

For the Love of the Family Ministries

Missionaries to America's Forgotten Mission Field, the Family

Testimony of Failing To Witness

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Rearing Spiritual Children

Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it. Proverbs 22:6 My son, give me thine heart, and let thine eyes observe my ways. Proverbs 23:26

The Bible has a lot to say about rearing children. This series undoubtedly will be different from the normal thinking or perhaps even what you have ever heard before. Folks, it is not my purpose to criticize anyone. God knows my heart; I want to help. Just as the Bible gives principles for other areas of life, it gives principles in this area as well. I know there is a lot of confusion in this area. Parents are hurting. Children are hurting. We certainly are not seeing children grow up and serve the Lord today. Why?

I have given this subject a lot of consideration; in fact, several years of consideration. All I can tell you is what the Bible says. I know the Bible works. If it does not work, the problem is not with the Bible; the problem is with me.

I know that you folks out there can say, “Well, I know a preacher’s child that turned out not serving the Lord.” Well, I can tell you about them too, many of them who are not serving or living for God. In more than twenty years of ministry I have seen a pattern develop. Several years ago I was called by another pastor who asked me to visit his son who lived near our church. He told me his son was away from God and he was greatly concerned. I agreed to visit his son. I went to the home and the son had a huge room with a pool table and several friends over. They were all drinking beer and using improper language. I introduced myself and the son invited me in. We talked for a minute and I asked if we could meet and talk (in my mind, at a better time). He really was not all that interested, but he agreed to meet me. At the second meeting, I shared his father’s concern. He laughed and told me a story about being involved in high school sports. He was a wrestler. He wanted to wrestle and asked his father for permission to participate in wrestling. The problem was the wrestling meets were on Wednesday night. This meant the son had to miss the prayer meeting night. The son continued to talk to his father about it and his father said it would be okay to miss just the Wednesday nights that wrestling was involved and that would be it. A pattern of unfaithfulness started. Because of a lust for the things of the world and a father who waffled in his convictions, he lost his son. This young man told me that after that he had no respect for what his father had to say. His son knew this was a compromise and he wished his father had stood for what was right. Just think folks, a pastor lost his son spiritually because he failed to have his son do what he preached to others they should do. The father showed an inconsistent pattern in his life.

Hebrews 10:25 “Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.”

Every preacher’s child I have talked to that does not live for God tells me about inconsistency in the parent’s life. This is in example, discipline, or communication, somewhere. Normally the problem shows up in other areas as well. Just about every child not living for God I have talked to says the same thing.

When I talk to the parents I get this response. “We did all we could do. We took them to church, had family devotions etc.” If you really get to digging in their lives, you find real spiritual inconsistencies, though. It is that way every time. You see folks; the Bible gives us commands. This is very important. God’s commands are directed to our will. Whenever God gives us a command, He makes us responsible. God knows we can do that. God does not make us responsible for things we cannot do.

Proverbs 22:6 *Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.* Proverbs is a book about a father instructing his son. Much of the teaching of Proverbs is by contrast. If you really want to know about the subject of child rearing read the book of Proverbs.

Notice here in the first half of this verse “***Train up a child in the way he should go***”. This word training has to do with spiritual instruction. So many parents are concerned about the physical and social well being of their child that they are severally neglecting the spiritual well being of the child. Most parents have the idea if they bring their children to church, send them to a Christian school, and pray at meals; it will turn out okay.

Notice it says, “**Train**”. This is like an athlete in training. Keep working at it all the time and do not let up. As parents, you need to set your mind to it. The first part of this verse deals with a command. **Train up a child in the way he should go.** Question? Who is the command to? Parents? More specifically, fathers! Just for the sake of reinforcing this, look at **Ephesians 6:4** **And ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.** How does a father provoke his children to wrath? By not bringing them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. The word **nurture** means training with structure. In the home, God has given an order. The order for the home is Christ, husband, wife, and children. This order is given for that basis, order. When God’s order is violated, you have a problem. In fact folks I see this as being one of the biggest spiritual problems we have today. I will deal with this subject later in the series on the family.

Notice that the first part of Proverbs 22:6 is a command, specifically stated to fathers! This is commanded activity; it makes us responsible.

