

UNIT 2: PARENTS AND CHILDREN

Lesson 10

Feb. 8, 2026

Responsibility of Parents to Children:

Christian parents are to nurture their children in the ways of the Lord.

THE LESSON OVERVIEW

Parents play a critical role in the spiritual and moral growth of their children. Within Christian families, parents play a key role in introducing children to Biblical concepts of salvation, morality, and truth. Parents provide guidance and correction that steer children from innate defiance toward a God-oriented life. This necessitates creating a nurturing home for spiritual development and discipleship. Parents bear a profound and honorable duty, partnering with God to shape the future generation. This responsibility demands dedication and commitment, balancing this privilege with the solemn duty of cultivating a faith enriching home.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

In his work on Christian family dynamics, Henry Brandt emphasizes the vital role of parents in guiding their children's spiritual development. He says it is a process of making disciples of Christ. This concept is rooted in Biblical teachings, which present God as our heavenly Father. Parents are tasked with the responsibilities of caregiving and guiding their children into capable, God-honoring adults. This personal and spiritual duty involves the sacred mission of cultivating their children's faith. By instilling values and supporting them through trials, parents have a profound influence on personal growth and individual integrity, which in turn have a crucial impact on society.

THE LESSON OUTLINE

1. CHILDREN ARE BLESSINGS FROM GOD: Psalms 127:3 through 128:6.

- A. A Heritage from the Lord (127:3-5)
- B. Blessings of a Godly Family (128:1-6)

2. DISCIPLINE AND INSTRUCTION COMMENDED: Proverbs 22:6; 29:15; Ephesians 6:4.

- A. Godly Discipline (Proverbs 22:6; 29:15)
- B. Godly Instruction (Ephesians 6:4)

3. PURPOSE OF DIVINE CORRECTION: Hebrews 12:5-11.

- A. The Privilege of Divine Correction (5-8)
- B. The Results of Divine Correction (9-11)

DISCUSSING THE LESSON

1. CHILDREN ARE A BLESSING FROM GOD: Psalms 127:3 through 128:6.

A. A Heritage From the Lord, Ps. 127:3-5

In verse 3, children are referred to as a “heritage of the Lord.” The word heritage refers to an inheritance, portion, or possession. They are also referred to as a “reward,” meaning they are a gift from God through the marital bond. In ancient Middle Eastern culture, children were considered a divine blessing, and large families were desirable. Children were viewed as a blessing for family strength, support, defense, and carrying on the family lineage. More importantly, the value of children in the eyes of God is emphasized in this text. As a blessing from God, parents are called to acknowledge this fact and treat their children accordingly.

In verses 4-5, the writer employs the symbolism of archery to highlight the significance of children, particularly sons, in ancient cultures. Sons were viewed as capable of defending the family during conflicts and participating in legal matters at the city gate. This metaphor likens godly parents to skilled archers, with their children as arrows that must be aimed in the right direction – namely, toward a life that glorifies God. The responsibility of parents is crucial, as even a slight deviation in their guidance can lead to missing this target. Interestingly, the Greek word for sin translates as “miss the mark,” highlighting the importance of precise parental instruction and direction. Children are gifts from God, akin to arrows in a quiver, but it is the parents’ duty to aim and release them wisely. Thankfully, through Scripture, God provides guidance to help parents excel in this vital role of parental archery.

B. Blessings of a Godly Family, Ps. 128:1-6.

This psalm provides a beautiful picture of a healthy, godly family. It is also a statement of God’s blessing on those who fear Him and walk accordingly to His ways. How does God bless such people? He gives them the joy and fulfillment of a functional (rather than dysfunctional) family. For children, nothing is more significant or impactful than their family. In this text, the benefits of a strong faith in God are illustrated, resulting in positive outcomes in the home. In verses 2 and 3, a good work ethic is rewarded with the fruit of one’s labors. The family is provided for and enjoys what they have. The wife is likened to a fruitful vine that grows alongside the house. The children come from the wife as a reward from God. The fruitful vine symbolizes the immeasurable value of a wife or mother to the domestic life of the home. Her role is pivotal in the health of the family.

Verse 3 also portrays children as gathered around the family tables. This verse highlights the joys and blessings of godly, nurturing relationships. In the context of parenting and family, it reveals the importance of creating a supportive environment where each child can thrive. The imagery of young olive plants, or saplings, suggests growth, vitality, and potential, reflecting the role of parents in cultivating their children’s development. It emphasizes that children are integral to the family’s strength and continuity, much like olive trees are valued for their resilience and productivity. Parents are encouraged to foster a supportive atmosphere that enables children to flourish, thereby enriching the family. This verse serves as a reminder that the well-being of a family is rooted in mutual respect, love, care, and above all, a reverence for God, which ultimately leads to a harmonious and prosperous household.

