

CHILDREN: IN LIFE, IN MEETINGS, IN OUR HEARTS (MALACHI 4:6)

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CHILDREN: IN LIFE, IN MEETINGS, IN OUR HEARTS (MALACHI 4:6)

Hi Saints... this is not meant to be all-encompassing, and yet, because “the children” is a subject that we receive questions about regularly – from the four corners of the earth – this may be helpful to you. Throughout the world in this generation, we are seeing the Body of Christ come alive with desire for TRUE LIFE in the Son of God. DAILY LIFE in the Church – a hundred mothers, brothers, sisters, and other intimate daily relationships – is JESUS’ PROMISE to those who abandon their agendas, demands, and desires of this present corrupt age.

Many have not known “where to go” after leaving the empty “traditions of men” “handed down by our forefathers” in “attending” some religious ceremony. After leaving the choreographed show of some assigned “weekly” time and place hosted by a religious hireling or superstar... many have not known “where to go” instead! If we have no “programs” and do not discriminate or segregate any longer by skin color, or education, or social and financial status, or by age – how do we then live?! And, WHAT DO WE DO WITH THE CHILDREN??!

This is a collection of a decade or two of letters, questions, thoughts, and transcripts... from various times and places, cities and countries, for the purpose of lighting the path for those of you who are training the Next Generation to be Poet-Warriors for Jesus!

This isn’t meant to be some cohesive, exhaustive, exhausting literary masterpiece. You have been spared the cutesy anecdotes, the striking metaphors, the tear-jerking stories, and eloquent word-smithing. This stuff has no “author” since (similar to what we call the “New Testament”) it wasn’t written as a “book.” It is simply some pages taken from real Life situations, depositing Truth into families and Churches desiring God’s Heart, in various parts of the world.

Some of these thoughts were written by sisters to sisters in other cities, or to other sisters here locally in the Church – but would apply equally to the men reading these thoughts. OH, for the fulfillment of the prophecy in the last verse of the Old Testament: JESUS WILL NOT RETURN UNTIL IT’S TRUE, by His own Oath!

God’s Riches be upon you, always...

– a bunch of saints in Indianapolis

THE GREATEST LOVE OF ALL

(Kingdom Version)

I believe that children are our future.
Teach them well and let them lead the way.
Show them all the beauty they possess inside.
Give them a Rock of Hope - to make it easier.
Let the children's honesty
Remind us how we used to be.

Everybody's searching for a Hero;
People need someone to look up to.
I never found anyone who fulfilled my need.
A lonely place to be -
and then I found the loving Prince of Peace.

I decided long ago to live for Him who makes me whole.
When I fail, when I succeed,
I can press on because I'm freed.
No matter what they take from me,
they can't take away my destiny...
Because the Greatest Love of all is happening to me;
I found the Greatest Love of all inside of me.
The Greatest Love of all is easy to achieve;
Learning to love the SON - it is the Greatest Love of all.

I believe that children are our future.
Teach them well and let them lead the way.
Show them all the beauty they possess inside.
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Let the children's honesty
Remind us how we used to be.

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The Greatest Love of all is easy to achieve;
Learning to love the SON - it is the Greatest Love of all.

And you should know that special place
that you've been dreaming of
Leads you to the Risen King...find your strength in HIM.

- Adapted

IN LIFE

As we walk together every day, bearing one another's burdens, loving each other, admonishing one another, helping each other... MANY practical issues and questions come up. These practical situations provide great opportunities for us all to learn together more and more of Jesus' heart and thought for every detail of our lives. Following are some thoughts that came out of some real, practical situations related to raising our children. It seems like they might be helpful for others as well.

Please keep in mind, these questions and thoughts offered make the most sense in the context of the Body of Christ that is truly functioning as a Body. Many of these discussions that follow are amongst those that are ALREADY walking daily with one another, as the Scriptures command, teach, and exemplify. They are ALREADY living as a family – one hundred brothers, sisters, mothers – walking together every day, caring about each other, sharing each others' lives, sharing the work, bearing one another's burdens, walking in the light.... all of us in love with Jesus, seeking His ways, seeking His Kingdom individually and together for each other, every day. We want Jesus' standard for ourselves and our children and we know we need each other's help to see His Highest! But that doesn't keep difficulties from ever coming up! ☺ The conversations that follow came out of some of our steps along this journey.

In the body of believers we are a part of, we realize how VERY privileged we are to have the love, help, and input of so many fellow disciples in the nitty-gritty practicals of raising our children. We also realize that may not be the situation for everyone who reads this paper. You may not have many options of people you can leave your children with and trust that Jesus' standard will be upheld and good seeds of His life and love will be planted. You may not have the advantage of others' eyes lovingly looking into your life and your children's lives and bringing light into your situation. All that to say, it's our hope that there's much from this you will gain and be able to apply in your situation... it's more our hope that you will find other lovers of Jesus to walk with every day and together share the burdens and joys of raising children in Jesus' ways every day. These thoughts will go SO MUCH further when walked out with others that way! And keep in mind, if you don't have children, either you will one day, or because of the nature of the Kingdom of God, you will see that you *already* have children because "you are your brother's keeper." No matter who you are, you have a part to play and gifts to offer as it relates to the little ones.

Raw Potential

Innocence is something that is a word that is descriptive of a little baby, a child. Innocence doesn't mean "flawless," and it certainly doesn't mean "good." Innocence means "packed with potential." A person with innocence is not what you would call by definition "good," but rather very much filled with potential. It's like a rock on a ledge. There is potential energy empowering a kinetic energy, and with one little nudge it's going to fall. The distance from the top of the cliff to the ground is the potential energy. It's not moving, and yet there is tremendous power with a boulder on top of the ledge. There is no motion, but tremendous power. One little touch, and it can roll over and destroy a truck.

That's the way it is with a baby or a young child. They are "innocent." They are latent, pregnant with power, yet not necessarily for the good and not necessarily for the evil. And that's where child-rearing comes into play. We are accountable, responsible, to channel that towards the good for God's glory. We are surrogate parents. We are replacing the Father of their spirits for a season. As they are conceived... as God brings them into the universe... as He blows a breath of His air and His Spirit into the womb – what was once a chemical situation now becomes *life*, a child. That's a miracle of God. Our responsibility as parents is to channel that innocence into life with their true Father.

My daughter often says to me, "You are my second favorite daddy in the whole world." She knows that her true Father is in heaven. She told her mother last week, "You are my favorite mommy in the whole world, but Daddy is my second favorite daddy." Taken at face value you wouldn't maybe know how to interpret that. ☺ But what she was saying was that she knows who her temporary father is, a father of her flesh, and who her forever heavenly Father is. My job is to present her perfect in Christ to her *true* Father.

We are to raise children for Him, not simply "rear children." That's an important distinction. We need to get it in our heads that this isn't just a *normal* thing of life. "The rain falls on the just and the unjust. People get pregnant, have babies, and get a job. You have this struggle and that struggle. Some people have migraines. Some people have children. Some people have both. That's just the way it is." No Way! It truly is a blessing and an intention by God to bring a child into the world.

A child is packed with potential, and as Jesus said, "Woe to him through whom sin comes." Sin must come, but woe, curses on him through whom it comes. Jesus is aware of the latent potential energy and life in any young child. He knows of the innocence and potential, so it is a serious matter that we CONSIDER our responsibility to raise our children for the King. We *are accountable* to God for *how* we "raise" them.

Your Life Not Your Words...

“Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.” This isn’t about telling them true, historical works and words of God. This is about sharing with them the wonders of the universe and their God. It is about requiring them to live lives “in order” with God and His Ways. It is about training them in submission, respect, obedience, and even “happy” -ness, giving, loving, etc.

A student fully trained becomes like his teacher. *Who you are* will affect everyone and everything you touch with 10 times the potency of your words. You can only train children in the ways of God as much as you see and value and live the ways of God yourself. Consecration and gifting are two different things. You don’t lack any good thing as you lose your life into the Body of Christ and the Purposes of God. When you do this, your children are not limited to the exposure of your own personal gifting. But it is not gifting that creates limitations here, it is the devotion and consecration of your heart and life that affects them. So, *the abandonment of your heart and life to Jesus and His Plan, and the degree to which you allow yourself to be absorbed into the Body, will have a much greater affect on the children than will the words or knowledge you proclaim.*

“Man does not Live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.” We need to be connected to the Head in order to properly discern when a child is rebellious versus insecure. Either case may be wrong and/or disobedient but how we handle one versus another is different. We need the wisdom that comes from above. *Anointed, gifted insight* into each individual heart and life is necessary when we want to shape lives for Him. *Our connection to the Head goes hand-in-hand with our connection to the Body.*

Who is Your “Family”?

Who is your Family? Who are your children? We have LEFT “father, mother, brother...” We have left PHYSICAL FAMILY and viewing life after physical, fleshly relationships. We’ve been granted a hundred times as many fathers, mothers and brothers! Now, our boundaries of responsibility include *ALL who are connected to us by JESUS’ blood*, and *He* determines the level of responsibility I have for specific people, rather than it being determined by temporary blood boundaries.

God has so graciously given us Salvation and Refuge and a Home to live in, where He is Lord and Master and Father over all. What a blessing that has been and continues to be!! In that household, we are meant to care for, feed, help, and encourage each other, spurring each other on to love and good works. We can spur each other each day to a consciousness of God and help each other recognize and avoid the pitfalls of sin. What

a wonderful blessing! WE ARE the Household of God, all brothers and sisters with One Father over us.

We are called to take a deep responsibility for one another and to “carry each other’s burdens and so fulfill the Law of Christ.” Part of that responsibility has to do with caring deeply for each other’s children. And this goes WAY beyond babysitting or “watching them.” Anyone can give that! But if we are filled with God’s Spirit, we can take responsibility on a much deeper level. We can help and care by “seeing to it” that patterns of disobedience, disrespect, or wildness or selfishness or... don’t go on and on undalt with and unchanged in OTHER PEOPLE’S CHILDREN.

We must care for each other’s children on that level and GET INVOLVED to see things change. Let’s be sure the walls come down (if we have them). Walls erected by faulty thinking such as: you “dare not” talk to anyone about *their children*. Or you dare not make yourself vulnerable by saying something and getting involved. Rather, hand to hand, eye to eye living with each other and each other’s children on a day-to-day, consistent, prayer-filled basis. Not being afraid to help and not being unbelieving about whether things can actually change in a real way is essential.

YOU and YOUR PRAYERS and WORK can make a huge difference in your neighbor’s life. PLEASE, let’s help each other with our children! We really NEED each other to be involved on a SPIRITUAL level. We, alone, or with only a spouse, do not have what it takes. We really need the eyes, ears, courage and insight of other people. Invite others in regularly if you are one who clams up and is “afraid of being a bad parent.” Be willing to take chances and be willing to take the care necessary to *do something*.

We have been redeemed from the “us 4 (or 6 or 8 ☺) and no more” way of life where all I’m willing to do in regards to assuming spiritual responsibility is within my own four walls. We even end up robbing our own children when we live that way. Let me say again, if we are HIS, then we have LEFT “father, mother...” PHYSICAL FAMILY and viewing life after physical, fleshly relationships. We’ve been granted a hundred times as many fathers, mothers and brothers! ***NOW, our boundaries of responsibility include ALL who are connected to us by JESUS’ blood.*** HE determines the level of responsibility we have for specific people, rather than it being determined by temporary blood boundaries.

“God first, physical family second, God’s House third” is a mindset that robs us and others of becoming more like Jesus! Somehow, we allow our personal level of responsibility for others to be based on physical reasoning rather than GOD’s reasoning. We need to have the same kind of hope and yearning and desire for other’s children as we do our own. Of course, there will be those closest to you in God’s household that you have direct responsibility for, while others may be woven more tightly in other relationships.

Who is my mother? Who are my brothers? And... who are my CHILDREN?? In God’s sight, other’s children are my children too. But how far are we PERSONALLY willing to get involved on a grass roots level with that “tough one”? Do I truly “carry

their burden”? How far have I really been willing to go? On my knees? With my words? With help from other people? All of these are questions we must willingly ask ourselves, with the intent to change, if need be. We must really turn things around in our own hearts (and repent if necessary) in regard to viewing other people’s children after the flesh and viewing our “family units” after the flesh. There are no “boundaries” in God’s sight, based on physical ties. We wouldn’t say, “I only love on blonde haired babies to a deep, deep degree and all other babies are periphery.” So we can’t say “I only love and care for my own children on the deep kind of level – everyone else’s children I care about on some other level.” Let us care as Jesus cares!

Loving Those Little Lambs

Ever heard your children referred to as “your kids” (baby goats)? I don’t even want that thought associated in any way with our children! They are lambs, not goats. ☺ I haven’t heard the word “kid” in reference to any of the ten or fifteen dozen young children here in many years! ☺ I’m glad!

You DO realize, Family, that our main “goal” as we raise our young children is NOT that we would make their behavior “perfect” – necessarily, right? Docile children, zombie or compliant children, with no heart or mind or energy or creativity... are NOT the goals, of course. I know I didn’t need to say that, but I’d like to exaggerate the point to make the point!

Creating a quiet utopian world at home with our lil’ ones MAY make life easier for us, IF we wanted to live self-centered busy lives. And the children then “learn” we won’t have them “interfering” with our big person important agendas. “Go on out of here and give me peace and quiet, and let me do MY thing!” But that is NOT the “goal” that Father has truly given us, OF COURSE! Again, I’m just exaggerating to make a point. ☺

HOWEVER! We DO want them to ALWAYS “*reap what they have sown*” – or we are MIS-representing God and Truth. “*Be not deceived – God is not mocked. A man reaps what he sows.*” That’s just plain Love, and being the Ambassadors Father has called us to be to these “loaners” – babes – He has granted us.

We MUST then: 1) Be consistent in our leadership 2) Be consistent in our clear communication to the lambs of what is expected of them 3) Expect and train them into immediate responses to our “voice” (not the second or third time we tell them something). “On earth as it is in Heaven...” “As unto the Lord...” “The sheep know the Shepherd’s Voice...” 4) Make certain that they know and experience (!) the fact that they will always, ALWAYS “reap” what they sow, and that a son (young or old) that is not disciplined is not LOVED! (Hebrews 12) Therefore, nothing is ignored, overlooked, or rationalized and excused away. Creativity in leadership and correction are surely Father’s way, and therefore our way – but NEVER are we inattentive or too busy to notice. Never are we

sluggardly, or should we ever exhibit foolish disrespect for God's Principles. God is not like that, therefore, we, as His Representatives and Proxy parents, may not be so either – or we are misrepresenting Him to the children.

In the midst of our children's discipline, or failures or successes, it is important that we remind them FREQUENTLY of their need for Messiah to forgive their sins and sin's consequences. Remind them often of their deep need for conversion to Jesus – for the Gift of the Spirit of Christ Jesus to inhabit their lives to free them from the POWER of sin! Help them to HUNGER for Him, and be ready to bow their knees to Him when they are old enough to comprehend that they have crucified the Son of God and are “cut to the heart.”

It is important to REMIND OURSELVES that we are not attempting some massive experiment in behavior modification or tolerating inconveniences of children that cannot take care of themselves. This is about LEADING A YOUNG ONE TO THEIR MESSIAH, and molding them into lovers and warriors for Jesus! AND, Father has granted us the privilege of molding them before they have (as we did) terrible influences and habits to overcome – so they are PRIMED for Jesus! They should be made to see their own sinful natures, and the weakness of their flesh and lack of sufficient willpower to overcome. Paint the glorious Picture for them in your discussions (“as you rise up and sit down and walk along the way,” and laugh or spank or tickle them) of the wonderful Gift of God – by Trust and Abandonment in Jesus – which He has offered us all freely. ***INVITE them, daily, into His Possibilities for their futures!***

Don't allow them to run ahead to “Braxton-Hicks” false conversions – on emotions, or their desires to please you (or to get out of trouble!). Many such “young childhood conversions” in the religious world are not truly a second birth at all. This is proven by the tragic and ridiculously unnecessary record in the denominations of losing 70-90% of their teens to the world. BUT, with an eye towards TRUE conversion at the foot of Jesus' Cross, do be sowing the Seeds – for when it IS time!

“Getting results” in child-rearing is not the goal, as wonderful as that sounds! Even though we may not achieve instant perfect behavior from the children (though CONSISTENCY is still MANDATORY!), there is still much GOOD NEWS in this, if we're functioning as we've been describing.

If your child is not learning obedience super quickly and is strong-willed, that doesn't mean you are a failure, if you are making certain they are reaping what they've sown, and also planting Good News Seeds! If their “wiring” is such that they're a bit “energetic” – just view it this way: when they DO give their lives to Jesus (and their “niceness” won't deceive them into thinking they are “Christians” when they are not, since they are not nice oftentimes) – they can give it ALL to Jesus. “He who is forgiven much...LOVES MUCH!”

Will we make some mistakes, as we grow up in these things? Sure. But, God has done many good things in many of us, in spite of terrible “upbringing” and false religion and vices and corrupt “friendships” that adults in our lives did little or nothing to protect us from. IN SPITE of much sin in our lives and in our upbringing and our pain, Father is

still able to wash us and cleanse us and lift us up, and even equip us to love and serve Him and His People and Purposes! HOW MUCH MORE will our children, free from the scars – of bad companionship, absence of leadership, vices and sin – be able to See Him high and lifted up!

And, again, even if we're not perfect (duh!) God is able to Work through those who love Him and lay down their lives for Him daily amongst His People and Plan. We'll seek His Wisdom – regardless of personal cost. And so, He will be with us, not leaving us as orphans. The "*Government is on HIS shoulders!*" Let's go forward with DANCING in our hearts, rather than trepidation! We're privileged to learn His glorious Ways, and participate in His Work with these young ones!

"Before the great and awesome Day of the Lord arrives, I will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to the fathers!"

Those who may be so very caught up in the "End Times" movies and books and talk... should be devoted to loving everyone's children into greatness for Jesus. Ain't much can happen until then!!!!

“RAISING CHILDREN FOR THE KING”

PART 1

The Law Of Sowing And Reaping

I’d suggest that we, in spite of even faultless insight and intellect in regards to every area of human development from a physical and spiritual standpoint, would not ever be capable of controlling the ultimate outcome of our labors. In other words, it will always come down to a face-to-face encounter with a living God. We cannot “do it for them.” They, like us, will be “born, not of blood, nor of the will of flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” This is the only way it is going to happen – not of human decision, not of natural descent, not of a husband’s will, but born of God. We will not be able to make them be born of God, no matter how accurate our insight is into the ways of God. We can’t do it for them. That’s their encounter with the living God.

However, we do have a responsibility as “substitute parents” (Heb12: 5-11; Luke 11:11-13) to “train them in the way they should go.” Specifically, we must be certain that they know the unalterable, invariable Law that says: “A man reaps what he sows.” He may not reap it today, but in due season, I guarantee you that every man will reap what he sows. It is unalterable. It is like the law of gravity – it’s going to happen; a man reaps what he sows. If you sow a corn seed, you will not reap an oak tree. It is impossible. It’s not going to happen. If a man of a particular species is involved in the propagation of that species – guess what – he will propagate only that species! The seed determines the outcome. It will always be that case, and you will always reap what you sow. *Never* will a pumpkin seed go into the ground, and cabbage come up. ***From Genesis chapter one, throughout Jesus’ teaching (Luke 6:43-45 etc.), and to the end of the Bible – “A man reaps what he sows” “in due season.”***

A Price Must Be Paid Every Single Time

Again, as upside down as it sounds, our job with our children is *not to get “results,”* but to make certain that they see the consistency of paying the price every single time they sow seed – whether “to the flesh” or “to the Spirit.” ***(A side note, worthy of several pages to some parents: NEVER, NEVER, NEVER should a child be disciplined out of selfish anger.)*** Without this vision, the *external* behavior may be conveniently altered to avoid punishment or to manipulate a response from you, *but the heart will not be changed towards God!* What a price to pay for our carelessness and lazy inconsistency!

We need to disciple our children into realizing that if they sow to the flesh, they will reap destruction. When they sin, there is a price that must be paid. When we are inconsistent because of laziness or lack of sensitivity in disciplining children, then we are teaching them that they do not reap what they sow. When we just let things go by, or

when we just give them a little whack and say “Be on your way,” or when we tell them not to do something, and we ignore it when they do it anyway because we are so busy with our own affairs, we are teaching them that you do not reap what you sow. “I can sow anything I want and reap a good harvest. I can be lazy, I can sow weeds and I can reap wheat.” That’s what we are telling them when there is inconsistent discipline in the raising of our children.

If we are not *aware* and *consistent*, we are teaching them that they can break the law of sowing and reaping. When, in fact, they actually can’t break it, because God, their true Father, is going to bring about the bad harvest in their lives whether they know it or not, in due season.

Our job is to continue to push microcosms in front of them. We are to show them on a small scale what is true on a spiritual level. We must be consistent in physical, material matters so that they will know in spiritual matters and matters of the heart that they *will* reap what they sow.

The Kingdom Is Within You

As we are raising up the children in the nurture and the admonition of the Lord, we are teaching them the principles in the material world, the visual aids that will allow them to understand the neither-here-nor-there-but-within-you principles of the heart.

All of the Old Testament is a foreshadowing of the reality that is in Christ. The entire old covenant is a visual aid in the material world of the reality that is true in the Kingdom of God. And that the Kingdom of God is neither here nor there – but within you! The old kingdom was a kingdom of sacrificial system and temples, etc. Now the Kingdom of God is that God does not dwell in temples built by men. Not in brick and mortar and not in steeple houses – he dwells in men. The kingdom is neither here nor there. It’s not at 9 a.m. on Sunday morning. *It is within you!* The sacrifice is a living sacrifice, no longer a lamb, goat, or bull. The Kingdom is not in the old covenant of material things, but now it is within you. It is a *spiritual reality*.

God’s people were always called the “children of Israel.” Did you ever notice that? Point being, God referred to them as children, and they are in fact types of children today. The law of sowing and reaping and the law itself – the commandments, the sacrificial system – all of that is relative to their position as children as they are slaves in the household. When you are child, it says in Gal. 4, you are just like a slave in the household even though the whole inheritance is yours. It’s not until you come into huioi, sonship, that you really understand the inheritance that belongs to you.

“Moses said to you, ‘Do not kill,’ but I say to you, ‘If you hate you have committed murder.’ Moses said to you, ‘Do not commit adultery,’ but I say to you, ‘If you violate your will, if you violate your heart, you have committed adultery already. If you have lusted you have committed adultery already.’” The fulfillment of the law in the Kingdom of God has to do with heart issues. God is not interested in behavior modification. He wants your will and your heart.

We teach that to our children by teaching them the law of sowing and reaping in the material world. By doing that we are teaching them the law of sowing and reaping in the spiritual world. If we are inconsistent in the material world, they will not believe in the justice of God and the holiness of God in the spiritual world, unless they have a revelation and probably a tremendous fall on their own apart from that. It can be done, it happened to most of us. We didn't grow up understanding any of these things.

Let's Get It Right NOW

Most of us didn't have parents that taught us these things. Yet somehow, by God's Fatherheart, He intervened and showed us some of these things anyway. Our job is to turn our hearts to the children and the children to the Father, so that we can have a generation of children unadulterated by the patterns of the world. ***We want them to grab that torch in full stride, running at full speed towards the glory of God, ushering in the return of Jesus Christ!*** We DON'T want them to have to undo all the bad things that we have passed on to them.

It's paramount, it's important, it's mandatory in my book – that we get these things right *NOW* even though we may not have learned them before. The Fatherheart of God can overcome our inadequacies, and that's a good thing to know because we are probably never going to get all of these things perfectly in line. God's Fatherheart is able to overcome these things, but if we can teach the children these things in the here and now, in the shadow of the physical world, then God can more readily grab their hearts in the spiritual world.

Our job with our children is not to get results, but to make certain that they see that if they sow a seed, they will reap a harvest every single time. If we won't be consistent, we will not teach them how to really change their hearts. They will only learn how to manipulate us – “Well, Dad, I just love you soooo much...” “What do you want from me?” “Car keys, dad.” See how that happens? It happens because they have not learned the consistency of the holiness and the judgment and the knowledge and the wisdom and the vastness of God. And this happens because we have been inconsistent! They can manipulate us and get away with it, and they know they can. So they think they can manipulate God, too, until a greater revelation and probably a tremendous fall comes along. ***What a price to pay for our carelessness and lazy inconsistency!***

Grace

In conjunction with this, as your love and mercy dictate in accordance with their “ignorance,” you may decide to demonstrate the *Grace* of God. (1 Timothy 1:13 “Although I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man; I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief.”) As our children are ignorant and walking in unbelief, as they don't have understanding of all the righteousness of God, we may, out of our mercy (out of our Fatherheart or our Motherheart), give them mercy and

show them kindness. You may decide to demonstrate the grace of God rather than just tremendous consistent discipline every single time they even look at us cross-eyed.

There may be a time when grace is the order of the day. However, “Grace” is not “overlooking” sin and mindlessly or “lovingly” pretending it didn’t happen, but it is *allowing someone else to pay the price for the transgression*, rather than the one who committed it. You have to understand that grace is not overlooking sin. Grace is allowing someone else to pay the price. Sin is never overlooked. The wages of sin is always death. There is never an exception to that. We will always reap what we sow. There is never an exception to that unless we allow someone to become a curse for us, unless we allow someone to become sin for us that we might become His righteousness (2 Cor. 5:21).

The Whole Law

Divine Justice and the Law of Sowing and Reaping do not allow “lawbreaking” to be ignored, even once. The Word of God is very clear on that (Rev.21: 27; Rom.3: 23; Rom.6: 23; Jas.2: 10-11; Gal.3: 10-14).

James 2:10-11 says that if you have committed even the slightest sin, then you are guilty of breaking the whole law. If you have just had a bad attitude, if you have been disgusted at your boss, if you have been deceptive in the slightest way (maybe you just haven’t told the whole truth), then the Word of God says that you are guilty of breaking the entire law. You might as well have been a rapist and a murderer, because you will be judged as a rapist and murderer for even rolling your eyes one time. You are guilty of violating the entire law if you violate it on even a single point.

Why is that? Because when you violate it on even a single point, you are shaking your fist at God. You have said, “God, you don’t have the right to tell me what to do.” That’s a violation of His holiness, and, therefore, a violation of His person! It is a violation of His person to totally disregard everything about God and to make ourselves a law unto ourselves. “I will decide what is good and evil. I will decide this is a little sin and this is a big one. This is important, this is unimportant. This is okay, this isn’t okay. It’s not okay to murder, but it is okay to roll my eyes. It’s okay to slander my boss or to have a bad attitude and slander my neighbor.” ***God says it’s murder.***

Moses said to you, “Do not kill.” But I say to you, “If you call your brother a name you are guilty of murder.” The nature of lawlessness is that we become a law unto ourselves. We violate God’s holiness. If we violate God’s holiness, we are totally guilty of violating every point of law and we are in a lot of trouble because the wages of violating God is always death. There’s never an exception to that.

Jesus Took The Curse

Gal. 3:10-14 says if we try to be justified by the law, we are under a curse. If we try to do good in order to please God and we become a law unto ourselves judging good and

evil, then we are under a curse, and we shall die. It says that Jesus became a curse for us, because “cursed is he who dies on a tree.” But if we, by faith, receive what the gift of God in Christ Jesus is and who we are, then we are clothed with Christ and are sons of God. How? By faith in Jesus Christ. “For as many of you that have been baptized into Christ, that have been clothed with Christ...” If we enter into the righteousness of God in Jesus Christ by faith in Jesus Christ, then He becomes sin for us while we become His righteousness. If we won’t allow Him to become a curse for us because we won’t receive His mercy and His kindness and grace by faith... if we decide we are going to justify ourselves in God’s sight, then we are cursed because we are guilty of breaking every point of the law and we will die on that tree. The law is very clear on that.

The Good News of Jesus Christ will be foreshadowed to your children as you creatively demonstrate the unwavering absoluteness of the Laws of God, and also, as Mercy is aroused – the Grace of *someone else* receiving the irrevocable punishment warranted by the transgression of the command that God, through the parents, has issued. (As crazy as it seems, “fast” for a day to pay the punishment that the child should have had to pay, or skip desert for them – and tell them why you’re doing it – if you decide to extend them grace that is “unmerited”. It could be a thousand different expressions, but let it be *something!*) Divine Justice says that one always reaps what they sow, and “grace” is *never* that sin is ignored, but that *someone else pays for your transgression instead of you*.

We issue a command to our children – if they violate that, even in attitude, they become guilty of violating the whole relationship between son and parent, daughter and parent. They become guilty of breaking the entire law by rolling their eyes. The law is that they are worthy of death. And, in fact, the old covenant was that if a child was not obedient to his parents, they would be stoned publicly in front of the whole church, in front of all Israel. That was the foreshadowing of family relationships and God was trying to show us that the rolling of the eyes is to violate the relationship of the family. That is true for husband and wife. That is true for child and parent. And it is an irrevocable law, and that warrants death according to the word of God.

Here’s the neat part: As hard as all that sounds, the good news of Jesus Christ is that He can become sin for us. He can become the curse for us. This is a life or death issue. This isn’t just a little bit of a game, a little bit of word play. This is life and death. If we won’t receive Jesus Christ as sin for us but rather we decide we are going to live a good Christian life to earn our salvation before God, then we are guilty of the entire law if we fail just once. You are okay if you don’t even fail once. But if you fail once, you are guilty of violating the whole of God’s love for you. And in so doing, you are guilty of violating the whole law, which is punishable by death. It’s true in a child relationship with a parent as well. The good news of Jesus Christ foreshadowed in our relationship with our children is that we can also show them a grace *not by overlooking their sin*, but by allowing that sin to be paid in another way. Don’t miss this opportunity to bring your children through a learning experience that they will either learn when they’re young, learn when they’re older (more difficult)... or never learn at all – and lose their souls for eternity, “reaping what they’ve sown.”

Taking The Punishment

One classic example that was very clear was when my daughter was interrupting a conversation that I was having with some adults. The law of God through the parent was “don’t ever interrupt adults,” and she did it. She did it innocently. She was a blasphemer out of ignorance, so she was shown mercy. Grace was aroused, and I took her punishment for her. She should have been spanked, but I literally took that spanking for her. As bizarre as that sounds, (and there are a thousand ways for that to be wrought out) it has to be seen clearly that the punishment will always be there 100% of the time – not 99%. “I’m going to pay the price for you.” 100% justice. 100% of the time. Grace is simply allowing someone else to pay that punishment for them. A man will reap what he sows, unless someone else reaps it for him.

It’s going to take some *creativity* and some thought on our part to make certain that the price is paid. “The price must be paid; here’s how it will be paid,” or “I’m going to fast for today because of this transgression in your life...” There must be 100% justice. Even if there is grace extended, that’s not overlooking. *It’s substitutionary*, it’s imputed, and it’s not overlooked.

Understand, Nurture, And Admonish

Jesus Christ has reaped what we have sown on the cross. He has died. The wages of sin is death, and He paid that price. So we disciple our children into an understanding of that by our consistency and our training of them, and by demonstrating grace to them in whatever creative ways that we can. But we have to know all of this. We have to understand grace. We have to understand the Fatherheart. We have to understand mercy, and justice and holiness to be able to disciple our children in these areas. It isn’t going to happen by accident.

We need to have an understanding from the Father of what His relationship is with us so that we might transfer that to our children and grow them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord – *HIS nurture and admonition!* It is not just trying to make good citizens out of them, teaching them to stay out of the way and to be “good,” quiet little children when we are trying to talk to someone in our own little selfish arena. We don’t want to make little dummies out of them, who mindlessly follow us around. “Yes, ma’am. Yes, sir.” The objective is not that they be “good little angels.” I would rather have a rebellious, rotten child who has learned the righteousness and holiness of God, and has learned the mercy and the grace of God through my relationship with them, than have a mindless child whose heart is foreign to God even though he knows how to stay out of trouble and avoid circumstantial trouble.

You cannot force “results” (and that is not truly your immediate aim), but you *can* be certain, through your willingness to lay down your life for your children in consistent training, that there is no mistake in their mind that everyone will reap exactly what they sow! *May God be merciful to us as we try to walk this out.*

Too Old for Discipline?

Question: Is there a time when, for me as a mother, to stop spanking my older son (twelve years old) and hand it over to my husband, as long as the respect on my son's part is there?

My gut reaction is that you will know when that time comes. Some little girls are not too old for me to pick up and hold on my lap. But I know that there comes a time when that is just not right any more. It is entirely possible that the time is coming when you turn your son's discipline over to your husband, or you exercise discipline in some other way.

No "Bottled" Answers

Hi! I know you explained this already, but I was wondering if we could perhaps get some more clarity, especially related to consequences and the law of sowing and reaping. I know there needs to be a consequence for every act of rebellion, and at the same time there will be teaching about the grace of God - Jesus' substituting His Life for us. In applying this to our daughter, do we discipline her every time she walks in the light about things she is seeing in her life? In order to learn the law of sowing and reaping, should there be a punitive consequence each time? Our daughter is coming into the Light with her sins 3 – 4 times a day! We need and desire to provide a response - but are they always punitive? And which ones are punitive and which ones aren't?

I know that my fear of her not walking in the light shouldn't keep me from disciplining her. Jenn has confessed things like: being bossy to other children, being easily irritated, thinking vain thoughts, not really caring about others, being worried about what others will think about her if she says or does a certain thing, and thinking she is better than others. These are examples of what she is seeing on her own and confessing to others. Should I discipline her each time she brings these sins into the open? If so, is it always punitive? For instance, suppose my child, on her own, comes to me and says something like, "I realized that earlier today I had a proud attitude toward one of the other children. I know I should have turned from it right then, but I didn't." Should she still be disciplined in a punitive way as well as be encouraged and directed in things like prayer, fasting, and reading scripture pertaining to pride, etc?

Also, how can a child recognize when something is a temptation versus when they've given themselves over to that sin? And is there different discipline or response for a child who is His child versus a child who hasn't yet given their life to Him? She is unregenerate and knows this as well. She seems to genuinely want something real with Jesus, but is finding she cannot even purify her motives for seeking Him. Neither my husband nor I feel we have a real grasp on this. We would appreciate any clarification. THANKS!

Hi. What rings in our ears is that this whole walk and Life of leading our children to Jesus is mostly an Art, in the most creative sense. It is mostly an art and not a science to somehow lead them to reach up and place their hands in Jesus' hands, to look in His eyes and be melted by His love and His mercy and His Kindness. How do you "bottle that"? How do you write a manual with all the wheres and hows and whens? How do you capture that unfolding of leading a child to see the True Life of God in a set of "ways to raise children"? The answer?? You don't! ☺

We need to have spiritual eyes to See Jesus and feel what He's feeling for each situation for each child, one-by-one-by-one. It will never be, "Okay, NOW I know how to do this." That will NEVER be the case. Rather, it will always be for us a day-by-day Life with Him, listening for His voice, staying soft in His hands and humble before His All-knowing, all-encompassing Greatness and Wisdom. If you wanted to put a label on it, you could say that it is all the Truths and principles and wonder of what it means to be Led by His Spirit.

So we can't answer you, really, about things like "Should it be punitive every time?" or "How do you know when...?" or "What's the difference for an unbelieving child?" Most of it's wrapped up in knowing HIM, rather than knowing an "answer." We would never want to say, "Always discipline for this." Or "Never discipline in this case." There are just too many variables to try to peg God down like that. So all of that ONLY drives us to be oh so serious and diligent and purposeful in Living at His feet...rooting out our OWN sin, refining and focusing our own priorities, so we can Hear and See and Sense what He's wanting.

One other thing to keep in mind since your daughter is getting older is that there may likely be a time (and for each child it is different) when it is best to lay aside the rod as the tool of discipline. That doesn't mean to lay aside discipline! It's just time to lay aside the rod. And it needs to be done with clear words to the child, "You're growing into a young lady and this is no longer the tool...The rod has been right and good and has had its place. IT IS a valid and useful tool in God's toolbox. So we're not laying it aside because it's unnecessary or ineffective. It is simply time for a change for you. There will be other means of discipline when you need to feel the pain." That way, the child understands that it is a decision YOU have made, specifically in response to what is Best for them, and God's timing. The child won't get the message that you've just slacked off and put the rod away because it is useless or unimportant. ***It has its place*** in every child's life, but

there does come a time to put it aside. That “change” needs to be clearly made, verbally to the child, so they understand WHY things have “changed.”

All that we need, all that we must have, all that we cannot live without, all of it, forever, is in Jesus. We can find Him...now, tomorrow, next week, next year, all along, regarding our children. IN HIM we live and move and have our being. He is Good enough, Kind enough, Full of Mercy and Compassion enough to Touch us again and again and again...to sustain us while we are yet learning to live IN HIM. It's so easy to forget how desperately we DEPEND upon His Touch, His Air, His Words, and His Thoughts for our children, now and forever!

We're really not wanting to “skirt” your questions.... we hope there is Hope in all this for you. And we think you'll find a lot more helpful nuggets as you continue to prayerfully read in quietness, and trust and peace. He cares deeply for you and your children. That starting place is Trust and then pursuing His heart and mind to be revealed in your inner man. There's just a TON about His character and creativity and avenues with our children that are yet to be discovered!

