources of education and entertainment for children. Communications technology can augment relationships and help children stay connected to people who care about them—for instance, when grandparents or other relatives live far away.

In balance, technology is certainly useful. The problem is, many children today have strayed beyond a moderate use of electronic devices.

Beware of digital dangers

A Kaiser Family Foundation study found that, on average, kids ages 8 to 18 spend practically every waking moment when they're not in school engaged in entertainment media of some kind—a staggering 7½ hours a day.

Somehow in the midst of all this, teens find time for texting. According to a 2023 Common Sense Media study, teenagers get around 237 notifications each day.

To be fair, parents are often just as absorbed in technology as their children, which only makes matters worse.

“There's not a lot of time for family members to talk with each other anymore because it's consumed by all our entertainment devices,” observes Arizona psychologist Lisa Strohman J.D., Ph.D., coauthor

of *Unplug: Raising Kids in a Technology Addicted World*. “Even when family members are in the same room together, they’re often all on their own screens, so they’re not really ‘present’ for each other.”

There are other casualties as well. Many believe communication devices can hinder relationships when used too much. “When kids spend more time on social media and texting, rather than talking with others face-to-face, their verbal and interpersonal skills tend to suffer,” warns Wisconsin psychologist Melissa Westendorf, J.D., Ph.D., cofounder of the Technology Wellness Center.

If that wasn’t enough to be concerned about, excessive media use has been associated with physical and behavioral disorders like obesity, myopia, depression, anxiety, insomnia and attention-deficit/

hyperactivity disorder, all of which are increasing in children.

In balance, technology is certainly useful. The problem is, many children today have strayed beyond a moderate use of electronic devices.

Of course, the problem isn’t just too much screen time, but also what kids

are being exposed to. Much of popular media bombards kids with messages promoting sexual promiscuity and violence, scarring young minds.

The Internet is full of pornographic websites that can easily be accessed by anyone. Too often it’s kids who visit these sites.

And children can be exposed to dangers like cyberbullying (bullying that occurs online), sexting and sexual predators.

Parental guidance and protection from technology traps

Ultimately, it’s up to parents to teach their children to use technology wisely. The Bible states, “Whatever you do, do all to the glory of God” (1 Corinthians 10:31). In the 21st century, this includes how we use our digital devices.

Here are 10 strategies for guiding your children to use technology in a way that not only keeps them safe, but also pleases God. You can adjust these based on the age and trustworthiness of your child.

1. Establish family rules for technology use

The Bible instructs parents to teach and train their children, which includes setting boundaries. Your family's technology rules should spell out how much "tech time" is allowed for your kids each day; when during the day or week technology is off-limits; and what media programming, games, apps and websites your kids may and may not use.

Some sample rules to consider: No digital devices are permitted during homework time or mealtimes. Television and gaming systems are not to be used for more than a specific number of minutes a day or hours a week. Do not download anything without permission.

Ideally, Dr. Strohman says, "set these rules when your kids are young and they'll be less likely to try and buck the system. But if you have teenagers already, it's not too late to establish these kinds of guidelines. You just need to sit down with them and tell them you're going to implement a new family program. They might get upset, but you're still the parent."

2. Talk with your kids about the potentially harmful effects of various technologies

Tell them why it's not healthy to watch too much television or to be constantly plugged in to technology. Teach them biblical principles to help them understand why particular computer games, websites, chatbots or movies are not appropriate.

Discuss the potential dangers of online predators and cyberbullying. Impress upon them that they're leaving behind a digital footprint, so they shouldn't say anything on electronic media that they don't want on public record for a long time. This includes an explanation of why it's not okay to send or receive sexually oriented text messages.

3. Don't allow electronic media in bedrooms or other secluded areas

Keep televisions and smart devices in common living areas in your home (such as the family room) so you can monitor both content and screen time.

Before bedtime each night, “your kids’ portable devices . . . should be deposited in your bedroom, perhaps plugged into a charging station,” advises Dr. Strohman. “This way your kids will not be tempted to use these devices when they should be sleeping.”

4. Use parental controls

Install filtering software on your computers, smartphones and gaming systems. Or set up parental controls through your Internet service, cable TV or satellite provider, or Web browser.