Family health does not mean perfection; a healthy family acknowledges there is always room for growth. Embracing challenges and imperfections helps members learn and grow. They view conflicts as natural in relationships and use them to strengthen bonds. Communication is central to maintaining this dynamic, ensuring everyone feels heard and valued. The key is nurturing each other’s physical, emotional, spiritual, and mental health. Healthy families celebrate all achievements

and offer comfort during tough times. Healthy Christian families always make space for grace and pray often for one another to mature in their faith in Jesus.

2. DISCIPLINE AND INSTRUCTION COMMENDED: Proverbs 22:6; 29:15; Ephesians 6:4.

A. Godly Discipline, Prov. 22:6; 29.

The admonition of Proverbs 22:6 to “train up a child in the way he should go” reflects the idea of dedication. It also means narrowing down or providing focus for a child’s conduct. This acknowledges the fact that children have a natural tendency to do evil due to the inherent sinful nature, one does not teach a child to lie or disobey: it is the result of Adam’s sin. However, most children also have an innate desire to do well and please their parents. Therefore, the parents’ task in disciplining their child is twofold: first, parents must curb the natural bent to do wrong; second, they must cultivate the desire to do good, ultimately to accept Christ as their Savior and grow in Him.

Each child is a treasure from God, endowed with their unique talents. The parent is responsible for discovering and encouraging these God-given abilities. Parents should observe each of their children to discover “the way he should go [teaching him to seek God’s wisdom and will for his abilities and talents]” (v. 6 Amp). This relates to God’s plan for the child and the gifts He has placed within them. Likewise, it is the responsibility of Christian parents to help their children move toward God rather than pursue the pleasures of sin. A plant will almost always grow toward the sun, and parents should always point their children toward the Son of God, Jesus Christ.

Proverbs 29:15 states, “The rod and rebuke give wisdom, but a child left to himself brings shame to his mother” (NKJV). This emphasizes the importance of discipline and guidance in nurturing wisdom and moral character. The rod refers to corrective measures, while rebuke concerns verbal instruction or admonition. Together, they serve as tools for teaching accountability and shaping behavior. The second part of the verse warns against neglecting this responsibility, as a lack of guidance can lead to poor choices and ultimately bring dishonor to the family. This proverb highlights the critical role of parenting in fostering personal growth and godly values. It shows that when applied with care and balance, discipline is a means of cultivating wisdom and preventing the negative consequences of neglect or lack of discipline.

B. Godly Instruction, Eph. 6:4.

Fathers are not to “provoke … [their] children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.” This verse offers profound guidance on parenting, emphasizing the delicate balance between correction and compassion. It acknowledges the significant role parents, particularly fathers, play in shaping their children’s character and spiritual growth. The directive to “don’t stir up anger in your children” (CSB) suggests parents should exercise their authority with sensitivity and understanding, avoiding harshness or unjust discipline that might lead to resentment or rebellion. This guideline accentuates two vital principles: authority blended with empathy. It calls for cultivating a nurturing and respectful environment marked by patience and encouraging guidance. Children who grow up feeling as if they will never be good enough to gain their parents’ approval often despair of trying to do well and grow up with a distorted view of God. Parents can predispose their children to view God as wrathful or loving.

The imperative to “bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord” (v. 4 CSB) stresses the importance of instilling spiritual values and ethical principles in children. This means more than just religious teachings and Bible stories; it involves consistency between words and actions.

Both through sound Biblical instruction and consistent Christian lives, parents teach their children God's precepts. By living out these values, parents become role models for their children. A supportive environment created by parents also signals care and dignity, bolstering feelings of safety and trust. Ultimately, Ephesians 6:4 proposes a parenting strategy that blends discipline with love, aiming to develop individuals who can face life's challenges with strength and integrity.

Parenting is a rewarding journey filled with joy and challenges, one that requires patience and love. Parents dedicating time to discipline and teaching build a foundation for their children's promising future. This nurturing process develops essential life skills and fosters a strong parent-child bond. Approaching this role with love allows for the growth of a child's unique talents and passions. Every child holds vast potential waiting to be unlocked, and through encouragement, parents empower them to excel. Remember, everyday experiences have the most profound impact. Cherish this incredible journey, knowing your love will leave lasting, positive effects.

3. PURPOSE OF DIVINE CORRECTION: Hebrews 12:5-11.

A. The Privilege of Divine Correction, Hebrews 12:5-8.

In verses 5 and 6, the writer quotes from Proverbs 3:11-12. He wanted his readers to put their troubles in proper perspective because some were considering forsaking their confession of faith in Christ. They had forgotten the Old Testament teaching about discipline. As a loving Father, God disciplines His children. God's correction is evidence of His love. In verse 5, chastening refers to "training and instruction attained through discipline and correction." Since it is God's responsibility to discipline His children, the writer says not to "despise" His chastening. As Christ's followers, we are not to take lightly or make little of God's correction. In verse 6, the writer uses the word "scourgeth," or "punishes" (CSB), a more substantial term meaning correction through corporal punishment. In modern thought, it is the concept of a parent spanking their child to help teach them a lesson. God does not discipline sinner; He punishes them. However, He disciplines His children.