Love, Mary and Debra

a letter from Jenn months later:

Dear Mary and Debra,

Hi! Something happened yesterday that I wanted to let you know about! We were watching that video “Freeing Power: Marrying Jesus” and after we were done I saw that I was married to the law and that there was no escape from that marriage...unless someone died. I had this picture in my mind of Jesus dying, and then after He is raised to life, He kneels down, reaches out His hand, and asks, “Will you marry me?” Well, I said I would and I gave my life to Him and now I am His! Last night I was baptized and I have been asking Him to help and teach me because I still need Him! I don't know how to live for Him, but one thing someone told me recently to just give my life to Him and say, “God, I don't know how to live for you, but I know you'll teach me! I run to You just like a child. Teach me!”

One thing that I definitely don't want to do is doubt Him or second guess Him or myself and the choice I've made. I can get in to those circles where its like.... “I will trust Him. OK. Now I trust Him. Maybe I don't. I will try harder. OK. THIS time I WILL trust Him. I don't FEEL like I am trusting him....” etc. I know that hurts Him and I don't want to do that. So if you think about it, feel free to pray that I would just trust Him in everything. One thing He showed me a few days ago is that I need Him to even be able to trust Him! If you have any thoughts I would love to hear them! Love, Jenn ☺! P.S. Thanks for your prayers!

Successful Child Rearing

With our childrearing, as well as with our other relationships... success is not measured by our circumstances, nor by how “good” things are going. We must NOT find our satisfaction in whether or not things are changing the way we think they should. We must NOT find our peace in the fact that things are “good” or, at least, “getting better.” Our Peace must be found in the Blood of Christ as our worth to the Father, and, as it relates to our lives in this present age, our “success” is measured by our FAITHFULNESS to our Father in these three things:

1. **MY response** to the tense moments, the hurt, the challenging issues, rebellion or betrayal or disobedience, the confusion... My RESPONSE needs to be patient, kind and peaceable, no matter WHAT else may happen. THIS is “success” in GOD’S eyes, which is all that really matters.

2. Whether with our children or in relationships with adults, our success is NOT to be measured by whether or not things are going well. OUR second goal, and God’s Pleasure with us, is not related to “getting results.” Rather, our “success” in God’s eyes is that we constantly speak the Truth in Love to those who are not as close to Him as they could be – no matter WHAT the consequences of trying to do so. (Not neglecting point one, of course!)

Our job is to be consistent in the correction of our children, without fatigue or loss of vision creeping in to dilute our faithfulness. OUR job is to plant Eternal Seeds of the TRUTHS of God in their hearts, and participate in whatever ways the law of Sowing and Reaping might be expressed to them – verbally or otherwise.

God has not called us to be “successful” as the world would measure it. (Jesus would not have qualified under those terms, as he “failed” with the *majority* of people that he met, since they did not respond well to him or endure in His Teachings). God has simply called us to be faithful ambassadors – consistent, loving, patient, and persistent in the sowing and applying of the Seed of His Word. Whether teaching and disciplining with a child entrusted to us, or faithful, watchful, loving, kind responsiveness to the things that are unlike Jesus in those that would wear His Name – these are the measurements of “success” in God’s House. NOT whether or not things change overnight.

3. The third measurement of “success” is whether we have TRULY done something about the difficult situations **ON OUR KNEES**. Not just talked about it, or thought about it, or casually mentioned it to God in passing as we go about our busy, busy days – but TRULY separated ourselves for God from our day and circumstances and TALKED clearly to Him about it all. THIS is “success” in God’s Sight. NOT whether or not things are going well.

BE SUCCESSFUL, as GOD defines it!! If you’ll do these things, no matter what your circumstances, whether good things are happening around you or not so good – go to sleep at night knowing that you have pleased the Father in this relationship (with children, parents, spouse, or any other). He has called us to Faithfulness in these three areas, no matter what else would happen. Please?

Father's Hand on Top of Ours

Question: How do you teach a child how to draw when you're scribbling yourself?

It's really not complicated when you remember that the Master Teacher is involved with the process, too! If we're obedient and soft, then we will all be learning together. Even if you're learning the very same things that the children are, you can still be useful to God. You don't have to get it "just right" or have the perfect words or perfect execution. Why? Because it isn't dependent on us – ***the government is not on our shoulders***. We participate with Him on whatever level He brings about for us and we'll trust that He will work through it on a level that surpasses our capabilities. Very few of us are sitting in this environment right now because of our parents and the fabulous job they did. For most of us, our parents probably didn't show us the ways of God very well. Yet, somehow, the Master Teacher was able to compensate for our environments and situations because we chose to have soft and teachable hearts. Then Romans 1 kicked in for us. "*Since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities – his eternal power and divine nature – have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made...*" God testifies of Himself that it's not totally on our shoulders to communicate perfectly and accomplish every last thing. That's not an excuse for laziness, sloppiness or immaturity. If we put all of who we are into it, and if we are truly doulos – slaves – then God will work with us, as the Master Teacher. He'll work with us on a level that surpasses our capabilities. Our Father has His hand on top of ours, helping us to draw. ☺

LEARNING TO TRUST OUR FATHER: Overcoming Our Self-Will

Understand that your own life is similar to those of our little shadows, our little children. When you understand how Jesus thought about all the children He was dealing with, life makes more sense.

At times you may see a little child bouncing on someone's knee and you know he's cute as a button, but at the same time, he still has his thoughts about what he wants. He can have a lot of opinions, and you can see it in his eyes. He wants what he wants, and he's going to lean into it, and he's going to be upset if he doesn't get it. He has a glint in his eye where he knows exactly what he wants and he's leaning into it. He has opinions and his head is not going to look where it's supposed to look. One minute he's with you, the next minute he's off somewhere else, forcefully applying himself. The process of parenting is to take his face and hold it so that he is no longer in control. We must apply guidance and character direction by letting him know that he is not in control of his own

circumstances. He is not God, and he doesn't have the right to decide what he wants and when he wants it.

There's a process of molding a young child so that they become soft and trusting. It's the same with us and sometimes that means that our wills have to be *overcome*. Our wills have to be challenged. And the harder case we are, the more that God needs to challenge us. In the case of Lazarus, what a tragedy God allowed – a terrible tragedy. A precious man, Lazarus, died and Jesus said, "I'm glad he died." God has to teach us how to trust. Jesus said of his precious friend Lazarus' death, "For your sake, I'm glad that he died because you are learning how to trust Me now. Nothing is impossible for those who trust." That's a process that God takes us through. And this can be a long process in our lives - depending on how stiff-willed and how stiff-necked we are - when God is working on us, His stubborn little children.

Most of us go through a long time in our lives where we say to God, "That's not okay with me. I don't like that. I don't want that. That's not okay." And God has to take our chins and force the look in the eye. He has to take our hands and pry them off the thing we are grabbing on to and then hold them there — while He sings to us! The question is, who will learn to listen to the song, rather than think of themselves? That's the question.

Most start this way: "Contradiction! No fair! You're using violence to steal from me what is rightfully MY thing, and then You're singing to me. This is a contradiction. I don't buy this. There is something wrong with this." Children tend to start out that way with their parents' "interference" with what they "*want*" and adults do the same with God. Just as good parents violate the self-will of their children when it's necessary to protect and guide and train them, how much more is our Father in Heaven wise, creative, and relentless in His training of us. He pries our hand away from our self-will and foolishness and all of our pride and arrogance. He pries our hands off and holds them down... and then He sings to us. While restraining and teaching us, He SINGS to us... with gentleness and love and kindness. He is not being mean. (Our "demands" are generally based on such low-level thinking anyway!) He is *not* being hard or mean to us. That's not the nature of His character. He is just simply saying to us, "*You* don't really know what is best."

Our normal way of responding is, "It's not okay with me." And as time passes and circumstances happen... slowly, ever so slowly, we begin to learn how to say, "It's okay now. I didn't like it, I didn't want it, I still don't totally understand it, but because I trust Your Sovereignty, it's okay now. I trust Your wisdom, and I trust Your careful attention to every detail in my life. I know that you desperately love me and you know more than I do about what is going on here. It wasn't okay, but now *it is okay!!!* I still don't understand it, but it's okay now."

That's the process of how we train our children to learn to trust: by singing to them while we overcome their self-will. We allow them to come to understand that, "It's okay. It really is okay. I don't have to have what I think I want — the instant I want it." God knows better than we do, and as parents, we know better than our children do, believe it or not — (smiling at the children in the room). The children are sure that they know best,

of course. ☺ That's just the nature of childhood and the nature of growing up, physically and Spiritually. We *learn* how to say, "It wasn't okay, but it's okay now. I didn't get what I thought I wanted, but it really is okay, because I trust My Father. I know He loves me, and I know He is desperately involved in the details and able to do anything far beyond what we could ever ask for or imagine. It's okay now. I let go of it. I worship You — rather than defy and challenge, or ignore You."

Simple, trusting Faith. That is the stuff that real miracles are made of. Not the showy, religious placebo stuff, but rather the real, genuine, life-changing miracles from the Father's hand. Listening, leaning into Him in intimate love and trust. And releasing it ALL into His hands. ☺ Amen ☺ Just a thought...

God's Throne Has Wheels

Question: Why does God allow us to feel large amounts of pain and confusion?

On a couple of occasions when a toddler has been visiting with me, they might have an opinion or two, or an "issue" that needs to be resolved. ☺ I'm sure NO ONE knows what I'm talking about here, right? On a couple of occasions with a young one, I've sat them down in my lap, on my office-style chair that spins around. I would hug them very tightly in my arms, and with a big grin on my face, I would spin them around and around and around in my chair, while on my lap.

Of course we'd both be a bit woozy and dizzy in short order, but while we were spinning together, I might sing a bit to them and talk to them gently. There was never a sign of panic in the child, but certainly some wide-eyed amazement and then disorientation and confusion at the whirling sights and lights around them.

And then, when I had their full attention, I would gently whisper to them, "Did you notice that NOTHING in your world makes sense to you – everything is spinning and unrecognizable and unreliable... except for me? I'm the only stable thing in your world right now, aren't I?" ☺

While they were probably a little too young to understand the heart behind my aberrant behavior ☺ or to comprehend my explanation whispered in their ear, here's where we were going:

Question: SO... Why does God allow us, at times, to feel deep pain, and confusion, and rejection, and _____?

"Therefore, since Christ suffered in his body, arm yourselves also with the same attitude, because he who has suffered in his body is done with sin. As a result, he does not live the rest of his earthly life for evil human desires, but rather for the will of God. For you have spent enough time in the past doing what pagans choose to do." Sometimes

when we're too "busy" for Him, or too distracted, or too self-indulgent, or have too many opinions and God can't capture our total attention and trust and obedience... Father plants us in His lap, sings to us, whispers in our ears, and then spins us around in His chair, faster and faster.

And then, finally, when we can't look at all of the junk around us anymore (because it makes us sick to drool after it or stare at it any longer), He finally makes us realize that only HIS FACE is stable and dependable and always there for us. The whirling mess of sights and sounds and feelings around us can never replace... the ONLY stable thing in our lives, really: His Life and His Love for us, by His Son Jesus.

SOMETIMES He just has to get the chair spinning to make us see that. To make us see HIM. Think? ☺

JUST LIKE YOU

A poem (sort of) from a local mom's reflections...

"Do you want your children to grow up to be
Just like you?"
Just like me? No way.
The-thought-sends-shudders-up-my-spine.
Does the thought do that to you?
Just like me? Unsettling thought.
Not like me apart from God.
(Hate-to-admit-it, but-it's-true:
I can be sassy, proud, euphoric then blue
'I want it MY way,' Sound familiar to you?)
Nope. Don't think so. I love my children, don't you know?
I want more for them than 'like me,' you'll see....
'cause

GOD is Loving
HE is Wise...
He is Faithful, He is Kind
He is Tender, He's Forgiving
He is Pure
And He Gave us His Son
So that we can Become
Just Like Him

Listen to this: Just Like Him.
So - with God, through God, and by Him, I can be...
(Don't yet know how, but a vision I can see)
Oh God, oh ...Father?... Just Like You? Just Like You!
And the thought ... has my heart & soul renewed
Yes...
My children and I myself can be made new.
You are The Father, draw me near
Make the pathway to you clear
Yes, Show me how To be Your Child, and Just Like You

A VERY PRACTICAL LIVING ROOM CONVERSATION

Here are some general (though not universal) things that are helpful to keep in mind regarding parenting, and your desire to hold up Jesus' standard and life... Remember, these questions and thoughts were amongst those that are ALREADY walking daily with one another – ALREADY living as a family.

Mostly An Art

Raising and disciplining a child is mostly an art, and not just a science! Each child is different, and you will see, as you are asking God for His current thought, that there are considerations from one age to the next, one personality to the next, one child to the next, and one day to the next. One approach might work with one child, but not another. A stern look may melt one child into a heap, while another child can take countless spankings and still glare back at you. Child rearing IS an art-it requires creativity and listening and finding the right solution.... but DON'T use that as an excuse for compromise! DO find the solutions and DO keep THE standard! The “science” part of child rearing in the Kingdom is to teach our children, “God is not mocked, you WILL reap what you sow.” This behavior, this attitude, this selfishness, this “trait” that is not like Jesus will have consequences! The child must be trained to know that bad seed bears bad fruit, and likewise, that good seed bears good fruit. I must teach my child that he reaps what he sows! However, each day is different and each child is an individual.

This is where the art comes into play. When my child has missed a nap and she's hungry and she's whining about everything, with compassion I want to help her situation, but I still need to teach her that the world doesn't revolve around her and that whining is NOT like Jesus! *I will not compromise Jesus as the standard to whom I compare my life and my child's life. I want a real relationship with Him. I want my child to have a real relationship with Him. Sin will block our ability to see and hear Jesus. So, there's no question that sin must be dealt with. The ART is in how we communicate that from child to child, situation to situation. This requires creativity, listening to God's Spirit, helping each other, day by day.... no formula answers! It's an art. It's an adventure!*

80% Affirmation

If you look at what has drawn you the most to obedience, it's most likely been God's affirmation and tenderness of love to you. How precious are His reminders that He's on your side, that He loves you in spite of yourself, that you did it right this time, and that you've pleased Him. These are the things that have propelled you quicker and farther

down the path of love and obedience more than anything. Right? This is Biblical, as well as your experience. Well, the same is so true for the children. Our training of them should probably be about 80% affirmation and praise and “setting them up” for success and 20% discipline. Most people would probably think 60% discipline and 40% affirmation, but really it should be more like 80% affirmation. This is not to say we need to be disciplining less.... but we need to be AFFIRMING a whole lot more!! Remember, “You reap what you sow.” Well, that applies to good seed as well!!! “Good job, that’s it, you did it! You obeyed!!!!” Isn’t it easy to see this with training an animal!? You don’t just beat him when he does wrong. When he obeys, you praise him, you give him treats, and you pet him, “good boy! It’s easy to see in that situation. How much more should we be loving and encouraging and affirming our children!!! ☺

Moms...Watch For This ☺

Moms tend to be softer and require less than they ought to from their children. Not always, but you need to know, and factor this into your thoughts. You may expect or require about 20% less from your child than what he is really capable of or can really handle. Or to put it a little differently, what you think he can do or can handle – he can probably **handle 20% MORE!** This goes for applying discipline and for just your basic expectations of what a child can do. Moms typically settle for too little.

Also, Because of your feminine, emotional and sometimes hormonal nature, when things are brought up related to your children, you are likely to react and overprotect and compromise. If you are one that is easily driven by emotional reactions: STOP! Be honest. The person who is addressing something in your life or your child’s life DID NOT just say, “You are a total failure and never get it right and....” ***Those are the exaggerated, over-reactive, blown-out-of-proportion kind of thoughts that spring from emotions that are out of control.*** “You always...you never...you blew it...” STOP IT! Reel in those thoughts and just be honest. If you’re listening through your emotions, things will get blown way out of proportion and you’ll miss the constructive, productive, healing intent!

And Dads...

In most day-to-day situations, dads aren’t with their children nearly as much as the moms are. So when it comes to discipline, dads can feel like someone who doesn’t normally do the cooking heading into the kitchen to prepare a meal. Have you ever tried to cook in a kitchen when you didn’t know where anything was, and you weren’t familiar with the set up? It can make you feel awkward and not very sure of yourself. Well, that’s how it is for dads sometimes with discipline. They don’t have as much “moment-by-moment” experience with discipline of the children, and they may not be as familiar with some of the subtle attitudes and problems. They are not necessarily “weak” in the discipline area with children, it’s more that by the nature of their lesser involvement,

dads may be overly compassionate or just not quite see what's at stake as readily. Again, not because they're weaker or don't have a heart for it... it's just that they don't have as much experience. So, dads you need to be aware of that and purpose to be involved.

Question: Sometimes when I'm with others and my child misbehaves or has an "attitude," all of a sudden I feel like I'm being watched to see how I'm going to handle the situation. I feel like I'm on stage or being critiqued or something. Why is that?

Well, you are sort of being watched. That's kind of our job, isn't it? I don't in any way mean that we're being "policemen" to one another. But, because we love each other, isn't it our job to be covering each other's blind sides? Isn't that part of walking in sensitivity to the Spirit – listening for the heart of things, noticing things and responding to them together? In those situations where some issue comes up with your child or whatever, you should expect that others might have input, and welcome that. If you are seeing this properly you, of course, are grateful for input. **You want Jesus' standard and you need the extra eyes and ears.** You need the gifts of those around you, as you are striving heart, mind, soul and strength to honor Jesus, right? If we are "baptized in the Spirit" – then, by definition, we will say, "I have need of you!" according to the apostle Paul (1Cor.12).

Now, something you might experience in situations like this is you may find yourself becoming paranoid and looking over your shoulder all the time. If you start focusing on your "performance" or your child's "behavior," instead of on finding Jesus together, you will get paranoid. You'll start wondering what everybody else is thinking, and you'll usually assume they're thinking the worst. Then you'll find yourself reacting or functioning out of what you think they're thinking. That kind of response is NOT acceptable, but can easily be turned around. If you're willing to walk in the light and seek input, you can still receive God's wisdom about your situation and you'll probably even find along the way how ridiculous your "paranoia" was in light of the Love of the Body. These guys LOVE you and you see it in them every day! If everyone were just "attending" something, then this wouldn't make any sense at all. But when living the way God has said a church should live, intertwined in one another's lives in love, then it is as natural as any family relationship. It's when folks that DON'T live daily as family start messing around with these things that the trouble comes up. When the paradigm is faulty there are quite a few Scriptures that you just CAN'T obey because the context of "church" is unBiblical and wrong.

Question: What would a bad response be when a person gets some input about their child-rearing (or anything else)?

Maybe it would be, in a place where they don't "all know Him, from the least to the greatest" and there is "leaven in the batch," or immaturity needing to be resolved... "Well,

I have this figured out, I don't need their input. I'm handling this situation just fine." You dig your heels in and assume you have a good enough handle on the whole thing. Maybe it's because of pride. Maybe it's because of idolatry of your children, or your own way of doing things. ***By arrogance or idolatry or ignorance, you have closed yourself to any input and gifts of others.*** This is a BAD, BAD idea.

Question: What do I do if I need to leave my child with someone, but I don't want that person to discipline my child?

Well, assuming we're talking about a trustworthy caregiver, you need to leave those caring for your child the proper tools to do the job. You have to remember our goal is to teach our children that in every area, across the board, JESUS is the standard. That means unbridled behavior, self-centeredness and heart "attitudes" cannot be tolerated. There will be consequences. If we leave them in situations where the standard is different, they will learn to take advantage of that. For example, your child may learn that mom is afraid to discipline in the grocery store.... so the grocery store becomes a "playground" where he gets to do whatever he wants, and he can get away with it. Another example is that a child may learn, "with this caregiver, I don't get away with anything... with this other one I do." So with that second caregiver he'll test more and push the limits of what he can get away with. It's tragic, but that's how we will train our children to think and act if we don't keep the standard high and enforceable wherever they may be.

Question: Practically, what does that mean?

Well, if you leave your child with someone, here are some of the tools you can also leave with them. The caregiver should know what things you are currently aware of and disciplining your child for. You might say, "these are the things that I'm currently addressing with this child, and this is how I am handling them. Therefore, I'd like you to handle it the same way, with the same discipline. If offence number 1 happens, this is what I'm doing, and I want you to do that too. If issue number 2 comes up, this is what I've decided to do. Please do this, too." And so on. And if there are areas in your child's life that you are not quite solid on yet, in humility address that too. "This one area I'm seeing, but I'm not sure how to handle it yet, so I'm not really doing anything. Therefore, I don't want you to do anything either... BUT, would you please be eyes for me?" When you get back, ask the person how things went. Find out, "Did this come up? Did you do this? And what about that one other area I mentioned? Did you see anything? Do you have any clues for me about the heart of this? Any ideas about how I should respond?" You haven't compromised anything by doing this, and your child is receiving a consistent message.

Question: What about a situation where there's a brother or sister that I don't feel comfortable leaving my child with?

Well, there will be some situations like that... *BUT, that means you need to find a solution!!* Why do you feel that way about that brother or sister, and what are you doing to change it????!! You **MUST NOT** just hide away with your “opinion” and “not lift a finger” to set them free, if you are correct in your assessment of them. Our lives are **NOT** about, “I’m just a mom with some good Christian friends (and I trust these three more than I trust those other three, but we’re all Christians walking together!)” **NO!!!!** Our lives **ARE** about being built together into a beautiful spotless Bride. “Wrestling to present **EVERY** man complete in Christ” never saying “I have no need of you!” “See to it brothers that **NONE** of you have a sinful unbelieving heart.” You’ve just described a situation where you’ve been made aware of something that needs to be addressed. There’s a reason for your hesitation to trust this person with your child. Work through it. Pray about it, fast, get “equipping for works of service,” work it out. When those little question marks come up in your mind, care enough to do something about it. This is about being **FAITHFUL**. We see things. We sense things. We wonder about this or that. Be Faithful to do something. Don’t just let those “little” things slide by. Care enough to help open doors for healing and solutions and make room for demonic stuff to just clear out of the way. This is so much bigger than just trying to arrange the “best” care for your child!! This may be a door into a conversation that you wish you’d had three years ago. “You asked to watch my child, but I just have to tell you...” Maybe, just maybe, this is a bridge into this person’s life that you’ve been looking for.

If you want to know God more and be a deeper person, it is not going to happen by just reading another chapter from some deep book together. It comes through practical situations where you have to face pain and heartache and challenge and you decide to walk through it with kindness and peace.... a death to self.... and humility...loving others and praising Him. How awesome our God is! *These very realistic situations are meant to be springboards into more Life, Fruitfulness, Care and Compassion for others.* Do you see it? Big News!!...You were **NOT** given this child purely for your enjoyment. You have much to learn. And this child was given to you not only as a wonderful gift and responsibility, but as a tool for change in your life and the lives of others around you. Some situations with our children can just open up things in our hearts or the heart of someone else that we never would have seen otherwise.

How much have you learned of Father’s discipline and training and creativity and patience through your experiences with your own children? How much have you learned of the incredible love of Father through the experience of love for your child? Do you realize, that’s an experience of the kind of love you can (and should) have for others – just as deep and warm and tender and longsuffering?

Question: Maybe it's just me, but I know there's a place for children to be quiet and respectful of the adults, and aware of the "bigger" picture of what's going on around them. But then, I find myself in situations with children kind of playing and giggling and being a little goofy and I'm trying to sort out how much is too much.... or is it back to that old saying, "Children should be seen and not heard"?

No Way!! There are rainbows and forests and such treasures inside to be brought out and enjoyed!!! Don't be afraid to let the children be creative and play and giggle and even jump on the couch cushions once in a while (why not even jump with them?:))! I'm not saying to let them just do that whenever they want. They need to know there is a time and a place for it. But, don't make a hard and fast rule for every single thing either. "You must never pull the cushions off the couch." "You must be quiet at all times." You will squelch and stifle their creativity so much they'll never be able to bring out all the gifts and things that they have the potential for. I would not advocate anarchy (lack of government) OR a military regimen.

To do this right requires good **LEADERSHIP**. It goes back again to the fact that this thing called parenting is an art. I don't want to allow a child's "motor" to get running too fast so that he's out of control, but I don't want to shut down his motor either, or never "rev it up," or fine-tune it, so to speak! I've got to find the difference... moment-to-moment, child-to-child, and situation-to-situation. This requires good leadership. But with good leadership, you can provide children with opportunities to express themselves and explore and create and discover things. And with good leadership they'll blossom and grow and pour out treasures and we'll all benefit from it...So, let them slide down the banister headfirst once in a while, okay?!! :)

A HUNDRED MOTHERS AND FATHERS... YET, ORDER IN THE HOUSE

Question: Since we are to be “a hundred fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters, ...” how does the way the world would typically view the family unit, biologically, fit in? How should the Spiritual Family and the biological family be understood in relation to one another, as it pertains to child-rearing and other areas?

There are a million practical areas in regards to all of this, of course. Perhaps we could use “child discipline” as an example. Even in an expression of Jesus, a living Church, that is very much like Jesus and doesn’t have a lot of unanswered questions and divisions and leaven... we must still give honor to the biological unit of family. Of course, in an assembly where every man does what’s right in his own eyes and few “discern the Body,” this would be even more true, since the deposit of daily love and relationship seldom exists beyond the bounds of a biological family unit.

Even if we are in a place where things are very close to what God intends for a true church, there needs to be respect for the biological family unit. Even where the life of Christ “from the least to the greatest” is in line with the direction it is supposed to be (everyone is not necessarily WHERE they’re supposed to be, but everyone is IN THE DIRECTION that Jesus intends) – it still would virtually never happen that I would just grab the hand of someone’s child that is maybe being disrespectful – and walk them off to the woodshed to give them a spanking. Not happening! – except in the rarest of circumstances or emergencies. *I need to honor their history and the direct responsibility that they have to the authority of their parents.*

Even though I’m very responsible for that child, as I have a hundred fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters, children, lands, possessions, I’m still not going to step presumptuously into disciplining children here and there, rather than working with them and their parents. I’m not going to whisk the child off to the woodshed – even though they are very much a part of my family.

AND YET, I do not, CANNOT, isolate them by flesh and blood and DNA as “mere humans,” as pagans do. “Well, they’re Black or Chinese or old or young, so I don’t really relate to them.” “They’re not really a part of me.” “They have a different set of genes than I do and they have a different last name than me, so I’m not really as responsible.” No! That is not true! We are to “see no man after the flesh,” regardless of their color, their age or whatever gene pool they happen to come out of. I’m responsible. If I’m truly “born a second time” I’ve become a different species, as have they, and this entity far surpasses and supercedes these issues of flesh and blood and gene pools.

Still, the order that God has set in place so that things function properly means that I'm not going to grab a child's hand and just walk off with them to the woodshed, regardless of their family unit. I'm going to honor the process that God has put in place – even though we *are* going to work it through on some level. I may talk to the child and say, “Why don't you go tell your parents what you just did.” I can be easily that involved any day of the week on that level. “Did I hear that properly? Could you please explain to me what you just said and why you did that to your sister?” “Let's talk about that. Let's go for a little walk over here. Your mom is over here. I'd like you to tell her what I think I just saw. Would you please do that for me?” I'm very involved in that process and I would never in a million years think that was not my responsibility and that I should not be involved. I would never say, “Well, they raise their children differently than I would and we've just got to agree to disagree” while their children grow up to be rebels and die in their sins when they're fifteen. I'm not going to do that! God has said many times that we do have accountability for one another's souls, and the last guy I know that implied, “I'm not my brother's keeper” is NOT one of my heroes.

God Is Owner

There is very definitely an honor process that says, “I want to honor the home” – “I want to honor the fact that this child's parents are primarily responsible for this gift.” However, I'm also keenly aware that they don't own that child or that spouse, but that GOD owns that child or that spouse. A parent or spouse does have a primary responsibility – but they are not owners of the child or the spouse. This little child is not a possession. This child, this spouse, is a co-heir. A child is a gift that has been given as a trust. The parents didn't create that life. They donated something to the process and now bear much of the responsibility, but ultimately those children belong to God. Because of that, I'm not going to let two parents destroy a child's life. Not on my watch. I'm going to somehow find a creative way to help. There are a thousand ways to help impart vision and I've got to be passionate about it, not passive. *I do need to take responsibility because those, according to God, are my children, too, in the Spiritual sense.*

There Is Discretion

Now of course, if I just met you, I'd be even more creative with you because I don't know you as well. With others that I know well I may be a little more blunt because they expect that and they themselves return that when necessary. We can be more direct when we know each other well because we trust each other and we know what we mean and there's no question about whether or not there is a commitment there. There is a loyalty and a love that allows a certain amount of frankness. That may take a little bit of time if you don't know someone as well, but you are still responsible for everyone that is of the same genetic species – that has been born a second time – and their offspring. I'm still

responsible. I AM my brother's keeper. I admit it. I'm guilty. And so are you. *You are priests if you've been born a second time. Responsibility comes with the territory!*

So, there is a process of honoring the order that God has set in place, and we each must be very committed to that. There is also a global perspective that says, "I can't shrug it off. I have to find a way – while I'm continuing to honor." There is not some quick fix answer for how to do things, but there has to be some vision of how this looks from God's vantage point so that we can begin to navigate our way through 10 million different varied situations.

Respect is the Issue

Question: One thing that I noticed while visiting was that the children addressed the adults by their first name. It may be a small thing, but we have always taught our children to use the typical Mr. or Mrs. Am I wrong? Is this being legalistic?

Perhaps not too legalistic, but it will never happen here, other than with visitors. We have found it impossible to live in a climate of love and trust, where a child's best friends at age 7 may very well be 3-8 times older than he is... and also maintain a caste system with titles. At what point are they old enough to call their best friends by their names, instead of by a title? It would be far too confusing. It makes sense in an institutional environment, or in a disconnected environment, as well as in a work place with "superiors" being referred to this way. "Excuse me, Sir, but could I ask you a question?" That won't work in a family, you know. Is that how your children ask you a question? Or your wife? Of course not. **RESPECT is the issue, and is essential.** But not titles.

Do the young ones quickly get out of the comfortable chairs in the living room when an older person enters the room? Do the young ones speak with respect, and ask questions humbly, never interrupting in some bold "I know things too" sort of way? Are they quiet and kind and sensitive when older ones are around, as well as the rest of the time?! :) With visitors, I will often ask the young ones to refer to the guests as "Mr." or "Mrs." But that usually doesn't last long because the guest won't want it to be that way once they taste the Life and see that the respect is there, with or without a title. And needless to say, in most cases in the world, using titles does nothing whatsoever for the hearts of those using the title, or receiving the title. It's easier to *say something* than it is to *be someone* which is the part we prefer to work on, of course. Love,

“RAISING CHILDREN FOR THE KING”

PART 2

The Father has ultimate responsibility for disciplining us as His children, and that also needs to be respected in our family unit. Other people randomly disciplining God’s children is an offense. Likewise, other people randomly disciplining children in a physical family is a violation. The reason why is because God has given the parents the ultimate responsibility. He has given them the ultimate place of understanding so that the carnal things might be purged out. It is very easy for someone who is not right there with the child, who doesn’t know his character to break the bruised reed. For someone who doesn’t know what they are struggling with and what they have already been through, it is easy to snuff out the smoldering wick. Some children are fragile, yet they don’t seem fragile to somebody who doesn’t know them very well. You may know the law, but you may not know the mercy and the grace and how to implement that.

Legislative Authority vs. Executive Authority

There are times when God gives us the ability to delegate responsibility to discipline His children. It says in Hebrews 13:17 to obey your leaders – those who have the rule over you in the church. They watch for your souls. Obey them; make their work easy. Make it a joy. It wouldn’t benefit you at all if they were not filled with joy in their work. You will be the one who suffers. Obey those who have the rule over you. The implication, as a representative contrasting picture of two words, is that God has all legislative authority, the “outermost point of authority or rule,” *arche* or *authentico*. But He gives *exousia*, which is the implementation or the ability to execute, to His people. He has given the executive authority to His people.

So, the commander-in-chief of the armed forces is the chief executive officer, the President. He can go out and implement, *exousia*. But the Congress, those are the legislators, that is *arche*. They make the laws; the President enforces it. It’s a checks and balances kind of thing. God gives law; we don’t make law. God makes all law in heaven and on earth. All law has been given by Him. We have no right to make new law, but God did give us authority. But, that authority is a delegated authority. It is an executive authority to execute what God has said. It is an authority to bind on earth what we see has been bound in heaven, as Peter was told. That also can happen in families.

Use Your Resources

If I give you responsibility for my children, I can say, “Children, I’ve given this person authority to bind what she knows has been bound in this family, and to loose what

she knows has been loosed in this family. She has executive authority. I've delegated to her authority to execute discipline." But that is on a case-by-case basis. It's not a random thing where everyone can go grab executive authority any time they feel like it. That is something that has to come out of the mind of the lawgiver. And in the microcosm that is in the family, it must come from the parents where *arche* legislative authority is granted. Parents get their legislative authority from God. The parents should be saying to the person who is watching the children, "Here is the limit of the authority that I give to you. I give you total authority to do whatever you want... I give you authority to discipline to this level.... I give you authority to watch them and report to me and I will give all discipline."

The parent has to be the one to decide at what level this authority is delegated to those who would execute that authority. There needs to be clarification in your household with your children as to what level you intend for others to execute the authority that you have legislated, *arche*.

Ultimately, it is the parent who must be responsible to utilize all the resources towards the one end of manifesting the law of sowing and reaping along with an expression of grace. Those two things working together must be clear. There has to be communication and a vision of "the big picture."

Be Discerning, But Don't "Overlook"

What happens on a case-by-case basis is going to have to be decided in each particular family situation. Some children are bruised reeds that are easily broken. Others have strong self-will and they need the consistency of every person that ever crosses their path disciplining them the same way the parent would. Some children need that, and some others couldn't handle that without crashing and burning. Fathers, make sure that you ***don't embitter your children***, says the Word of God. Don't go past that line and break the bruised reed. That doesn't really give you an answer of what to do tomorrow, but it will at least give you a route to pursue to find out what the right thing is on a case-by-case basis.

I don't know if I've ever spanked another child in the church here. I might have, but I can't remember doing it. That wouldn't even necessarily be wrong if the parent has legislated and given the executive authority to do that. That might be perfectly okay. But I'm saying in my case what I do is I talk to them when they violate something that is clear. Three times in the last day and a half I have sat down with different children and said, "What you have done violates the law of your parents. I know that for a fact. It violates the law of God, and there is no way you are going to get away with this. Your sins will find you out and you need to know that. You need to see the law of God and the justice of God. One of these days you are going to recognize that there is a Messiah who you are in tremendous need of because of the sinfulness of your heart." I just talk to them about it and point them towards the Messiah. I may not discipline them, but what I won't do is overlook it. I cannot overlook it in my child or anyone else's child.

I may not be the hand that spans them, but I will not overlook it. Somehow or another I will communicate it to their parents or I will talk to them face to face.

Sometimes I know full well that the little ones don't understand a word that I am saying, **but I am not going to overlook it.** I can't overlook it in any of you. And you had better not overlook it in me. And we are not going to overlook it in our children either! Even age two isn't too young to be hearing about the promise of a Messiah, His redemption, and the blessed hope of His return. The creation which groans in expectation is awaiting His return. The sons of God are waiting to be manifest. All of these glorious things are things that even a two year old is not too young to begin to hear. They can begin to know there is help – "I'm disciplining you now because of justice, but there is hope because of Jesus."

Not A Parent?

Paul was not a parent, but he sure knew a lot about parenting. *The reason he knew a lot about parenting was because he knew God the Father and he knew how God the Father related to him and how God the Father related to Jesus Christ.* He saw the manifold wisdom of God and Jesus and could incorporate that into microcosms. He knew a lot about marriage because he knew a lot about Jesus and the Church, the Bride of Christ. So, you can know through spiritual principle things that you can have no way of knowing by experience. Most of our experiences are deceptive anyway because they are based on faulty premise and bad training. *We are better off going to the source for understanding than having experience, which is probably bad experience anyway.* There is hope for the future.

You Are Your Brother's Keeper

The very nature of God's heart is that we are our brothers' keepers. It's not an unfair request on anyone's part that others be involved in helping raise their children. Using the resources and gifts that God has given you to help raise your children is RIGHT and GOOD. The things that we call frustrations (and I will say this by way of warning) sometimes we say, "I don't understand" or "I'm frustrated by this and I don't know what to do." Be very careful that it is not a cop-out because you are too lazy to get involved. You don't want to think about it. You don't want to discern what is going on, you don't want to be involved, you don't want to be bothered, so "I don't know what to do, I don't know how to handle this, so get it out of my way." If you say that enough times no one wants you to watch their children, so you get off the hook. No one wants you to be around their children because you are not displaying the character of Jesus and it's a bad influence. That's one way for you not to be bothered by it. Be very careful that you take your responsibility before God very seriously. Whoever receives one of these children because of Me – *receives Me and receives the Father.* That's definitely an indication and

motivation to get involved. Just saying, “I don’t know what to do” doesn’t really eliminate that whole area of “if you DON’T receive them you are not receiving Him or His Father.”

Even if I don’t have a whole lot of understanding about all of this, that doesn’t eliminate my responsibility to learn more, to grow, and to implement what God does show me. Don’t allow a lack of perfect understanding to cause you to cop out in your relationships and in the opportunities you have to serve God by serving His children, big or small.

Question: Can you give another example of getting involved?

