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## **For the Love of the Family Ministries™**

**Missionaries to America's Forgotten Mission Field, the Family  
The Most Important Key In Rearing Children to Live For the Lord Part 2**

**Dr. Terry L. Coomer, Pastor  
Ministry of Hope Baptist Church  
139 Shadow Oaks Drive  
Sherwood, AR 72120  
501-819-0446**

[TLCOOMER@juno.com](mailto:TLCOOMER@juno.com)

<http://www.fortheloveofthefamily.com>

<http://www.hopebaptistlittlerock.com>

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## **The Most Important Key In Rearing Children to Live For the Lord Part Two**

**Malachi 4:5-6, "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD: And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse."**

I said last time, Kim and I are at the time of our life where we are looking back to see what we did wrong and right in the rearing of our children. Of course, over time, dealing with people, and the study of God's Word we keep learning more. What could we have done differently? Where did we make mistakes? What good things did we accomplish? Last time we said the most important issue in child rearing is to **get the heart** of the child and **keep the heart** of the child, Proverbs 23:26. Unfortunately, many Christian parents have never heard this or do not understand the importance

of it.

Over the more than 30 years I have been a Christian, I have seen more fear in the lives of parents on this subject of child rearing than anything else. I have also seen more confusion, pain, and disaster relating to this than anything else. The devil has done a good job here because most Christian parents are utterly confused on the issue. Many Pastors are also confused on the issue. More children grow up in Christian homes and do not serve the Lord than do grow up and serve the Lord. In fact, the statistics are staggering.

Malachi 4:6, “And he shall turn **the heart of the fathers** to the children, and **the heart of the children to their fathers...**”

Rebellion in a child is not normal, it is Satanic. Ephesians 6:6, “...**doing the will of God from the heart**”. If you do not have the child’s heart, you have the potential for rebellion and terrible horrible things occur when that happens. The one who has the child’s heart will eventually have his life and his loyalty.

I hope you noticed the matter in Malachi 4:6 about turning the heart of the children to their fathers. Whoever has the heart will eventually have the child. Folks, there are four things about the heart that are very important:

1. Pray for and ask God daily to give you your child’s heart.
2. The heart can be lost.
3. The heart can be hardened.
4. The heart can be stolen.

Items two through four is the pattern a child goes through to rebellion and it happens in that order. Children will not give their hearts to their parents (remember your goal in life as a parent is to get and keep their heart) until they see their parents as just, Luke 1:17, “to the wisdom of the just”. The number one characteristic of wisdom is justice. When parents are seen by children as being just, then the children feel free to trust their hearts to the parents. Then “the disobedient (children Luke 1:17) becomes open to the wisdom of the just”.

Young people are not ready for God to work in their hearts until their hearts are turned from themselves to their parents. When a teenager gets right with his parents, he finds it easy to get right with God at the same time. His biggest problem in surrendering to the Lord is surrendering his heart, will, and emotions to his parents.

Listen carefully; a parent who is led by his or her emotions will lead their children into sin every time. What I am talking about here is illustrated in the Bible with the story of Absalom and David in II Samuel 13-15. Because David lost Absalom’s heart, his heart was hardened and he rebelled against his father. David surely did not understand the damage he had done to the heart of his child. In fact, he ignored him. Absalom in turn stole the hearts of the people and turned their hearts against

David. (II Samuel 15:1-6). What a story of pain, agony, and disaster. The same type of story is played out in many Christian homes with some variation. Folks, **remember the heart of every spiritual problem is a matter of the heart.**

One of the most important statements I can make is this: **The key ingredient is to get the child's heart early and to keep their heart. Don't lose their heart and if you do, find out where you lost it quickly. Go get it back quickly no matter what it takes to get it.** A little later in this series I will talk about turning around a rebellious child and how you get the child's heart back. It can be done if a parent understands the matter of the heart and is willing to pay the price to do it.

Hebrews 3:10, ...”they do always err in their heart”. The reason that most children who grow up in Christian homes do not live for God is the parents do not have the heart of the child or they had the heart of the child and they lost the heart of the child.

When we see defiance and rebellion we really do not understand what is going on underneath everything. You have lost the heart of the child at this point! I can hear some one now say, why did I lose it? We will cover that a little later.

Why is it such a big deal about the heart? The heart controls everything about the life. It is much like the physical heart which is the most vital organ of the body. You could lose your leg or arm and live...but that is not true of the heart!

Folks, the word heart (spiritual) occurs about 900 times in the Word of God. If you lose their heart, you lose their respect. If you have their heart, you can teach them and protect them. Remember, whoever has the heart eventually has the child.

I have seen many hearts of young people get stolen and the parents do not even know it! Years ago, a young lady in our church was going into her senior year of high school. Her mother called me one afternoon and asked if she and Mary could come by and see me. We set up a time, and they came by. Mary and her mother were in tears, as mom explained she and her husband were going away for a week on an anniversary cruise. She stated that she and her husband had had several conversations with Mary about staying home alone. Mom stated, “We want Mary to stay with you and Kim for the week, because we cannot trust her”. At this point Mary and mom were bawling. I found myself on the horns of a dilemma. Mary had no interest in staying with us for a week. She also had no interest in obeying her father and mother. You understand at this point mom and dad had lost the heart of their daughter and did not know it. Of course, mom and dad were concerned because of the behavior of their daughter who grew up in church and had gone to a Christian school all her life.

I asked mom why she did not trust her daughter, and her answer was revealing, “Because I do not trust what I have seen with her and her boy friend”. Mary had had a boy friend since she was a freshman in high school. Of course, this was acceptable behavior with the parents and kids in the Christian school she attended even though her Pastor had spoke and showed from the Bible many times that girls and boys do not need to be involved at this point because they will give their heart to each other. When that happens the parents are in trouble and the child is in spiritual trouble.