These filters allow you to restrict your children’s access to particular TV shows, movies, games, AI and websites, and prevent them from using these media at certain times of the day or for longer than you allow.

5. Watch TV and movies with your kids

Don’t let them watch television by themselves just to keep them occupied. If they have an hour of TV time coming, if at all possible, watch it with them. At the end of the program, talk with your children about what they just saw: Were there any moral lessons to be gleaned? What kind of strengths or weaknesses did the characters have? Did their actions reflect good values?

If something questionable comes up during a program, don’t be shy about offering your comments right then. “Co-viewing,” as this is often referred to, can be an effective way of filtering what kinds of ideas come into your home and being aware of what your children are exposed to.

If watching with them isn’t practical, take time to review the movies and shows they watch on their own and stay aware of the content.

6. Monitor your children’s phone and online activity

Familiarize yourself with their favorite apps and websites. If your kids have social media accounts, get your own profile and “friend” them so you can see their posts. Some experts suggest installing monitoring software to track your children’s Internet activity.

Some of these steps may sound drastic, but you don’t have to

sneak around. You can be open about it. You need to know what your children are communicating and viewing online so you can protect them.

7. Encourage your children to build real friendships, not just social media connections

Don't allow your children's digital contact to become a substitute for in-person contact.

This is important, Dr. Westendorf says, because "our emotional attachments and empathy building to others is better formed in face-to-face encounters than on a computer screen. Children need to experience real physical touches, hear real voices and see real people's faces."

8. Get your kids involved in nondigital activities

Set time aside each week to do something as a family without electronic devices. Plan a game night with board games, play a game of soccer or go bike riding together, take up some hobbies as a family (crafts, cooking, bowling, etc.), or plan a family outing (to the zoo, museum, playing field, park, hiking trails, community recreation center, etc.).

Encourage your children to participate in sports, clubs, church activities or volunteer programs to direct their attention toward something other than electronics.

9. Model godly use of technology

Your children are going to note your example. So if you don't want them to watch violent movies, spend hours every night aimlessly surfing the Web or use their phones at the dinner table, you shouldn't do these things either.

"If you say one thing and do something else, you'll never win," Dr. Westendorf says. "But if you do the same things you tell your kids to do, they're more likely to go along with it."

10. Know the warning signs

Your children may be misusing technology if they:

- Quickly turn off the computer when you enter the room.
- Become agitated or angry when you limit online time.

- Prefer to spend time online rather than with family or friends.
- “Sneak” computer time when alone.
- Lose interest in activities that don’t involve technology or are preoccupied with getting back to the computer when away from it.

If you notice any of these behaviors, you may need to remove all technology and get help from your minister, a family counselor or other professional.

To sum up, digital media, like so many things in life, is not something that’s inherently good or bad, but it can be misused and overused. It’s the job of parents to help their children make the right choices so they can enjoy the benefits technology has to offer, while avoiding its many traps.





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Chapter Eight

Four Keys to Raising Resilient Kids

While you may not be able to completely shield your kids from pain and hardship, there are steps you can take to help them face difficulties with a can-do mindset.



As adults, we often view childhood as a carefree period of life. And certainly, most youngsters are under less pressure and have fewer responsibilities than their parents.

But childhood is hardly stress-free. At times kids struggle with schoolwork, deal with family problems, get teased, encounter bullies, feel excluded, are let down by friends, perform poorly in games, get sick and get injured.

To one degree or another, all kids face difficulties, disappointments and setbacks.

Resilience

What helps young people overcome hardship is the same character strength that helps adults: resilience. Resilience is generally defined as the ability to rebound, recover or bounce back in times of adversity. It means getting up after being knocked down and moving forward with optimism and confidence.

According to child psychologist Caren Baruch-Feldman, Ph.D., resilience is not only a matter of snapping back to one's former state after an ordeal. It can also mean coming away stronger.

"Resilient people understand that ultimately they will be strengthened by the problems and challenges they face," explains Dr. Baruch-Feldman, author of *The Grit Guide for Teens*. "When we push ourselves and we learn from our mistakes, that's how we grow."

She says resilience not only gets us through difficult times, it develops best in the midst of adversity.