In one city, there was a family who physically speaking had no hope for having a child. That child never should have been born. Physically his mother was barren and there was no hope in that regard. Then, when the child was born, he didn’t breathe for six minutes! Medically it seemed he should have been brain-damaged, yet he wasn’t. Everything about his birth was very special. But now, he’s a pain in the neck to his parents! He is very strong-willed. You pick him up and he is going the other way before you even have him in your hands. He’s just that way – very, very selfish. He was constantly up through the night demanding his rights even as an infant. Some children aren’t like that, but he was a wild one.

I had told the mother (before she had lost a year of her life) that what she needed to do was to make sure her child had his physical needs met, put him in his room, close the door, and come out and spend time with Jesus. Because if she didn’t do that, she would end up paying a tremendous price for it. And so would he. She thinks she is serving him, but in the end, what she is really doing is *destroying him*. She needed to learn how to let him cry, and she didn’t learn that lesson until a long time into the situation. It is still harder for her than it ought to be, but I do know that it is important even for an infant.

I only see this family about once every three months but one time I dared to ask the mother, “Do you trust me enough to let me do something?” She was at her wits’ end and said, “Yes, go ahead.” So I took her son in my lap (he was just an infant), held him, gave him a kiss, and true to form within 15 seconds he wanted down. So, I held him, talked to him, and determined for principle’s sake that I was not going to let go of him until he yielded his will. He got madder and madder and screamed and screamed! His mother had never done that. If it was the middle of the night – snap, she was there. Anything he wanted – he got. It destroyed her spiritual life, or at least took a tremendous toll on it. She couldn’t pray, she couldn’t read the bible; she couldn’t share her life with anyone else. She couldn’t even get dressed until 2:00 in the afternoon sometimes! It totally wiped her out because he mastered the household.

That day that I held him I knew for sure that his diaper was changed, and I knew that he was fed. I knew that he wasn’t going to die and that all his physical needs were met. I held him. And while he was screaming, crying, fighting, and turning bright red – I sang to him, hugged him, kissed on him, and let him know that I loved him. This went on for 45 minutes. I just kept singing. ☺ He knew I loved him and that there was no resentment

in my heart. I made sure he knew that. There was no anger, no hostility, no “you dumb little kid, how dare you do that.” There was no reaction in me, it was just love. And then, FINALLY, he relaxed and smiled at me. Do you want to know what I did after that? I IMMEDIATELY set him down. The point is that I didn’t let him down until he gave me his will.

We’ve been through that many times since then, with him and others. The point in which I can give in is when they yield their will. As soon as the child stops being angry (or is just too tuckered out to keep being angry), I go right to them and hug them. But I won’t ever feed their flesh. I won’t ever give in to the demands of the flesh. I’m not talking about their true physical needs, but that carnal nature that demands their rights. Even as an infant, it makes a tremendous difference.

One Last Thought...

If viewing the children in the ways that we have been talking about is the will of God, then it’s not only necessary to implement, but it’s also a responsibility and a trust to go forth and multiply and fill the earth. Not just observe it, not just to recognize it, not just to amen, not even just to do it. But it’s the will of the Lord to propagate it because we are ambassadors of reconciliation between God and man, so keep your eyes open. Keep your eyes open as to how you might serve with the Word of God to others around you as the months and years go on. If you are a child of God, you are a priest, and he who has been given a trust must prove faithful.

OUR CHILDREN, AND EXTENDING GOD'S LOVE OUTSIDE THE FAMILY

Question: The children in our neighborhood are a terrible influence on my children. If I'm honest and discerning about it (rather than spacing it because of my own desire for "freedom"), I know that "bad company corrupts good character" and even most of the "religious" neighbors have children that deeply love and mimic the world. That would make them, according to God, enemies of God – which is NOT what I want for my children, of course. SO, how do we reach into the lives of the neighbors without giving our own children over to "conforming to the patterns of this world"? How can my family influence them if we have to avoid them? And what are they going to think of me? That I am snobby? 😊 However, I just can't risk our children yoking with hers. -Margaret

We just CAN'T risk our children yoking with the children of the world. The answer to your question is... VIRTUALLY ALWAYS do what you do with unBelievers *on your turf* – and not theirs. Meaning, YOU provide the direction and creativity and are involved and watchful. Even "bad" children love to go bowling, ice skating, etc. and you can do it all on YOUR terms. You choose the places and see to the environment and the companions and how it is handled, and how long it lasts. You must be involved with your children's futures, instead of naive or lazy or worldly-minded about children needing exposure to sin in order to be "well-rounded." If you want to lose your children the way those folks will lose theirs, go ahead and follow Freud's advice on this one. *GOD said*, "Bad company corrupts good character" and "Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord!" Sure, it creates some awkwardness when you don't accept the neighbor's return invitations most of the time, but that is just the way it goes. You can accept the safe invites, but NEVER the questionable ones even when there are major pressures to do so. It is beyond a doubt that we DO live in enemy territory. The Scriptures are very clear that this world is enemy territory, and only a very foolish person would live and act otherwise.

So.... If my son is doing something in some slightly more dangerous environment spiritually (something on the world's turf that we've targeted for Jesus) – he'll nearly always have a couple of other (at least one) younger or older true brothers with him. Even if they weren't "invited"! You're absolutely right. You CANNOT risk your children yoking with the enemy's children. If we're going to "yank the unBelievers from the fire", we're going to do it on *God's turf* or on *God's terms*, not like lone-ranger hero types, disconnected from the Head and the body. In the Civil War (and any war) they always refer to getting "good ground" to fight on, or they don't fight – they move on. Hope that is helpful?

And Again, Who Is Your FAMILY? Holidays, “Families,” Morphine, LSD...

This first thought is devastatingly simple: What you find your life’s pleasure in, what you need and want in order to be truly happy, the place where you find your comfort and strength... this is the place where you must also find the salvation for your soul. It is either Jesus, or it is an idol.

Frankly, most people either find their comfort, identity and happiness in evil vices, their occupation, man-made religious activities, some sport or hobby, or in physical family ties. Some combination of these “drug addictions” allows the average unregenerate person to “be happy” and contentedly comatose in this fallen world. These are nothing but DRUGS, illegal substances that dull the senses to the REALITY that might be theirs in Jesus and His Kingdom. Yet most people, instead, harden themselves with the substitute “high” of these “drug addictions.” Sports (as an escape or vice, or affection and conversation consumer), or job or family... are for many no different than worshipping idols. Why? Because looking to these things for happiness, strength, peace, bonding, or identity... is to turn away from Jesus.

“No man can serve two masters.” One can either be self-seeking, or Jesus-seeking... but never both. Those that “love the world” (and the “things of the world”) are “enemies of God.” Those that “live for pleasure” are “dead even while they live.” What DO we find our comfort, identity, and happiness in? And what DO our physical family members (adult “brothers” and “sisters,” parents, cousins, aunts and uncles, grandparents, etc.) REALLY live for?

By way of definition, an “unregenerate” person is one not “born a second time” – not yet genetically altered in the Spiritual Realm. They have not abandoned their lives into the love of Jesus, and are therefore not Christians and not going to heaven. “Attending services” and “being a good person” and believing the “right things” cannot and won’t ever, in themselves, cut it with God. A person without a life given over to Jesus is “unsaved” and is called by the Bible a “child of the devil.” Wow! This may sound unkind, since they are all “wonderful people,” but it is reality, nonetheless. And it can change, if they will choose to live for Jesus, rather than for their own lusts, desires and securities.

Let’s focus on one particular area of this idolatry and “drug addiction” common to the species of the unsaved: “FAMILY” – as in “physical blood-line” bonding and affections. Let’s start in the obvious place. What does the Messiah have to say about it? What does GOD think about this area of “family” that is so emotionally powerful and intoxicating?

How Did Jesus Define Family?

Jesus CLEARLY re-defined “family” for those that have been re-born. Who is your REAL family, if you are truly a christian (birthed now in the Spirit of God)?

(Mark 10:29-30, KJV, YLT, NKJV, Darby, Peshitta Ancient Eastern Text, Tyndale, Moffatt, The Greek Literal New Testament) *So Jesus answered and said, “Assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My sake and the gospel’s, who shall not receive a hundredfold now in this time; houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions; and in the age to come, eternal life.*

(Mark 3:33-35) *But He answered them, saying, “Who is My mother, or My brothers?” And He looked around in a circle at those who sat about Him, and said, “Here are My mother and My brothers! For whoever does the will of God is My brother and My sister and mother.”*

(Luke 11:27-28) *And it happened, as He spoke these things, that a certain woman from the crowd raised her voice and said to Him, “Blessed is the womb that bore You, and the breasts which nursed You!” But He said, “On the contrary, blessed are those who hear the word of God and keep it!”*

(Luke 9:59-62) *He said to another person, “Come, be my disciple.” The man agreed, but he said, “Lord, first let me return home and bury my father.” Jesus replied, “Let those who are spiritually dead care for their own dead. Your duty is to go and preach the coming of the Kingdom of God.” Another said, “Yes, Lord, I will follow you, but first let me say good-bye to my family.” But Jesus told him, “Anyone who puts a hand to the plow and then looks back is not fit for the Kingdom of God.”*

(Mat 10:34-38) *“Don’t imagine that I came to bring peace to the earth! No, I came to bring a sword. I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. Your enemies will be right in your own household! If you love your father or mother more than you love me, you are not worthy of being mine; or if you love your son or daughter more than me, you are not worthy of being mine. If you refuse to take up your cross and follow me, you are not worthy of being mine.”*

Jesus’ view of who our REAL family must be, if we are HIS disciples, and therefore Christians, is pretty radical, isn’t it? But who has the right to argue with Jesus and question His authority or wisdom on the matter? “You didn’t REALLY mean that, did you Jesus?” Our flesh doesn’t like these commands from Jesus very much. And if a regenerate person finds this challenging, what would we expect from a pagan?

What They Want

What does an unBelieving physical relative generally want, as it relates to their fleshly family? Most all unregenerate “family” members DESPERATELY desire cutesy “family” get-togethers, cooing at “grandchildren” (along with the accordion wallet photos 6 feet long), giving/trading “gifts”, eating large quantities of food, hollow laughter about carnal

subjects, hugs, kisses, and warm fuzzies. They have little else of Real meaning in their lives, and so they must ***CRAVE physical realm “bonding” as a substitute.*** They may gossip about, or be angry with one another (other than at holidays), or see massive destructive sin in a “family” member, but it doesn’t matter. The “drug” of “physical family” is so strong that they can still fool themselves into thinking they are “tight knit” – though they have nothing much deeper than shallow surface relationships.

Physical family relationship is far inferior to God’s Way, and is simply a penumbra of God’s original intent, not the real thing. Jesus said that only this is REALITY: real relationships with Father and with real Family. And this Family can consist only of those that are born a second time as radical, supernatural, undivided followers of Jesus! Openness, sincerity, integrity, self-sacrifice, love, generosity, forgiveness, loyalty, trust, mutual-dependency through thick and thin, the spark of delight and fun... all based in the Truths of Jesus lived out together daily, in His Spirit. This is His Plan. ***Don’t mistake this*** for the very shallow “shadow” of family relationships, based on “we all have the same hairline and nose and last name,” so we should be “close-knit.” The “physical blood-line family gathered around your dinner table” as an entity complete in itself is not a concept you’ll find in Jesus’ Heart. This is not His Plan, based on His Teachings above, and many others.

See Through Spiritual Eyes

(Rom 9:6-7) *“For they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel; nor are they all children because they are Abraham’s descendants.”*

It is not that God failed to keep his promise to them. But only some of the people of Israel are truly God’s people, and only some of Abraham’s descendants are true children of Abraham. But God said to Abraham: “The descendants I promised you will be from Isaac.” This means that not all of Abraham’s descendants are God’s true children. Abraham’s true children are those who become God’s children because of the promise God made to Abraham.

From the beginning, God’s intent has been to see “family” according to the Spirit, not the fleshly offspring. “God sets the lonely in families.” The Real thing is seen through Spiritual eyes, shared in communion in the Spiritual realm with Jesus, and invested in by vulnerability of heart, love of the Light, and obedience to God. It has nothing to do with physical blood-line. Jesus surely made this point clear beyond debate. God’s Plan has always been that the “shadow” would never be indulged in, but rather it would point us towards “the Reality, which is in Christ” *alone*.

Coddling Will Kill

If you coddle, and cooperate with, and are cozy with unBelieving “family” (whether they are religious, or not – but still part of the world system), without reservation, without qualification, without speaking to them about their souls regularly in spite of social

protocol, you are deeply hurting them and yourself. If you “join in the reindeer games” and just blindly DO the “family” stuff, at holidays and other times, do the chatty phone calls, photographs of the children, and hang out with pagans – you are no better than a drug dealer. You are giving a drug fix to a junkie. If you allow them to continue to build their lives, like the animal kingdom does, around physical realm, flesh and blood things to get their “highs”, you are defying the teachings of the Master, to your own detriment. Beyond that, you are contributing to your physical family’s destruction by giving them the substitute for True Family, and True Life – JESUS and HIS FAMILY, the CHURCH. It is not “love” to overlook things that Jesus has called fatal. “Keeping peace” (which truthfully is more likely to be either cowardice, or lack of relationship with Jesus on your part) is not “loving them” when you are allowing them to die without a real, consecrated walk with Jesus. Those that love the world are always “enemies of God” – and you allowed it to go on! Shame on you, if you have done this, in order to “avoid conflict” or to pad your own insecurities and fleshly desires for worldly affections.

Let me repeat a key point here. You must grasp this. Perhaps these “family members” are “churched,” but not truly living for Jesus. By Jesus’ Words, they cannot be saved unless they deny their very selves, take up their crosses daily, and radically follow after Him. Jesus was clear. They cannot be saved, unless they will do this, from the heart, and fall deeply in love with Him (instead of themselves, the world, and the things of this world, such as physical family, jobs, hobbies, etc.). ***Unless they ARE living for Jesus, heart-soul-mind-and-strength, they are NOT your family.*** That is IF you believe what Jesus articulated in the Scriptures written above. And if you don’t believe Him and want to live this way, then you should go be with and enjoy the company of, and bond with your unregenerate “family members.” Can you feel comfortable with them and depend on unbelievers? Do you have no deep groanings and difficulty laughing at their jokes? Can you hang out with them during endless carnal or shallow discussions, indulging shamelessly in their pagan feasts and gift giving and “family” bonding “drug” parties? If you can do these things, then you should question your own intimacy with God.

“How can two walk together unless they are in agreement?”

“Come out from among them and be separate,” says the Lord. “And then I will be your God and you will be My people.”

“If you love Me, you will keep My commands.”

“Bad company corrupts good character.”

Can you be good company to the unregenerate – with nothing at stake, nothing challenged, nothing changing... just partying with them on their level? (Maybe YOU don’t curse or drink as they do, but you are clearly “one of them” by how you distribute your affections and allow your children to be handled and entrusted.) If you can be “chatty” with them in a relaxed and familiar or intimate way, you are in serious trouble. If you can live with them, visit with them, travel with them, eat with them, “party” with them socially in an unchecked, unhindered, relaxed way, there is a very serious problem. If you enjoy all of that and “bond” with them without deep grief in your heart, you are probably one of their species as well. Unsaved. And you are only more deeply sealing

their destiny without Jesus by giving them the “drugs” of “fleshly family” that they crave which is dulling them to the only REAL source of Life: Jesus of Nazareth and HIS Family.

Grieve As Jesus Grieved

When Jesus reached out to the unsaved, such as Zacchaeus, they were comfortable with Jesus only if they desired to repent. Obviously, sin was *not* overlooked, and the conversation was not carnal and worldly.

(Luke 19:8) *But Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, “I will give half of my possessions to the poor. And if I have cheated anyone, I will pay back four times more.”*

If you DO grieve deeply for your physical family, you cannot join in the pagan revelry and just be one of them. Of course you care about their well-being very much – primarily spiritually, and then otherwise, but you MUST NOT give them their demanded “drug fix.” You must not just go along with all of the building and bonding they desire, around flesh and blood. You may only build around Spiritual things, if you are a son or daughter of God.

Emotional Blackmail And Such

It is entirely possible to love pagan family, and reach out to them, and “honor father and mother” – WITHOUT giving them the “drugs” they crave. You’d be far better off visiting with them at times AWAY from “holidays” and times of the “drug fix.” And watch that you don’t bend to the emotional pleas or emotional blackmail. “If you *REALLY* love me then you will _____.” “If you’re *REALLY* a christian, then you will ‘honor your father and mother’ and do what we want you to do!” This is terrorism and emotional blackmail, and you must not give in to it. Drug addicts will always make demands and threats and emotional pleas for their “fix” but you are NOT doing them a favor by giving it to them. You can “honor” them (without the sin of giving away affections that must belong ONLY to Jesus and HIS Family) by showing kindness in other ways and at other times. We can visit, perhaps, at times and in ways that can center around Jesus, rather than the intoxication of “holidays” that “must not be ‘spoiled’ by these religious conversations.” *Keeping Jesus always before them, rather than as a “side” topic that “we just don’t talk about,” is mandatory.*

Jesus Is NOT A “Side Issue” Or “Private Matter”

Does someone you know want “religion and politics” to be “private” matters? Wrong. Jesus is everything, and must not EVER be relegated to a “side” topic. Only an unsaved church-goer would even be capable of leaving Jesus out of any relationship – whether co-workers or physical “family.” If you can bond with, and give trust and affection to, and enjoy the company of ANY unregenerate person in an un-challenged, non-Jesus-

centered way, you have severely impaired your ability to know and hear and experience the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This applies to physical family, co-workers, childhood friends, neighbors, people that like similar sports, or whatever! You are robbing them of perhaps their greatest chance to have Eternal Life, and you are robbing yourself of fellowship with Jesus by disobeying and wounding Him. I'm not kidding. This is very important stuff. And I know the world and the religious world have probably never told you this. But it's true! Jesus was serious about what He said.

SO, let's get our perspective in tune with Jesus' Teaching and Commands, and then we are free to really love people as He did and does – without mixing carnal sympathies, and worldly thinking into our relationships. We can “honor” them and love them in HIS way, and not from a place of sin on our parts. Please take this seriously, “to the praise of His Glory!”

WHERE DO MY YOUNG CHILDREN STAND BEFORE JESUS?

a letter:

Hi Lauri... greetings ☺Thanks for asking and caring.

First of all, the “sanctified” or “made holy” children (because of the faithfulness of the believing parent) that Paul spoke of to the brothers and sisters in Corinth simply means that God smiles on a household and protects it and loves on it, and provides for it for the sake of the parent that is His. The children are “set apart,” or “chosen,” or “smiled upon” for the sake of the one that is His. This is the same reason that He loves us so much... because of the faithfulness of His Son that we hide ourselves in. Many times God made choices for all of Israel for the sake of “My servant David” – or Moses – or Abraham. Not because they themselves had been faithful, but because He had such love for those that were His, that He smiled upon those *that belonged* to those that were His. ***This is not to be confused with “the children are therefore saved because of the parent.”*** This is **NOT** the case, as MANY other Scriptures, old and new Covenants, portray clearly. But He does offer His love and provision.

As for how you deal with unsaved children, the major thought is that God CAN hear their prayer if they are sincere and have responded as far as they are able at this point in their lives, as demonstrated by Cornelius. The man was unsaved, yet had an angelic visitation that few saved people have had. God HAD heard his prayer and seen his self sacrifice for God’s sake. However, had he not responded to the Truth from Peter, there is no question whatsoever that his days of being heard by God would have been over.

Application? When our children stop responding to what they know, God’s favor will no longer be with them as it had been. When innocent ignorance (“sins committed in ignorance” as the Hebrews writer put it regarding the children of Israel) is replaced with selfish rebellion or apathy, the problems start.

One of our primary jobs with our children is to reflect God’s character in the consistency and unbiased nature of our love, and the consistency and unbiased nature of our discipline. Another primary responsibility is to let them know, from the time they are very young, that the good news of Jesus’ birth and life and death and coming to life again... means that there is hope to be saved from the penalty of their sin – WHEN they give their lives to Him in the future sometime. Someday, we will tell them again and again, they will realize how terrible their sin is and how much they need a Savior. And then, we tell them again and again, He will come to live inside of them and live His Life through them. This is the good news and the “new deal” that He made with men and children that could not obey God, or their mommy and daddy. So, we tell them they have something very exciting to look forward to. And so, we point them towards the future as we guide and correct and nourish their present.

Just had a minute, but if you will think and pray through what I have written here, you'll see that I've answered all of your questions that you have written, either directly or indirectly through application. I'll ask God that He give you the liberty and strength and wisdom to raise His children all the better as time passes! Love in Him,

HOW Do I Lead My Children to Brother and King JESUS, and to His Kingdom?

years later (spoken in South America and transcribed here)...

Real Life Situations

Real Life situations are the pathways into the hearts of the children, as well as adults. The children need to see that because of the one sin they committed (the one you are currently talking with them about) they deserve hell and will get hell, unless Jesus washes them clean. Even if they never lie or disobey again, they still deserve hell just *because of THAT one sin* they just committed, and they will get hell unless they are washed by Jesus.

As situations arise where a child has disobeyed, or rebelled, or fallen short, those are the times to speak the gospel in a creative way and really let them see the blood of Jesus and the Spirit of Christ indwelling as the only solution. The blood of Jesus is the only solution for what *has been*, and the Spirit of Jesus is the only solution for what *shall be*. And if you want to lead them to that realization, then these real life situations are the way into their hearts, rather than just into their minds. Real Life situations are the roads that take you where you want to go – into the heart.

A Connection

If we want to get the children to this place of seeing that they need JESUS and that HE is the only answer, then we have to get them to the place of seeing they have MURDERED Him with their sin. The way that we get the children there (or at least hope that we have gotten them there, because you never REALLY know for sure) and the thing that you CAN do (and there are some things that we just can't do) is make sure you help them make the connection to the fact that it is THEIR sin that has wounded and murdered this Jesus, the Son of God. There must be some connection there with Jesus being murdered by *their* personal sin. There must be a shame and guilt, a cutting to the heart because "this man Jesus, whom *YOU* crucified, has been made both Lord and Christ." So, watch to see that some connection is made with Jesus, as a person, dying because of their personal sin, and with them being cut to the heart as a result of that.

Persistence

The second thing you want to look for as you watch and pray toward a child's entrance into the Kingdom is *Persistence*. If they knock and keep on knocking, the door will be

opened. Like the widow at midnight, it was because of her persistence that the judge came and opened the door. You want to see that it's not just a flash in the pan, an emotional fancy that they could forget about later, then just go back and play. You want to see persistence because if you're premature in that, if you don't make them pay that price and *demonstrate persistence*, then you WILL be put to the test on that matter six weeks later. You'll have that question. "Well, did they really become a Christian or not?" Because you cracked the egg open prematurely rather than letting them fight their way out, you'll have a mystery on your hands maybe for the rest of their life. They will go in and out of things and you won't even know if their conversion was legitimate or not because there was this premature "thing" that happened and you don't know what it was. You don't want to doubt it because you think you're not supposed to second guess salvation, of course, yet you can't legitimately have confidence in it because the fruit is just not there.

That's the price you pay when you're a little too goopy and emotional and too pleased with yourself for what a great child-rearing job you did since "all my children were Christians by age four." That's just a stinking ego trip. It's a denominational anathema that's just pathetic and has ruined millions of people. Because of the lack of depth of their "Bible class teachers" or parents having them "say a prayer" "repeat after me" – they don't even know who or what they are. Or even worse, they think they do, and they're dead wrong. This is ONE reason, of several, that the religious world is filled to the brim with leaven, in radical rebellion against the Command of God. So many that were led to think, "it is well with my soul" – never came to the *REAL* Jesus of Nazareth in the first place. Some, who wanted an ego trip or were simply naïve, mis-taught them. They have no FRUIT of true LIFE, yet this deception follows them around, "Oh well, you're a Christian. You're okay. Don't worry about it." All this deception has followed them their whole life because we didn't do our job on the front end. It follows them around because we had this ego trip of what a great child-rearing job we did because all of our children were Christians at such a young age. Isn't that sweet? They went up the aisle at age five and it was untested and unreal in most cases.

Question: Are you saying we won't ever really KNOW??

If you're looking somebody in the eye and you see what you think is sincerity... if you see what you think is a cutting to the heart because of the wounds they've brought upon Jesus, the Son of God... if you see what you think is persistence... there is still a chance, no matter how hard you test it, that you don't see it exactly right. It's like Simon the sorcerer. Was Philip such a fool that he would baptize someone with such ulterior motives as wanting to have power? Out of that crowd of people around Philip, there was one yo-yo that he didn't see through. Now Peter did. Peter saw through it and that's the difference in giftedness. Philip, according to the book of Acts, had a gift of "good news telling" where Peter was a builder, a master builder. He was an Apostle. So, Peter could see it and Philip couldn't. Sometimes giftedness allows somebody to see through a

facade when another person can't. But as wonderful a person as Philip was, he couldn't quite tell that there was a major problem with one of those men's heart. It looked genuine. Luke says, "Even Simon the Sorcerer believed." Yes, but even the demons believe and tremble. There was still a fundamental problem there. "Has satan so filled your heart" is a big thing to say to somebody that's still wet from just getting out of the water. But Philip blew it. It was premature. It was untested. He was probably a little proud. Those guys were NOT super human characters with capes or halos floating over their heads. Philip probably was a little pleased with himself that he'd made a convert out of this big shot sorcerer and he didn't test it. You've got to be willing to turn away somebody that even seems sincere, whether it's the President or whomever. Who cares about their status as a celebrity or how "passionate" they are?

Also, keep in mind that you can corrupt the whole thing by **OVER-TESTING** it too. When you interrogate, and twist, and turn, and struggle, you can potentially ruin the beauty of something if you go too far along those lines. There comes a time that you just can't shred it and put it under the microscope any more without destroying it. You should test all those things, but be careful not to over-test and scrutinize.

Question: You will be able to tell down the road, right??

Yes, although if you remember the five different kinds of people that we talked about (the five chairs) then you remember that things may appear to be different than they actually are. Some people look good and it's real. Other people look bad and it's real. Some people look good and it's not real. You'd like to be able to know, but as John said, "their going out proved they never were among." This would mean that there was a period of time where you really couldn't quite tell. Jude talked about those that sit at your love feasts without the slightest qualm, but their destiny is outer darkness and they are twice sons of hell. But they sat at the love feasts, so there at least was a period of time when, like Jannes and Jambres, their folly was not quite evident yet, but later it became evident to all. They had a form of godliness, but, because it was powerless, the folly eventually became evident. But there was a transition period where you wanted to give them a chance. You wanted to hope that they were just weak, yet redeemed, rather than the fake one on the other side. However, eventually you may find out it's not real in them, so it breaks your heart and, hopefully, not too many people are hurt in the meantime.

If you aren't certain of what all is going on inside of your children you can always tell them... "I'll watch and pray with you." If the child, or anyone, is serious, they'll be coming back to you. "Can you help me get in touch with others who can help me? I've got to find someone who will help me." If they're serious, they'll be willing to call someone in another country to help them if you can't or won't. Give them things to read, from the Scriptures and elsewhere. Ask them to tell you what it meant to them. If the Holy Spirit is doing something inside of a truly open heart, then you'll know it by the **Surprises** in their responses. It won't be "Oh, I forgot to read that. Sorry. I'll do it now." Nor will it be, "Ummmm. I'm not sure what it means, really. Ummmm." (And then they

give you a superficial “book report” about the WORDS they read.) If the Holy Spirit is involved in a translation from death to life, from the kingdom of darkness to the Kingdom of the beloved Son... there will be ample evidence in the Surprising answers they give and the DEPTH of how they are revealing their insight into their own hearts and need for Him.

Here’s how it works, as it did on the first day the men came to Christ in the New Covenant Experience: “They were CUT TO THE HEART, and said: Men and brothers, WHAT MUST WE DO?!!?” CUT TO THE HEART!! “What I do, I HATE!” is the experience of anyone wrestling with GOD, rather than just learning concepts. As Paul said in a letter to the new converts from Thessalonica that the following would be proof of a valid encounter with God: “We KNOW this is for real in you because we saw Power and Deep conviction. NOT JUST WORDS tumbling around in your heads, or emotional upheaval in your flesh, or jealousy of peers’ conversions, or an attempt to push a button and please parents or others – but we saw a response to the Voice of Heaven and His Good News in POWER, and DEEP CONVICTION!” POWER. DEEP CONVICTION.

And The Fruit?

“You turned to God, and away from your sin, to serve the true and Living God!” Look for that! WAIT for that!!! Pray fervently for the REAL thing – Jesus descending upon them, bringing them into the “Valley of Decision” and on to TRUE WASHING AND CONVERSION, in the Highest miraculous sense! No more “futility of thinking” and “darkened understanding.” No more self-life dominated thinking, and moods, and days, and weeks – unaware of the living, Risen Jesus except for in some shallow, token sense!

If it’s not the REAL thing, the COUNTERFEIT will forever be a plague to them, and an illusion that will KEEP them from the Real thing – *the REAL PERSON of Jesus!* Please don’t let your ego, or your own shallowness (imparted to you by the religious world that loses, by their admission, 75%+ of their children to the world, and loses 60% of their marriages to the enemy) cause you to cheat your children of an ENCOUNTER with the LIVING GOD, after TRULY seeing their own hearts for what they are. This is SO important!!

In an era of such bad fruit in the religious world, much can be traced back to this whole topic. Most “groups” or “denominations” would GLADLY welcome the “rich young ruler,” and never see through Ananias and Sapphira to show them the door or a casket, or have the courage to deal with Simon the sorcerer. So much bad fruit has come from “missing it” on the front end with what a Biblical conversion to Jesus and a Biblical definition of “Faith in Christ” really is. It’s time now to turn things around, in keeping with the Teachings of Jesus and His Apostles, and watch Him build HIS Church. Then and ONLY then will we see the “gates of hell” no longer prevailing. It is an exciting thought, and even more exciting to watch and participate in!

“RAISING CHILDREN FOR THE KING”

PART 3

Adam’s Offspring

Another issue that I’d like to ask you to consider with me is “What is discipline for?” Where are we going with all of this, what is the end product that we desire? Let me develop for a moment why those are important questions; they are not as shallow as they may seem at first. Here is a radical thought to chew on...

I think we do our children a tremendous disservice by just innocently singing with them all the years of their youth “Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so,…” and “This little light of mine, I’m gonna let it shine, let it shine, let it shine all the time. I won’t let Satan poof it out,…” When we do those things, when does the time come when “this little light of mine, I’m gonna let it shine,” and “Jesus loves me, this I know,” and “Jesus loves the little children,” turn into a scandal (Greek word: “*skandalon*”)? When does it turn to “cut to the heart” and a crushing need to repent and “be reconciled” to a Holy God that we were at *war* with (biblically – Jas 4:4; 2 Cor. 5:16-20)? How does that happen when they’re busy being told all of the time how much God loves them? And certainly He does, but you must see the dilemma!

Falling On The ROCK

Now, all of a sudden, they have to become converted. They’ve got to be cut to the heart. They have to stumble on a stone and fall on a rock and be “crushed” (1 Pet. 2:8; Matt. 21:44; Luke 2:34-35, 9:57-62, 14:25-35; Gal. 5:11). How does that happen when they’re “good little children” all the time? There’s something that we’re going to have to work through in our own lives as we’re dealing with our own children and showing them that they need a Messiah. Do they really need a Savior, or do they already have one in their hip pocket from the time they are a little babies?

I recognize that these are very delicate issues and I’d like to suggest to you that as our children are growing up, their hearts are alien to God; their hearts are innately selfish and hostile to God’s law and hostile to the dominion of parents and of God and of any authority. There’s something there that is a little bit hard to describe. I’m not talking about the doctrine that I grew up with, where I needed to be sprinkled as a baby in order to be forgiven of my sin or I’m going to hell (or a man-invented purgatory). That clearly, biblically speaking, is not the case. I’m not speaking of that, but of a nature in which, from the time we’re very little, our minds are on ourselves. We revolve around, “me, me, me, me.” That *is* Satanic according to the Bible; to say “my will, my will, my will,” “me, me, me,” “gimme, gimme, gimme.”

The nature of Jesus Christ is not to be served, but to serve. If we teach our children

when they're very young just to "*Booster, booster, be a booster, don't be grouchy like a rooster... boost our Bible School*" and "*I am a 'C', I am a 'CH', I am a 'CHRISTIAN'*" throughout their young lives, when does the time come for recognizing that "my sins – my *specific* sins – have murdered the Lamb of God, Jesus!"

Is it at camp sometime when everybody else is getting dunked, when all of a sudden everything in the universe culminates in, "Hey, I think I'll become a Christian!"? It's a fad, it's a gimmick; it's not the scandal, it's not cut to the heart, it's not a "Godly sorrow" that works repentance; what indignation, what alarm, what fervent desire to be cleared" (Acts 2:37, 19:18-20; 2 Cor. 7:8-11), an immense knowledge of our own sinfulness. "Blessed are the poor in spirit."

When does it become... "*I recognize my poverty, my emptiness, my alone-ness... my inability to feed my own desires, to fill my heart and satisfy my heart. I can't do it with money. I can't do it with sex. I can't do it with drugs or alcohol. I can't do it with popularity. I can't do it with possessions. I can't do it. I'm trying to feed my appetite. I can't do it with a shopping spree. I can't do it with a good-looking "date." I can't do it, I can't do it, I can't do it! I can't get enough; it's an insatiable appetite, and I'm wrecked. I'm destroyed from my lack of ability to find what satisfies the spirit.*"

Only Daddy's Love

It is only the love of God for us in Jesus Christ, absolutely nothing else but the ***touch of the Father's Love for us***, that will fill that desire and those appetites and needs. All sin is simply an attempt to fill needs and clothe a "nakedness" that only the Love of Father can satisfy. Every sin you can imagine from A to Z, *every single sin* is simply a desire to fill a need that only the love of God in Jesus, His Son, lavished on us by the Holy Spirit, can fulfill. If we *really* knew that love and could look up and see our Father's eyes, and if we could see His arms stretched out and see Him running towards us with a ring for our finger, we would have ***ALL WE NEED!*** Though we've been living in a pig pen and eating corn husks, squandering His wealth as the prodigal son did, if we could only see the love of the Father, all of our needs, every last one of them, would be met. All of the law and the prophets are fulfilled as our love for God consumes "all of our heart, soul, mind, and strength" and as we "love our neighbor as ourself." ***The love of Jesus Christ meets every single need.*** *And sin is absolutely irrelevant, unnecessary, a disgusting waste of time, and a loss of inheritance and a loss of fellowship with Him and one another (1 Jn. 1:3-7) when we really know the love of God.*

Don't Rob Them

As we spiritually train our children, we've got to make sure that we don't cheat them and rob them of the "scandal," of the stumbling block, of "the offense of the cross" – a skandalon. We mustn't rob them of their Calvary, and the climax of

celebrating *His* love on Calvary, by padding them with little Bible stories all along, while their little hearts are still alien to God.

“Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain.”

An interesting and crucial point to pick up on is that some children hide their sinful nature better than others. “Some sins go before” (1 Tim. 5:24), and some “lag behind,” if you will. With some children, our first response is to say, “What an angel!” With others, it’s more like, “What a terrible, angry, sinful child” The truth is that there is *no difference* and we need to get that very straight because all of their hearts are alien and foreign to God. Some children are better manipulators, some children have a mindset that’s sharper and more able to hide and mask and to modify their behavior to please us externally, but their hearts are still far from Him. Some could even mask the rolling of the eyes, which is a supreme test since “the eye is the lamp of the body.” The truth is that all of their hearts are far from Him, apart from Jesus Christ and the life that’s in His Spirit. For that reason, judge not a child by “this is a bad child, this is a good child.” The fact is, “Apart from me, they can do nothing,” Jesus said.

There Is No Other Way

“No man comes to the Father but by me.” There’s no other name in heaven, or on earth by which men must be delivered except the name of Jesus Christ. There is no other Way, but through Jesus. “I am the Way, the Truth, the Life.” “And this is eternal life, that they may know, intimately, the Father, and Jesus Christ, whom He sent.” And there’s a “scandal” that’s necessary to encounter that kind of Salvation.

As Simeon told Mary and Joseph on the day Jesus was circumcised in accordance with the law, Jesus was “destined to cause the fall and rise again of many.” He’s going to rip open the hearts of men and cause them to fall that they might rise again.

Every child has to go through that, and if their sins go before them and they look like a bad child, that’s the way it goes – they need a Messiah. If their sins lag behind – if they’re so sly, they’ve got Dale Carnegie built in as part of their sinful nature so they can hide their selfish nature – well, guess what? They are still very, very separate from God and their hearts are alien to the love of the Father and the fellowship in Him until they are born again, “translated into the kingdom of the Beloved Son from the kingdom of Darkness.” Again, as for the time-line (how all these things fit together), I don’t even know anyone who has an airtight understanding (though some think that they do). Fortunately, I really don’t think you even need to know everything, but what you do need to know is that apart from Jesus Christ they are nothing and they have no fellowship with the Father, and even their motives are a pretense.

