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For the Love of the Family Ministries™

Missionaries to America's Forgotten Mission Field, the Family

Rearing Spiritual Children Part 3

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Rearing Spiritual Children Part 3

Proverbs 4:1-13 "Hear, ye children, the instruction of a father, and attend to know understanding. For I give you good doctrine, forsake ye not my law. For I was my father's son, tender and only beloved in the sight of my mother. He taught me also, and said unto me, Let thine heart retain my words: keep my commandments, and live. Get wisdom, get understanding: forget it not: neither decline from the words of my mouth. Forsake her not, and she shall preserve thee: love her and she shall keep thee. Wisdom is the principal thing: therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding. Exalt her, and she shall promote thee: she shall bring thee to honor, when thou dost embrace her. She shall give to thine head an ornament of grace: a crown of glory shall she deliver to thee. Hear, O my son, and receive my sayings; and the years of thy life shall be many. I have taught thee in the way of wisdom; I have lead thee in right paths. When thou goest, thy steps shall

be straitened; and when thou runnest, thou shalt not stumble. Take fast hold of instruction; let her not go: keep her; for she is thy life."

The book of Proverbs is about a man instructing his son spiritually. We have seen in this series of messages that God not only says we can rear spiritual children, He expects us to. It is important for every Christian parent to realize that the devil makes war on babies. Not only does the devil make war on baby Christians, but also he makes war on our babies. If the devil cannot get to you, he desires to get to you through your children. The reality we need to understand is that we are in a spiritual battle. Ephesians 6:4, 16 "And ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Above all, taking the shield of faith wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked." These two verses are connected very importantly in this matter of rearing our children to love and serve their Savior.

The shield of faith is a vital part of the Christians armor. You are to put on the "whole armor of God" because the Christian life is a warfare, a spiritual conflict. The problem today is the Christian who hears these words, but does not really hear them. I am convinced that most Christians hear they are in a spiritual battle but do not understand the battle is real. Therefore, they do not live like it is real and they have no idea how to train their children in this matter. Rearing our children for God is a serious issue that is not being understood in this apostate hour. As the Apostle Paul names the different parts of the Christian's armor, he comes to the shield of faith and emphasizes its importance by saying, "Above all, taking the shield of faith..."-for with the shield of faith, nothing can hurt you; you are more than conquers through Him. Romans 8:31, 37.

Parents it is important for you to be spiritually dressed every day. The devil will seek to destroy our lives and our children's lives. Parents you and I will never minister to our children spiritual things unless we have been ministered to by the Lord. We need to get spiritually dressed every day and teach our children how to be spiritually dressed. How do we do that? I think there is something important here. You can open your Bible every day and go about it methodically, mechanically with a ho hum attitude. You will be spiritually blinded and dead. II Timothy 2:15 "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." The word study here means to give diligence to. Listen carefully, we need to go at the study of the Word of God prayerfully, passionately." We need to pray "Lord I want you to open the Word of God to me today. Holy Spirit be my teacher and my guide. Lord is there any sin that stands between me and you today? Show me my sin." When God does show you any sin you must confess the sin, repent from the sin and forsake the sin. Then and only then will you be able to minister to others, which includes your own children. We then need to pray for the filling of the Holy Spirit. We need to ask God to control us that day by the Holy Spirit. We need to ask God to help us put on the armor of God today. This must be done every day.

Folks, I do not see much passion today among Christians for rearing children for God. The major reason is it takes work to have a spiritual relationship with God and it takes even more work to convey how to have a spiritual relationship to your children. Most parents have never sat down and talked with their children about dealing with their sin, understanding their old nature etc. One of the

greatest experiences of my life was with our oldest daughter, Teresa. Teresa recently graduated from Bible College and has married a godly young man and they are currently preparing to go to the mission field. She has a heart for God. When she was sixteen the Lord laid on my heart to spend more time with her. For the next two years every Sunday after church we would go get a coke and take a drive. Some times we would drive for hours and just talk about he Lord.