Mary stayed with us that week. It was a difficult week and it sought to only push her farther away from the heart of her parents to the heart of her boy friend. Her heart was now hardened and therefore it was stolen by her boy friend. This was a young man who grew up in a Christian home and in a Christian school. He told her, “She did not have to listen to her parents or her Pastor”. **REBELLION!** Mom and Dad still did not see it when I explained what the problem was. They wanted their daughter to be socially acceptable. They lost their daughter. Disaster happened when mom and dad encouraged her to go to a Bible College when she graduated. She wanted to be with her boy friend and he had her heart. The sadness is many Christian parent’s think it is cute when in fact it goes against the matter of the heart. The pain this family suffered was immense. Of course, the parents blew me off when I told them when she was in 9<sup>th</sup> grade that this was a recipe for a disaster. Many times they heard me preach about this and felt it did not apply to them and their home. They some how thought they were different. They did not understand that the heart is a very delicate matter.

Folks, that is the reason why the world all around us is working to tie the hearts of children with a whole bunch of things, I John 2:15. The world is continually trying to tie the heart of the child to the babysitter, friends, television, school teachers, cartoon figures, sports stars, and rock stars. Satan also uses the boy friend-girl friend craze to steal the hearts of the children from the parent’s permanently.

The sadness in our day is how utterly blinded parents are. They encourage their 13, 14, 15, and 16 year olds to look for boy friends and girl friends. We must teach them that the heart is a delicate matter and they are **to give their hearts and emotions to only one person in life**. It is no wonder the Christian home is in such a mess.

I have had many parents ask me, “When the disaster took place what happened?” At the time if you explained it to them they would get angry at you and it is your fault. Or even if you explain it to them when the disaster hits they still are mad and angry and unwilling to see the need and what they must do to get their child’s heart back. They believe they have done what they could do. They are angry because their heart is broken over the rebellion of their child, the behavior of their child, and the lack of spiritual interest of their child.

The heart can be lost. Many parents violate the only negative command in the Bible in respect to their children and they lose the child’s heart. Folks, I guarantee you if you violate this command you will lose the child’s heart. That command is in Ephesians 6:4, “And ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath...” The word wrath means a strong desire to avenge. Folks, the biggest way the parents lose the heart of their child is through the ungodly anger of one or both of the parents. The companion verse to this is in Colossians 3:21. Ungodly anger discourages a child. Some other companion verses are: Ephesians 4:26-27, James 1:20, Psalm 37:8, Galatians 5:19-20 and Ephesians 4:31 which says, **“Let ALL wrath and anger....be put away from you...”**

So many parents display anger in the home. The child may do what you say because they are afraid of you, but their heart is moving away from you. Ephesians 4:32 says, “And be ye kind one to

another, tenderhearted....” Does your child see you as kind and tenderhearted or as an angry person?

**There is no place for ungodly anger in the Christian life especially with your wife, husband, and your children! We are to be controlled by the Spirit, Ephesians 5:18. Being angry in an ungodly manner is not being controlled by the Spirit! There is no justification for it.**

I do not know how many times I have heard a teen that is rebellious tell me, but dad comes home and he is just mad all the time.

We have many missionaries come to our church. Many of the missionaries who come to our church you do not meet until they arrive. I watch how they interact with their children, wife, and husband. I have seen some angry stuff and rebellious children. It is a recipe for disaster in the ministry and in their home.

One of the first things I ask a parent who is having difficulty with their child is, “Do you see yourself with an angry spirit?” The answer will tell you immediately. I have had people who got mad trying to tell me they did not have an angry spirit!

On one occasion, I had been counseling a couple for marital problems and the children were in rebellion. I stopped by the home unannounced and heard yelling and screaming. I knocked on the door and one of the children let me in with rolling eyes. The father was on the phone with the mother and both were yelling. The husband handed me the phone and said, “See what I have to deal with?” I listened for a minute and heard some awful language and screaming and then I said the mother’s name. She immediately stopped and her whole disposition changed. Later in one of the counseling sessions with the 12 year old boy, he said, “Pastor, I wish they would just stop yelling at each other and us. They are always mad!” This couple is now divorced, involved in immoral relationships, drugs, and their children have been immoral and involved in drugs. They would not listen when they were told anger was destroying their marriage and their children.

You may say I do not get angry that often. Let me ask you this, if you lived by a volcano how would you feel about it if it only erupted every once in awhile? **There is no place at all at any time for ungodly anger in your home or the Christian life, Ephesians 4:31. The heart is much too delicate to survive the catastrophic situation of the anger of the parents. I have found that anger is a sin that many Christians justify, and do not understand the damage they are doing spiritually and in every other way to their wife, husband, and children.**

In the next article we will see what anger does, how the Bible describes it, and how to deal with it. In conclusion, I want to give you seven things I have found that cause parents to lose the heart of the child. Remember, that anger is by far the most often problem and is a variable in some of these:

1. Criticizing unjustly.
2. Speaking to them harshly.
3. Teasing excessively.
4. Too high of expectations.

5. Insulting them publicly.
6. Not communicating
7. Not spending time with them.

Remember folks, the heart issue happens in the order I pointed out.

1. Heart can be lost.
2. Heart can be hardened.
3. The heart is then available to be stolen.

*Terry L. Coomer is the Pastor of Elwood Bible Baptist Church, and the Director of For the Love of the Family Ministries. He has also served as the Publisher of the nation's fastest growing daily newspaper. Pastor Coomer holds Family Conferences in the local church. To have a meeting at your church or other needs he may be contacted at (765) 552-1973, [tlcoomer@juno.com](mailto:tlcoomer@juno.com), <http://www.fortheLoveoftheFamily.com>.*