They may try to do the “right thing,” just as the Israelites tried to do the right thing, but Romans 7 says we *cannot* “do the right thing,” in keeping with the Holiness and Righteous expectations of God. We are not going to be able to make it on that basis. Peter said, “No one ever has” (Acts 15:9-11). The law says, “Do not covet,” and our

hearts immediately crave to covet. The law, as Paul testified (Rom.7:7-25), causes the sinful nature to lustfully spring up. All the law that we give to our children, all the law God gives to us, simply makes them and us want to sin all the more. That's just the nature of the law and our flesh (Gal.5:16-18). But, for those that are in Christ Jesus, there's no condemnation. "Who will free me from this body of death?" Who will free me from the decay of this corpse that's strapped to my back? Who will free me from slavery to sin, and its penalty? "Praise be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!" I *can* "put to death the misdeeds of the body by *the Spirit*"! (Rom. 8). I can, in the mortal body, fulfill the righteousness of Jesus Christ by the Spirit, by a love affair with Jesus Christ, by a marriage to Jesus Christ (Rom. 7:1-6). I could live in a way that I could never conceive of when I tried to approach the Father through the keeping of "do's and don'ts." I can fulfill His Word in my mortal body (here and now, with "ever-increasing Glory" – 2 Cor. 3:18; 1 Jn. 3:3-10; Rom. 8:3-4). I can live by the Spirit and put to death the misdeeds of the body (Gal. 5:16; Rom. 6:11-14; 8:9 – 14), and I can "reckon myself dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus."

But, it can only be done that one way – *by a love affair with Jesus Christ*. And our children need never be taught that there is *any other Hope* than "*Christ in you, the hope of Glory*," even from their earliest days.

Be At The "Window" – Among Them

The moral of this story is that we need to be, priority one, at the "window" where we can see the "transgressions of the Law" in our children's lives. We can't be mindless. We've got to look. We have to see into our children's life transactions (as they play, as they are being instructed, as they "rise up, sit down, as they walk along the way") and address that carnality which will kill them if the "Law" is not brought to bear and the Hope of the Messiah not held out before them. Because some are better able to hide it, we've got to be right there with the children ("among them", "with them" – remember Jesus' way?) in the pressure cooker of life. We need to be there in the instruction and training in every area of life – be it education or team sports or family relationships or table manners or relationships with their peers. We've got to be right there with them to see that carnality so we can *bring the law of God to bear* on it, *testify to the Law of Sowing and Reaping*, and then say: "*Behold! The Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world!*"

If their anarchy or selfishness goes on unnoticed and unchallenged, they'll never see the law and authority of God, and they'll never know that they need a Messiah. You see, the law is a "tutor" and a "schoolmaster" to bring us, to drive us, to Jesus Christ. They've got to see the law; they must see the law. The law is to "make us conscious of sin," as it says in Romans 3. Our children need to know that every mouth is an "open grave" and that we've "all together become worthless"; we've "all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God." And it's only by faith in Jesus Christ and the free gift of God in HIM that we can be delivered. They've got to see that. But if we're not right there "at the window,"

seeing when they “fall short of the Glory of God” because we’re not present mentally or physically due to our other “priorities” (we’re just letting them run their own lives any way they please by not being right on top of it all), then we can’t bring the law. And, if we don’t bring the law, then they won’t see the need for Jesus Christ as Messiah...

I must repeat, because it’s just that important. We’ve got to be right there “with” them – not in a “programmed” section of life, but “as they rise up, as they sit down, as they walk along they way,” as they play, as they work, as they make decisions. And not, of course, “looking over their shoulders,” babying them and keeping them on “apron strings,” but sensitive, watching and praying and as one “called along side” (Hebrews 3:12-14). If they don’t see the Righteousness of God and become conscious of sin because we are somewhere else in our hearts, they’ll never have the tutor that drives them to Jesus Christ as their Messiah, *their only hope* and *the delight of the Father*. Our children, if left to the normal paths of this present world without the consistent challenge of the Word of God applied to and confronting their specific actions and attitudes, will always believe they can approach God on their own merit.

Messiah Is Coming! Messiah Is COMING!

Everything in the law and prophets said, “*Messiah is coming! Messiah is coming!*” and “I will give you *a new heart and pour out my Spirit* and allow you to have the ability to keep my law for the first time.” And that is the place to which we want to lead our children (Jer. 31:31 – 34; Ezek. 36:26 – 27; Heb. 8:10, 10:16; Luke 3:16 – 17). All the “law” and the prophets, if truly of God, must testify of the *Messiah* and of the gift of His Holy Spirit. Jesus said, “*Moses and the prophets testify of Me. You diligently study the Scriptures thinking that by them you have eternal life, but these things testify of Me.*” “The spirit of prophecy is the testimony of *Jesus*.” “And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.”

As we discipline our children, we’re disciplining them to see that there’s a law of sowing and reaping. We are helping them to see that they fall short of the glory of God. We are training them to see that when the law comes what they want to do they can’t do and what they’re not supposed to do they always do – to see that the law must drive them to Jesus Christ, and to see always that *there is hope!* And that Hope is the *Messiah*. All the law and prophets point to Jesus, the Anointed One, Our Messiah!

As we discipline our children, (and don’t miss this point), as we discipline our children – we’re not just simply slapping them on the hand and teaching them not to do a certain thing, we must teach them that *Messiah is coming*. We’re teaching them that there’s a Day coming, Glory to God, “There’s a day coming that you will see the need for a Messiah and you will have an opportunity to be translated from the kingdom of darkness to the Kingdom of the Glory of His Son. And, guess what? Then, as you’re baptized into His death, you’ll rise to walk in newness of Life. As He was crucified and as He died to sin for you, so also reckon yourselves dead to sin. And as many as have been buried in the likeness of His death shall also be raised in the likeness of His resurrection.”

That's the testimony. When we're disciplining our children and training them, our heart is to constantly put before them, "The day is coming, the day is coming when a **Messiah will come** into your life and you'll be translated from your inability to keep the law. I know, I understand, I sympathize, I shed tears for your inability to keep the law. I understand. But the law is holy and righteous and blameless according to Romans 7. The law cannot be altered, it's right. The law is right, but guess what, **Messiah is coming**. And by a love affair with Him and by the gift of His Holy Spirit, you can have the ability to walk in the light as He is in the light. You can put to death the misdeeds of the body by the Spirit; you can keep in step by the Spirit and not be driven by the carnal nature, by the flesh. **Messiah is coming. Messiah is coming.**" All the law and prophets (specifically, our "discipline" and consistent "application" of the Law of Sowing and Reaping) are testifying: "**Messiah is coming. Messiah is coming.**" As we teach our children, as we train them, *that* needs to be what we're always pointing towards – **JESUS**, not "behavior modification."

When that day comes that they see the wretchedness of their life apart from Him, when finally it breaks forth and they see the light – then they'll be ready. A revelation of who Jesus is and who they are apart from Him will cut them to the heart. **And they'll know right where to go because the law has driven them to Jesus, the Anointed One.** They'll know right where to go with no despair, because "there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus".

Please meditate on these things, pray through them. I know it's not easy to capture all of that, but it has everything to do with who you are and it also has everything to do with who your children are becoming. The hearts of the fathers will be turned to the children and the children's to the fathers. And we're going to see children as Joel prophesied – **the Sons and Daughters speaking forth the utterance of God**. At age 12 they are about their Father's business with a jealousy for His House and a fervency and a wisdom that exceeds anything that we can imagine. They can gain twenty years on us when we've not consumed their earliest years by teaching them vain ritual that they have to unlearn as well as a futile sense of righteousness by behavior modification rather than by the Blood of Jesus and the gift of His Holy Spirit.

Jesus Gets to be the Boss

a conversation with a 27-month-old who specifically hasn't yet grown to love the fact that she is not "the boss" and that others can "tell her what to do" (She also likes to ask questions) 😊

As she was going to bed she asked,
"Why did the Romans take Jesus' clothes off in that movie?"

“To be mean to him,” her mother answered.

“Why were the Romans mean to him and why did they beat him up and kill him?”

“Because they did not want him to be their boss.” (long sober pause)

“Mommy, *Why* does Jesus get to be the boss?”

“Your REAL Daddy, God, made you and all the people. That makes us His children. That means that HE gets to be the boss of you and all the people. He is our Creator, our maker, so that means *He decides* who is boss. And *He decided* that *JESUS* would be the boss. Our REAL DADDY, spoke from the skies 2 times and said, ‘This is my Son, whom I love; with Him I am well pleased. Listen to Him!’ You see, it wasn’t just the Romans who killed Jesus, it was all the people... people who don’t want a boss and who do not like being told what to do. If you want to love Jesus, you must be soft, and listen to Him, and let Him tell you what to do.”

The next day this two year old made a point to let several people know that it was not just the Romans that killed Jesus, but it was His own children. She does indeed have much to learn, and the sooner we start the better. Children are never too young to hear the good news of the KING and of His KINGDOM! ☺

EXHORTATION AND MOTIVATION TO RAISE YOUR CHILDREN PROPERLY!

an early morning thought:

Dear Saints, you probably have never viewed it from this perspective, but do you realize all of the heart-ache, lost sleep, trauma, and destruction you will cause to loving brothers and sisters and their children – *if you fail to raise your children properly?* If your children become monsters, because YOU refused to teach them to respect, obey, care, love, sacrifice, learn, or fear God – do you realize how much harm it causes SO many others? Picture what will happen if they are monsters of self-centered arrogance and defiance of God and man, or simply care nothing for God. Picture how that will affect you and your family, and all of their “friends,” and all of the adults who have sacrificed to try to help you raise and educate them. What a tragedy! Confusion, hurt, tears... *forever*. Isn't it worth it, for the Saints, and for the Lamb, To RAISE THEM RIGHT? Carnal sympathy, human logic, laziness, fear... GET OVER IT! The price is TOO HIGH! Learn how to raise them, and HELP EACH OTHER. Don't be fearful and NOT address things that will spell tragedy later on. Please. (PS – Now I KNOW a few of you have REALLY tough nuts to crack, and your children's wiring is seriously challenging. Don't feel bad about this – they can turn out GREAT, even though it is very difficult now. JUST DON'T BE TOO PRIDEFUL OR LAZY OR SOFT to deal with rebellion, and to involve and listen to others. Those SINFUL ATTITUDES are what will kill your child(ren) in the end, NOT their wiring!)

a note from a brother:

Hello gentlemen... Just wanted to add a thought... In the pagan world, 99% of the teens will end up in hell. In the church world, where the youth groups and “services” and such are the means of “building” God's People, 70-80% (by their OWN estimates!) will end up in hell – because it is NOT God's Way! In the environment of a Church that is an Image of God's Son in His Bride, where there is organic Life together and everyone is a Priest and involved deeply with Jesus and Jesus' Work in the lives around them every day, perhaps 10% of those that grow to be teens will head for hell, in spite of all. ☹ We cannot MAKE the parable of the soils not be true... Every one of us, and the young ones, choose God (or not) *by the decision of their OWN hearts*. SO, we cannot MAKE others love Jesus. We CAN “pull the weeds” and “water” and “fertilize” so that there will be 7 times as many that fall in love with, and obey Jesus... than if we were building wrong.

NOW, let me add this. If YOU are not, in your home, representing Jesus properly to your children – by your life amongst the brothers, your wife and children, your prayer

life, your attitudes, your sacrifice and love of others, your reaching out to unbelievers as if you BELIEVE the Word of God – if YOU are not willing to lay down your life to represent Jesus properly in your home, then YOUR CHILDREN WILL BE AMONGST THE 10% THAT LOSE THEIR SOULS TO THE ENEMY. In fact, the 10% is if you do YOUR PART for Jesus. It would be more like 30-50% if you will NOT do your part for Jesus and for the children. Those around you will help some, and bring the percent down a bit. BUT, if you *mis*-represent Jesus by being foolish or lazy or worldly-sentimental (false love) or distracted... the odds are very high that no one around you will be able to compensate for what you have made excuses about and have neglected to do. If you have debates and negotiations with children (in essence, allowing them authority over you, and misrepresenting God in so doing), sloppy standards, unclear directions, erratic behavior demonstrations by the adults, and so on – you are doing DEEP harm to the trusts that God has put into your hands. AND, this goes for mothers, too, of course.

SO, let's re-fortify our hearts and minds and priorities, and ***SPEND THE TIME*** praying with, reading with, and talking to our children – constantly! Support your wives' hard work. Husbands, You're NOT above all that we have been talking about. You are not oh-so-wise that you can waltz in to a situation and say some sage things and then disconnect again! ***DO THE WORK! And LIVE THE LIFE*** – for that is what the children will REALLY believe.

The Hearts of the Fathers

Hi guys, I had a chance to sit in on a time that a few of the brothers were spending with some of the boys the other night learning some history, and frankly I was shocked and disappointed. The time itself was good and the boys were respectful and relatively self-controlled. But once the sit down time was “over” many of the boys regressed into a certain level of silliness, fun-centeredness, and were just generally immature. Most of them were 11 or 12 yrs old, and I couldn't help but think of Jesus as a 12-year-old, in the temple, discussing the Scriptures with the teachers of the Law. If you'll permit me to say this, most of the boys seemed years away from being able to do such a thing, not just from a lack of knowledge about the Scriptures, but from a lack of character, maturity, self-control and Heavenly priorities. I began to consider ways to remedy their situation. The most effective solution I could see was based on this fact:

Becoming a real boy VITALLY DEPENDS on having a dad that is a real man and having many dads that are real men.

Or another way:

If the Life of Jesus Himself - His Qualities, His Priorities, His Character, His Love, His Zeal for the Father's House - is not fully alive and well in you, then you will have a very difficult time trying to impart those things to your sons (and daughters). The children

are *becoming* who you are. You may be able to COMMUNICATE a high vision with your words, but *who you are* is what you will IMPART.

So, if you are lacking, then 1) Turn to Jesus, repent and be changed and 2) Aggressively integrate other men in whom you do see Jesus into the life of your son (and you should do this regardless, since Jesus is so multi-faceted and you don't have all the gifts that your child needs to flourish).

These are a few things that can so easily be imparted to them that absolutely must NOT be imparted:

Misplaced priorities: Do they see us get all excited about things that are so undeserving of our affections and energies? Sports, work/business, electronics, food, movies, gear (computers, sports or otherwise), current events, etc.

Lack of character: laziness/sloppiness, anger/temper, complaining/bitterness, foolishness, COWARDICE, lack of righteous zeal towards sin, arrogance about what we know, arrogance about what we can do, arrogance about what we "own," apathy, defensiveness, shyness, loudness ("hey, look at me everyone"), talkative/constant joking, worry, self-centeredness, crumbling under failure or pain, emotionally unstable, etc.

Lack of Kingdom perspective and building: independent functioning, closed about our "personal" and inner lives, functioning in the worldly "us four and no more" mindset, building up our own paneled houses, sacrificing little for others, acting on natural instincts, overall attachment to seen world issues and priorities, not passionate about "as in Heaven, so on earth," etc.

Do you see any of these things in your son? Do you see them in yourself? What about writing down the ones that you see and telling others (those with whom you and your children have close relationships)? Ask them for help. Ask them what they see. One of the things that I've been guilty of in the past is being soft on sin in my son's life if I saw the same sin in my own life. Only the righteous are as "bold as a lion." If I won't have the courage to nail it with energy in my life, then I won't have the courage to nail it in his life, at least not with any integrity. If we both have raised the same dragon, then it becomes difficult to kill HIS because we both have raised the same pet. If I coddle my dragons, then they can kill us both.

"He will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers; or else I will come and strike the land with a curse."

Fathers, we are the keystone here. We must do our part. We must be Fathers to our sons and to each other's sons.

One final thought... if your son were to write a paper about all the similarities he sees between you and Jesus, how much could he write? I know there might be some things he doesn't see or some things he couldn't articulate very well, but is there enough about Jesus' life that comes through you that he could say, "In my dad, I see Jesus in the way he... And in the way he..." Just a thought to remind us to make sure that there are real and tangible ways we are expressing Jesus, that we truly are dying to WHO we are, and are more and more becoming WHO He is.

With much love, hope, and need for change, Stephen

Roadmaps Toward a Pure Heart

**a living room conversation, sparked in another city,
and later transcribed here...**

Question: My son wants to play guitar. He's been taking lessons and there have been a lot of frustrations. He has encountered a lot of things that are really Kingdom parables, analogies in and of themselves, and I'm trying to highlight those things. What kind of practical advice do you have for the adults or for the children as far as helping the children not to let their affections fall on those things? For example... We play basketball together. How do we really keep that as something that is on target – a pure heart, out of a sincere faith, having no defiled conscience? Is it the same thing as with business? We “work with all our heart,” but do not GIVE our hearts to it?

No Traditions

It is, but I would add another thought along those lines that I think is very practical. It goes back to a teaching of Jesus (quoting Isaiah) that is very dear to our hearts and yet still can threaten to be a major trap for us. ***The traditions of men nullify the Word of God.*** A tradition is anything that is so *repetitive* that there is an expectation built in. A tradition doesn't have to just be things such as burning incense, sprinkling holy water, genuflecting or having icons on the wall. A tradition is, “I always put on my left shoe before I put on my right shoe, and if I can't find my shoes in my closet in that order, then I'm upset about it.” Or, “I always get up at this time.” or “I always go here, I always do this...”

There was a season of time in my life where I went for maybe two and a half years without missing a day of running. I can look back and remember it being eleven o'clock at night and it didn't matter how late it was, I just had to get that run in. Even if I had been on the road traveling all day, I would still get out on the interstate, leave a car full of people parked on the shoulder of the interstate, and run two miles down the road and two miles back before getting back behind the wheel to drive some more. I did all that so that I didn't miss a day of running. There was something good about the discipline of that, and you can admire that in one respect, but looking back on it, I see it differently. For one thing, I can say there was enough of an obsession in it that I found identity in it. And secondly, I was willing to somehow inconvenience other people in it. And thirdly, if I wasn't getting it my way, in my time, I was nervous about it. Perhaps I had the self-control to appear to be spiritual, but it was like fingernails on a chalkboard inside my heart – “I gotta do this, I gotta do this.” It had part of my heart. That was a tradition of men.

If you have a tradition of the route you drive to work in the morning, it might be that one day you miss being the first one on the scene of a major car crash because you won't

ever go three blocks out of your way because you won't listen to God. You would have been the first one on the scene and could have been there to talk to them about Jesus before they died. But "Nooooooo, I *always* drive this way. It's eighteen seconds faster, so I do it my way." You are not listening to God. This tradition nullifies the voice of God. You can't hear God anymore because you are so patterned and ingrained in a comfortable way or the "best" way to do something. That is a tradition of men that nullifies the Word of God.

God Is GOD, You Are Not

Now getting back to the question concerning our children... Something we have to do with our children, and ourselves, is not let the things of the world possess them. Somehow we have to teach our children that there is nothing sacred in life except God Himself. There are no "givens." There are absolutely no givens in their schedule, no givens in the things they own or don't own – there are no givens in *anything!* "Oh, I've got to have my guitar lessons." "Oh, do you?! Do you have to have your guitar lessons?! I don't think so." When I hear that I think of that Quickdraw McGraw cartoon where he dresses up and "kabongs" his friends on the head with the guitar. "Sooo, You have to have your guitar lessons, do you?" **KABONG!!** :) We need to be enough like God in that respect, who is very much like that, to stop our children in their tracks when necessary. They must know that there are no absolutes. There is nothing they *automatically* get to do. There is nothing they can find their identity in except for God and they must have a loose grip on everything – a *VERY* loose grip. If we don't teach them that principle by making them sit in the bleachers sometimes instead of getting to be out on the floor in their uniform, then we have totally misled them about the character of God. And they will make all the mistakes we have made, and then some, because we have mis-taught them. We have misrepresented God to them.

God does not let us control our environment like that. If we are paying any attention to GOD *at all*, then you realize that you can't buy a house just because you want to, you can't hold a job just because you think you are good enough, and you can't build a relationship just because you think you are cute and cuddly enough. You can't do anything on your own, and you know that if you are close to God at all. If you don't know that, you are a fool, and you will find out sooner, or later. You need to know that God is *not* your co-pilot. It's not like that. **God is GOD and you are not! You are very small.** It just needs to be very ingrained in us that we are prostrate before Him in our spirits – physically at times as well, but always in our spirit. We are prostrate – blessed are the poor in spirit – theirs is the kingdom. That is something we can do with our children. We can make sure they don't control anything. We can watch for the things that are very important to them. If they find their identity in something that they always do and always have to do, then we need to help them adjust their thinking in that. If they are upset because they cannot have or do what they want, then we need to help them.

What upsets a person? That's where that "pure in heart" thing comes from, right? Is

your child upset because he doesn't get to play in a basketball game? Does that upset him because he has to sit on the bench or in the bleachers? Because he doesn't get to go to the coin toss because he was displaced as captain? Does that upset him (or her)? Does that stir their heart? Well they are in real trouble then when someone else gets a promotion ahead of them at work for political reasons or something happens that they don't like in the realm of relationship or school or a hundred other things you could think of.

We have mis-trained them because we have let the traditions of men nullify the Word of God. Something they *expected* and *owned* has taken a piece of their heart. They are not pure in heart, and it is our fault because we *let them invest their heart* and own something by our lack of discernment and our false love – which is really for our own ego.

Too Soft???

Do you know why I am too soft sometimes? Because of my own ego. I want people to like me. I want my children to like me. So it was for my own sake that I didn't really want to discipline my son, because I didn't want to break his heart, which would break my heart. I didn't want to interfere with what has been an exceptionally wonderful relationship the last couple of years. I didn't want to impede that, but in the process I was denying God. I was denying the true definition of love, I was breaking the Word of God, and I was breaking covenant with God. I was violating all kinds of things in the Spirit with a false love and a false mercy.

The best thing I can do for my children is to teach them not to be a slave to what we will call the traditions of men. We must not mis-teach them the character and nature of God in the unseen realm. If I am not clear in my own thinking about how I raise my son, then I'm going to let him wander away from love. I'm going to let him wander away from life that is truly life. All the busyness with that stuff (guitar lessons, basketball games, art class) is not the issue. The issue is how much we let our hearts or their hearts be attached to it by allowing the traditions of men to root themselves in. The expectations and demands and all the things that "I'm supposed to be able to do" is deadly to their hearts. "I'm supposed to be able to drive around with my friends." Whatever the thing is – it's deadly. It's poisonous. You cannot read them enough bible verses at bedtime to overcome how much of their hearts they have given away because we have let them do that by mis-teaching them. You can sing songs fourteen hours a day, but if you let them give away their hearts and let them be attached to and shaken by things that are of the earth then you are hurting them.

Our children will come out with little remarks that are very clearly portraying what they are beginning to invest themselves in, and if we let that stuff slide by, then they will destroy themselves and rot away their life with God and never experience Him. All they will have is religion. They will want to have a "ministry," they will want to "do good things for God," they will want to "witness," yet they will never have God and the love of

God in them and through them because they have given away that piece of their heart. They have given away that piece of their conscience, and entropy has taken over.

Be A Good Leader

We must make sure by our leadership that we do not allow the traditions of men and expectations to control our children so that they become shaken just because they can't have a certain thing. We need to watch for every area in their lives and in one another's lives where we are shaken if we don't get something we think we *have* to have. "Gotta have my cup of coffee in the morning." Nothing against coffee, but if someone's "gotta have their cup of coffee in the morning," then it's an idol. It has displaced God, their heart is impure, and they have wandered away from love and life that is truly love and truly life. If there is something other than God's Word and God's promises that we are holding on to – if we don't get it we are disappointed, or brokenhearted, or frustrated, or nervous, or depressed – then we have displaced God by giving away even the smallest part of our heart.

Question: Are you saying that you pretty much have to test to find out where their heart is?

It is true that God will provide opportunities for us to see those things in our lives or in our children's lives. If you begin to smell a rat you can say, "Let's not do that. What do you think about that? This week let's not do that," and then sit back and see what happens. Or talk them through it. The wrong impression that maybe someone could have is that if you do something more than twice a week that all of a sudden it is grabbing your heart. Even in the case of basketball, the question is if you are doing it every day, is it capturing your heart as you are training and working hard at being good at it? Whether it be golf, basketball, business or whatever – If you are really working towards being very good at it, ask yourself if it is capturing your heart? It's something to be very watchful of. The more a person does something, the more likely it is that it will grab their heart. We have known men who are absolutely terrible at golf and it grabs their heart. Then there are men that are pretty good at golf and it has nothing of their heart. It's not so much the quality of play or the quantity of play as it is the *heart issues*. I don't want to say, "Well, I ought to be able to do this all the time because it doesn't have my heart." Well, that can just be an excuse too, when it really *does* have your heart. It's something really to watch carefully.

Build Right – Right From The Start

We also need to be careful that we take the time to really BUILD God's Ways and Principles into their hearts. When my son started playing baseball, I made a couple of things very clear to him. I made sure that he understood that a game must not have his

heart and that Jesus and His Kingdom must always be first. I told him that I must have complete obedience and immediate response at all times. Before he ever played his first ball game, we had a very clear conversation about how the whole thing was going to look. “It’s the bottom of the last inning of the game... your team has two outs and is down by just one run... YOU are on third base and YOU are the winning run just waiting to be batted in by your team’s best hitter who is stepping up to bat... NOW, if I make a sign to you that says we need to go, ***you must walk straight across the pitcher’s mound to the bleachers where I am and we are leaving!*** If there is a ***kingdom reason*** to do something else, your heart must not be so into the game that you cannot just walk away with me. Your heart must never be so entangled with it all that you would ever say, ‘C’mon Dad! Could we wait, can we please wait just one more minute...?’ I expect immediate response. ***‘On earth as it is in heaven.’*** The same way Gabriel and Michael and the angels respond to God, that’s how quick I want you to respond to me. And if you are not prepared to do that then we are not going to do this game. ***If you won’t make your vow to me before heaven and earth that that is how you are going to handle this in your heart, then we are not going into it at all.*** That’s the only term, the only ground we are going to build on. If you don’t think you are strong enough for that, then let’s not do it. I’m not into being irresponsible by having you come off third base for no reason – especially when you are the winning run. ☺ ***BUT, if there is a reason,*** and there very well could be, then I don’t expect any argument – no whining, no discouragement, no embarrassment. Your eyes have to be on God, and if you can’t build that way, then we are not going to do this thing. Okay?”

That sort of conversation is a good way to start the process, whether it’s guitar or basketball or whatever. We need to make sure we are building with that in view before we even begin. And that’s our agreement right off the bat, not something we try to work in later on. If we have to work it in later on because we were blind when we started and didn’t help them and lead them in that way – well, fine, we will add it later on. But now that we all have enough insight to do that in advance, we should! It will make it easier for them, instead of making it unnecessarily hard later on when the tests come.

God will provide the tests, to be sure. But frequency or skill, none of that automatically means that your heart is “off.” I will never forget Tom and Lynn’s baptisms, because I was on the eleventh fairway at the golf course at something like three under par when I got a call on my cellular telephone. That was a test. Those things are a test of where our hearts are. What does it really mean? If I had been twelve over par – “Hey! Let’s go! Let’s get out of here.” But I think God set me up to test me. God provides many tests to make sure we don’t get off track. It wasn’t like it was automatically easy, but those are the things we have to do to refine our own hearts and help each other do the same.

Question: Is that the only value in things like guitar, basketball, and golf? Is the value in letting the children pursue these things wrapped up in us encouraging them to really do it well, and for God? Is the true value found in the character

that develops, the kingdom principles they learn, and the opportunities for their hearts to be refined?

Well, that's a load right there, isn't it?! There are a ton of valuable things to be gained within these areas, but as an end in themselves, there is absolutely nothing of eternal value. The process of being engaged in something provides **a very valuable window** into their hearts and souls. "Will I have the self-discipline to approach this properly rather than be sloppy or lazy about it? Will I respond well when things don't go the way I want them to?" These things provide a window into the soul. They allow a **process of character building and discipline**. There are relationships and opportunities that it opens up with other people. There is a window into God's soul and, therefore, an opportunity to see something about who God is in this process of learning what "music" or "competition" even is. There are a ton of possible valuable things in it, but as an end in itself, there is obviously **nothing**.

We shouldn't let any of us or our children view it as an end in itself. Why do other people involve themselves in these things? Who cares! Here's why we are going to do it or why we are not going to do it. There are at least four or five major, major reasons that a variety of those kinds of things are very healthy to do. They are not to be pushed aside as meaningless, unspiritual rubbish, but for the right reasons those are incredibly meaningful things. It's just that we can't lose our way and mis-focus in the process. We can't fall in love with the world and the things of the world and lose God in the process.

Question: What about in the case of children that aren't very active? There are some children who really don't want to get involved in anything, be it guitar or any kind of activities. Do you really push for that? Do you encourage that and try to get them involved?

If it is a weak spot for them, if it is a character thing – they do need help and a push out of themselves and into activities. Something that some brothers are doing with some of our young men in the 6-8 year-old range is basically a boot camp of different forms of competition. Sometimes it is sitting at a table with words and numbers and sometimes it is out in a field with a rope playing tug of war. We are especially watchful of the ones that don't have the heart for the battle yet. We say, "Push, push, push," just trying to help them see what it means to develop an attitude of fighting the good fight, running the race to WIN – not just to survive. If it is not already natural to them, they need to learn some basic principles of entering the Kingdom by **force**. If it is natural, there are some things to repent of about it, and if it is not natural, there are some things to be built into them. We look for weak spots, areas of blindness, areas of lack of engagement or involvement. We look for passivity in this area or that. If they are lacking something that is in God's character, then we want them to have that.

When children are about six it is a great time to start. Maybe it's violin or a sport that they don't even necessarily like, but so what? There *is* a place for it. Whether they like

it or not, there is a place for that discipline and learning. There is a place for being *under authority* and for the time management...there is a place for all that. Not just in the business sense of “time management” and “self-discipline,” but just to say, “I will buffet my body. I will make myself do something because someone who is important to me, that I love, that has authority over me has asked me to do it. That is my motivation.” That is *sufficient motivation*. This should be done without any whining or undesirable attitudes.

A Vision

I was in South Carolina on a trip with some brothers, when I had something like a dream or a vision. I can remember pictures in my mind, but I don't remember what form they came in. I talked to maybe 10 brothers at dinner about it that night. In this sleepy, sleepy dream or vision of some sort, there was a garden and a variety of plants. I remember having very little interest in it.

BUT, something very serious happened inside of me. At some point I shifted to where I had *a great deal of intense interest in this garden, and these plants*. I then *poured* myself into cultivating and caring for the plants, and learning everything I could about it all. Then, at some point someone asked me, ‘Why do you care so much?’ And the answer that I had for them was, *‘Because the One who died cares so much. It is my obligation to have the same heart for it that He does.’*

I wept when it happened. I couldn't stop. I feel the tears behind my eyes as I am retelling it now. I remember tearing up at the table at dinner in South Carolina. Some of the brothers will remember this. I felt very strong emotions and reconfirmed convictions for my life at the time of this dream – and I've tried to live my life that way ever since. “Hey, I could care less about this plant. This gardening thing is a pain. I don't know anything about it. I don't know that I care anything about it – maybe it's not really my problem. After all, what can I do? They're not my plants, and I don't like plants all that much (it's not my ‘thing’). I don't know what to do anyway.” Somehow, though, I had to turn my mind and efforts around. It was essential that I get my emotions involved in taking responsibility for making that garden lush and fruitful and safe. Why? *Because the one who died and left this small plant and this garden to me as an inheritance – HE CARES. HE CARES. HE CARES.* This is His stuff – and He has entrusted something to me – so it is not a matter of just ‘tolerating’ it. I must emotionally care as much as He cares, and pay whatever price He has paid or would pay! And His Plant, His Garden is surely not to be neglected or forgotten, while my affections or busyness are elsewhere.

Beyond all of that, the goal of this commandment is love, springing forth from a pure heart. A pure heart is to have the same affection for the object of His Love that He does, untainted and undiluted by ‘self’ interests and agendas.

So, I poured myself into it. I just sobbed over these plants and loved on these plants. In myself, I thought these plants were stupid and worthless and had no particular value.

And even if they would have had value and had been delicious green vegetables, I would have *never* eaten them. You know me. ☺ It had absolutely nothing to do with me – no personal desirability at all. Yet, I made my heart to feel the same tears, the same joy, and the same love over this garden that the one who entrusted it to me had.

Beyond question, this picture, which was and is so dramatic for me, describes what has and must define my life for Him. ***I must lay down my life and my emotions for individuals that He chooses for me in this way*** – and for His Bride, His visible Church: as HE defines her in Acts 2:42-47, Mat.5:14, 16:18, Heb.3:12-14, Eph.3:10 and 5:27... accepting nothing less, ever. I have *made* myself cultivate a love and affection in areas that perhaps didn't start that way necessarily, or might have been squashed by pain, had I allowed it. But as I saw how **He** views His Plant and His Garden, I have sought to bring my heart totally into being submersed in all the same feelings that He has.

There is no greater satisfaction in the world, no greater joy in the world, than that. It seems costly on the front end, very costly. But there is tremendous value in paying the cost of loving and caring for and protecting His Plant, His Garden.

Do you know how this dream or vision relates back to the children? For instance, the violin – “I hate this thing! I can't do it! ***But because it has value to YOU, the one I love and the one that has authority in my life, I will pour my whole heart into it. It will mean everything to me!*** Not because it has value in itself, but because it has value to you, it will mean everything to me!” That's a pure heart. That's what we entrust to our children. That is the heart that we call them to with a tug of war or a spelling bee or whatever it would happen to be. We call them to that intensity of a pure heart! We help them separate between what they feel like they are good at or what they feel like they like to do, and what they can do for the one who loves them and has authority in their life. We help them to the place where their passion is connected to the passion of the one that gives them life rather than to their circumstances and what they would have wanted otherwise. That's a ***pure heart!*** A good conscience is to not violate that. A sincere faith is to see it the way God sees it and to live that way ***unwaveringly.***

Question: What about the things that the children really WANT to do? Do you just go with that? They are six or seven years old and they think they really want to do something. As long as you can't see a reason why they shouldn't, do you just get in there with them and help them learn in that experience? Do you just let them do it because they want to and you know that you can use that somehow as a tool?

I wouldn't press it so far as to say “just because they want to,” but you can fish your way around. There are going to be limitations. They are going to have four things they want to do, and realistically when you look at the load that those four things will place on you from a time, energy and expense standpoint, you can see that it is going to rob you of some vitality. It will ***rob you*** of some opportunities to sense and smell the roses of God because you are busy doing *something* all the time.

You are going to have to curtail some of their desires. Some of their desires you are going to be able to go along with; although even then there needs to be such a loose hold on it in their hearts. They need to be trained right from the outset to have a very loose hold on whatever the thing is. If perhaps they gain their desire, they don't "own" it even then. ***It's a blessing – it's not their property.***

You can let their desires help you navigate a little bit, but there is an overload point – which is ***unacceptable!*** Also, even when you let that navigate you a little bit, the children absolutely have to be taught clearly from a Kingdom vantage point the value of what they are doing. Why are they doing it? What should they be looking for? How should they view themselves? How should they view the authorities in their life? Their work ethic... their ability to walk across a pitching mound and right off the field in the middle of a game... they must learn to see everything the way God sees it right from the outset.

That is the way we have to build. We must make sure that they see everything all the way through from God's perspective and that we don't leave any leeway for other stuff. It is tempting to either ignore it because we are blind ourselves (*we* don't even see it) or to think that it is "merciful" and "kind" and "loving" to just overlook it and give them a little pat on the shoulder. "Well, now, now, now...It's Okay, baby."

Don't Misrepresent God

We have a lot of opportunities to mislead them and misrepresent God. These are the only windows we have. They are getting a little older, and the next thing you know – it's over with essentially. If they make bad choices and start moving the wrong direction, there is very little we can do once the momentum starts going that way. ***These are the years*** where we need to make sure that we are very sensitive to the small things and help them build in the right way with what things we do give them to do. We need to view it that way. It is not what things they are running us around with, it is what things we are giving them to do. We are managing their assets for them. We are giving them things to do. And if we don't view it that way and we let them run us around while we try to drive from the back seat, then we are making a mistake that ***they will regret*** and ***we will regret*** for a long time.

You were asking about things that they want to do. I know with my son there are things he wants to do and I might let him do those things. But then there are also things that maybe he wouldn't have thought of to do himself, and I have him do those things as well. With things that they want to do, what will often come into play is that they are looking at it through rose-colored glasses. Once they actually get into it and find out that maybe pursuing the thing was a little more costly than they thought it was, at least you can refer back and say, "Remember, ***you*** wanted to do this." And hold them to it and don't just let them quit when it starts becoming tough. But you can at least use the fact that they said they wanted to do it. When it is something they *didn't* want to do, you can't bring that back to their attention because it was your idea that they do this. But when it

is *their* idea, and it starts getting costly and they want to quit – *then* you have an opportunity on your hands. And it will be costly. Anything that is worth anything will be costly. They probably will be tempted to bail out of it, and we shouldn't have the carnal sympathy to let them start and stop things depending on how they feel about it on any given day. Help them have the discipline of following through on something even if it proves to be a little more costly than they thought it was going to be when they first got into it.

It seems like they will enjoy whatever they are good at. They will start off with great intentions, whether it be golf or whatever. And if they are naturally good at it right off the bat, then they like it, enjoy it, and they will want to keep doing it. If they are not good at it – “Well, I don't like golf.”

They need to have a heart for the battle as it relates to work ethic. This comes up constantly. When someone is not good at something they immediately don't want to do it. For some it is reading; for others it may be sports. They won't tell you they are not good at it, but you know that's the reason they don't like it. “I don't like this. This is a waste of time, a waste of money. Why does anyone like this?” Teaching them to have a good work ethic becomes a vital lesson in a situation like this.