She would ask spiritual questions and we would talk about them. No subject was out of bounds. We talked about developing our relationship with the Lord. We talked about how to really pray and what she was learning from her Bible. What was God speaking to her about? We would talk about what she was looking for in a godly young man for a husband. I made sure she understood that she needed a young man who would not be lead by his emotions, but one who would be lead by the word of God. I explained that a young man who is lead by his emotions would eventually lead her into sin. We prayed together and became closer as a father and a daughter. I made sure she understood what her mother and I expected from her when she left our home. The key here was it took time. I had to make the time. To this day when she really wants to talk about spiritual issues she says "dad can we go get a coke and take a drive?" This time spent with our daughter on the Lord's day helped her at a time when she was preparing to leave our home to understand the importance we and the Lord placed on our spiritual lives. Parents, spiritual communication is one of the keys to rearing godly children. The second key is taking the time to do it. The third key is I have to have a spiritual relationship with the Lord myself to be able to share my spiritual heart with my child. Teresa is a lovely young lady who was home schooled, became a spiritual leader at Bible College, and has a heart to serve and love the Lord. Listen carefully; do not assume the children understand spiritual truth. You need to communicate spiritual truth and repeat it over and over. Repetition is the key to learning. Set the time aside and pray much for God to give you the child's heart. Proverbs 23:26. When God does give you the child's heart make sure you put the right things there. I showed my daughters how to have a daily time with God and went over it with them repeatedly. I looked at their notebooks and asked them questions and prayed with them. (We have a program developed for our church people called "How to Have a Daily Time with God." It goes step by step on how to have a daily time with God and gives the books of your Bible you should read in the order you should read them and what you are looking for in your Bible). It is available by writing to our address. Our daughters were taught this from a young age. By the time they went to Bible College they knew their Bible very well and their spiritual relationship was well established. When we send our children to Bible College we need to send them to a place that will stretch and challenge them spiritually. They need to be challenged to expand their relationship for God. Do not send your children to a place where there is no challenge to live for God.

When the Lord gave my wife and I children, we were young Christians. We had not been saved very long and were in the first few months of Bible College. My wife almost died in childbirth with Teresa. I got on my knees at 4:00 A.M. in the hospital in Chattanooga, Tennessee, and asked God to spare the life of my wife and daughter. If he would do so, I would promise to rear my daughter for Him. I was not impressed with the children that were being reared around me at Bible College. Also, I was not impressed with many of the Pastor's children I saw and with those who were preparing to serve God as Pastors and the children they were rearing. I shared this with my wife and we prayed

and asked God for help in this matter. We sat down together and read every verse in the Bible that talked about rearing children, our responsibility in rearing our children, and any verse that was remotely connected. We prayed over the verses and asked that God would make them real in our life. We started the plan when Teresa was a baby and we made this a goal in our life. God was gracious to show us many things we needed. We were not spiritually mature Christians when we started to look at these verses; we were just a young couple asking God to help us rear our children for Him. James 4:8 became very real in our life, "Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you." God began to teach us and we applied what the Lord was showing us.

I would go in to Teresa's room every evening while she was asleep as a baby and get down beside the bed and pray for God to help us to be spiritual parents, to do exactly as He commanded and to not let us fail in this matter. It takes commitment on the part of the parents to make this happen. As a Pastor, I believe the Bible teaches that I do not have a ministry unless my children live for God. I know many people do not like to hear that, but the Bible tells us so. One of the qualifications of a Pastor as stated in I Timothy 3:4-5 "One that ruleth well his own house having his children in subjection with all gravity; For if a man know not how to rule (manage) his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?"

Parents, as soon as Junior learns to read get him started in his own daily time with God. We started with our children before they could read reading them a book called "Little Talks with God." We also read to them "Keys for Kids." We talked to them as small children about what it means to be saved and having a testimony for the Lord. We prayed daily with them and talked and prayed with them for others to be saved. As spiritual issues came up we discussed it with them.

Do you know how many times the word instruction is used in Proverbs? Twenty-five times. It is used only eight times in the rest of the Bible. Proverbs 4:1 "Hear ye children, the instruction of a father." Proverbs 4:4 "He (meaning father) taught me also". Parents, whenever God wants to make a point in the Bible he repeats it. In Proverbs he has repeated it twenty five times! Parents, he is saying you receive instruction from the Lord and give it to your children. That takes work! It means more than just reading a verse with them before they go to bed and praying a little prayer.

I also want to point out to you something important about Proverbs 23:26, the last phrase says "let thine eyes observe my ways." Have you ever thought about what is the true definition of spirituality? The definition of true spirituality is the believer's submissive relationship to the Holy Spirit. Parents, he says "follow my example, observe my ways." If your children never see you submitting to the Holy Spirit they sure will not respond to the Holy Spirit. You need to respond to the Holy Spirit not just in services, but in the home as well. If God the Holy Spirit has dealt with you about something that you want to change in the home, set the children down and tell them the Holy Spirit has dealt with you and this is the reason you are going to change this. If necessary, tell them this is sin and I have confessed this to the Lord. They see then that God is dealing in your every day life. Folks, that is important!

One of the real failures in child rearing is that we have given our children exposure, but not true

instruction.

We may bring them to all the services, as well we should. They learn a few verses in Sunday school and we feel pretty good about that. We can even put them in a Christian school and have prayer at meals and at bedtime. All these things are good, but they are exposure not the type of instruction that God is talking about here in Proverbs. The Christian parent hopes it all turns out all right. Parents that is not training!