Our natural inclination as parents may be to try to protect kids from pain and hardship. There are times to do this, but we can't do

it all the time, nor should we. Difficulties are part of life, and kids and adults alike have to be prepared to deal with them.

Peter tells us, “Do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you” (1 Peter 4:12). Youngsters need to build resilience not only so they can navigate present challenges, but also to prepare for the inevitable trials they’ll face as adults.

Some individuals are naturally more resilient than others. However, this ability can be developed and learned. Whether your children are preschoolers or in high school, it’s never too soon or too late to teach them about resiliency.

Here are four ways you can help them build this vital character strength:

1. Teach them problem-solving

When kids know how to tackle challenges, they become more resilient. If they make a mistake or something doesn’t turn out as they had hoped, they’re able to take it in stride, realizing there’s often another opportunity to make improvements.

The best way to instill good problem-solving skills is by taking advantage of teachable moments according to your child’s age and maturity level. For example, if your older child comes to you upset about something that happened, brainstorm possible solutions together. Ask him or her, “What do you think you should do about that?” or “How do you think you could turn the situation around?”

You may share your ideas, too, but present them as steps to consider rather than directives. Help your child evaluate all the options, pointing out the pluses and minuses of each, but let your child be the one to decide on the best course of action.

“While you should always be available to offer guidance and support, you should encourage your children to figure out what to do on their own,” advises Dr. Baruch-Feldman. “This tells them you trust them to solve their own problems and encourages them to take ownership of what happened.”

As kids get experience working through problems, even relatively minor ones, they’ll be better prepared to face larger roadblocks down the road, she adds.

Obviously, the type of decisions you allow your kids to make and how much latitude you give them depends on their age and maturity and the severity of the problem.

2. Don't try to shield them from adversity

No parent wants to see his or her kids hurting or discouraged, which is why it can be tempting to try to fix their problems for

them. But unless they're facing something that's too big for them to manage on their own or could cause serious harm, we should resist the urge to intervene.

Remind yourself

When your kids face their own trials, teach them to pray for strength, resilience and God's guidance and intervention.

that someday they're going to be on their own. Now is the time to teach them how to face challenges. Very often it's when kids are at their low points that they're the most motivated to address problems.

3. Nurture an optimistic outlook

Resilience and optimism go hand in hand. "A positive attitude empowers us; it takes away some of our stress; and we feel more energized to do the hard work, because it is hard work to keep going," Dr. Baruch-Feldman says.

We can help kids maintain a hopeful outlook by pointing out the positives when they're discouraged—what things *are* going well, what they have to be thankful for, the lessons they're learning in their trials—so they don't get caught up in all the negatives. If your youngster has endured a difficult situation for a while, compliment your child on his or her tenacity.

One teen shared how keeping a "blessings journal" helps her stay upbeat. "Every night, I write down three good things that happened that day," she explains. "Then, when I'm down about something, my parents will encourage me to read my blessings journal, to remind me of all the good in my life."

On the other hand, don't downplay what your children are going through. The heat of an agonizing ordeal is not the time to tell them, "Keep your chin up" or "Look at the silver lining." Such statements can make them feel like they're being corrected for expressing their very real feelings of pain. Most kids are not going to be ready to look at the positives until they've first worked through their emotions.

Saying instead, "I can see this is really difficult for you, but I also have confidence you can get through it," validates their feelings and tells them you believe they have the abilities to address the problem.

4. Point them to God

Of course, our No. 1 source of strength is our relationship with God. Ultimately, God is the One who carries us through trials, who gives us the courage and ability to navigate life's stormy waters and helps us bounce back and grow. But while you may know this, you shouldn't assume your kids do. Pass these precious truths on to your children.

An effective way to do this is to share your own experiences. After you've faced a trial—whether a health or financial challenge, a problem at work or the consequences of a mistake you've made—open up about it with your kids. Obviously, how much you divulge depends on their ages, but be willing to talk about the lessons you learned and how God saw you through.

Consider having a family Bible study on the topic of how God strengthens us in times of adversity. The book of Psalms is an excellent place to start—in particular 18:1-2, 32; 27:1; 31:21-24; 37:39; 46:1; and 138:3—along with Ephesians 6:10; Isaiah 40:29; 41:10; and Philippians 4:13.