How do you address it?

I think you know. When you see that, those are the kind of things you talk about. You try to get at the heart of the matter. “Why is it you *really* don't like this? Are you embarrassed? Is it because people are watching you and you feel like you are failing and you have your ego in it? You understand these things are things that break God's heart. We can't be driven in any way by our egos or by fear of men or anything like that. Do you sense these things in your own heart?” The process of sensitizing each other and our children to the things of the heart is what gives us the capacity to hear God, respond to God, obey God, and repent if we can't see it. If it is invisible to us because we are dazed and insensitive, then we are just going to go through life with the priorities of men and waste our lives.

Just the process of talking about it HELPS THEM. ***Sensitizing each other to the mysteries and the issues of the heart and calling each other to let God be the standard rather than the way men think, has a ton of value.*** Just the conversation itself is 90% of the solution. Of course, the children do have to provide the heart to change and to evaluate things God's way. They do have to choose God's way over man's way. They have to bring that to the table, but our part is to help sensitize them to the issues of the heart that most people are too dull to ever see. They spend their whole lives building the wrong way and they never see it.

We can help them. We can lead them. We can make a difference in their lives. Don't let time slip away. We can do it through our wonderful Lord, JESUS!

Just Like a Father...

**excerpt from a thought expressed amongst the saints
while reading through Thessalonians...**

“You are witnesses, as is God Himself, that our life among you believers was holy and righteous and above criticism. You will remember how we dealt with each one of you personally, like a father with his own children... exhorting to a particular line of action, stimulating your faith and courage, and giving you instruction. Our only object was to help you to live lives worthy of the God who has called you to share the splendor of His Kingdom” – Paul to the Thessalonians

“Notice how Paul speaks of a father’s role. If that’s *not* a description of how you function with your children and with younger believers, and younger yet-to-be believers, *then you’re missing a given*. It’s a given that fathers and men will be that way to children. It’s a given that fathers and men in the Kingdom will be exhorters to the particular line of truth and action that’s fitting the gospel. It’s a given that they will be encouragers, and equippers, and instructors of the Truths and the Righteousness and the Ways of God. They will encourage, equip, and instruct the younger ones in the faith, trust and character of Jesus of Nazareth. Paul said it so naturally. He said, “That’s the way I was with you, just like *all fathers* are.” Accept that as a norm. Accept Christ in you as your guide and helper! Of course, females have an essential role as well, but I just want to exhort you males to take the natural course that God has lined out for you. God has called you to “share the splendor of His Kingdom.” What a WONDERFUL, GLORIOUS opportunity...!!!”

“...You will remember how we dealt with each one of you personally, like a father with his own children...”

In the last of the Last Days, you will know that God is IN the thing, and is wrapping up the Show, when you see...

“He will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers.”

ON WHAT SOME MAY REFER TO AS “EDUCATION”

“RAISING CHILDREN FOR THE KING” PART 4

I’d like to share, with anyone who has ears to hear, these areas that I consider paramount to raising warriors for Jesus Christ, rather than just good little citizens and “survivors” in a fallen, decaying world system.

First, we must courageously break the curse of the standardized, franchised, dewey-decimalized society besieging us in the 20th century as we train our children in “the nurture and admonition (and ammunition – 2 Cor.10:4-5) of the Lord”.

Second, let’s catch the vision that our primary responsibility is not to make them behave and keep them out of trouble until they’re old enough to make their own decisions. Our primary responsibility is to teach them the immutability of the “Law of Sowing and Reaping”.

Third, the culmination of all of the aforementioned is to actively, clearly and *gloriously* point them through the discipline of the “Law and the Prophets” to *Messiah*, and the gift of His Mighty *Holy Spirit*!

Who Defines What Is Acceptable?

Someone, somewhere, decided that whatever the most people do, is the standard by which everything else is judged.

Very seldom are the issues of life *truly weighed in the balances of the Word of God*. You see it in what is “acceptable” for clothing, haircuts, speech patterns, what “church” is, how we should raise our children, and a thousand other topics. Instead of making our decisions based on the Word of God, we are often hypnotized into conformity by fear of men or laziness. We simply parrot the world’s ways and heap some scripture on top of men’s wisdom and traditions in order to sanctify them.

There's a myth that none dare touch, that has dominated the culture of the "western" world for over 150 years. Yet, it is "eastern" and even carnally universal in that it was the thrust of the motivation for the building of the "Tower of Babel" thousands of years ago (Gen. 11 – to not be scattered, to be "one", to have uniformity of language, culture, and the like)

That myth, *fatal* to true spiritual growth into fruitfulness and maturity, is that of the necessity of standardization, systematics, conformity to the norm, methodical, clinical, "scientific method", test tube, franchised, dewey-decimalized life. Every factory, every shopping mall, every hotel, every grocery store, every educational institution and virtually every "church" (religious institution) in the nation bears testimony to the 20th century ultimatum of "if you are different than what *we* say is 'norm-al,' you are weird, rebellious, unprofessional, a cult, and/or something worse."

Henry Ford with his assembly line, Dewey with his "scientific method," and other men, somehow managed to categorize and pigeonhole just about everything. They want to be able to put you into a pigeonhole because if they can classify you, then they can somehow excuse themselves from listening to anything else you may have to say.

People want to all look alike, think alike, and be alike. We have this mindset that wants everything to be uniform. Man wants to make bricks – nice, square bricks that all fit together. Uniformity is what people like, but ***God's way is to build with STONES!***

It scares people to risk, going out on a limb and venturing to trust God and be obedient. People want to stay packed together, clone one another, talk like everyone else talks, and think like everyone thinks – because it's "safe." It is not American to think anymore. It's not 20th century to have a mind and contemplate and meditate and reach a conclusion based on a whole array of information. We must risk rather than just making our decisions based on what everybody else before us, our forefathers, concluded. We have lost our heritage of being in the image and likeness of God – *of being creative*. We have lost having the kind of understanding and wisdom that doesn't rely on externals, but relies on the mind of Christ! We have lost that, but that is part of the restoration, the renewing of our minds so that we will know the good, perfect and pleasing will of God. That's part of the restoration of our heritage, of our inheritance. (Galatians 4)

The only "Standard" that has any meaning in the final analysis is the Word of God – ***what God considers "acceptable,"*** not men. Atrocities have been committed and perpetrated for centuries by men who were certain that, "Whatever the most people say is surely right." "Who do you think you are to question?" There were men who were executed for daring to propose that the earth might not be flat or might not be at the center of the solar system. Men (and even God's Son Himself) have been cruelly murdered by "religious leaders" who were protecting their "system" and "orthodoxy" that they were absolutely *sure* was "biblical". As our brother, the apostle Paul said, "It is the same now." Men's hearts have not changed, and men who dare to challenge the norms of society will be murdered.

A mindset that we must valiantly foster, is a *freshness to the Word of God*, and a willingness to reject the "empty traditions handed down by our forefathers" (regardless

of the consequences at the hands of our “forefathers”). We must start over again with an unwavering obedience to God in every area of life. “Gird up the loins of your mind, and be ready for action.”

The word picture that Peter used was “Get your cloak and your gown tucked up under your belt so that you can RUN!” Be willing and ready to MOVE and ACT. You must not just believe certain things and sit around fostering certain opinions about things, but instead you must be ready to DO something.

Just by way of some “food for thought,” with specific application for raising our children...

Must Our Children “Go To College”?

Why? Certainly, it’s *possible* to “go to college” and be in God’s Will, but what are the priorities that would send them there in light of “Seek first the Kingdom, and His Righteousness – and all these things (that the pagans run after) will be added unto you”? Do we send them to college because that is what *people expect us to do*? Is it because we don’t know what else to do? Because we don’t want them to be “blue collar”? Are we sending them to college because it is God’s will specifically, or are we doing it because the normal society pushes us that direction? We have to stop and challenge things like that, or we are going to get sucked right up into the world system with their priorities. A tree bears fruit after its own kind. If we are birthed out of the womb of the world’s system, we are not going to *bear fruit for God’s Glory*. If we yield to the world’s system, we are always going to be hindered. It is better not to birth Ishmael than to always pay the consequences of doing things in the ordinary way, as Paul said in Galatians 4.

Educational Factories And Big Yellow Buses?

Must our children be subjected by the state, even to elementary education? Must they be taken away in big yellow buses to be force-fed the prevailing philosophies of men?

They will be placed in the pressure-cooker of “testing” and “examinations,” and it won’t be to see if they can absorb and reason, but to see if they can properly regurgitate what has been dictated to them. If you think about it, that is exactly what happens in the school systems. You are graded not on your creative abilities or on your skills of reason. You are graded on whether you can mime, mimic, and regurgitate exactly what was told word for word in the right order and the right way. If you are not willing to regurgitate it exactly the way they tell you, you will flunk. I know it’s true in seminary and it’s true in college. If you don’t regurgitate it exactly the way they tell you, you will fail because they are not trying to teach you to think for yourself. They are trying to teach you to think like *they* think, which isn’t thinking at all. It is conforming to the patterns of the world. Children are not being challenged to absorb, to reason, to formulate conclusions,

and to act. They are taught to mimic what everyone else is doing and copy the empty traditions handed down by our forefathers.

Young, moldable, pliable children in those big, yellow buses are being shipped off en masse to the four corners of the city to be packed full of the prevailing philosophies of men! They are given no ability to reason on their own, and no freedom to think on their own. They are only taught to mime and mimic whatever they are told. Even if they were told they could choose on their own, the end result is that they are too young to do that when the tests all point toward one thing – regurgitation.

Is this really the right way or the only way? Do we have the *freedom* to think and to reason and to decide if in fact there is another way open to us? Is there another way available?

Schools Are Servants, Not Masters

I want you to think of the school systems, of jobs, and of all these other things, not as things that dictate to us the nature of our lives, but as tools to be utilized as we perceive the Kingdom of God and His righteousness. The school systems can be *used by us* – we pay taxes – *we own them*. They don't own us. That's the nature of the United States of America – it's by the people...for the people. The U.S. Constitution is written in such a way that they are our servants, not our masters. We need to be able to utilize those tools without being mastered by them. That's the mindset you have to have because it will master you if you allow it.

Your job will master you. It will tell you where you have to go and what you have to do. “You have to be transferred. After all, you have to make a living.” “You have to take this promotion. You have to work these extra hours.” “I have to provide for my family or I am worse than an infidel.” Then you end up using “scriptural” reasons to be a slave to the world system and to do what they tell you to do. “This is just what is ‘expected’ of me.” The IRS, the government, the medical field, and the educational system, *were never meant by God to be our masters*.

According to Romans 13, they were meant to be tools by God to bring justice to those that would rather live in anarchy. Jesus faced a king who said, “I have the authority to let you go or to murder you, crucify you.” And Jesus said, “The only authority you have is what my Father gave you.” The authority comes from God and is to be utilized as a tool by God to bring peace and order to a world that would tend towards chaos and anarchy. We don't have to be slaves to it when it contradicts the ultimate authority, which is God Himself. As Peter and John said, Judge for yourself whether it is better to obey God or mere men who have violated God's order. Keep all that in your awareness. Are those little yellow buses and the like really the right way or the only way?

Why Do We Do It?

What is the real reason we would send our children to children of the devil? That's

what the apostle John called them – “children of the devil,” but most people wouldn’t buy that. Most people you ask in the world today would say “I’m not a Christian, but I am sure not a child of the devil.” If God tells the truth and if the scriptures are the Word of God, then God said a person who is not a child of God is by default, automatically, a child of the devil. The prince of this world is at work in all who are disobedient and all who have not been translated from the power of darkness to the Kingdom of the beloved Son. That is a scriptural fact; it’s undeniable and not up for debate. *If you are not born again in the Kingdom of God of water and the Spirit, translated from one kingdom to the other, then you are a **child of the devil**.* That being the case, if we send our children to unregenerate men and women to be trained to be their disciples, we are sending them to children of the devil to be discipled. There is just no way around that. The Israelites wouldn’t have sent their children to the Philistines to be educated. It would have been an atrocity. It would have been unthinkable and very ignorant to ship all their children off in little yellow buses to be educated by the Philistines! We need to contemplate what we are doing. There may be a time and a place to utilize those tools, but you *may not* be mastered by them.

So, what are some of the real reasons for sending our children to the children of the devil to be discipled for six or eight hours a day? What would be our reason for doing that? Is it because of laziness? “Well, I need my free time.” Is it because of fear? Is it because of inadequacies? “Well I don’t think I can raise my children as well as the school system can. I don’t think I can teach them as well as the school system can.” There are certain fears and inadequacies that we carry around with us that really aren’t necessary. For 1800 years, the school system as we know it didn’t exist and people did fine. In fact I challenge you to find me the Edisons and the Abraham Lincolns of today. You just won’t find many men of that caliber today. Those men, for the most part, were not products of a system. In fact, men like Einstein were kicked out of the system! They were called insane and addled because they didn’t think like everyone else thought. And they flunked. Einstein flunked math, and he invented most of what we call math and utilize today. I want you to be aware of the fact that our *inadequacies and our fears* have been programmed into us – *they are not natural*. They are not even necessary. We don’t need to feel so inadequate or be so afraid.

Laziness is a whole different matter. “I need my free time” – selfishness! “I want to have my free time, my leisure time. I don’t want to have to be responsible all the time for this trust that God has given me.” That’s carnality in our own hearts that we are going to have to come to grips with. Laziness and fear and inadequacies can be crucified. You just have to realize they are not necessary.

Another reason people send their children off to the world is mindlessness. We just drift through life mesmerized by the things around us – everybody else is doing it so, of course, it is the right thing. That is the curse that I am trying to break right now. I’m not trying to tell you what to do or how to do it, but I am trying to break the curse of this glossy-eyed life that just accepts everything right at face value because someone else said so. You can’t do that if you are a DISCIPLE of JESUS.

Are you really sure that sending them off to school is a Kingdom decision made intentionally for the *Glory of God*? You need to be sure.

Dating?

Is “dating”, as modern society has defined it, really an idea that is acceptable to a Holy God? What are the alternatives? Certainly it isn’t automatically wrong for two young people to be together, yet what is driving the encounter? Must we bend our knee to every whim of a decadent society? Do we need to be on the defensive to “explain our aberrant behavior”? It is clear that even the majority of the religious world has accepted much conformity to the “patterns of this world” with a glossy-eyed lethargy (See James 4:4; Rom.12:1-2). James tells us that if we are friends with the world then we are *ENEMIES of God*. In Romans it tells us that we can not know God’s good, perfect, and pleasing will if we are conforming to the patterns of this world. *Are you content to take everything at “face value” that the world is pushing?* I trust not.

God’s Highest Way – LIFE!

Let me suggest to you that our Father’s highest way to bring others (our children, or anyone else) into the “full measure of the stature of Jesus Christ” and the triumphant completion of the mission from God for which they were born... is not departmentalized, digitized (1011011), right/wrong, good/evil, fact, statistic, memorized knowledge, database “life”! God, when He came in the flesh in Jesus, did not operate that way – and surely God would know the highest way! Never did Jesus say, “OK, boys. Today we’re going to ‘study’ the book of Isaiah. Now in the original Hebrew, verse 5 reads....” No Hebrew word studies. Not even any “Bible studies” as we have defined and practiced them. No chalkboards. No examination. No cap and gown graduation or diploma. No “Wednesday Night Prayer Meetings”. No Worship or Education “Committee.” INCREDIBLE! After Jesus, in flesh and bones, had finished with them, it was still easy to observe that they were no scholars:

(Acts 4:13) *“Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus.”*

(Deuteronomy 6:6-9) *“And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart; you shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.”*

(Mark 3:14) *“Then He appointed twelve, that they might be with Him and that He might send them out to preach”*

(Luke 22:27) *“For who is greater, he who sits at the table, or he who serves? Is it not he who sits at the table? Yet I am among you as the One who serves.”*

God's highest way is without category and "departmentalization." It's LIFE. Not "worship services" from 9AM to 11AM on a "christian sabbath" day (check it out – it's not in the Bible). Nor is "education" to be fractured into "departments" and classifications, with weekends or summers "off" from purposeful learning. That course will result in a fragmented ability to retain, and event-oriented learning motivation (exam cramming, not true learning). And, worst of all, "religion" will automatically (without extreme measures to thwart the momentum) become a "subject" alongside the others.

In God's economy, life is meant to be "in Him we live and move and have our being," and "whatever you do, whether food or drink – do all to the Glory of God." "Math" is learned as a testimony of God's Glory. "Physics" is taught to expand our hearts to praise Him. "Language" is to communicate the "splendor of Holiness" to our brothers and sisters. All things are "to the Praise of His Glory," and to "the edification of the Body of Christ." Never are they to be an end in themselves, or God's jealousy is rightfully aroused.

(Rom. 1:20-25) *"Since the creation of the world, God's invisible qualities, His eternal power and divine nature have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made so that men are without excuse. For though they knew God, they neither glorified Him as God nor gave thanks to Him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles. Therefore, God gave them over to the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. They exchanged the truth of God for a lie and worshipped and served created things rather than the Creator, who is forever praised. Amen."*

These men thought they were wise and learned. Jesus said, "I praise you, Father, because you have hidden these things from the wise and the learned, and revealed them to little children, to babes." In this case, because men thought they were wise, they became darkened and their thinking was futile. They thought they were intellects and scholars. It wasn't that their IQ's were low. It was that they misjudged what was important. Any time you misjudge what is important, you are a fool, no matter how much you "have between your ears." If your priorities become degraded and you begin to value a gift from God as a god in itself, then you are a fool. God will give you over to your foolish, futile thinking and allow you to have an ever-increasing insanity. ***He is jealous for His glory.*** He will not allow you to focus on created things rather than the Creator. That's just the nature of God. He is jealous for His own glory, and when you glorify *things* in themselves rather than glorifying the Creator of those things, you are making those things to be god.

Time, space, matter – all of them point toward infinity, not towards themselves. They point towards something way beyond matter and space and time. There has to be an explanation beyond matter, space, and time as you begin to understand matter, space, and time. Point being that God testified of Himself as it says in Rom. 1, and all men are without excuse. Don't ever forget that. Every single man on the face of this earth is

without excuse because God Himself testified to Himself through all of His creation. The rocks and physics... the trees and relativity... the bubbling brook and mathematics... everything testifies: infinity! It cries out, "Infinity!" Jesus said, "If my people won't praise me, the rocks along the road will burst into praise." Everything cries out to the glory of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ His only Son. All men are without excuse. And we become foolish and darkened in our understanding and futile in our thinking by turning to created things and worshipping them as an end in themselves.

God's jealousy is rightfully aroused when anything else becomes an end in itself. When we teach math, geography, or anything, we have to testify to Jesus Christ, through whom all things were created by and for and in whom all things consist. If everything doesn't point to Jesus Christ as the representation, the image of the invisible God, the exact representation of His Glory... if everything does not cry out to the life of Jesus Christ before there was time and for all infinity – then it is a false god. ***We cannot call true education secular without defying God.*** God is jealous for His glory.

Though events will occur, true "education" is driven by "as we rise up, as we sit down, as we walk along the way", or God will simply be "another subject to be studied." It will be something to help us go to heaven when we die and are finished advancing ourselves here. Jesus did it "among us" and "with us"... never "to us". I hope that can at least start the questioning process. At least think about it OK?

JESUS, MASTER TEACHER. . . HOW DID HE DO IT??

Breaking the “Home-school” Paradigm

For those who want JESUS, in all His Fullness...who want to move toward a way of life that's led by the Spirit rather than by externals...

No Categories – It's All The Same Thing

Whatever you do, please don't view this on a shallow level of, “Wow, I sure am glad I home school,” after you read this. That's *not* what this is all about. This is about something as fundamental as the difference between *going* to church and *being* the church. It's like the difference between knowing the Bible. and knowing *God*. It's just that fundamental! That's the reason many of you teach your children at home – for the very same reason you don't attend “services” someplace. But not everyone has that much vision about it just yet!

There is a direct correlation between teaching your children the ways of God in matters that are academic, and teaching them the ways of God in matters that are spiritual. ***They're the same thing!*** It's our job to show the children how those two things *merge together*. We don't want to turn them over to unbelievers who have no way of merging those two “worlds” because they view them as two totally separate things. “We'll talk about academic things here. But we'll leave politics and religion for outside the classroom, off school property.”

God owns the heavens and the earth and everything is His, and *that's* why some of us teach our children at home. *He's* the one who created the planet, and the laws that He put in place are *His laws*. That means that ***every true law is inherently a spiritual law***, because *God* put it into place. So when men discover something about the natural order of things, they're discovering something that's actually ***from God***. And on the flip side, when man perverts something from the natural order of things, they're actually opposing God and are His enemies. That's why wisdom from the world is unspiritual and of the devil, according to James. All of that to say, there's a direct correlation between *how and why* we do things, and spiritual matters.

Because Christ is all in all, there is no such thing as an academic “subject.” There is no such thing in God's heart and mind as a “Bible study.” Some of you know what I mean by that, but everyone needs to know. Having a “Bible study” twice a week and approaching the scriptures in some sequential order, week-by-week is very far from God's heart and mind. In truth, it's very destructive to God's purposes. Some of you understand that. Some of you have heard that and you believe it, but you're not sure why it's true. And some people are not convinced about it at all.

We've got to see that all of this is really the same subject. We teach our children at home instead of allowing the "factory" setting of school to shape and influence them. They're at home so they can be given a healthy perspective of life, of information, of intellect and of priorities – all are spiritual matters, with a lot at stake. It's not just some alternative way to educate our children.

A Diet And Three Alarm Clocks

Jesus didn't need a wristwatch to be the most productive person on earth. And He didn't need a diet to be the most disciplined person on earth with His eating. He was led by the Spirit, so He didn't need that stuff. *For us too* it's essential to learn to be *led by the Spirit* in every circumstance. And because we're not quite there yet, sometimes we need to go on a diet, right? Haven't there been times when you've had a lack of discipline in your life? You've plugged your ears and haven't been able to listen to the Spirit very well? So to somehow crunch yourself into being able to hear the Spirit again, you put yourself under the law. Maybe you decide to fast or you set three alarm clocks so you get out of bed on time. You find yourself getting sloppy, so you use external means to help you achieve a Godly goal. Everyone has done that at some point in time, right? That's okay.

But what if you *always* had to live that way? What if you had to make out lists of everything you could eat for the rest of your life? Or if you set your three alarm clocks and never varied one minute from your wake-up time? Your whole life would become a rigid machine that you set in place to make sure that you were being "*spiritual*." That'd be a tough way to live, wouldn't it?

I'm not saying that some form of law or help along the way isn't a good thing. It certainly can be good to put yourself under some external discipline, *if* it's in order to help you hear God better. But remember, that's the goal – *to hear God better*. The truth is, we don't need externals to keep us in line if we're listening to God every moment. Jesus never needed any of that! His discipline came moment by moment from the Spirit of God. He never did anything He didn't see the Father doing, or said anything He didn't hear the Father saying. Wouldn't that be a better way to live than putting externals in place to make sure we do all the "right things"? Do you understand that? It's very important to understand, because how we educate our children is *very* related to all of that.

Some people make it their goal to read through the Bible in a year. So they write it on their calendar and read x-number of verses a day, right? Do they get some good out of it? Probably. But wouldn't it be far better if you got up in the morning, spent some time with Jesus, and He directed your attention to some specific scriptures that He wanted you to read? It wouldn't be out of your "good deed" for Him. And it wouldn't just be a discipline of your flesh so you can grow, where you don't get much out of it, but you keep doing it anyway. Picture instead, that *out of relationship with Him* He whispers in your ear, "I would love for you to spend some time in Hebrews 4 this morning." How

wonderful! You celebrate that and it's *anointed!* And *that* is the difference. It's not dry and lifeless, like it is three out of four days when it's on your calendar.

Wouldn't it be far better if you could fellowship with Jesus about what *He* wants to teach you? So maybe He draws you through a theme of faith for six months at a time, directing your attention to things that He wants you to see and learn. Isn't that a higher way than reading through the Bible in a year, as "spiritual" as that sounds? Maybe it's better than not reading your Bible at all, but wouldn't it be much greater to *have Jesus lead you?* Out of fellowship He would lead you through His Word in His own time and way, drawing you into the things He wants for you. Make sense?

Even Our "Forefathers" Were Doin' It! (Well, sort of...)

In the early days of America, George Washington and others were doing something far more organic than what's going on right now. It wasn't by the leading of the Spirit, but it *was* in cooperation with *God's* way of doing things (unbeknownst to them!). We might think the government school system is the only way to do business, but there's something much more organic that's possible, even to unbelievers. "*As we rise up, as we sit down, as we walk along the way.*" That's scripture, and it's also the best way to teach your children even if you're a pagan.

George Washington wasn't very bright compared to his friends, but he was doing trigonometry at age 11. "Wow!" we say. "*Trigonometry at age 11? What a genius!*" But that was *normal* back then in this country. Our problem is that we've sold ourselves into this way to "do church" with programs and hierarchies. It's this way to "do education" with big bucks and buildings, programs and curriculums. We've sold ourselves into this way to do business that's more off of Henry Ford's assembly line than it is out of God's Ways.

Teaching the Way HE Taught – And Teaches

Jesus is the Master Teacher, right? He was the greatest Teacher who ever walked the face of the earth – no one would ever dispute that! So how did He teach? *However He taught is how we need to teach.* We know better than to pull our Bibles out every Tuesday and Thursday from 7 to 8 p.m. to study 2 Timothy. That's not how Jesus did it! We know better than that. So what this means is, let's learn to apply the principles of being led by the Spirit, to the teaching of our children. Let's learn how to walk organically, out of life, "as we rise up, as we sit down, as we walk along the way." Let's learn how to do that and be led by the Spirit in *every area* of discipline in our lives.

It's so easy to fall back on, "I'm going to read through the Bible in a year and that means 14 verses a day." You're motivated to fall back on that when you feel bad about yourself – you feel kind of lazy, like you just can't do it. We feel bad about ourselves and our walk with God isn't very strong, so we look for a way to bail ourselves out of the mess we've gotten ourselves into. That's when we sometimes turn to the externals.

Don't get me wrong – externals can be okay sometimes. But that's *not* where we want to end up! We don't want to be satisfied with depending on externals with education any more than we would do that in the church. We understand that in the church, right? There's no difference between the church and educating our children – there's no difference. We know that, so let's practice it! There's no difference between how we eat or what we do at work or how we are in the church. ***It's all God's kingdom!*** It all *belongs to God*, so the way we function should be the same in *every* arena of life. Like Jesus, we won't do *anything* we don't see the Father doing.

The Best Way

Some people are used to being totally irresponsible. They don't take responsibility for their own life – the bell rings and they get up and go. They don't even care, they don't understand, they don't think. Someone comes along and says, "Stop it. You need to take responsibility for your own life." So they do and that's better than being like Pavlov's dog that just jumps up when the bell rings. ***However, there's a higher way, and that is, to be led by the Spirit of God in all that we do.*** Out of our relationship with God, we know *when* to do it, *how* to do it, and *why* to do it. We're not led around by what's expected of us or other external things. So keep in mind, "Sure, the externals are better than nothing at all. But, there is yet a higher way."

It takes work sometimes to extract Truth from the things around you. Some people go out for a run with other believers and they don't learn a thing from it. Some people go out for a run with other believers, and they're testing their own heart – watching, praying, and learning from it! The difference between those two people is ***inside the heart***. Try and put yourselves amongst those that extract spiritual truth from every last thing they see – *everything* they can find. We want to always be listening for how we can *apply* things to the Kingdom of God. And don't stop at the obvious, but go deeper! Many people walked by the farmer in the field and the pearl merchant day after day and learned nothing from them. Jesus saw the same things, and He knew the meaning of it and extracted it and applied it to their lives in a profound way. As followers of Jesus, we need to learn how to do that too. Challenge yourself to be a disciple who can extract spiritual truths and apply them in your life.

“Okay Everyone, Sway Right...”

We want the children to be *thinkers*. The goal, as we're rising up and sitting and walking along the way, is to teach the children how to think, in both physical and spiritual matters. Jesus did it so well – ***He taught people how to think***. He didn't teach them to regurgitate a bunch of information. That's the clergy/laity system “in a nutshell.” You sling a bunch of people out there, give them a creed and give them a bunch of doctrines to follow. About a quarter of them can say the doctrines back to you, and the rest just sit there and have very little they can understand, retain or identify with.

Just because of being a human being, there's something that ought to really grate us about the religious world. In a charismatic place you might hear someone say, "Now, repeat after me! And the guy would yell, "I said!" And the people would chant back, "I said!" Then, "You said" ... "You said." And on and on like that. Have you ever been in a place like that or seen it on TV, where people are treated like little children? "Okay, everyone, I want you to raise your hands and link hands over your head. Then everyone sway right. Okay, now everyone sway left." Those situations happen all the time in concerts, or Pentecostal "churches" or wherever. The problem with it is that it's very demeaning and degrading, whether it happens from a religious pulpit or a school pulpit. "Listen everybody! Repeat after me. If everybody says it right, and smiles just right you get an 'A'." In other words, "You get my approval, and then you can go on to the rest of your life." ***That's generally why ten million people have been robbed of their inheritance in any given 20-year span.*** It's because they're all treated like babies and led to believe that all they can ever do is "repeat after me" – whether it's in a schoolroom or a "church" building. If you let them do anything else, they might botch it up.

There was a time when big business men wanted to create workers for their assembly lines. So how would they go about doing that? Seems like it would be pretty hard to get a bunch of intelligent, thriving people to stand in an assembly line, not asking or suggesting anything – to get them to just stand there and not cause trouble. They wanted people to be ***human machines***, doing the same thing over and over again, mindlessly and without comment, and accepting any kind of treatment and any kind of wage. Seems like it'd be pretty hard to create a bunch of people like that! But they came up with this brilliant idea of importing the Prussian school system, which created Nazi Germany. In the 1930's it turned a bunch of intelligent people, even some with PhD's, into a mass of conformists that would do whatever they were told and just repeat after me – ***Heil, Hitler!***" This is some serious stuff! And we've not only imported the Prussian school system into the U.S. public or "factory" schools, but we've also imported it into the "church" world. It's imported into boardrooms behind closed doors too. Everyone's told what they're supposed to believe, and how they're supposed to act. They're told who they are, and treated like little children with a "repeat after me."

You'd be ***appalled*** at the way "worship leaders" talk in this country behind the scenes – to hear what they say in their seminars... "If you want to get the music just right, start with quiet songs to get people in the mood. Then right before the offering, use this other kind of song to provoke giving." All this ***incredible psychology and manipulation goes into the "church services."*** You'd hear ***exactly*** the same things in the seminaries – when to pound the pulpit, and how to make an appeal. You'd hear how to carry yourself, the perfect time to make your entrance and when to slip out. All this stuff is taught in order to control people. In Revelation 2 it says that Jesus hates both the practice and the doctrine of the Nicolaitans. And the Greek meaning of Nicolaitans means, "to conquer the people." Jesus ***hates*** the practice of conquering the people.

Andrew Carnegie and others wanted a new world order that would generate a great amount of wealth for a few people. They needed a mass of people who would do what

they were told and not ask any questions. People who would attend “services” regularly, give their money, smile and go on without asking any questions. They wouldn’t raise their hand and say, “Yeah, but wait a minute! Can we talk about this?” Carnegie didn’t want that sort of thing. It’s not good for the American economy. It’s not good for the “church” economy to have people asking questions! It wouldn’t be good to have people who converse, people who think – people who have their own prayer life, and want to work out God’s will in their lives. If they lay down their lives for others, and relate to others – that would cause problems! That’s good for some people, but it’s not good for the Body of Christ. It’s better if folks would just veg out in front of the TV, get in their car, drive to “services”, get back in their car, drive home and plop in front of their TV again. And you wonder why *99% of American Christians don’t grow one lick in 20 years?* It’s because they never face anything Real in their own hearts. They never deal with anything. They don’t change and don’t lead their children in any way of righteousness. That is just the way it is in America’s religious world. That same philosophy of education is reflected very clearly in the government school systems.

What About Charts And Calendars??

The application is that we teach our children spiritually how to rise up, sit down and walk along the way. We don’t have it all planned out. Does any one of you have a calendar or chart with a big list of all the attributes of Jesus to teach your children this month? Do you have the qualities of Jesus or the doctrines of Paul written on a piece of paper somewhere and you’re going to make sure they learn it all before they go on to the next year? Does that sound like a good idea to you? Personally, I don’t recommend it, because the tree of the knowledge of good and evil leads to death. “Oh, that would be such a “goood” idea...” Wrong. ***God is sovereign and larger than all of us and He will lead us in the paths of His choosing if we will listen.***

The problem in the garden was a problem ***with listening***. There was an inability or an unwillingness to stay connected to the Head. They wanted to be like gods, wanting within themselves the ability *to know* good from evil. We want to have good thoughts in ourselves, “I *know* that I am a good pray-er. “I *know* that I’m functioning perfectly in the gifts that I have. I *know* that in these certain ways, I’m bearing fruit that will last. I *know* that I know all the scriptures I’m supposed to.” We want that secure sort of attitude.

We *think* that if we knew all those things about ourselves, we’d be happy. But we wouldn’t. God wants us to be totally dependent on Him, and to trust that He will lead us as the current Master Teacher and Comforter. He’ll lead us into *His* ways, *His* righteousness, and a knowledge of *Him* and the ability to flourish in the life He has granted us. It’s a process, it’s a relationship. It’s also the way we relate to one another, and the way we want to relate to our children. We wouldn’t choose 15 ways that our children should be more like Jesus and put them on the refrigerator and cross them out one by one as they’re conquered in their lives. Just like we wouldn’t treat a child like he’s a machine! “But aren’t these all good things that they should have?” Well of course

they are. But that isn't how you go about it. "What's wrong with reading the Bible? Isn't it good to read the whole Bible in one year?" Maybe so, but with that kind of logic, you might be fighting against God by how you're going about it.

We're talking about applying spiritual truths *that we already know* inherently in the way we lead our children in areas of character and their knowledge of God. We lead them organically as a family. It's as we rise up, sit down, and walk along the way in the same way that Jesus did with the 12 and even with the multitudes. There was a process that was *very organic* and *very alive*.

Once there was a teacher that wouldn't let students just regurgitate a bunch of material so that they could pass on to the next grade. He didn't tell them, "Do this, this and this and now you're okay. Go on to the next place." He taught them how *to think*, how *to be*. It wasn't just about what you *know*, or what you *do* – it's about *who you are*. And that was the process he was dedicated to. *The "what they knew" and the "what they did" would take care of themselves once they began to see that "who they were" was the Real issue.*

There is a way to view life where we can pull all these things together and apply them in our lives academically and spiritually. With our children, we'd never say, "Every Tuesday and Thursday let's study 1 Timothy together." Of course you'd *love* for your children to know every truth that is in 1 Timothy! But that *isn't* how you'd want to approach it.

Don't Panic Now, Okay?

Just keep these things in mind as we talk about expanding our children and helping them learn and understand in other areas of life. Don't panic! When you started "forsaking the assembly" on Sunday mornings, you panicked a little then too, didn't you? ☺ Like, "Uh-oh. What are we going to do without Bible classes for all ages? What are we going to do without a Sunday morning service from 9 to 11?" You panicked a little bit when you first thought of that, didn't you? There was the insecurity of, "*Surely* we can't grow spiritually if we don't have all these machines and props and programs in place to hold us together. We'll fly apart!"

A while back, the body of Christ here didn't have large gatherings with the whole church for six months, and at the time, logic said, "Chaos! Everyone will fall apart spiritually. Oh, we'll never see each other!" Well it didn't happen that way, did it? We knew better. But someone from the outside would say, "How can an *entire church* go for six months without a *single* meeting? How could that be? *That's impossible!* I bet everyone will fall away and no one will pray. No one will care about each other – they'll never even see each other for six months!" That's what most people would think. But *because it's family*, people actually grew spiritually! They changed. They continued to grow and become more like Jesus at the same pace as when there were frequent gatherings. It's because our lives don't depend on externals. It never has and it never will.

The same is true for our children. Their lives are not held together by externals.

The best thing we can teach them is how to HEAR GOD, how to *become*, and how to walk with Him as they rise up and sit down and walk along the way. We can give them the desire to learn, to experiment, to ask questions and go places people have never gone before. Like with *us* – what are we doing here? We’re going places that no one has ever gone before (as far as we know!). We don’t know of many people who think or act like we’ve been describing, but there are a lot of people who *want to!* Some people are desperate and have spent years trying to find the way of the cross, and the way of the Spirit, rather than doing the futile business of attending some religious thing for the rest of their lives. More and more people want *answers*. Well, we’re here because we desire to go forward with God and ***we’re willing to take a chance***. We’re willing *to risk*, and rethink things and not just accept what’s been fed to us for the last 2000 years. Let’s keep learning, and keep growing – that’s really what this is all about as it relates to education or any other area of life.