A lot is said today in Christian books on the subject of communication. Then they proceed to tell us that we talk about ball games, any kind of game, things children like etc. Listen carefully, God is saying this instruction here deals with spiritually communicating. Folks, this goes back to ministering to them the things of the Lord. These are things the Lord has ministered to us. You must take time in this communication to explain to Junior salvation, repentance, being filled with the Spirit, walking in the Spirit, how to pray, how to witness, how to study their Bible. You must talk to them about God the Holy Spirit, God the Father, the purpose of the church etc.

We have been brainwashed to believe that the children will get that in Sunday school and the Christian school. The child will never listen there like he will to dad and mom on these areas. We will not be able to talk about these subjects with our children if we do not know what the Bible teaches about them. I hope you are starting to see the void I am a talking about. In Proverbs you see the father talking to his son about these and many other spiritual things as well. Parents, the children must learn spiritual truth from you.

The reason for the massive spiritual failure is parents who are not willing to work at their spiritual relationship and then working with their children in spiritual matters. I have heard many parents say, "I took Junior to church and he went away from God". The point is you only gave him exposure not training. Then they say "he came back to God after living in sin." I rejoice in that and am glad God got a hold of his heart. The sad part is most do not come back because they have only been given exposure and they see no power or difference in that. If you are fortunate that God was gracious and God did get a hold of that child's heart, we are glad for that. However, many make major sin messes of their lives in the meantime and make messes of other lives. The teaching of Proverbs is start early and train the child and the training will stay with him for the rest of his life. Exposure without training is deadly to spirituality. If you do not train him he will have to develop it himself. The big problem is he has already been religious and saw no power or difference in that.

A child that has been trained properly will not be blown away when the time of adversity comes because he will have seen you deal with problems in the spiritual way and you showed him how.

Proverbs 24:10, 19:21, 9:10 "If thou faint in the day of adversity, thy strength is small. There are many devices in a man's heart: nevertheless the counsel of the Lord, that shall stand. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the Holy is understanding."

Remember parents the father in Proverbs is telling all this to his son. Do you see the way he talks to him? We have been brainwashed that somehow we are not to communicate to our children

spiritual things. That might turn them away from God. No folks we are to work at communicating God's truth to our children.

Some people will even say, "let the Holy Spirit do the work." Dear friend what is it that the Holy Spirit uses? The Word of God! Parents do not be afraid to communicate spiritual truth to your children. In fact you may have to force yourself to communicate to them. As you listen and observe you will learn their strengths and weaknesses and you learn about the child and their way. The lie of the devil is you will drive them away. No, folks when they are young you have a tremendous opportunity to mold their spiritually thinking. Start off slowly and go deeper as they get more understanding. Remember this is a spiritual growth process for you and them. The more you communicate the more questions they will have. This is a discipling factor for you. There should be no greater joy than to disciple your own children. You must have a passion and desire to work at spiritually training your children.

Proverbs 23:26 "My son, give me thine heart." How do you get their heart? Here he just asked the child for it. All the way through Proverbs he says, "Listen to me son." This is where love comes in. Verbalize to your children you love them. Make sure they know and tell them over and over that you love them and God loves them. Husbands and fathers sometimes have a hard time with this. If you start out early in marriage and when your children are small this should not be a problem. If it is hard for your personality ask the Lord to help you verbalize your love for your wife and children. I have found the best way to do this is to verbalize my love for the Lord to Him.

Dad, if all you ever do is beat the tar out of the child and never tell them you love them you are in trouble. Also, many parents do not understand how to discipline their children and beating the tar out of them is not God's method. I will deal with God's method in another message. We do believe in spanking, but there is more to it than that.

Dad we need to pray for wisdom and ask God to show us where we need to work at in the child's life. We need to know our weaknesses and the child's weaknesses. Parents if we make a mistake, be willing to admit it. We must respond to the Holy Spirit's conviction in our lives.

I want to give you ten brief items for review:

1. Parents must have a spiritual relationship daily with the Lord. This relationship must not be mechanical, but a spiritual relationship.
2. Parents need to commit themselves to rearing godly children. Pray for wisdom and the endurance daily to do so.
3. Be willing to admit personal failure to God and the children.
4. Communicate spiritually to your children. Make yourself talk to them about spiritual things. We need to not only talk to them but to instruct them on how to have a daily time with the Lord. We

must be available to instruct spiritually in all areas.

5. Explain to them truths from God's Word.

6. Get the child's heart. We need to pray for the child's heart and ask the child for their heart.

7. Teach the child to fear the Lord. Proverbs 1:7

8. Talk to the children about what God expects. You must do this more than once and this should be a continual process.

9. Make sure you tell the children you love them, that God loves them and you must show them you do.

10. Children must see parents submit and respond to the Holy Spirit. You must respond to the Holy Spirit in the preaching and teaching of God's word and in your own devotional life. You must teach and encourage your children to do so as well.

The next message deals with proper discipline of the child. What we have covered up to now is extremely important, but proper discipline is extremely important as well. Proverbs mentions it five times. Finally we will cover what to do if you have failed to train your child to live for God.