In verses 7 and 8, the writer makes his argument using the example of earthly fathers. The Scriptures assume that loving parents correct and guide their children. This includes instruction, encouragement, nurturing, and disciplinary action. Parents who do not correct/discipline their children treat them as "illegitimate and not sons" (NKJV).

B. Results of Divine Correction, Hebrews 12:9-11.

People typically give their earthly fathers "reverence" even though they correct and instruct their children (v. 9). The idea of reverence includes submission. If one provides such respect for earthly fathers, how much more should Christians submit to their heavenly Father? Verse 10 states that earthly fathers correct their children for a short while. The discipline does not have to continue if the parent has effectively brought up their child. Therefore, there is less need for continued correction and discipline. Proper discipline by a loving parent typically bears positive results. Godly parents do what seems "best to them" (NKJV), meaning they discipline according to what they understand to be right and best for their children at the time.

The heavenly Father disciplines to lead His children to righteousness. God is not harsh nor does He ignore sinful or inappropriate behavior. He exercises discipline for a person's good. One of the results of His discipline is that His children are made to be more like Him, as reflected in holiness.

In verse 11, the writer states the obvious: No chastening seems pleasant at the time. Chastening is not meant to be an enjoyable experience. However, the process is designed to produce positive results, including learning a valuable lesson. Children are meant to learn from this experience. The same truth holds spiritually with the heavenly Father. The pivotal point in this verse is, “nevertheless, afterward,” the Lord produces “the peaceable fruit of righteousness.”

Hebrews 2:5-11 offers valuable insight into divine discipline, comparing it to the nurturing correction of a parent. This passage emphasizes that discipline, despite its discomfort, is a demonstration of love intended for personal growth and righteousness. We are invited to view difficulties not as burden, but as opportunities for growth, thereby enhancing endurance and strength. By enduring, we become transformed, changing into improved versions of ourselves. This viewpoint fosters patience and gratitude, revealing that such experiences are crucial to our spiritual path, shaping character and deepening faith.

CALL TO DISCIPLESHIP

Christian parents have the responsibility and privilege to shape their children’s lives to reflect God’s image. Christ’s command to make disciples is primarily the duty of parents, not just the church.

MINISTRY IN ACTION

One of the most significant challenges in disciplining a child is maintaining consistency. Pray together for God’s wisdom and grace as godly parents. Churches should encourage such prayer by and for parents.

WORKSHEET

An Israelite Father Who Had Only Daughters

The Story About Zelophehad and His Five Daughters is told in three chapters of the Book of Numbers in the Old Testament.

God Commanded Moses To Take a Census of Israel in the second year of their 40 years of wandering in the wilderness of the Sinai Peninsula (Numbers 1:1-3), and again in the last year of their wandering (26:1-4).

The Incident Regarding Zelophehad's Daughters came about as a result of the second census of Israel mentioned above. In taking the census, it was discovered that Zelophehad, a descendant of Joseph the son of Jacob, had no sons to become heirs of his promised inheritance of land in Canaan (26:33).

As a Result of This Situation for Zelophehad, his five daughters are named several times in Numbers (Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Tirzah), and their situation became the subject of an extremely important decision given to Moses by God (27:1-6).

By God's Command, a Law Was Established For Israel, that if a man had no sons, but only daughters, his inheritance, at his death, would pass to his daughters (27:6-8). This was a very significant law, in view of the fact that in the ancient world the inheritance of a father could pass not to daughters, but only to his sons, or to other near male relatives, if he no sons (vv. 9-11).

A Short While After This Decision Was Given, leaders of the tribe of Joseph came to Moses and requested that the daughters of Zelophehad be required to marry men within their own tribe, so none of the inheritance of land given to the tribe of Joseph (Manasseh and Ephraim), would become the property of other Israelite tribes. This request was granted (36:1-6).

So, The Five Daughters of Zelophehad married men in their own tribe (36:10-13). And thus concluded The Book of Numbers.

Spiritual Nurture

- 1. What are children compared with in Psalm 122:4-5, and why?**
- 2. What are children compared with in Psalm 128:3-4, and why?**
- 3. What does Psalm 128:5-6 imply about grandparents?**
- 4. What will likely happen if parents fail to “train up [their] child in the way [they] should go” (Proverbs 22:6)?**
- 5. How can parents bring up their children “in the discipline and instruction of the Lord” without “provoking them to anger” (Ephesians 6:4 ESV)?**
- 6. What can we learn from the heavenly Father about how we should (and should not) discipline our children?**