Sure, you might start to panic when the props are taken away. When I had crutches for a while after knee surgery, the first few steps without those crutches were frightening beyond belief. There was little strength in the legs, but the difficulty was a head problem more than anything. The queasy stomach has nothing to do with the knee, it has to do with ***fear!*** Be encouraged with all this, if you’ve already made a lot of changes in your life. You’ve probably come a long way. As it relates to education, I’m not suggesting that you get radical and make some instantaneous jump into something way off someplace. But what I *am* saying is, there’s a little more risk that we could be taking in this process of raising our children. There is a higher way *to be led by the Spirit* and to draw our children up into being *thinkers*. Our children and young adults can be people who risk, who ask questions. They don’t have to fall into some dead pattern like everyone before them. Instead of regurgitating the state capitals, they’re asking *why* that state capital moved from one place to another! *Why are things as they are?* They can be people who are able to *comprehend and think*, and ask the questions that will change the world. And I’m not just talking about having some economic or social impact. I’m talking about all ***the related spiritual issues*** that are very real and very applicable to our lives.

We dare not teach our children to be followers that fall in line behind some pat answer that’s been shoved in their face. Just like with us – we’re not here because we accepted the empty traditions handed down by our forefathers! We are here because we’ve been willing to question things. We have been willing to say, “I know what the previous generations thought, but what does *God* really think? What does *He* think about it?”

We need to teach our children to think like that – to have that same question and way of approaching life. If we mimic the public school system in educating our children, we’ll be teaching them to follow an empty pattern that’s been handed down to them. They’ll learn to spit things back having added nothing to it. That isn’t what we want, is it? We don’t want to bring only that which is given to us, to the table of Life. We want to go beyond that and bring more than we were given, right? We want to add something to the life that God has given us. We want to offer something to people around us, that

goes beyond the norm. We want to do that ourselves, and we need to train our children to think like that too. Let's put them on a path that will allow them to catapult ahead of where we are. A lot of this has to do with our daily interactions with them, including the way we educate them.

Exploring TOGETHER...With Respect And Love

Question: I want my child to obey, but I don't want her to just mimic responses to me. When I ask her to do something, I want her to say, "Yes, mama", and not argue with me. So how do I teach her to obey, yet to still think?

Great question... Some people approach life like there's no standard and you get points or something for being "radical". God has a truth for us here about teaching the children that's deep and rich, and no one has come close to exploring the depths of it. And God is calling each of us to dare to go farther than anyone around us has ever gone before. But searching that out is not a matter of rebellion or being radical. It's a process that's *in cooperation with everyone around us*. Like Moses said, "I don't even want to go in unless I can bring everyone with me." Those attitudes of cooperation and respect for authority are *very much a part* of how we want to approach all this.

Someone could say, "Well, don't let everybody else do your thinking for you. Develop your own convictions." The words sound right, and it even has an air of spirituality to it. But it's missing the element that there is *wisdom in a multitude of counselors*. Let's say a person has a conviction about alcohol, and he isn't going to let others tell him what to think about it. "I've developed *my own* convictions about it." He'll end up setting himself back five to ten years spiritually because of it. There is truth in this world. There are *real things* that God knows that maybe you don't know. So don't be afraid to ask the questions – you *ought* to ask them. That doesn't mean you hear something and blindly say, "Okay, I'll go do that."

Become A THINKER, And Work It Out TOGETHER

The question you asked is very important, because we need to teach our children to pursue truth, but there are definitely boundaries of truth in our lives. Whether we like it or not, the fact that I have a conviction about something *doesn't make it true*. My conviction does not make it true. It's not "right" simply because I think it's right. To develop "my own convictions" in a vacuum as if I'm running the show rather than God is a *very dangerous* thing to do. The fact is that I have to start with, "God is running this show". I also don't want to just blindly follow what other people are saying or doing. I want to understand *why they have the convictions that they do*. They have convictions and probably know God better than I do and they've been down the road farther than I have. Somehow, some way, I need to *find out why* they reached the conclusions they did. Not just *what* those conclusions are, but *why they reached those conclusions*. And if in my

pursuit of it I still don't develop the same convictions that they have, I have to ask, "Why not?" I have to ask questions about *why* our convictions are still different. It's not just "What do you believe?" And then you say, "Okay, I believe that too, because you're smart, and you're spiritual". That's junk.

But it's also not, "Well, I've heard other people's convictions about it. And frankly, I have my own." That's sheer rebellion. That's not Godly. It's terrible and it's tragic. That will set you back at least five years in your spiritual walk. Here's a *much* better way... "Why do you have the conviction that you do? I trust you, so please help me understand. You've told me everything about it and I don't share that conviction yet. Is it that you're wrong, or is it that I don't understand what you're trying to say? Can we invite someone over who shares your conviction? If your conviction's right, I want to have it too! I refuse to be lazy about it. I'm not going to withdraw and say, 'Oh well. He didn't sell me on his conviction, so I'm stuck with my own.'" No! ***We care, we love, and we respect enough to keep pressing, to find out why.***

Some of the most important words and convictions come out of us when there's some sort of crisis or crossroads in our lives. Those times push us to say things that we had never put into words before. "Here's *why* I feel this way about it." "Oh wow, now I understand!" Such wonderful, rich truths can come out of our lives and into our lives if we *keep pressing until we understand*.

Some people in this world are very miserable because they try so hard to believe what everyone tells them. They end up miserable and shallow. They can't help anyone and fall apart if someone asks them a question they can't understand. It's really *not* a matter of saying, "Okay, since you're more knowledgeable, spiritual, and wise than I am, your conviction has to be mine." You don't just go around like a parrot. That ain't it! But it's also not, "I have my own conviction about that. Mine is just as good as yours!" Maybe it is and maybe it isn't. But one thing's for sure, if our convictions differ about something that matters, you owe it to me to talk to me about it. And I owe it to you too. If I know you're following God with every fiber of your being and your conviction is different than mine about something important, I *must* get with you to resolve it. We have to find out which one of us is right, if either. Because we're probably not both "right".

How lazy, sloppy, and careless to allow differing convictions between us simply because we never pursued it to a depth that would expose the weaknesses in our convictions. We need to deepen our walks. Conflict, controversy and differing convictions are some of God's best tools to deepen our walks with each other and with Him. It's not a matter of blind conformity. It's also not a matter of rebellious, "I've got my own opinion and judgment of you and yours." Out of love we owe it to each other to find out why. Out of love we test and approve and hold fast. We need to go into everything that we can *to find out why* – until each of our convictions is refined by God to a far greater measure than either of them was separately. It's very important that we do that.

Likewise, With The Children...

And for sure, there is order in God's house. The Father is the head of Christ, and Christ is the head of the man. The man is the head of the woman and the children are then under the mother and the father. That order must be honored by all. That doesn't mean it's disrespectful for the children to ask questions. *We want them to ask questions* but it has to be with respect and not out of judgment or arrogance. It can't be a flippant or a boisterous thing, but they can honestly say, "Mom, I heard you say something, and I'm not sure I understand why that's the case." We can applaud that! And if we find ourselves rebelling against *that*, it's usually because *we* didn't know what we were talking about! We say, "Don't you be asking me why!" And under our breath, "Because *I* don't know why." We get a little indignant when there are too many questions, or we can't answer them because we don't know why either. It's so important that we *stay soft* in every situation. If we really don't know why, just say so! And then *find out why!*

We want to teach our children, "Are you *sure* you know what I asked you to learn? Great." Then they repeat it back to you. And you ask them, "Do you know *why* it's that way? If you don't, then you don't *really* know it. Start over." We probe into that area of *why and how*. "You know what a toaster does, but do you know how it works? Find out how and get back with me." We're teaching them *how to think*. You may find your toaster in little pieces in their bedroom someday, 😊 but you'll have a child that knows how to think.

Seriously though...don't worry, it's really going to be okay. It takes some confidence and security and wisdom on our part, to press our children and those around us on a spiritual plane. We press them to not only know *what*, but to go deeper and to know the why's and the how's – *the insides* of the thing so they can actually reproduce it or take it different directions as the circumstances vary. You've heard it said on the academic side, "That's what makes America great." And you could say on the spiritual side, "That's what makes great Christians – people who don't just parrot back what they've heard."

Know how to think. If people ask you "*why*" enough times it makes you understand your own heart better. Someone says, "How can you carry that attitude?" or "What is that look on your face?" It forces you to take a closer look at your decisions and your motives. But most people don't think about motives – they just do stuff. If they're told, then they do it. If they want it, then they get it. But we are learning to stop and ask those questions, "Why? What does God think about this?" And we're deepened in the process.

People can be of average intelligence but be ***far wiser and far deeper*** than the rest of America. They could stand up against the vast majority of business managers because they *know* how to think. Paul said to the people in Corinth, "Isn't the least of the saints more capable of judging than the kings and judges of this age? Why are you going to the pagans to be judged? What do *they* know?" Paul didn't just say, "Oh by the way, you have the Holy Spirit." He was saying that the process of being a follower of Jesus makes you *far more* of a man or woman than any pagan would ever be. You're *far more* of a philosopher, mathematician or geographer than what the pagans could ever be – ***because***

we're seeing through the matter to God's heart. We comprehend in the next dimension beyond what the pagans could possibly comprehend.

Paul was saying that we're not ignorant like the pagans and unbelievers. We're aware that there's something *beyond*, and we press towards that. We raise our children to do the same. "So tell me, what is the *meaning* of this? *Why* do you do what you do? Why does this work the way it works? What is prayer? Don't just tell me the words about it – tell me what it *means!*" We need to press our children and each other to *go way beyond* just "repeat after me." And that's where the respect comes in...we're humble and we honor, but we want to get into the meat of the thing and not just parrot some expected answer. Every situation is different, but if we're thinking that way, we'll get to the *heart of the matter*, more and more and more.

“Children’s Bible Hour” – Friend Or Foe??

For generations now, the “church world” has had this need, or so they’ve thought, for “Bible classes for all ages.” Do we *really* need them?? In the gatherings of the church here, many of the children probably don’t understand 15 to 20% of what’s being said – the definitions of the words, anyway. We don’t make a bunch of concessions for age or background when the whole church is together. It’s different than the norm, for sure, but God’s led us that way over the years and it’s been very comfortable. We don’t have some sort of caste system, with different “levels” – like whether someone’s a new convert or not. No classes for the “new converts,” yet it’s fun to watch new believers quickly grow to great levels of strength. *That’s God’s pattern!*

There’s no big push to baby the children with some kind of “children’s Bible hour” and minimize things. They’re growing spiritually, and growing in maturity and character and in the knowledge of God and His ways. But we don’t play some kind of kiddy game to get them there. It’s a *process* of being in and amongst the adults, whether in a public setting, at home or somewhere else. It’s a valid principle spiritually and with academic things too. Talking down to people, and patronizing them only makes matters worse.

Remember that musical, “My Fair Lady”? It’s a story about an English professor of linguistics at a college in London. He finds a girl in the poor section of town who has terrible grammar – terrible English. He sets out to “clean her up” and make her a lady. As the story unfolds, she eventually *becomes* the person he treated her as. He saw who she could *become*, and as he loved her and believed in her, she *became* that person. He had failure after failure with her when he tried to help her in some “academic” way. But when he loved her and believed in her, she changed. How much more for our children! Out of our love and out of our faith in them, *they become who we believe they are.* We don’t talk down to them and pressure them with, “You need to get from here to here” in some sort of rigid way. Life springs forth if we just draw them into the life of the *Family* and let the natural flow of things do its work.

That one-room schoolhouse with children from ages 5 to 19 isn’t far from what we’re talking about. The principle of being under one roof together and children basically

teaching themselves was the *birthplace* of some of the greatest advances in technology. Because it was a family environment, no education “system” was ever better. Men like Adams and Jefferson and even John Wesley were *unbelievable* in the way they functioned, and in their academic knowledge (though that doesn’t have much value in and of itself). But these were *brilliant* intellects that made great leaps, in understanding the world that we live in. The point is that the *way* those men got there, was a whole lot closer to the way we’re supposed to be raising one another and our children, spiritually. It’s a whole lot closer than the factory schools and factory “churches” of today. Try and catch a sense of the organic life that yields results in every area of life – academically, spiritually and otherwise. And keep in mind that really *every* area is spiritual.

(If you trust the world system for a minute, think again! It *will be* deceptive in every fashion imaginable in order to accomplish its goals. The nature of technology, and the deception and the conspiracy of mankind is *beyond belief*. Can you imagine an extremely realistic photograph of Abraham Lincoln and Marilyn Monroe together? Well it happened – they made it look *so* realistic! You better believe they could do that same thing to you. They could put you in some kind of photograph, to incriminate you. And the world could “*prove*” that you never filed your income tax return, even if you did. Believe me, the world system can get you, and Satan’s the mastermind. Satan has a whole lot more against what you and I are doing with our lives, than the average guy who stirs up worldly stuff. That is just *the nature* of this world and if you don’t have a conspiratorial view of the planet, you better get one. It’s just the way life is. Satan’s the ruler of this world and that’s how he plays the game. So think in those terms. Life isn’t always fair or just, or sane, or honest. It isn’t that way in this world – that’s why we’re pilgrims, aliens, strangers and foreigners looking for a home.)

“Uneducated” Dirt Farmer??

Back in the old days, the average, uneducated (so-called) American farmer had a plow in one hand and a philosophy book in the other. They were *aware* of the world around them. USA Today has made sure that all we know about these days are the latest statistics about America’s favorite sitcoms. You can’t even find world news in the average newspaper in the United States! Frankly, we’re being cut off, systematically, from an awareness of what makes the world work – *we don’t even know*. The rest of Europe thinks we’re total fools because the average American has no idea what’s going on. People are satisfied with a Big Mac in one hand and USA Today in the other. All they want out of life is to make a decent wage and go home and watch sitcoms.

That’s how most Americans are viewed – they don’t know anything. And that hasn’t happened by accident. As Dietrich Bonhoeffer assessed it, “The only thing that could come from Prussia’s factory schools is a world war.” The average American dirt farmer in the 1830’s knew that too! They were aware of what makes humanity work and could discuss topics that *only* college professors can discourse on now. Contrast that with the American school system...the average high school graduate *can’t even read* very well,

let alone do trigonometry at age 11, which was very average back then. It's not just that the teachers need to be brilliant, either. It would be easy to think that the weight is on our shoulders, "Wow! We need to be brilliant beyond belief if we're going to teach our 11 year olds trigonometry!" That's not really the way it is.

It's a matter of functioning in God's way, using God's means in all matters of life, and then "we" will never be the limit for our children or others that we influence. But if I function in the "factory" mode, then I will be the limit of everyone around me that I influence. Whoever I am spiritually, I won't be the limit if I do things God's way. Brilliance can rise to its own level both spiritually and academically. *What you know* will not be the limit of what your children can know *if you teach them how to learn rather than teach them ideas to regurgitate*. That's why this is important both spiritually and academically.

Passing The Torch – The Elijah/Elisha Connection

Go back and take a look at the relationship between Elijah and Elisha. It's an impressive picture, because it has a *whole lot* to do with why we are here and how we live our lives. Just before Elijah was caught up into the heavens in a chariot of fire, they went and visited something called the "schools of the prophets." Whatever in the world it was, it was something Elijah started and a place where he taught. There were men at these "schools of the prophets" who learned from Elijah, but did any of them get Elijah's mantle? What an impact, that *Elisha got the mantle*. In the end, it was Elisha who got the power, and who got Elijah's respect from God and man. And then Elisha went and split the Jordan in half! So what was the difference between the "schools of the prophets" and Elisha? The difference was that Elisha was *a friend* of Elijah – they walked together! It was an *apprentice relationship*, it wasn't "school." There weren't any "classes" for Elisha – they were friends! **Elisha became who Elijah was out of relationship, out of walking together.** As they rose up, as they sat down, as they walked along the way. I'm sure Elijah gave some wonderful teachings in the "schools of the prophets." No doubt, the men there put great effort into learning how to be prophets. But in the end, they watched Elisha walk away with the mantle.

We're looking for the difference between the schools of the prophets and Elisha's training. We're not trying to move the school of the prophets from school buildings into homes. If we bring them out of a building – be it "church" building or school building – and do *exactly* the same thing in a living room, we haven't accomplished anything! There's no difference between the two.

People out there complain about how they're part of a "house church" but it's really just "services" in a living room. *Changing clothing and locations doesn't change why and how a thing happens.* The dynamics can be basically the same even though the environment is totally different. The same can be true for our children. Even if we're "at home" it's possible to still be putting them "through the schools," both spiritually and academically.

We're trying to bring it from "school" to the *relationship* Elijah had with Elisha –

apprenticing. It's our *lives together*, daily in public and from house to house. Admonishing one another *daily* so that none are hardened and deceived by sin. "I perceive that you are competent to counsel one another." It's a life of confessing sins one to another, serving one another, hoping, trusting and keeping no record of wrongs. *That's* what makes us become who God wants us to be – *all of us together* training ourselves like Elijah and Elisha – and the mantle from God is passed on. We grow spiritually and change as we live the way those men did – not like the way of the schools of the prophets. It's *through relationship* that we draw the children into a knowledge of the world around them, both spiritually – and in what we call academic "subjects."

In some ways it's scary because there are no props and no guarantees. There's no "Bible class" anymore. "Oh no! How will my children know their Bibles?" This is how...Life and relationship and application of the scriptures day by day by day... hearing it, living it, breathing it. And all of a sudden they know it! No memory verses, but they *know* it. How does that happen? It's because Elijah and Elisha's relationship *yielded fruit*. The schools of the prophets may have given marginal satisfaction to their egos, but very little beyond that. We want the Elijah and Elisha kind of apprenticeship with each another, and with our children in every area of our lives. *That's* where the *Real* fruit is.

Organic Life And Leaving The Props Behind

Question: The state has requirements for what the children have to accomplish. For example, in the high school years, they may be required to have "4 years of history" or "4 years of literature". It's easy to get into a rut with a textbook and then it's hard to branch out and be creative and research into other areas. We're not going to say, "Phooey on the state" and don't want to! So how do we weave in a 1,000 page textbook on a subject (that's a lot of material) that's "expected" of them, but at the same time be freed up to let the children explore and search into other areas of interest and value?

It has to help us to consider that George Washington knew trigonometry at age 11. ☺ That has to help us. He wasn't a brilliant person – he was average, so there has to be a way! Would George Washington have passed today's education equivalency tests? Yes, I believe he would. By the time he was in the "sixth grade", he would've already surpassed today's high schoolers. If we think in those terms, then surely we can accomplish what's "required by the state" ***through organic means***. If George Washington could do it, then so can we. Living it out with each other in an organic way will provide better tools than what we've been using previously, to accomplish the task.

Assignments that require broad exposure will teach them how to learn. It'll cause them to overlap into different areas – learning something about history, about literature, about philosophy, about math, spelling, grammar and on and on. The practical things we

give them to do will help them discover all these areas. In one sense it won't be a textbook-curriculum-based-education anymore. But the end result will be far better.

All of us were so afraid to leave the “church” system because we had to leave all the props that helped us to be “spiritual” – the sermons, the Bible classes, the programs. But when the props were gone, we all grew ten times *faster* than we ever had before! The impetus for learning was provided by *organic life* rather than the curriculum based, go-through-the-textbook approach that we'd been doing for years. We learned to take personal responsibility for our own lives, and our gifts and callings that God has given us. And as we took responsibility for ourselves and in our relationships, there were dynamics, which resulted in a *far better* spiritual “education” than we ever could've imagined!

Washington, Lincoln, Edison and countless others gained a *far better* education from organic life than they would have from curriculums and classes. Likewise, the *true brilliance* of our children will come out better *organically* than it will *institutionally*. In the religious system we worked our heads off and produced only minimal fruit – *very* little spiritual growth. We bashed our heads against the wall with *much* pain and anguish and yet had little success in helping others grow. Similarly, we can put tons and tons of effort into this “way” of educating a child, and our efforts can be largely wasted. But if we help our children grow and learn in *God's* way it will only produce *far better* results, not worse.

What we've been talking about isn't something you “squeeze in”, in addition to the 1,000 page textbook. We're talking about *Jesus' way* to approach the dilemma, which will yield *far better* results. There may be ebbs and flows to what is happening in any given month. But over the course of a year this kind of Life will yield better understanding, better knowledge, better wisdom, better experience, and a better ability to cope with the world around us – just like it has done for us spiritually.

I know of a pretty high caliber college, where one out of three incoming freshmen are valedictorians or salutatorians in high school. The school has a pretty rigid entrance exam. Also, year after year, this school's officials have polled the five, ten, and twenty-year graduates to see how they are doing. The funny thing is that the most successful people by far, are NOT the ones who graduated with the highest grades but the ones who graduated with a grade point average of between 2.8 and 3.1. Even some 2.0's were millionaires, five years after graduation! But the ones who had the highest grade point averages turned out to be very unsuccessful in life.

Are we trying to meet some sort of external standard to please the world system? Or are we really trying to make our children successful in life? If we copy the school system's “way” of teaching in our homes in order to meet their external criteria, we'll be forced to use their methods to do it – their textbooks, their curriculums, and their “class schedules”. If we use their methods because they've forced their desire for *results* upon us, we will end up with the same thing Carnegie wanted from the public schools. And *that* is, little, non-thinking, non-accomplishing robots that just do what they're told and never achieve their potentials. There's a risk involved, but maybe we should take a chance and begin to experiment.

Take the Risk Or Run Back To The Props?

Is there a risk in being led by the Spirit instead of depending on props? Big risk! Why? Because if you don't know *how* to be led by the Spirit, you're going to fail. When the props are in place, at least you can feel good about yourself, like you're on the right path. You don't have to feel miserable as if you are a failure or something. But when you're propped up by externals, the things *inside your heart* don't change. If we're not led by the Spirit, if we don't hear God, we're going to fail in what really matters. If I'm not accustomed to hearing God and I sit at home until I "hear God" about what I'm supposed to do with my evening, what happens? *Nothing*, right? So you either learn how to *hear God* and begin to venture out in that ...or you sit there and do nothing. You skip the whole process, zone out and become a couch potato in someone's living room. Or you "busy" yourself and end up killing yourself because of being so shallow. You end up frustrated, unfulfilled, and awkward. I *highly recommend* that you learn how to hear God and be willing to fail in the process. Failing in the middle of trying is better than pretending and putting a bunch of props in place. When you do that, you'll feel awkward, frustrated and shallow and make other people feel that way too.

The same is going to be true in educating our children. There is *a risk* involved. If you pull the props away, then you have *to think*. Not only are you calling *the children* to think, but *you* have to think *too!* If I don't trust myself to know how to think – to be able to hear the Spirit – then I've locked myself up. I've put myself in a situation where *I either learn...or I die*. And other people will die with me. And since I don't want that to happen, I'm tempted to run back to the props. *That's* the battle of life! That's what life is all about – learning how to be like God. Learning how to be led by the Spirit, how to move ahead and to not depend on ourselves, how to ***hear God and not depend on props***.

It's a learning process, for sure. It's not, "Oh, I get it. I'll start doing that tomorrow." It's a process of sowing seeds in your heart and trying to help your child understand the world around him. You're not just trying to accomplish a checklist that some government school has given you. Instead, you're helping your child see God through geometry, through electronics, through word crafting, and through other areas of life. Volunteering yourself to this process of learning yourself and of helping your child to be a learner, requires something of you. It requires something way beyond reading the textbook 10 minutes before you read it to your child. Does that sound familiar? ☺ It's a test, but it's an opportunity to grow – for us and for them.

For The Young Ones...Take Responsibility

Please don't think in your minds, "The adults that are helping to educate me are going to do things differently now." You need to consider, that the ones who have been spiritually successful in life are those who have taken responsibility, *themselves*, to grow spiritually. They didn't wait on someone to do it *for* them. The same is true with your learning. Those who have ***taken responsibility*** are the ones who have been successful in life – holding and excelling on the job, creating jobs for others, making a decent living

for their family. Someone else can spend the same number of hours, but be miserable and unable to even make a decent living. If you want the qualities that will enable you to work hard with your hands and make a living and provide for others around you, then *take responsibility* to get there! It's *your* responsibility – not your mom's or dad's, or anyone else's. The responsibility is *yours* to pick up an encyclopedia when you have a few extra minutes and read about that unfamiliar idea or place or thing that someone mentioned. It's your responsibility to educate yourself – to learn everything you can learn in every area of life. That's *your* responsibility. The adults and parents' job, is to make sure you have all the tools you need (and they need) to learn. But it's *your* responsibility to be mature enough to decide that you want to learn, and to be respectful and desirous of learning. You're going to have a good work ethic, you're going to *care*, you're going to *pursue* answers and *ask* the right questions of the right people. Those are choices you have to make.

All these things are true spiritually, too. You'll not amount to anything if you don't have that same attitude about spiritual things. YOU can decide that you're going to learn, you're going to grow, and you're going to change. You're not going to wait for someone to convince you for the fourteenth time about an area you need to change. You're going to pursue it yourself. You're going to find out and go after it and discover for yourself what Jesus has said to you about *your* life.

We know of a 15-year-old young man who was playing football one day – just a simple little family game of football. He was running for a pass when he tripped and hit the ground and never got back up again. He died, and to this day, they still don't know why. You have to understand, that when you go out to pass a football or play basketball in the backyard, it may be the last time you ever play. Your friend may go out for a run or take a trip in the car and it may be the last trip he ever takes. That's the nature of life – you *must* understand.

Whether young or old, all of us have a responsibility *ourselves* to find God and to go forward in life – to take responsibility for our own lives and as many other lives as we can help. In the end, every person will stand alone before God. If you're 14 years old right now, you may have never stood alone before *anyone!* You've not felt what it's like to stand all by yourself in front of someone you don't know very well and explain something. But the truth is, you could be standing *alone* before God 15 minutes from now! And no one will be there to explain *for* you. All of us are old enough and mature enough to take responsibility for our lives. Whatever help others may give us is wonderful. But we need to take responsibility for our *own lives* – to find God, and His will for our lives and respond to Him ourselves, from the heart. We're grateful for all the help we can get, and we want to *give* all the help we can. But in the end we'll stand alone before God. It's time to be thinking that way.

The same is true for education. I've talked to several young men about the fact that if they function in a sloppy, irresponsible way – the way they are right now – they'll be fired from their job someday. An incomplete project is not acceptable. If you give your

word that you'll finish some work for someone, you cannot be incredibly slow about it – finish the job! You can't piddle around with your “personal” time and desires either.

I know of someone who was fired for using a computer for personal use during some “spare” time on his job. His boss walked up and said, “Is that personal business? Clean out your desk.” Life is like that. It's *very* important that we not view ourselves as a mass of humanity – all of us as one big lump of people and “I don't really have to be responsible.” But you do! You really need to think about who you are, and what you are doing. You need to take responsibility to finish a task properly and on time. You need to care about people, and love them.

Like when you blow it...you need to face God directly and explain yourself. You need to ask Him for direction and tell Him face to face that you're sorry – one on one between you and God. “I'm sorry God.” Not just, “Oh, I wish I hadn't messed up.” That's *not* taking responsibility. Taking responsibility is to look God in the eye and say, “*I am sorry, God.* That was wrong, and I don't want that to happen again. Please help me.” And we'll face other people too. We'll look an adult or brother or sister in the eye and say, “I am sorry. That never should have happened that way – I was wrong to do that. With God helping me, it won't happen again! I am very sorry and I need your help. Will you forgive me?”

As individuals we must have that sort of clear thinking. We'll *take responsibility* for our own lives, our own education, our own spiritual growth and go forward aggressively, from the heart. Of course, we'll get help when we need it – that's the nature of the Church. It's wonderful that God has given us each other. But in the end we stand alone before God.

Through Life

So if you're wondering about the details of educating the children, remember that this is a *growth* process. This is an opportunity and an encouragement to stretch and grow and to keep awakening ourselves. We've grown in some ways, and in His grace, God intends to bring us to a new level of Life and Understanding. The rabbis taught one way and then Jesus came into the world and taught a whole new way! In a short amount of time, He accomplished ten thousand times more than they ever would have! It isn't that the rabbis weren't trying to create knowledgeable, God-fearing people – they were! But they didn't approach it the right way. JESUS APPROACHED IT THROUGH LIFE!! “*The life became the light of men.*”

That's really what we are saying about any area of life – “spiritual”, or so-called “academic”. “The life became the light of men.” It's really *all* spiritual, if taught correctly. So keep your eyes open. Don't segment your lives into different areas – keep on learning how to incorporate God's Way of Life into every area of your life. It's an exciting journey!

If we keep our eyes open and our hearts soft, we'll be much better off, five years from now. By God's grace He will keep showing us and teaching us. More and more we'll be aliens and wayfarers in this world, stranger and stranger creatures to the world

around us. But in the end they'll grab our cloaks and say, "You know the way...please show us." In the end God will have a people that are soft enough to hear His voice and learn His ways and that stand very far apart from the patterns of the world. The masses of society and the so-called intellectuals and rulers of this present age will come to us asking for help and guidance as the darkness settles into the earth. There is but One Light, and *His name is Jesus* – living in those who follow Him. This is important. It has much to do with our futures and the end of the age.

LIFE Preparation

Question: I've been thinking that this is really a great adventure – doing things God's way. For my daughter, it's been natural since the time she was born to show her and teach her. From the start, it's "This is yellow and this is blue. What's that color, over there?" I never had a time where I thought, "Now's the time to get a preschool book." It just happens in life, along the way or at McDonald's or wherever. She's only 2 now, but as we've been talking, I've been wondering how it will look when things are not as simple, like geometry-type questions. Talking about pi in the midst of life seems more difficult than one plus one is two! I haven't wanted any kind of school "technique" now, and I don't want one later on either. So what will it look like?

You can teach in a sterile environment, or it can be that as you're filling up your gas tank, you ask your child, "If the tank is perfectly round, how many gallons of gas can it hold? How do you know?" There are *many* real life situations like that, so keep your eyes and ears open! But there's one other very important and helpful thing we can be teaching the children in terms of **how to think**. It will affect and change their lives and give them much success in their jobs, no doubt (remembering of course, that any advancement on the job is dependent on God's sovereign purposes for us as well). It has to do with preparing their lives with learning *critical thinking*. It's very much a part of life and a person will *not* be elevated into a place of stature in the workplace, without learning the process of critical thinking. I dare them to advance themselves in any particular career without it. For example, do you know how to evaluate *why* a contract or warranty is written the way it is? Why is the small print there? What does it mean and how do you interpret it? Those kinds of questions can easily be asked of the children. Many, many opportunities come up where you can have them read something, and then ask them *why* it was written the way it is. "What was the meaning and the motive of the person who wrote that? I'm not asking you, 'What does it say?' I'm asking you, 'What was their *motive*?' What are they saying that they are not telling you?" That's an *extremely* important part of life.

When your boss reviews your work and tells you what he thinks, do you believe everything he says? Why is he telling you what he is? What's his intention? What is he

leaving out? Asking those questions and pursuing the answers is an extremely important part of life. Take salesmen, for example...they need to ask the questions that others don't ask. They need to give answers to questions that weren't asked but should've been. They need to be able to look around and perceive the needs that haven't been noticed yet. A good salesman sees *beyond* the obvious, while the salesman who barely makes quota, doesn't. The point is, the main thing we want to do is to teach our children how to think, how to ask the right questions. The other things tend to work themselves out – like the specifics of teaching the children about trigonometry or geometry.

So let all of this stir your interest and creativity. Help the children and one another along in this process of learning how to think. We don't want them to just learn how to “repeat information” they've been given – we want them to think! “So where did ‘pi’ come from, anyway? What is it? *Why* is it? Develop the formula.”

As a reminder, we are not talking about learning to be thinkers because we want to be successful in the world's eyes. Thinking critically is a *way to live!* It's a key, along with humility and consecration to God, of course. And that ***humility and consecration*** springs from having hunger, desire and fervency. I doubt you would find a man that's been successful in God's sight who doesn't have the qualities of pursuit and fervency and energy towards knowing why, knowing how. It's an *energy* that gets past the obvious into questions that haven't been asked. Like Moses... “Show me your face, Oh God!” And Peter... “Tell me to come to you, Master, on the water.” *That's* the sort of attitude we need to cultivate in ourselves, in each other and in our children.

“Thomas, why didn't *you* ask to get out of the boat and walk to Jesus?” Why didn't Thomas, or John or James for that matter, ask to do that? The answer is a *very* important key to why Peter had a more preeminent place in God's work than those other men. So please stir these things within yourself, in one another and in your children – in *every* area of life. Don't segment the spiritual from the academic, because you won't be able to do it! If you're going to be lazy and structured and depend on crutches in the so-called “academic” area of life, you'll be that way in spiritual matters. You'll not be able to stimulate your children or friends very well in the spiritual areas, because the “spiritual” and the “academic” are not separate – *they are really the same thing.*

Explore, Flourish, Excel!!

Question: Some children are “wired” toward absorbing information quickly, restating it, and even bringing it to life. Others are pulled like magnets to saws and hammers and have absolutely no desire toward learning about how some social situation impacted America. I can see how important it is that the one who grasps information quickly needs to learn how to pick up a hammer. And the one who picks up the hammer needs to learn certain things about the world. So how do we take into account the different gifts, talents and “wirings” of the children? Should we push them in the areas they flourish in, but expect less in

the areas that they don't? What should our expectations be? I think of Thomas Edison who may genuinely have failed the GED, yet he had a tremendous impact on America!

One thing we need to shake free of is the pride that's attached with high school and college graduation. It's so built into our nature that it's a "mark of success" to have this degree or these letters after your name. That's what we've been *told*, but it hasn't been that long in human history that those benchmarks of so-called "success" even existed! Think about it! They weren't considered valid measuring rods of *anything* until the most recent generations. We've been fed this bill of goods, this lie, that high school and college are IT, and everything is supposed to move toward that end. But we know *plenty* of people that have accomplished an *extreme* amount!

Many wonderful things have happened in the business world and otherwise – *without* all the so-called benchmarks of high school or college diplomas. We've been told that these are very important things, but when it all shakes down, the world *knows* better than that. In fact, those papier mache "accomplishments" are going to be valued less and less as time goes on, compared to the *Real* world accomplishments.

So yes, it's *Right* that we should find the particular areas of interest and talent in the children and *really* encourage them (and others too!) to explore those areas. Other areas of discipline shouldn't be neglected in the process, of course. That would be foolish to think that because we're interested and good in one area that other areas don't matter. The discipline of learning other things will actually maximize the areas we excel in.

There is a brother who had much success in the area of mechanical design at a certain top-notch company, but it wasn't just because of his technical ability. He also had the ability to communicate. He needed to write papers about his work and persuade his boss about projects he wanted to do. Communication, persuasive skills, grammar and spelling are necessary in *any* field of endeavor, on any spectrum, whether it's land development or robotics design or whatever. *Many* areas are woven together and things like literature feed the ability to craft with the human language. The children will get what they need, because all of it is so very interrelated.

We don't have to be jammed into a Play-doh mold-maker so we come out in the form of someone else's design. As far as the specific state laws? Your children should be learning far more than what is "required." And if you can demonstrate the brilliance of a child in one particular area in a court of law, the prosecutor would be hard-pressed to make a case for the child missing a few hours of something else. Who's going to prosecute a child who stands in front of the UN and gives an address? If a child has a level of competency in one area, it doesn't much matter, how much he or she's done in another. And *really*, all of the different areas *weave together*. The child couldn't *possibly* excel in just one area without working in the others to some degree.

So yes, we should look at each child and their particular "wiring", their giftings and their desires. Their lives can be built around the things that are *most important*, as opposed to what the government sausage processors want us to do. It *is* possible to satisfy the

government, and still maximize the individuality of what God has for each child. It's like Paul very clearly said about those in the church, "All do not have the gift of..." To expect that "everyone must have the gifts of _____," is unfair and it makes for poor and miserable Christians, from an execution standpoint. They won't thrive in life if they're cut from a cookie cutter mold like everyone else. So give some creative thought to where the children are going, on an individual basis. They'll need the tools you give them, to maximize their efforts and they'll need the guidance in the disciplines to help them get there.

A Great Adventure ☺

It's a Journey – an Adventure, isn't it? It's nothing to panic over. Five years from now, God can have you living in a *totally* different dimension. That's kind of fun to think about! You have to start somewhere, so why not here? A shaking, frustrating, uncomfortable stage is good for us. Ninety-five percent of what you hear could just be wonderful to you, but 5% of it may be frustrating and irritating to you. *That's good*, because we're not doing our job if there isn't a "5%" that bugs you and grates you. Maybe you think the 5% is something you can live without and it doesn't apply to your situation. But truth be told, that 5% is your *key to the future!* If you don't have things that throw you to your knees and frustrate and irritate you and hang heavy over your head, then you'll never become the person God wants you to be. It's the hard and grating things, the frustrating and confusing things that actually make us who God wants us to be. The stuff we agree with – "I already knew that," "I can learn that," "I can do that," – doesn't change us. But the stuff that *hurts* us... *now that changes us*. Hopefully something here has "hurt" a little and makes you feel inadequate. *That's* the stuff that will make your future! Sow those seeds, pray over them, and water them with your perspiration and your tears. Really ask God to make it real in you... be helping others... and ask Him to help others too.

This isn't a big radical revolution and a "new way" to do things. What we're really saying is to open your eyes, ask God to give increase, sow the seeds deeply, and care. Pursue and let God expand your own heart and mind so you can help others expand their hearts and minds. It's a *living, organic way of life*, not a new "thing" devoid of externals.