The second part of the verse is **and when he is old.** My understanding of the Hebrew meaning for this phrase is when the child leaves the house. Not when he is seventy-five he will return. It means, mom and dad, when the child leaves the home he will not depart from the training you have given him. Remember that the word training here is spiritual training. Remember this is a book of contrasts. Here is the principle. If he is trained right, he will not depart from it. Folks, listen to me very carefully right now. The lie that many Christians have bought into is that it is not their fault if their children turn out wrong. It is a good rationalization of sin, and it is really hurting the cause of Christ. The Bible says do it right, train him up right, and the promise of God is he will not depart from living for God. My question: Is God a liar? No. Then what is the problem? I mean why are we having an epidemic of children who grow up in Christian homes and do not serve God? Not only do they not live for God, but many live like barnyard animals. Proverbs 22:6 is a timeless principle of God. If the child departs then whose fault is it? It is the fault of the parents, specifically the father.

My purpose is not to be unloving or to be mean, but God said this; I did not. The question is, can we rear spiritual children? Let me give you the classic answer that all preachers and I hear. “Well, Pastor, we did all we could do, but they still went the other way.” Folks, if you start to believe that now, you’re going to have some spiritual misfits and misery on your hands.

Therefore, we have identified the source. **The training is wrong.** What is the correct training? I feel sorry for many parents. They have never been trained in spiritual principles by their parents or their pastor. Many pastors do not know what it means to rear children for God. Consequently, it is like the blind leading the blind. Alternatively, maybe you were saved as an adult. The answers are found in the Bible. I know someone is going to say, “I know where you are headed. You are going to tell us to attend services, read the Bible, pray, have family devotions and so on. We have done all those things and look what we have.” Well, all those things are important, but they can be done mechanically; in essence, not with the right heart. They are not done with the right heart. They are not done with a real heart for God. You cannot teach a child to have a spiritual relationship if you do not have a spiritual relationship.

There is an interesting word in Proverbs 1:1-8. This word is repeated in verse 2,3,7 and 8. The word is **instruction**. Notice in **Proverbs 1:4, To give subtilty to the simple, to the young man knowledge and discretion.** This instruction deals with the training of Proverbs 22:6. What kind of training are we talking about? Spiritual training. Who is responsible? Dad. If the training is wrong, the child will depart.

Someone has said, “When a parent is involved in sin, it will always show up in the children.” It always does. Some Bible examples: David, Solomon, and Eli. There are many others.

We have identified the problem, the training. Really, identifying the problem is easy. The difficult part is correction of the problem. The problem is the training and who does it. How many times is mom left with the spiritual training of the children? In most churches in our country, the mother is left with the spiritual training of the children. The question in the first message was where are the fathers? Do you know what the key verse is in this book? Listen carefully, **Proverbs 23:26, My son, give me thine heart, and let thine eyes observe my ways.**

Dad, you have to get the child’s heart! I am going to devote a whole sermon to this later in the series, but what I am interested in explaining is the last part of the verse. **And let thine eyes observe my ways.** Do you know what the real problem is spiritually? The children are observing the ways of their dads. We have dads all across this country that love their children, but they neglect their children’s spiritual training. Your children look to you. When they see spiritual things are not important to you, it all falls in place. You cannot fool your own children. They know if you are real or not. They know what takes first place in your life. They know if you have a real heart for God. Unfortunately, the devil knows as well and the devil knows how to use it.

We have identified the problems:

The wrong kind of training and the way the training is done.

1. Who is doing the training?
2. The example in the training.

The remedy for wrong training is Dad has to have a real spiritual relationship with the Lord.

1. Dad has to commit himself to rearing spiritual children and has to get the child’s heart. You must pray for this. Dad has to have a real spiritual relationship with the Lord.
2. Dad has to commit himself to rearing spiritual children and has to get the child’s heart. You must pray for this.

I am going to cover these in detail later. This series is designed to identify, correct, and help parents to train their children to have a relationship with God and live for Him. Do not listen to excuses from those who have failed in the rearing of their children spiritually. The devil knows that misery loves company. Can we rear spiritual children? Absolutely. Why can we rear spiritual children? Because God says so. You must work at rearing a godly family.

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