It's also helpful to address why God allows us to go through trials. Romans 5:3-4 tells us that tribulation produces godly character. Help your children understand that God uses trials to build resilience, courage, longsuffering and other strengths in us, and to teach us to trust Him. It is easier to hang in there when we focus on the big picture of what God is doing in our lives.

Read the stories of resilient Bible heroes like Moses, Joseph, Gideon, David, Hezekiah, Job and Peter—people who made mistakes and faced serious hardships, yet with God's help endured

suffering and stayed the course. Remind your children that God will also help them.

When your kids face their own trials, teach them to pray for strength, resilience and God's guidance and intervention. Let them know you will pray about it too.

Jesus Christ told us we would experience trouble and hardship in this life (John 16:33). It's important for us as parents to help our kids in dealing with hardships now so they can be prepared for the bigger trials they'll encounter as adults.

Remind them they're not alone, they always have your love and support, and that God will be with them through thick and thin.



Additional Parenting Resources

This booklet provides a sampling of the material on parenting available on the Life, Hope & Truth website at lifehopeandtruth.com. You can find many more articles on specific parenting issues in the “Practical Tips for Positive Parenting” section and the “Family: Keys to Building a Strong Family” section. Here are some of those articles:

- Parenting Advice
- Disciplining Children
- Family Bible Study Topics
- Helping Our Children Grow
- Allowing for Allowances
- Bullying: What Can You Do to Help Your Child?
- Could Our Kids Become Bullies?
- Learning to Say “Sorry”
- Thank-You Note
- How to Raise Contented Kids
- Helping Kids Deal With Tragic Events
- Most Common Parenting Fails and How to Avoid Them
- Never Give Up: Helping Your Child Build Perseverance
- Biblical Fatherhood
- Why Are Dads Important?
- The Importance of Mothers
- How to Guide Your Children Through a World You Don’t Understand
- Grandparents Raising Grandchildren
- Too Kind? How to Apply Mercy in Parenting
- Teaching Children to Stand Up for God Without Putting Others Down
- The Role of Women
- Role of Men
- Why Sex Matters: The Architect’s Design

- [What Does the Bible Say About Gender Identity?](#)
- [Leaving a Legacy for Your Grandchildren](#)
- [Miscarriage: The Day We Lost Our Baby](#)
- [Seven Characteristics of Healthy Families](#)
- [Three Big Threats to Families](#)
- [Four Keys to Building a Strong Blended Family](#)
- [The Family That Prays Together](#)
- [The Family That Plays Together](#)
- [The Disappearing Family](#)
- [Artificial Intimacy: Why AI Will Never Satisfy Our Deepest Needs](#)
- [Why You Shouldn't Smoke Marijuana—Even If It's Legal](#)
- [Should Christians Vape?](#)

See also our extensive “[Encourage, Equip & Inspire](#)” resources. Parents will find studies to inspire and use with their children. Sections include:

- [The Christian Family](#)
- [The Word of God](#)
- [Shepherding the Heart](#)
- [People of the Bible](#)
- [Memorizing Scripture](#)
- [Additional Resources](#). This includes dozens of crafts and activities designed for preschoolers through middle schoolers.

And see our nearly 50 “[Bible Stories for Kids](#)” with downloadable coloring pages.

And view our video “[Four Keys to Godly Parenting](#).”

If you have questions about parenting or other biblical and Christian living topics, our team of caring ministers are happy to help. Use our “Ask a Question” form at lifehopeandtruth.com/ask-a-question.

About **LifeHope&Truth**

LifeHopeandTruth.com exists to fill a critical void in this world: the lack of understanding about the purpose of life, the lack of realistic hope for a better future and the lack of truth!

Neither religion nor science has satisfactorily addressed these issues, so people today are of divided opinions, confused or, worst of all, don't care anymore. The ancient words of the prophet Isaiah ring so true today: "Truth is fallen in the street." Why? Is it because God was right when He warned that humans are inclined to reject Him and usually choose not to know Him?

We are here for people who are searching for answers, who are ready to prove all things or who are hungry for more than what they've been taught most of their lives about God, the Bible, the meaning of life and how to live. We want to help you truly understand the good news of the gospel and fulfill Jesus Christ's admonition to "seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness."

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