It's been said many times before, "If you get a "thing" out of this, you haven't gotten a thing out of it!" This happens so often in the religious world, "Oh, I know. We won't have a building or a budget now. We can copy this new way to have 'church.' It'll be great!" No it won't. It will be a miserable failure because what God wants for us, comes from loving each other and applying His word in our own lives and the lives of those around us. You don't do that by pressing a button. There's no "new way to have church". It is individuals that have decided to love others more than they love themselves and they've decided to love God and obey His commands. They'll do whatever it takes, to the point of death, to help others live for Jesus, too. You can go ahead and say, "Here's a new way to have church," but you're only fooling yourself because you can't hang a

skeleton and then pump life into it. *First* comes the life – the form comes out of that. You don't create the form and then try to pump life into it.

How true for teaching our children, too! It's not, "From now on we're going to do this instead of that." You'll be trying to make a "new way to have school" and that ain't it!! Don't expect life to come out of it, because it's really the other way around. ***Expand your heart, and your prayer life, and get some calluses on your knees.*** Love your children more, love others more, listen more, care more. Allow these seeds to grow in *that* environment and the form will take care of itself. It's not a "new way to have church." It's not "a new way to have school." It's a desire to love God more, love others more and to be more like God in our daily activities and the way He lives. The rest will take care of itself. It is truly, a *Great Adventure!*

**Forget Un-church,
Un-education...ONLY JESUS!**

a conversation between brothers:

Hi brother, I've been thinking a lot about the children in regard to "subjects" and "education." Leaving the predictable world of textbooks and curriculums seems strangely scary (like leaving Sunday morning services). If you leave that world, then there's nothing to hold on to. I've read many, many books and heard a lot of different "theories" regarding the "best way" to educate a child. They can all sound so "right" at times that it is hard to figure out which path to take. I feel like taking my daughter's current set of textbooks and shelving them for a time, and declaring open season on education. I figure I have nothing to lose by taking away the "crutches" of the textbooks and "subjects" for a few months. But can you help clarify for me how this will look? Leaving the predictable world of having "education" neatly pre-packaged and pre-planned and "boxed" is scary to me. But, at the same time, it seems like the hunger to learn is an innate trait built into children at birth. Is this so? Should I expect the children to have a natural "hunger to learn" to the point where I don't have to provide much in the way of "structure"? And, how can my wife and I constantly make things "creative" and "interesting" like so many "theories" suggest?

Love, Brad

Focus on the Eternal

Hey Brad, *SINCE the “education” process is relatively MEANINGLESS, compared to the more obvious Essentials.....* it will always remain EXTREMELY important to NOT “shackle” parents or yourself with putting massive effort and time into being infinitely creative over every detail of the “education process.” **THAT’S** the rub - we don’t have the “right” to put massive time and effort into something that is largely meaningless in the big scheme of things. The “tools” of education (like “subjects,” textbooks, workbooks and the like) are “crutches” in some ways, just like the tool of a washing machine instead of a washboard, and an oven instead of a fire. Why do we use those things? BECAUSE COOKING AND WASHING ARE NOT THAT BIG OF A DEAL! *Sometimes* using “crutches” is worth it!

We know that there is great value in teaching our little ones and each other how to ask questions and work hard to find answers. True learning is NOT the “regurgitation” of facts and figures. However, the tools of textbooks and “subjects” can be a “washing machine” sort of help, no doubt.

I’ve also noticed that every child approaches information differently. NOT ALL children are “hungry” or “inquisitive” - not by a LONG shot! That creates many *other kinds of problems*, and they can’t all be handled in the same way. Remember, ***most of the time a child’s greatest problems are spiritual, not academic.*** THAT being the case, I would REALLY hate, for example, to have you or your wife bound in a MASSIVE effort of re-creating a “way to educate” (an innovative, personalized, ever-changing, daily planned “curriculum” - FOR EACH CHILD SEPARATELY - FOR EACH DAY AND MONTH, for years to come). The largest problems and highest goals - spiritual ones - are ***what require*** and ***where we should be spending*** the largest amount of time and energy and creativity. I’ve witnessed parents *really* fouling up their children’s lives by over-emphasizing education. All this time and energy is exerted into “educational goals” instead of into the Things that Matter and Last. People have mistakenly done the same thing over the years and across the miles, with “art” or “music” or “sports”...and it’s deadly. SO, that’s another thing to ponder, since you asked... ;) xoxoxox Love,

Hi Again, I know that “As you sit down, as you rise up, as you walk along the way” is the Best and most Alive way to live in all areas of life, not just the cubbyhole of Spiritual life. So where does one stop and the other begin? There are no “subjects.” I’m not “doing English.” Also, I’m puzzled as to why it has taken me so long to even SEE it? I made the leap in one world (spiritual), but not the other (academic). Why?

Despite the wrestlings, I want to let you know that I’m feeling a lot of HOPE in all this. I believe it’s related to helping my children and wife and all of us, spiritually. Love, Brad

Hi Brad, Believe me, I know what you're saying. Many of us have been functioning in this for over a decade! We knew even way back then that even "learning to read" isn't something to be forced on a child at some pre-determined age. Look at the young men and women around here, and what has been done with them, in their VERY organic training! You know of the couple of young men who are so-called "freshmen" in college - what does THAT mean? Just because they're in their early twenties, are they really three years "behind"? Behind WHAT? The pagan's recipe? Forget that! They both have a 4.0 in ENGINEERING School, without having had any of the "prerequisites." And it's NOT simply an issue of their IQs! We've broken all the rules in education and *everything else* for a decade and a half, and the children and adults *are flourishing because of it*.

No Religion, Please

Part of the "rub" that I was talking about earlier is that we shouldn't start a religion around "no textbooks," just like we shouldn't start a religion around "eating only rice cakes and healthfood" or "no immunizations." Textbooks CAN be great tools and time-savers for "getting the clothes washed," but we need to view them as *ONLY tools*, used with daily discretion. They're not to lead us around by the nose or steal our creativity! And we don't want to put a yoke on your wife or anyone else about some special way to do something when "education" per se has miniscule value, *when weighed properly*. They WILL get the Physics and Differential Equations and Languages... JUST LIKE OUR OTHER 30 and 40-year-old females..."as they rise up and sit down and walk along the way." We've been doing this EVEN WITH THE ADULTS for a very long time now. (And we're not talking about a highly "intellectual" bunch, but the adults are LEARNING every academic subject imaginable. That's *unique* for their ages, for *any* group of adults in the entire world.) So my response: **NO YOKE** of any kind, in putting effort into making a big deal out of washing machines or health food or educational philosophies. It can EASILY become a *false religion*. Remember the woman who became infatuated with some Amish child-rearing book. She was placing FAR too much emphasis on something that you don't see the apostles, in the scriptures, placing emphasis on. She was having all this difficulty with her children, and really, her husband was part to blame, because if he would have been involved with the children and their discipline in the first place, she never would have needed to get into that obsession. It was not *revelation* that caught her attention - it was a relief valve for failure and fear.

So, do what is SUPPOSED to be happening with your children *anyway* - teaching them and learning along the way in the ebb and flow of life. That's already being demonstrated amongst us every day with things like 40 year olds learning nuclear physics, though they never attended "college." **THAT'S LIFE!** Again, I'm only saying 1) this stuff has *already* been life for many for many years. Many that I'm around don't even call things "subjects" or "time to study Math, since I'm done with English." That's WRONG, for the very reasons you've mentioned. 2) don't become obsessed with something "tricky" when it should be just every day life, using books or not, as the

situation dictates, without the EXTRA WORK to be cutesy or creative, and 3) don't break the requirements of the state or you may lose your children to the state, and 4) REALIZE that every child is DIFFERENT, and NOTHING "works" except *us listening moment by moment to God*, for each of them. ANYTHING will fail with many children; that's just how it is. Do the children have an "Uncontrollable desire to learn"? No way. Even IF that turned out to be true for all of yours, it is NOT true for all of everyone's. Probably not even yours. Selfishness is a higher motivator to the unregenerate than "learning" in many cases. That's not true for all, but it's true for many.

As for the "philosophy" of "education" and "productivity," the corporate world was obsessed for a while with "Quality Circles" for exactly the same reasons. And they have "failed." *There are NO answers, except HIM*. We're always searching for "answers" because they're EASIER than WALKING IN HIM EVERY MINUTE. But that's what we can, and we must, and *we will do- walk with HIM minute by minute*. There are some valid truths in the books you've read, but only to a point, and then the methods/theories fall apart and are filled with Spiritual holes in some areas. BUT, the "rise up, sit down, walk" part is Right! NOW, perhaps your wife was in bondage to books and schedules and whatever. I wouldn't have guessed that she would be doing that. Usually, it's the MEN who try to impose that on the women because they're afraid the women are playing around all day. They're afraid the women aren't doing a good enough job "educating," so they impose laws and guidelines out of fear. But, I've not witnessed generally that women are regimented and shallow and NON-Life oriented.

THIS is the flavor of how many have lived for years!

Funny? Or True?

Q: How does a home tutored child change a light bulb?

A: First, we check out three books on electricity from the library. Then the children make models of light bulbs, read a biography of Thomas Edison and do a skit based on his life. Next, everyone studies the history of lighting methods, concluding with dipping their own candles just like the American pioneers did. Next, everyone takes a trip to the store. Here they compare types of light bulbs as well as prices and figure out how much change they'll get if they buy two bulbs for \$1.99 and pay with a five-dollar bill. On the way home, a discussion develops over the history of money and then of Abraham Lincoln (because his picture is on the five-dollar bill). Finally, after building a homemade ladder out of branches dragged from the woods, the light bulb is installed.

And there is light.

As it should be.

Now, perhaps the child hadn't *intended* to "study electricity" that day - but that's where leadership comes into play. ***You teach your children what they NEED, not just what they WANT.*** And HOW you do it is a FAR cry from textbook regurgitation. Of COURSE, it's not on some chincy schedule based on A Beka or government factory mandates. SO, I'm only saying that we should do what we've always done (such as the above light bulb thing) as we "rise up, sit down, walk along the way" - as all the adults learning German or Calculus would attest. We're NOT to create a religion of "anti-textbooks" or anti-leadership WHILE we're doing the obvious of "rising up and sitting down"!

I just don't want a "health food binge" in the "education realm" to replace "being led by the Spirit" (books or no books, or WHATEVER, day by day) - and create MORE work and guilt for the women. "Education," as the state defines, is ONLY as important as washing the clothes. The rest TAKES CARE OF ITSELF, viewed correctly. Again, I have NO idea how things function in a normal day in your home, or what is going on with the educational and spiritual specifics there. I know the folks around you are a big help, and obviously, I think VERY highly of your wife - always have, and always will. I don't question her at all. She's a jewel to the max and warms my heart. My point is I DON'T want to become focused on "educational techniques," when they are shallow and unSpiritual on the MOST important levels. A religion of "anti-institution" is not where we want to go, but rather ***LIFE in ALL areas!*** Not "un-church" or "un-education" or "un-_____"...BUT rather, Jesus, ONLY JESUS!!!!

Anyway, my shortness of time and 10 interruptions have made this too choppy and too non-Dale Carnegie. ☺ But DO let the points soak in, okay??!! OBVIOUSLY, most of what you're saying is right, and should be common already. It's not that complicated. Just no RELIGION, PLEASE! Very sorry to not be able to dialogue with you more as I'd like. Bear with me?..... Love,

a conversation amongst sisters:

Hi! I was wondering if any of you had any thoughts on teaching the children "academics." We really don't want to bring public school home. We know that each of the children are different and learn differently. Isaiah seems to grasp distinguishing colors and letters and numbers very well. Gail on the other hand can't seem to get a handle on those things. We've been looking through books that talk about letting the children learn at their own pace, focusing entirely on their personal interests. No scheduled times to learn. Just going through the day asking questions and the parents are only there to answer questions or help them find the answers they're looking for. We've already come across some things that we know can't be Father's way (example: let the children take control of the day and allow them to do whatever they want to do). We realize that can't happen

and would never go to that extreme, but then how do you know what a child needs to know and when. Should we just let them learn to read whenever they are “ready”? We’ve been reading about some children who did not learn to read until they were 8 or 9 years old. This is some of what we are trying to work through. Any thoughts would really be helpful and appreciated. Love, Rachel

Hi Rachel, Raising our little ones and teaching them all they need to know about life can be quite a challenge. I am familiar with the kinds of books you’ve been reading. I understand the authors’ points at times, but, as you already mentioned, sometimes they take it way too far. They build a religion out of their theories and leave God totally out of it. The aspect of teaching “as we rise up, as we sit down, as we walk along the way” has great value because it is JESUS’ way. BUT, to say that you should never determine to have concentrated, disciplined time where you sit down **FOR THE PURPOSE** of teaching your child is silly. And there are times where YOU need to determine what it is YOU want the child to learn, whether they like it or not. Everything has to center around Jesus and NOT a way to do “academics” or “home-school” or “education.” Don’t get me wrong though, I think the books sometimes have good ideas and some thoughts to consider. That stuff can be very helpful for breaking up our long history of institutional schooling and/or how “schooling” is supposed to look. And those books can sometimes have some practical, helpful, and creative ideas for us. But, they are *just tools* in the toolbox - not **THE** Way. **JESUS** is **THE WAY**!

I surely do not have all the answers in this area, but I know Who does. And I know that I find peace and life in just CARING for the children, and trying to LISTEN, and Watch, and Pray as to what they need to learn and when. Your children are so young, and the sky is the limit. There are soooo many things to see and explore and learn with them. I think the biggest obstacle when they are that age is that WE TEND TO GET TOO BUSY and not notice the TONS of opportunities that each day offers! I often look at my children and think, “Wow! Life has so many opportunities just built-in. If my little ones are not being fed and nourished and learning about **LIFE** in a full way (spiritually, academically, mentally, emotionally), it is definitely *not* because life isn’t **FULL of the opportunities.**”

Well, speaking of little ones, I better go take care of mine. ☺ Love, Rose

Stand Amazed

a late night thought:

The following alpha-numeric page from the other night reminded me how I LONG to SEE LIFE from Jesus’ eyes and perspectives and I long to be LIKE HIM in the way that

He was/is among people. I want to SEE for myself and impart to the children (and others) the kind of eyes that SEE HIS KINGDOM, from the marvels of mathematics and gravity, to the mysteries of Christ in us – the Hope of Glory. Love, Renee

One of the reasons Jesus called God's Order and Reign "the KINGDOM of God" is that it is SO much more than a certain lifestyle different than the world's or "believing certain things." Consider, before sleeping (a miracle in itself!) the marvels of this VERY interesting planet and System. WHAT exactly IS "life"? What is the essence of a tree that makes it ALIVE, instead of just a piece of wood? Stand amazed at the issues of time and space and color and music and mathematics and eternity. What is gravity? ENJOY! Let's not be dull Do-Do birds and get caught up in our tiny little space and miniscule issues and thoughts... and MISS...The KINGDOM OF OUR GOD AND HIS CHRIST!!!!!!!!!! We're part owners, you know! DOMINION. GREATER WORKS THAN THESE SHALL YOU DO! Enjoy. Marvel. Worship.

Apply His Truths to Everything

a letter:

Hi. (This note is to help continue to clarify this cool opportunity to learn more of God's Ways. There is no difference, living in Him, between the spiritual and the educational and the family and the vocational "sides" of our lives. Let's apply what we've learned about the Way God Lives in what we've called the "spiritual side" of our lives – to everything else as well!)

On the subject of our learning together of our Father's world ("education"), keep in mind a couple of thoughts that we have all learned in the so-called "spiritual side" of our lives... they apply as well to things called "math" (a way to describe the orderliness of our Creator-Father and the issues of life using numbers), and "science" (understanding a bit of the immense genius of our God in how He put together this universe and the temporary and breakable "laws" that govern it), and "literature" (the crafting of words to paint pictures and communicate matters of feeling and heart and the abstract, etc). Think how these things work themselves out in the church day by day and week and year, and you'll grow in insight as to how to live them out as they relate to "learning" with our lambs. Just to reinforce some previous messages and discussions... Apply these Truths to "learning situations" also...

"Consider how each of you might spur one another on, and don't forsake the gathering of yourselves together."

"When you come together, each of you has a word of instruction..." You will likely be together often, though not likely in the same time and place each time. No one person will dominate, or "run the show," but likely gifts and maturity and understanding will provide order "from within" (not from "out front"). At any given time, the anointing that

drives the discoveries (as “everyone comes with a word of instruction” regarding the thoughts and ideas and events and principles that we had thought to discuss this particular time we are together) and discussion could come from ANYONE present (the priesthood). No clergy. Certainly gifts, and maturity, and Life driving the times, with each one responsible.

Obviously this is not just about word games, though it is tempting to look at it that way as we are yet babes in understanding. Some are SURE that it is just a word game to not call something “a worship service” and a person “the pastor” or even “reverend.” But, as you know, the words are the highway to Life and death. It DOES matter how we describe things and how we think of them. “From the overflow of the heart, the mouth speaks.”

More at another time, I’m sure. Greetings from the saints here on the other side of the ocean :) Love in Christ Jesus,

Leadership: an Essential Element

a livingroom discussion from many years ago...

If you’re a parent, then guess what? That automatically makes you a leader, too. ☺ Did you ever think of it that way? If you’ve been given children to care for, then providing them with solid, consistent, Jesus-centered leadership will be **key** in raising them to love and respect God and His Life and Ways. If you want to deposit a healthy respect of authority in your children’s lives, then the first example begins with you!

Everyone’s seen it, that children, left to themselves, will wander aimlessly, gravitate towards what their flesh wants, hurt themselves, and sometimes hurt others in the process. In **all** matters of life, for all ages, (whether 2, 10 or 16) they need patient instruction, constructive guidance, involvement, correction, and direction from us. On a gut level, we need to be **leading them** – showing the way, going ahead of them – in word and in example. We need to show them how to perceive the world around them, how to THINK about things, how to care and how to learn. They need instruction and they need “tracks to run on.”

Imagine what it would be like if you turned a child loose in your kitchen to prepare a meal without ever having explained a thing about it. You wouldn’t dream of such a thing! Unless of course you wanted a disaster on your hands – or worse. If you cared about your child and wanted him or her to learn how to cook, how would you go about that? Would you just say, “Go figure it out – there’s the kitchen.” That wouldn’t be wise or caring leadership at all, would it? Instead, you might start by “introducing them” to the “kitchen world.” You might walk them through it. Open cupboards and drawers, show them the tools a cook needs and why and what they are useful for. You’d give them some basic introduction and explanation. You would show them the potential dangers,

like knives and hot stovetops. Then maybe you'd give them a simple recipe to follow and see how they do. Would you start with a souffle'? Probably not. You give them a simple brownie recipe and let them go. Let's say, in the process, they throw the whole egg in instead of cracking it first. How are you going to "correct" that? Do you yell – "You've ruined them!" What's really the goal, anyway? Might you ask them why they did that? And ask them what the result would be (crunchy brownies!)? The point is, that you're providing the tools and the opportunity to explore and try and "put into practice." You're helping them think through decisions (like cracking an egg or not) and *why* they do what they do. And by the way, children (and adults, too) typically will **not notice things** around them unless they are *drawn into learning*. They might be "hanging around" in the same room every time you make a meal, but they won't *really* get into the inside of the nuts and bolts of cooking unless you take them by the hand and draw them in very specifically.

So part of being a leader has to do with seeing the need for learning, and then drawing them in, to discover and experience and think for themselves. You do it because you simply care about them! You see that they have great potential to learn and comprehend and appreciate different aspects of the world around them. You build in them a desire and willingness to learn. You *see the potential inside of them* and you don't want it wasted! So you care enough to take the time and energy to consider how you might "spur them on"! You take responsibility to not only "acknowledge" that there's a need (anyone can do that) but you *do what it takes* to meet the needs and tap into their potential and draw their gifts and abilities out. If you had a child with a natural musical ear and ability to sing their own made-up simple and lovely tunes for Jesus, wouldn't you want to do EVERYTHING you could to develop that? Wouldn't you want to provide them with all the tools and stimulation and direction necessary to fan that into flame? Of COURSE you would! You'd do whatever it takes – money, time, energy, perseverance (on your part, and you'd require it of them) to help them and to draw out that gift.

When Jesus came, He "*went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.*" (Matt 9:35-36) There was no one to lead them, to take responsibility, to care for and nurture them. Sure, there were Pharisees and teachers of the law all over...but where were those who *loved the people* and got involved? Where were those who had compassion and cared for the people...for the children?

"*Then he said to his disciples, 'The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.'*" (Matt 9:37-38) **Plenty** were those who needed guidance! **Few** were those who knew how to take responsibility and do the Work. Sure, you can have "teachers," like for your second-grader in a school building somewhere, but that person may as well be a robot to that child! Providing intimate, hands-on leadership – guidance, nurturing, direction and training – *that's* the privilege we have as parents with our children. And it is a privilege.

There's a popular print these days that says, "One hundred years from now it will not matter what kind of house I lived in, how much money I had, not what my clothes were like. But the world may be a little better because I was important in the life of a child." That really is the truth... if we will care, get our hands dirty, and pay the price to be there for them with strong leadership.

There's just this built-in truth that because you have a child – it *makes you* a leader! Now whether you provide good leadership or bad leadership is another story. You *are* giving some sort of message to your child. Perhaps what's written here will provoke you to being a better leader for your children, for Jesus' sake. We can be people who care for their specific needs in very tangible ways and provide them with proper perspective about all kinds of issues – giving them a foundation in the Truths of Jesus day in and day out in the way they act, think, speak, relate with others, with things, with adults. Always looking for ways to provide them with solid ground of Truth to stand on. Paul said to the Corinthians, "You have 10,000 tutors... but not many fathers..." A Real father, a Real mother in Christ, those are rare. Living that way for our children and for others will cost us. It costs you your time, your preferences about when you might be able to do something, your money, your effort and energy, your thoughtful consideration, your consistency and devotion, your stability, *and your love!* If you ever view all the "interruptions" or "inconveniences" or "difficult circumstances" or the "work" of caring for your children as a big pain in the neck, an energy drain on you...so tiring, so haaaarrrrd...so difficult... "woe is me"...if you look at those "things" that way, you are missing an opportunity to be a Real father, a Real mother!

You Don't Have To Be An Expert

And thank goodness, to be a good leader for your children (or anyone, for that matter) *doesn't mean you have to be an "expert" at anything!* As was said before, a leader is one who sees the potential in others and works to *draw out that potential*. For example, suppose I said to you, "Why don't you write a comparison/contrast paper on Newtonian and Quantum physics?" You might ask, "Okay, where do I start?" At this point, I might encourage you to look in the encyclopedia and extract from it as much as you can. I might also suggest that you call Joe Smith and ask him to explain what he knows about the topic. So you gather information and ponder and dive in, and Joe points you to a book he has and so on. Before you know it, you're *being filled up with a knowledge of something you previously knew nothing about*. And it happened because *leadership* provided direction and tools and resources. The work wasn't done FOR YOU, but you were given a path to run on, in order to draw out your potential – your own skills, and work and probing and understanding. Now here's something cool about it...when the time comes and I see your report, *I may not even understand* everything that you wrote about the topic! ☺ But it doesn't really matter, because I *did my job as a leader* for you. I didn't have to be an expert in order to spur you on, guide you, and draw you into something you'd never known or experienced before. A good leader is someone who

can push someone else to *their fullest potential*. It's not that I go there for you. I point the way and provide the tools, then *you* go there. So as was said before, it takes care, and it takes courage to step out. It takes consideration and patience.

The goal is to make our children into stronger, bigger people – both mentally and spiritually. We want to provide a way for them to *grow*, spiritually and mentally – not just learn a bunch of stuff in their head. So be looking for those special paths to lead them on to help expand their thinking, their world, their understanding of Life and the things of God. In the process of all that, there will be different levels of growth that you go through. For example, let's say you decide to teach a 5-year-old some spelling, using a computer program. At first, you might take them step-by-step through it all – turn the computer on, click on the icon, pull up the program and show them each step along the way, practically and patiently. That's a first level of instruction and guidance. And it's necessary, for sure, but only on the very first level of learning.

Obviously, you won't want to "hold their hand" continually. Whenever they learn about spelling, as in life, they need to explore and think and work at what to do. So next time, your goal would be to help them learn it for themselves. You might explain in words how to bring the program up, how to double click, and then let them explore it for themselves. If they run into a problem, you push them to troubleshoot for themselves. You put the tools in their hands and allow them to experience firsthand this new medium. For them it's a new level of experience that they've never known before. But wait, there's more to come!

It won't be long before you'll let them find the tools *and* figure out how to use them. This time, you sit the child down at the blank computer screen and take a "hands-off" approach. You're still very much the leader of the situation, but you're asking *them* to pull up the spelling program *from start to finish*. At *this* level much more than just the spelling words can be learned. They'll learn what it means to have courage because maybe they're not familiar with computers. So to sit down to a blank screen and get a computer program running can be pretty intimidating. It will also teach them some memory skills, and hand-eye coordination when using a mouse. It will force them to be thinkers and innovators. Do you see all the possibilities of something as simple as that? But they'll never have the chance to learn these things if someone else is always doing the work for them. What would it accomplish, to do it for them? All you'd be doing would be robbing them of the essential, crucial opportunities of life that will make them into stronger, larger, wiser people. You will rob them of their potential, their life, and their futures if you always "do it *for* them." Watch out for that one, because sometimes we have something in us that wants to just "get the job done" or...we want them to "finish – hurry up," or we want them to "get a good grade". We erroneously step in and "do it for them" because of our own impatience, shallowness, selfishness, or other fleshly reasons.

Leadership is also not just leaving your children to fend for themselves because of your own laziness, preoccupation, lack of love or disconnectedness from Jesus. *That's not being a leader at all!* Jesus' leadership is also not "lording it over them" with a

slave-driver mentality. “Okay. You listen to me. Do this, do that. Go here, go there. Get it right. Don’t mess up.” Heaping all sorts of external laws and requirements on them. Rather, it’s providing them with the Love and provision and guidance of the Father as you hide your life in Jesus...patiently, consistently, constructively providing for the children. *Anything* that is not like Jesus’ leadership must go...things such as being random, sporadic, unclear, lazy, unreliable, or inconsistent in our expectations and Standard. If you haven’t thought of it, or seen these kinds of things already, *please* deal with them quickly, and ask Jesus to show you how to be a good leader for your children.

Finally, we’ve got to be willing to Listen for the Spirit’s voice...the “deep calling to deep.” Getting past the surface issues and having the courage to stretch your children (and others!) and be stretched yourself. Make it an absolutely *essential goal in your life* to be a person that impacts lives and will make *every effort* to see them reach their full potential. Demand that of yourself and expect no less than that. If Jesus lives inside of you, there is no question that you will impact the lives of those around you – children and others. There’s no question of whether you will impact people’s lives – you will! You may not know exactly *how* God is going to accomplish that in you, but He will do it – IF you have the courage to accept these things and a determination to walk them out.

Programs vs. a Priesthood...

another letter:

Hi Family, A brother and I were talking last night about another aspect of teaching our children, and he thought it necessary to pass on.

To this point the veil has been dropping from our eyes as we’ve been seeing more clearly the “Bible study” / “worship services” mindset (old covenant) we’ve been living with in regard to teaching the children. That IS how we have been functioning. Bible study one, two, four or even seven times a week is NOT God’s Way of imparting Truths of His Word to others. We know that! We’ve lived in the way of the Spirit, caring about people and working day by day by day, trusting God to bring His Word. Likewise, it seems He’d have us impart other truths of His universe in the same way. Bible “classes” won’t cut it, and neither will geography, computer, cooking, or biology “classes” once, twice, or even seven times a week. No matter how innovative or creative the “classes” might be, they’ve gotta go!

Maybe part of the key to unlocking that door is let’s kill the clergy/laity mindset we’ve had. In about every academic learning situation, we’ve functioned in a “teacher” - “audience” frame of mind. The posture (myself included) has been one of “the teacher”. Sure, I’m their sister too. But I’ve also made myself “clergy”.

An example: Jane knows trig so Jane becomes THE “trig teacher.” (Of course we don’t refer to people as “teacher,” but that IS what they are.) This IMMEDIATELY does

two things. 1) It relieves everyone from taking responsibility in that child's life regarding trig. It actually steals opportunities from others to invest in that child because "someone else is teaching that so I don't need to." 2) Because the child has only ONE teacher in that area they seldom if ever seek out help in the flow of life from others. The responsibility falls in a predetermined way, on one or two people's shoulders for each "subject." It's an unspoken assumption on everyone's part. Jack teaches physics to these certain children, so no one else does or would even consider it. And the "student" would rarely look for help elsewhere. As a result of this clergyism, people aren't THINKING in terms of investing in certain areas of a child's life because, after all, the teacher ("pastor") has that responsibility. (I'm sure parents are caring about what their children are learning and from whom, but you get the overall drift?)

God says He's raising up a PRIESTHOOD! ALL are servants of the faith, administering faithfully what God has given them, whether spiritual, physical, or intellectual strengths. The "programmed" way of life hinders God's process of working through the Priesthood of believers! Are you seeing it? We would NEVER think in terms of: "Sue is my teacher about walking in the light." Yet we DO live with "Jane is my trig teacher." Immediately we don't have to take responsibility for Jane's "students" in that area any more.

Think about it? Shalom, Mary

P.S. We're ALL in this together. He is lovingly and patiently bringing this to our attention. Not with a rod to beat us, but with a crook to guide us to much greener pastures. So let's thank Him for His Kindness and His goodness to specifically watch over us and teach us His ways, okay?

A Capacity to Learn

Hi Family...

I was just thinking about something this morning and wanted to pass it on...

We can all see the proof of how the *little children have such a CAPACITY for learning – especially languages*. By the ripe ole age of TWO, many children have just about mastered the English language. Most children can speak in complete sentences, changing verbs and suffixes when appropriate, at a VERY young age. I read something once, that I believe has proven to be true... children seem to KNOW and USE the "rules" of the language long before they are ever old enough to be TAUGHT the rules.

I know we have all heard that the time to learn a foreign language is when you are young (the younger the better), and there is much evidence that this is true. We also know that of all the children we know on the planet, *there is a good chance that some of OURS will end up moving to "the four corners of the earth."*

Sooooo, my question is. . . Can some of you who know other languages make an

effort to pass this knowledge along to the little ones? I am not talking about organized, in-depth, language lessons. ☺ I know there are many older children who are learning or have learned other languages. That is not really what I am referring to.

I am talking about just taking opportunities along the way (as you rise up, as you sit down, as you walk along the way) to speak the other language that you know, as you interact with the little ones. I am ESPECIALLY thinking of those in the 1 yr. – 6 yr. range who seem to be SPONGES as it relates to learning things this way. You know, just natural, day-to-day dialogue *IN ANOTHER LANGUAGE*. ☺ Obviously, there will be the need for some consistency to it, or it won't benefit as much.

And for those who may not be as “fluent” as others... you could still add to the consistency of others' work just by repeating every chance you get the ten phrases that you do know. ☺ And maybe you can make sure that you have some little tools (books, tapes, CDs, or toys emphasizing another language) on hand as you are caring for little ones?

Whatcha think? Sound fun? It does to me. (But not only do I not know another language, but I'm reminded frequently that given my southern heritage I can barely speak English.) ☺ ☺ ☺ Love, Rose

Learn and SHARE

Hi...just had to share these thoughts with a few, at least!!! (Like it says below) ☺
Pretty cool dialogue this evening...Love, Beth

Some of us were talking with some children about learning, learning, learning and sharing what you're learning with others. A thought was, “But I get so worried about what others will think.” Do you want to know how to get over that hurdle in ANY area of life, regardless of the “truths” you're dealing with?? Do you want to know how to get past the self-awareness that robs you of really experiencing God (versus just knowing stuff that you're “supposed to know”). When you immerse yourself in what you're learning of Father, of His goodness, of His creation, of the laws of the seen as well as the unseen, of nature and space and time; when you are diving head first into a body of knowledge about anything at all, THIS will be the result...

“We can't help speaking about what we have seen and heard!!!!” You won't be able to keep your mouth shut! When you lose yourself in truth – any truth – and when you begin to “see” the beauty of the thing, and make it a part of you...regardless of which corner of creation it comes from...you won't be able to keep yourself from speaking of what you've seen and heard! Because it's ALL GOD!! And it's all amazing!

I think that's a pretty fantastic way to approach life! Diving in head first, exploring,

probing, losing yourself in what you're coming to understand. The "lightbulbs" start going off and "WOW!!! This is really cool!!" You won't be able to HELP but speak of what you've seen and heard!! That'll sure take the doldrums out of learning a bunch of "facts" and spitting them back, eh??

For those who have been miraculously rescued from the realm of death and Wonderfully Ushered into the Kingdom of Light and Love and Liberty, I thought you might appreciate this "take-off" on a little children's rhyme you may have heard in your earlier days....☺

No more pencils, no more books, no more teacher's dirty looks.
No more boredom, no more dread, no more using just your head.
No more "classes" no more "Briiiiing!" Now you're learning from the King!
No more slouching in your seat, now you're jumping to your feet!

I've got to know, tell me more! This is awesome, it's no bore!
Times and places gone forever, must we go to "school"? No never!
Pitch the schedules, pitch the speeches, NOW, all of Life will teach us!
Now it's passion, zeal and more, with some Vision, you will soar!

Every day in every home, not a one of us alone,
Facing "system's" drudgery, from that bondage we are free.
Done with rituals, dead and stale, that leave you yawning, droopy, pale.
No longer chained to "proper form," we've been set free, we've been reborn!

Sitting, walking, on Life's way, there's NOTHING we can't learn today.
Search and probe and push the limits, immerse yourself, for GOD is in it!
Look with spunk to unknown worlds, where "status quo" will be unfurled.
Every paradigm be shattered, and we'll find what really matters!

God is Good and Life is full...
For us there's no more "going to school"! ☺

TO COLLEGE OR NOT TO COLLEGE... THAT IS THE QUESTION

Hi! Several of you with young ones (who won't always be young) and some of you who are near "college age" have asked this question, so I thought I would give you something to file away in your minds, hearts, and in-baskets for future consideration. Here is the current question: "Should we consider 'college' education as an option, in view of this present dark age?" We've rightfully re-considered piling our precious little lambs onto bright yellow government busses. We're not interested in the forced indoctrination of our beautiful children in the ways of the world, by unBelieving peers and teachers. And seldom have we heard of a "christian school" that isn't dripping with worldliness as well. We haven't naively "bought" what this evil age is selling us under the banner of "education" for our younger ages. Now, what about the next phase of "education"?

First of all, let's unravel some bad thinking that has been dumped on us by an exceedingly vain and fallen world. No matter what we've been told, four years in COLLEGE is *NOT* the "next logical step after 'high school' for any person who wants to make good of themselves and get a good job, and be 'expanded' socially." This is BAD thinking. BAD, BAD, TERRIBLE thinking. Worldly thinking. Just on the most basic Christian level, we know many people who have accomplished MUCH in their careers and lifetimes and who have generated huge amounts of financial resources for the Kingdom and to supply for their own needs, who never even graduated from "high school" – let alone did anything with college!! "Promotion comes not from the east or west – it comes from the Lord alone!" "Education" and "qualifications" are not what WE find security in. GOD alone makes the decisions that advance our "careers." We do NOT trust in the chariots and horses of men, or rely on being "discipled by the Philistines" in order to make money and support our families.

"College" is "logical" to the human mind that is so impressed by, and reliant upon, pedigree, experience, connections and the like. However, this is not how a follower of Jesus measures his path and sets his course. Since the Father determines our destiny, based on His Plan, a shepherd can be King and a promotion to Prime Minister of a world power can come out of PRISON! Is that a Bible class lesson for children, or is this HOW WE LIVE OUR LIVES – TRUSTING HIM IN ALL THINGS? All of that to say, "college" must NOT be an emotionally or intellectually important issue for us. The cultural norm, the "pattern of the world," is not to be assumed, or run after, for those who have "died to the world and the world to them." Those who are "born from above" **SEEK FIRST THE KINGDOM.** *God's Kingdom*, that is.

With the backdrop of "God's Perspective of the foolishness of man's perspective,"

we can go on to consider more about this thing called “college.” Since it isn’t, from God’s vantage point, an “expectation or obvious choice for any aspiring, intelligent young person”... what, then, *IS* college? Simply put, it *MAY* be this: an apprenticeship for a particular kind of future occupation. A future electrician would be educated via apprenticeship on the job, perhaps supplemented by some technical classes. A future mason or plumber or carpenter or auto mechanic... would likely be apprenticed by on-the-job training. A future chemist (if this sort of job is appropriate for a disciple of Jesus, and I think surely it could be) would, perhaps, need to be apprenticed in a university. Perhaps apprenticed in four years, or maybe drawn out over eight or ten years, depending on other Kingdom responsibilities and opportunities. An accountant or computer programmer may need an “apprenticeship” (“education”) in a college environment. *Perhaps*. IF that’s even the kind of job that best fits one’s interests, skills, and most importantly, ability to serve God in the workplace and generate income for *HIS* Purposes.

Are the jobs of “chemist” or “engineer” or “president” better, *in God’s Sight*, than the jobs of “janitor” or “fork lift truck driver” or “warehouse clerk”? Only a perspective seduced by the enemy would be impressed with, or consider more desirable, one kind of occupation, and look down on the other. For a parent to be “proud” of one type of occupation over another (rather than reserving all “pride” for whether or not their child is walking the way of the Cross and seeking first the Kingdom)... is utterly worldly and judged by God as such. Let’s not do that!

So, let’s say, after reconciling our easily-misled hearts to the Truths above, we still see that our particular means of generating income for God’s Work and Workers, and for supporting family and sharing with others... is best “apprenticed” in a college situation, in this case. Now how should we proceed?

In view of the mandate for every follower of Jesus’ to Seek First the Kingdom, several things should be considered. Perhaps the first area of attention should be the course of “apprenticeship.” What “field of study” should be pursued? Some courses would be poor choices, or dangerous choices, or unthinkable choices. Regardless of the world’s esteem and value system, income potential, or even areas of personal interest, there are just some occupations that would be totally inappropriate for a disciple of Christ. Occupations that, either in training or in job description, require too many hours, or perhaps are too dangerous physically to be justifiable, should probably not even be considered. Work that requires too many evenings, or too much travel to be conducive to Kingdom Life, should, also, probably not be considered. Work that compromises areas of modesty, or of thought-life, or dangerous exposures on the Internet or ___ ... cannot be worth risking the only things that have any real value.

Would we jeopardize intimacy with Jesus, and triumphant Life in Christ in daily deep relationships in His Body for the sake of money?! What a hideous thought. Would we do it for ego? Tragic beyond words. Would we do it to please a parent or impress any mere human? How foolish that would be. Would we allow ourselves to be force-fed the world’s “fools-gold wisdom” – simply because we have never questioned their shallow and fatal ways? Surely Not!

If the college “apprenticeship” field of study is still a possibility after filtering it through the above thoughts, then what next? What about the living situation? “Wisdom from below” conventional thinking says, “Ah, well, let ‘em live in the dorms, out ‘on their own’ where they can experience life and grow up.” Again, this is irresponsible and worldly thinking. Frankly, any adult that would say this either doesn’t know God at all, or is seriously blinded by the world in their own work environment. Very few “adults” handle living in the world system all day long without being numbed to God’s Spirit and His Convictions. So, why would we expect our young people, only now in the early stages of being formed into the Image of Christ, to do better than perhaps 98% of adults in the “church world” do? And what about the dorm scene itself, ALL-NIGHTERS in the dorm, night after night? Why would we even consider sending our children away from “the church, which is the pillar and foundation of Truth”? If an adult who has been “baptized by one Spirit into one Body” can NEVER say, “I have no need of you” to daily relationships in the church (1Cor.12, Heb.3:12-14) – how utterly dangerous to subject younger ones to this. Without daily input, anyone and everyone (according to God) will be “hardened and deceived by sin.” Would we build this way for money? For ego? Out of the shallowness of just naively following the world? No way!

If ANYONE is “seeking FIRST the KINGDOM” (not just the King, but “the KINGDOM” – meaning His PEOPLE!), they will need to make living choices accordingly. They will (99.9999% of the time), if seeking FIRST the Kingdom, choose to live in a place where their “work” (whether an apprenticeship in a “college” or a twenty-year veteran of an occupation of any sort) does not take them away from being “daily” (again, Heb.3:12-14, etc.) in the MIDDLE of relationships with God’s People.

So, what does seeking FIRST the King and His Kingdom mean practically?? 1) An adult male will intentionally move his family and find a job in a place where he knows he and his family can be DAILY involved in excellent deep relationships with Jesus’ followers. He will limit his hours and travel and evening hours to best suit his PRIMARY purpose in providing for his family: Seek first the Kingdom. Of course, God’s perspective is that one must “care for the needs of his family” or he is “worse than an infidel.” The greatest needs, obviously, are spiritual. Wow. Serious, priority stuff. Perhaps, as they called it at a corporation where I once was employed, such a priority might be “a CLC” – “a career limiting caper”! But, so be it.

2) For a “college apprenticeship”? Same deal. You can make the application. It would make no sense if one were “seeking FIRST the Kingdom” to move to a city where you are not able to be TOTALLY, DAILY, DEEPLY involved in Kingdom relationships. Don’t even THINK about “Well, I’ll find something. There are good people everywhere. I’ll get involved in some good campus group and ‘attend’ somewhere ‘regularly.’” If that’s how you think of the Christianity and the Church that Jesus rose from the grave in order to bring to earth, then do whatever you want and live where you please. It won’t matter anyway. I’m serious – not playful or sarcastic about this.

If you see more of these precious matters, don’t be blinded by the world and just eat up their ways! For “college” or any anything else, move ONLY to a place where there is

KNOWN DAILY LIFE – self-sacrifice, confession of and dealing with Life-robbing sin, reigning Love, the living and active Word... you know, *the JESUS Life!* Or, if you already have this miraculous Gift available to you in your neighborhood, don't forfeit it! You could commute from home to your job or "apprenticeship" in college! Even then, you mustn't get so "buried" in "studies" that you neglect the reason you were even BORN!

"Seek FIRST the KINGDOM." What is the context of that command by Jesus? All of the things "the pagans run after" will be taken care of for us by the Father Himself, *IF* we seek first His Kingdom. Will we live that way, or just sing pretty songs about it one or two days a week? C'mon! Let's go for it! He truly loves us and is the absolute SOVEREIGN orchestrator of every opportunity and job promotion, every moment of health, every memory and every dream. He will keep all that's ever been entrusted to Him! How much risk is there, really, in THAT?! 😊

If all this seems a little radical to you... well, why not? Pilgrims, foreigners, strangers, aliens? "Come out from among them and be separate," says the Lord. "And then I will be your God and you will be My People." It really comes down to priorities and Faith in Jesus, doesn't it? Jesus violated all of the rules of social and religious order and establishment, didn't He? And He turned out okay, in Father's estimate. And so, also, will His brothers – those that live by the same Life and Spirit-culture. 😊

For His Everlasting, Ever-Increasing Government, On Earth as it is in Heaven... from a fellow pilgrim, needing His Blood.

YOUNG PERSONS' INTER- RELATIONSHIPS

These thoughts were put together by a few here, for a sister in another city who had asked some questions. Thought it might be helpful as we sort through this Life we are living! Consider it, too, from the perspective of young men, by substituting the gender...

☺ -Mary

“Hi, we were hoping to get some advice, if at all possible, regarding our young teenaged daughter who has talked with us about some “romantic” thoughts she has been having. She has confessed to liking the attention boys give her and such. We have talked with her about talking with Jesus about it, and walking in the light with it when it happens. Because of it, we have been more careful about the circumstances she may find herself in.

One thing we have done, living between a bunch of neighborhood boys, is to consider the specific scenarios that may come up day to day, and avoid them! But we don't want to just change her “external behavior.” We want to give her God's way of thinking, so she can have her own convictions and be changed on the inside. We've seen too many teens her age be told what to do, squashed into a “religious” or “moral” mold and then when given the opportunity they throw themselves into the arms of the boys and the world and music or the peer pressures of “going along with the crowds,” or whatever the topic may be.

So our questions are, when our daughter walks in the light about struggling with romantic thoughts and unhealthy thoughts about boys, do we or should we have her tell us the details of those thoughts each time? Or would that only start those thoughts flowing more? We don't want her to keep thinking about

them...so would saying them specifically be the best way to put the thoughts to rest or help direct them? And as for her circumstances, how can we help her be different “on the inside” and not just be “told what to do” – changing for a time externally but then lusting after and falling prey to the junky stuff later on? Don’t know if this makes any sense, but if you have any thoughts, we would appreciate it. Thanks for any help in this area.”

Hi..... First of all, Thanks for caring enough for your daughter to SEE and CARE for her in this whole area. So many people categorize the flirtatious, giddy, attention-craving phase that can happen between teens as “normal” and part of “sowing their wild oats” and “getting it out of their system.” However, that is NOT a part of God’s plan for his young people in the house of God. It sounds like you have already thought of a lot of this, but here are some things that you may just want to keep in mind as you continue to help her through this somewhat tough time in life. ☺

Yes, DO Be Specific...

Yes, please make sure your daughter knows that if she is having a difficult time in this (or any) area, that she can talk with you or with someone who can help her get a proper perspective on things. Let her know that she can (and sometimes should) be specific about what’s going on inside. When we *walk in the light* as He is in the light, we experience real fellowship (instead of the fake, social thing) and we experience cleansing by God’s Spirit. A young woman with these questions, temptations and struggles is no exception to that. God will honor those who are honest and open about their sin, not hiding in shame or fearing “what others will think.” ***Being specific cleanses and strengthens you.*** Being super specific may not always be the best idea, but most of the time, being specific is a key that God gives to unlock a door that will show you who you are, as well as what He wants you to be. Ask general questions of her, perhaps, to get her talking, rather than, “Did you think this specific thing?”

Let her bring out what’s on her mind. Provide the opportunities for that. If you feel like you can’t see the way, look for someone who can. Encourage her to talk to Jesus about it and to others who know Him well. Let her know she should ***choose wisely*** who she talks to, and why (not just gossiping to “peers” because of being “more comfortable” in that conversation, or looking for reasons to validate her thoughts). But she mustn’t bury her thoughts and temptations because she’s ashamed or embarrassed or skip it because it’s “too personal” of a subject.

On how to keep it from being “conforming externally” but being “far from God” on the inside? Make them aware of *God’s thoughts* on the matter, not just giving them a new “moral code of conduct” or a new set of “rules for thinking” to live by. They need to see Jesus, the person, and that He has very real and pertinent thoughts about her situation!

The Yuckiness Of Worldly Thinking

Here's some perspective on the subject as you sort it out with the precious young ladies....Beware of the world and the self-centered picture of everything it paints. The more intimate relationships are no exception. In the area of "romance", dating, marriage, and "falling in love", the world promises such happiness and fulfillment...you see it all over the t.v. and movies, books, magazines, glamour stories and such. The world's picture of romance looks so rich and appealing, but its basis is *shallow* and *elusive*. People are drawn and driven by externals such as physical appearance, having "things" in common, how he/she makes me "feel", my "needs", my emotions, my lusts and the fantasy of "romantic moments". The bait that lures is fleeting and only produces the ungodly babies of jealousy, envy, lust, idolatry, comparisons, immorality, possessiveness, disappointments, bitterness and factions.

Relationships and romance the way the world paints them may look so fulfilling and desirable, but when you arrive in that fleeting place (if you ever do at all) it's gone and often the process itself wrecks people's lives. Like tempting candy, that "sugary sweet" is quite appealing and enjoyable – for a time. However, if you tried to live on a diet of it, you would die. It does not have what a body needs to function properly. The candy may temporarily "fill" but in the end you will suffer greatly for it. Sin is like that. It doesn't usually reveal itself as the gross, disgusting, twisted, maiming monster that it is. Sin lures us in with things that appeal to our flesh and then destroys us.

(James 1:14-16) "...but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. Then after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death. Don't be deceived, my dear brothers."

In most societies it's nearly always been considered a worthy pursuit to desire a mate for different fleshly reasons, but it is *deadly* to our spiritual welfare. *It is sin* to pursue a mate because of his looks, his physique, his money or personality or position on the social ladder. It is sin to pursue men for the sake of getting attention and flattery. Males are not on the planet so women could get pumped up on a bunch of gunky emotions and so "I can have someone who would love me and give me all I ever wanted". That ain't it. Those motives will cut you off from the Life of Jesus. Basing relationships out of emotional appeal is sin – a kind of sensual indulgence.

Plant A Marital Garden On The Inside

In a desire to "find a mate" it is so important to keep our hands and hearts open for God to do as He wills and not grab on to anything else. Otherwise, we set ourselves up for disappointments and unfair expectations from others and from God. He can be trusted to give us all we need. He will point the way and open the doors in His time, and in His way. And you can bet it won't unfold in the way the world deems "important." In the meantime, young ladies can "*seek first His Kingdom*" by serving the saints in her life through acts of self-sacrifice and kindness and love. And on the inside, she can be planting a "marital garden" by prayerfully and quietly finding out what God wants for a

woman of His and how to function. Not with a bunch of gabbing or being consumed by it, but with peace, quietness and a submissive attitude. There is plenty of work to be done on the inside, for any young woman who desires to be God's kind of bride, pleasing to Him.

(1 Peter 3:3-4) "Don't be concerned about the outward beauty that depends on fancy hairstyles, expensive jewelry, or beautiful clothes. You should be known for the beauty that comes from within, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is so precious to God."

(1 Timothy 2:9-15) "And I want women to be modest in their appearance. They should wear decent and appropriate clothing and not draw attention to themselves by the way they fix their hair or by wearing gold or pearls or expensive clothes. For women who claim to be devoted to God should make themselves attractive by the good things they do. Women should listen and learn quietly and submissively. I do not let women teach men or have authority over them. Let them listen quietly. For God made Adam first, and afterwards he made Eve. And it was the woman, not Adam, who was deceived by Satan, and sin was the result. But women will be saved through childbearing and by continuing to live in faith, love, holiness, and modesty."

(2 Tim 2:22) "Run from anything that stimulates youthful lust. Follow anything that makes you want to do right. Pursue faith and love and peace, and enjoy the companionship of those who call on the Lord with pure hearts."

(Col. 3:5) "So put to death the sinful, earthly things lurking within you. Have nothing to do with sexual sin, impurity, lust, and shameful desires. Don't be greedy for the good things of this life, for that is idolatry."

(1 Thess. 4:3-8) "God wants you to be holy, so you should keep clear of all sexual sin. Then each of you will control your body and live in holiness and honor – not in lustful passion as the pagans do, in their ignorance of God and his ways. God has called us to be holy, not to live impure lives. Anyone who refuses to live by these rules is not disobeying human rules but is rejecting God, who gives his Holy Spirit to you."

Don't Spoil The Fun By Running Ahead

God knows our needs better than we know them ourselves. As a young woman, don't get ahead of God and the Way He wants to do His business. Instead, be busy about the Work that God wants you to be focusing on. Enjoy being a young person, watch Him work, with patience and wonder. **He knows what you need!** There will be lots of springs and summers and autumns and winters to enjoy and live in. Don't "spoil the fun" by chasing after the packages and gifts that aren't yet ready to be opened!

Consider this picture...Imagine that a mother wants to do something very special for her daughter. She wants to give her a special treat out of her love and generosity. So she stashes her daughter's favorite ice cream in the back of the freezer, waiting for that perfect moment to pull it out and surprise her. Finally, that perfect time arrives. You can imagine how eager the mom is to see the look on her daughter's face. She goes to the freezer, and

when she reaches for the ice cream, she finds it half eaten! The daughter helped herself to the ice cream! All of the anticipation and joy for the mom was stolen and ruined. And sadly, because the daughter helped herself, she missed out on receiving a gift of love. You see the point...when you run ahead and take something for yourself, you rob God of the wonderful gifts He wants to bless you with. And more importantly, you miss out on growing close to Him through trusting and worshipping Him, in patience and love.

So, if you find yourself “looking at the boys”, gravitating toward them, thinking about them, craving their attention, enjoying their attention, please STOP!! That is not God’s will for your life to have “goosebump mania” through the sensations of your flesh and emotions. If you find yourself distracted by the lust of your flesh and emotions, calm your soul. Our emotions and hormones and feelings need to be laid on the altar for His purposes, reigned in and reserved for Him.

She Needs To Be Protected, And Within The Walls

The precious young ladies of God’s people, whether born again or not, are made for Jesus, *not* for the eyes and lusts of the world and its pagans. As young princesses growing older amongst God’s people, they need protection – from the world, from its cares and affairs, and from its deadly influences, not to mention the danger, crime, immorality and lust of a wicked and depraved generation. Our young princesses are vulnerable and need covering and nurturing in a special way. Her heartthrob needs to be that of a handmaiden, pursuing Jesus whole-heartedly. She can wash Jesus’ feet through the serving of the saints, through obedience to her parents, through loving authority and by being a bright spot to the people in her life, sowing good seeds generously, every day, towards Him and towards His people!! Learning to fall in love with all that He loves and hating all that He hates – falling in love with HIM, as her heart’s desire.

To be a woman of noble character is her aim – within the walls of God’s People, serving His house with diligence, kindness, industriousness and love. This description in Proverbs 31 is a picture of the life of a woman in the midst of Israel, a type of the church of Jesus, where all the people are bought by His blood. It is not in the context of the world that she pursues this picture that is described. A few snapshots from the proverb....

“Who can find a virtuous and capable wife? She is worth more than precious rubies. Her husband can trust her, and she will greatly enrich his life. She will not hinder him but help him all her life....She is energetic and strong, a hard worker. She watches for profitable trade; her lights burn late into the night. Her hands are busy spinning thread, her fingers twisting fiber. She extends a helping hand to the poor and opens her arms to the needy....She is clothed with strength and dignity, and she laughs with no fear of the future. When she speaks, her words are wise, and kindness is the rule when she gives instructions....Charm is deceptive, and beauty does not last; but a woman who fears the Lord will be greatly praised.”

And in Titus...

(Titus 2:4-5) “These older women must train the younger women to love their husbands and their children, to live wisely and be pure, to take care of their homes, to do good, and to be submissive to their husbands. Then they will not bring shame on the Word of God.

Practical Problem Areas

Here are “problem areas” which will hinder a person from becoming that woman of noble character. You may want to look them over with your young lady.

1. Appearance – A lopsided, unhealthy value placed on one’s clothing, hairstyle, facial features, body parts. If you are overly concerned and preoccupied with “how you look”, you have a misplaced priority and possibly a misplaced affection. Are you...noticing how your clothes “feel” on you all the time? Linger in the mirror examining your face? Comparing your body to someone else’s body? Pride in yourself or jealousy of others? Always thinking about what you’re going to wear? All of these things are telltale signs that you have a misplaced priority about your earth-suit that robs you of being beautiful where it counts – on the INSIDE! “It is not outward appearance that makes you beautiful, but the inner self.” Do you believe that – for REAL? If so, work hard to make yourself beautiful on the inside with good choices, a yielded heart and by rejecting the temptations to primp and gaze in the mirror and be overly concerned with clothing, makeup and hairstyles.

2. Clothing – If it is important to you that you have the latest trends and styles, you’ve got an idea that comes from worldly thinking. If anything, we want to steer away from the trends of the world! Not that we should stand out as being weird – we don’t want that either. But to mimic what “they” do with clothing, shoes, eyeglasses and other apparel is dangerous territory to tread on. Here, the important question is: why do you wear and buy what you do?? Because you “like it” may not be a good idea if it smacks of the world. Just because it is so plentiful on the racks doesn’t make it a good idea. Sometimes it requires very conscientious work and effort to find clothing for a young woman in the kingdom which covers and is appropriate. Not trendy yet not monastic. It is quite a balancing act sometimes, but don’t worry, we can figure it out together! The important thing is to approach the whole area with a very loose hold, learning to prefer what is becoming and proper for a disciple and laying down preferences for certain “cuts,” necklines, flimsy or clingy materials, tight clothing and the like (all of which you will want to get rid of as you see the importance of covering and guarding the “lines” and “shape” God has given you.) Your body doesn’t belong to you, but for another, in the future. And it doesn’t belong to the world for pagan men to gawk over! Keep it safe, okay?? Take special care.

3. Magazines, books, catalogs, movies, t.v. – What you allow to pass into your head through the media, and printed material is VERY important. It WILL eat you away on the inside to take in bad seed in these forms. Worldly novels, stories that emphasize “good looks”, romance, self-centered relationships, and other worldly values will only

serve to make it a priority in your own life. If you look at teen magazines or tabloids, they are out-of-bounds for a disciple – utter trash. Not some legal thing to “not read magazines” – but just because there is NO value in them for anyone who wants to be more like Jesus. Many magazines emphasize and value everything you don’t want to become! Looks, makeup, weight and figure, dating, primping, social pursuits...all these things are the opposite of God’s desire for your life. It is the world’s way of “training” you. God wants your priorities to be HIS and so, the seeds to sow will best come from His Word in all its many forms, others’ godly influence, and turning away from worldly sources.

4) The opposite gender – Take special care, as a young person to not position yourself in tempting, tough situations. Going towards boys or standing in places and in ways where you’ll be noticed is not usually a good idea. Flirting and being “chatty are bad news! The “dating game” of the world is OF THE WORLD! Don’t fall prey to its lure. “Dating” is, as one brother in California is prone to say, preparation for divorce, not preparation for marriage. It is WRONG building to participate in the “dating game” approach to “courting”. “Dating” cultivates a wrong sense of priorities and desires and habits, and introduces great dangers that never need be there for a young person, OR an older person.

There is a better way – a JESUS way – to meet and begin to know and find God’s Heart if He would have you have a marriage partner. “Make no provision for your flesh” by setting yourself up in bad situations, or closing your eyes when others are doing so! Better to “stick with the girls” (or, for the guys, stick with the guys) in a lot of cases, or with those who have a watch over your life. There is NO real reason for ever segregating by “age” or isolating in “opposite sex” private situations, anyway. NOT if we are trying to get to know JESUS and those that are His, and to hear His Voice, anyway. If we have other motives and mammal instincts we are pursuing, we’ll do it the way the world does it, without even questioning it. And we’ll let others “bully” us with, “Everyone ELSE is doing it! Don’t be such a shrew. You’re being overly protective. You’ll smother them. You have to let them expand themselves. You have to let them make their own decisions. Blah, blah, blackmail, accuse, insult, pressure to conform to the patterns of this world.” There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death, and 60% divorce rate in the “churches”. THERE IS A WAY THAT IS GOD’S for discovering if Father intends you to have a marital partner, and, if so, who that may be. And it is NOT “dating”.

Build Right In ALL Relationships!

Keep in mind too that the *only* good foundation for *any* relationship is to build because of what Jesus is currently doing – and NO other reason. If you choose and build because of external reasons or desires of your flesh, you will find yourself very empty, very frustrated and very alone. The only kind of relationship that brings Peace and Life and good fruit to you and those around you is to pursue people based on *who they are in Jesus*. It’s got to be a relationship that has Jesus and Truth as its total basis. The whole

reason you are in it is because of Him and His House, and nothing else. Be attracted by what attracts Jesus. Be attracted by those who are serious about pleasing Jesus and who want to be changed into His likeness and who respond to the Word of God with obedience and respect.

Choosing your friends because of their age or social class or where they live or the kind of job they have or because they look pretty, or have a funny personality is building “after the flesh”. To “like” people because you have common interests or because they give you flattery and enjoy you so much, is self-centered reasoning and improper building for a disciple of Jesus. ***Let the measurement of the value of a relationship be how it is helping you grow in Jesus and how your relationship helps others grow in Him as well.*** A genuinely God-centered relationship with someone will ALWAYS benefit other people. It will NEVER, ever, ever be exclusive, revolving around two people only, sucking one another towards themselves. Ask Him to purify your motives and desires in the relationships He’s placed you in. Allow Him to fill you and reject finding fulfillment anywhere outside of His will for your life.

Remember that you will become like those you hang around. “Bad company corrupts good character.” Be careful who your closest friends are because you’ll become like them. Don’t spend your affection, desires, time and energy on those who value the world’s ways, affections and priorities. Steer clear of choosing and forming relationships based on worldly junk! Don’t be rude or unkind to those who are without Jesus or who are immature in their lives, but don’t desire affection from or buddy up to those people either. Pursue godly examples, and *be* a godly example.

To sum it up, followers of Jesus are bent on one thing and that is to love Him, to serve Him, and to adore Him only; to become increasingly buried and submersed in His Life and His thoughts and His priorities. Deeper and deeper into the Life of Jesus, to the Glory of the Father, through the leading of His Spirit. Now that’s a ROMANCE that is very worth pursuing!! It sounds good, doesn’t it? :)

If Father has Plans for you – to remain single, as He did His Son Jesus, and His servant Paul and many others, that is WONDERFUL also! Don’t be bullied! Don’t be afraid! Many pursue these things out of selfishness, or loneliness, or hormones, or pressures from peers or parents, or foolish thinking, or pride (not wanting to be labeled) or laziness (wanting someone to serve them and meet their needs), or desiring affection, or an undisciplined mind, or discouragement, or being unclear of their Mission in Life. WEAK! YUCK! Don’t be like this, like the animal kingdom, but “Be TRANSFIGURED by the renewing of your mind!”

And IF He desires marriage for you, in time? Don’t be afraid of that either! It *is* in the Father’s heart, you know, if HE has authored it as a Gift to you! The picture of a beautiful young woman preparing herself for her one and only, is a reflection of God’s desire for His betrothed! Looking with hope and perseverance to being prepared in heart and mind and character is God’s heart for *His people, His Bride*. The purity of love, a marriage, procreation, and the beauty of the “cord of three strands” – as well as the *close quarters training ground in godliness and self-sacrifice*, is in fact, buried deep in the

Father's Heart. It's not a bad thing, it's just that it is meant to be given by Him, not chased after by His children. He is the one who birthed the idea of a man's deep love for others, and expressing that as a shadow of the Life and Love of Jesus. But it is HIS to Give and not ours to take or grab after, or to build as we choose. "Let the Bride and the Bridegroom come OUT of their chambers" and "seek FIRST the Kingdom"!! And your Heavenly Father, who knows...! *Come, Lord Jesus, for Your Bride!*

Concerning Vanity

Question: Do you see any dangers in telling the little children how "cute" they are?

Yeah, it doesn't take them very long to learn how cute they are either. They have all these faces smiling and cooing-cooing them. I still cannot quite break my daughter of looking in the mirror while she is crying. As soon as she starts to cry, she heads for a mirror. Some of those things go back to how adorable everyone thought she was. For her sake, as well as ours, it's good to be aware of those things. Not bone-crushing austerity, but the wisdom to know what it is we are doing.

Once I mentioned some of this to some folks in another city who had their six-year-old daughter all done up. They had her ears pierced, her hair done up perfectly, and she even had eye makeup on! I called the parents aside and said, "You are destroying this girl! Yeah, it's adorable. I admit it. She is gorgeous. She is the prettiest six year old I've ever seen. But the last thing she needs is a whole parade of people going up and telling her that. She is going to get her perspective and priorities so off base that by the time she is fifteen you are going to wonder why she has phone calls all night long and ends up pregnant... And you will scratch your head and wonder how it happened. You are going to realize then, when it's far too late, that you are priming her up for your own pride's sake! You did it for your own benefit, and now it has destroyed your daughter because YOUR priorities were wrong!"

Question: Would it be best not to mention the cuteness of the children at all?

We do need to be aware of it and cautious, but it is in God's heart to love his children. I love telling little ones when they look nice that they look nice. I think that's in the heart of God. We all need to be able to respond to that with grace, with no fear. The definition of humility is not thinking too much of yourself, and not thinking too little of yourself. It's just *not thinking of yourself*.

That's the same way with every other thing in the kingdom of God. You could have pride in the fact that you were the president of a big company. You could have pride about your job as a janitor. Or you could have fear in one or fear in the other. It doesn't

make any difference. The issue isn't what you do for a living. It's not thinking too much of it *or* thinking too little of it. It's just not thinking of it. We need to have an attitude that is indifferent towards all these things. To be indifferent towards a nice dress is a far better attitude than thinking too much of it, or thinking too little of it. God invented color. He invented beauty. He invented all of those things. It was His idea – the beauty of holiness. God did His creation in a pretty magnificent way. Even our physical bodies are praised by God as being tremendous workmanship. To just cover all that up in austerity as a monk or something is to defy God and the gifts that He has given. To deny His gifts is as nearly foolhardy as to worship His gifts. The goal is to not think too much of it or too little of it – just to be indifferent. Whatever you receive, give praise to God for it – give Glory to God for it. Pass it on. Don't be like Herod and be eaten by worms because you refuse to pass it on.

I don't know how to define that in really clear terms, but don't turn it around the other way and make some kind of cultic thing out of it where you are dressed in sackcloth and ashes. Respect beauty, admire beauty. If you go back and read Ezk. 28, the creation that God did in lucifer is pretty awesome. God did that on purpose. But, lucifer forgot that he was reflecting *God's glory* and thought that *he* was emanating glory. Lucifer got it mixed up. God wanted it to be beautiful, but he wanted lucifer to see that he was reflecting God's glory, rather than emanating glory as a source in himself.

Along with that is that we must see beyond the physical. So often we don't see the beautiful child that is inside that beautiful dress. We don't see the attitudes of the heart that go along with that. So often we are so indifferent. We grew up seeing the physical. That's all we see.

A Peek into a Letter

from an “older” woman to a “younger” woman (Titus 2:4)

Listen carefully, and try to understand... and if you don't understand you can ask questions! Okay??

Jesus once told Peter to watch and pray (be alert, stay close to Him and keep asking Jesus to help you understand the things He says) because, in Jesus' words, “satan wants to sift you like wheat”. That means that satan, the liar, who hides in darkness and dishonesty, tries to trap people into the darkness by getting their attention with something they desire. For sweet young ladies, one of these areas has to do with a desire to be attractive.

Let some of Jesus' Light shine on you..... Do you realize that every time you feel good because you like the way you look, you are lifting yourself ABOVE Jesus in your own heart? Even the times you feel bad just because you don't like the way you look, you are still lifting yourself above Jesus! Do you know why that is? It is because Jesus

is the only Person who is really, truly Beautiful! That means, that the people who hide their lives in Him become more and more beautiful every time they learn from Him and obey Him, and change the things in their lives that are unlike Him. Satan wants you to think that looking good makes you beautiful, but all it really does is make you look nice on the outside.

If you needed to clean the toilet and all you did was close the lid and polish the outside of the tank and the seat, what do you think it would smell like inside after 12 years of this? Pretty gross, eh?? Would the inside be clean and fresh and healthy just because the lid is shiny and polished? Of course not! Would you want to use a toilet like that? So what's the parallel?? Jesus wants you to have a pure, stable, steady life that doesn't ever depend on how your hair looks that day (because some days hair just does weird things! And it doesn't matter to Him, if you aren't lazy or selfish about it.) Satan doesn't like it that he can't ruin our days by making us angry about wild hair or panicked about a pimple or insecure about old clothes. Satan doesn't like it that God's people don't have to respond to his stupid ideas about what is important and valuable. God's people are secure and safe in Jesus' grasp. They find their *identity* all day, every day, in the fact that Jesus, ***the ONLY Beautiful Person forever and ever and ever***, Loves them, is committed to them, talks with them, forgives them, covers them with His Blood and His Holy Name. He Promises never to leave them, no matter how their hair or clothes or skin or eyes look, as long as they are full of Him and not full of evil, worldly darkness or sin.

Jesus doesn't want you to get trapped by satan into finding your identity in how you look. This will only draw your heart away from Jesus and make you miserable because you will never be beautiful enough to feel good this way. It will consume (that means it will eat up, devour, destroy) your heart and steal your life from you in the end, whenever that end comes. You will never be happy and you will never be free and you can never know Jesus and His Love for you if you live this way. **SO DON'T** live this way, feeling good or bad about how you look. Instead, sow seeds with Jesus and with people who love and know Him. Fill your heart with Him and the things He loves, and then you can begin to live by feeling good because of who Jesus is and what He is like and what He has done for you and all the people who Believe Him! Read about who He is and what He loves and then go do something about it, ok? You'll regret it for a thousand billion years if you don't, and you'll be thankful forever and ever if you do! Love,

Goals of a Young Woman

1. My goal is the biblical goal of Titus 2: to be a woman of character, principle, love, diligence, and to be busy at home.

2. I also want to expand my mind and skills – not so I can “make money” or explore a worldly environment, but so that I can grow in heart and mind and ability to relate to God, God’s Creation, God’s People, and those that God is extending His Hand to in this present age. I want to be able to teach others, be conversant, be Full. Learning, whether self-initiated, correspondence course, or something else that is handled from a strong Position, spiritually... is a good thing. Teaching children in order to be faithful in multiplying what God has allowed me to learn, as well as to have “windows” into the young people’s hearts in order to reach out to them spiritually, as well as to spur me on to greater learning... is a good thing.

3. Whether married or unmarried, learning to manage a home, learning to cook and clean, learning to raise vegetables should that become necessary one day, learning to balance a checkbook... all of these are good things.

4. Instead of asking, as a woman (men may be somewhat different in this area), “How would this or that provide a good ‘living’?” or, “Is this skill ‘marketable’?” I will ask, “What am I genuinely interested in? What could I possibly be good at?” Then, perhaps, I will pursue learning more of that area in various ways mentioned earlier. I will work hard in that area and see if it provides some “leads” in what I may want to pursue in order to expand my heart and mind, that I might be a more suitable vessel for serving God and serving others through “the parables of Life” that this learning experience (viewed correctly) might provide.

Special Note: The “young woman” in Prov.31 was functioning TOTALLY WITHIN ISRAEL – GOD’S CHOSEN/HER FAMILY! She did NOT live that way amongst the Egyptians and Philistines!!!!!!!!!! That is WRONG, and DANGEROUS. Many lives have been forever trashed due to the temptations, and independent and worldly lusts and situations, cultivated in a man’s heathen world that SHE SHOULD NEVER HAVE BEEN IN IN THE FIRST PLACE! The Proverbs 31 woman is like Dorcas and Tabitha... **IN THE BODY OF CHRIST, IN SPIRITUAL ISRAEL – NOT functioning that way with EGYPTIANS or BABYLONIANS!**

IN MEETINGS

A Vision: The Children...The Church

**a time when the saints were gathered together
with all the children (as usual)...**

“See, I will send you the prophet Elijah before that great and dreadful day of the LORD comes. He will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers; or else I will come and strike the land with a curse.” Malachi 4:5-6 (NIV)

K: Something that God wants to happen for all of us is that our hearts will be turned toward the children, and the children toward the fathers. One of the things that this has meant to me is *not* some sort of a superficial “Uh, Hi there Johnny...” (with a pat pat on the head and now I can get back to what’s “important” – but I am to really care about them as an eternal dweller, a fellow journeyer. I’m just a couple of years ahead of them which is *practically nothing* in the perspective of eternity. A few years on earth, even seventy years on earth, is next to nothing. One of the characteristics of Christ is to have a great love for children. *They’re not insignificant.* They are extremely important.

The ambient noise level may be slightly greater when they are all with us, but that’s okay. It’s good for the children to be with us. Sometimes we just may have to say, “Look, I’m working on training my child right now. I know he’s making more noise than he ought to be, but I’m working on it. Please bear with us.” There *may* be a time to walk out the door, too. But God has a way of working all things together. So, let’s look at tonight and children and gatherings as a very positive thing.

H: When a child, even a little baby, goes out the door with their parent, I almost feel like there’s a certain defeat in that. I’d rather as a family work those things out together. There might be a time where that would be necessary, but by and large, *I want to be family.* I’m not that interested in the Pharisaical heart in the disciples. “Get these children out of here! We’re trying to have a good meeting here.” Jesus said, *“No! They deserve front row seats in all of this. Bring ‘em on! Let them come to Me, and we’ll suffer if we need to... Suffer them to come.”* ☺

Now, about that passage in Malachi, I noticed something about Jesus’ first coming and the nature of the time of service of John the baptist. In the time of John the baptist, you really don’t notice a lot happening in the way of children and their hearts being turned to the Lord or to their fathers and fathers’ hearts being turned to the children. There is no recorded evidence of that actually ever being fulfilled. So even though John

was the Elijah to come, I think the vast majority of what's being talked about here *is still waiting to happen*.

In the end times and the times prior to the great and terrible Day of the Lord, there are many things that are going to happen. One very prominent issue might be signs and wonders. There will actually be a lot of different kinds of things. But considering all of those things there was ONE thing that God saw fit to mention in the closing sentence or two of what we'll call the old covenant when He was saying, "Watch for what's yet to come!" The salient quality of that..."Here's how you'll know that the end is near – the hearts of the fathers will be turned to the children and the hearts of the children to the fathers." That's not just a statement of "family life." *It's a statement of relationship*. There's going to be a *sensitivity* in God's people to see things that normally they would have brushed right by and had no heart for.

Sensitivity

I'm *not* talking about family idolatry. What I'm talking about is sensitivity – "hearts turned towards." Sensitivity to see what's happening in this little life that just scooted by. Sensitivity to the little boy that just slipped on the steps and is lifting his hands up towards you because he has fallen in the snow and now has icicles between his fingers. There must be something in our hearts that's going to turn towards that. Their crying is not going to be an inconvenience. It's going to almost bring us to tears – sensitivity. A prominent quality of the last days – of a people prepared for the coming of the Lord – is to not see things the way we've seen them in the past anymore. *Paths that are made straight. Arms that are strong and not hanging limp. Knees that are strong and steady on what would have been a shaky path*. So, watch for that. But don't just *watch* for that, repent if there's anything in you that isn't seeing things the way Jesus did. "Let them come!" Have hearts and hands that are extended to those children. Receive Him, the Lord, by receiving the children with that kind of sensitivity.

Of course, *all this speaks of our relationships with one another because usually the children are the last things we see*. Almost always, everything else tends to be more important to us. What some adult is saying is very important to us, but the children are sometimes the last thing we see. So if we've got the children right, we've probably got most everything else in order too. If we can SEE children, then we will probably be able to see other things in more refined and sensitive ways as well. If we can turn our hearts toward children who seem to be a little bit louder or a little bit out of the flow of what's *supposed* to be happening in *our* mind, probably we're going to have hearts for everything else, too.

If we really revere His Name and we're looking for the Son of Righteousness to come with healing in His wings, then we also need to be *watching* for what's going to happen in *our hearts*. We must *prepare* our hearts for what Jesus Himself wants to happen in our hearts before His return, to usher in His return. Prepare ourselves with simple things, not necessarily great exploits. Great exploits will come with the territory,

but *He does great exploits through compassion*. He does great exploits through sensitivity to both the Father and the Father's children. The power of great exploits is agape, and the children are a good test of where our hearts are.

Children, Listen Up

Children, some of you really need to draw close to your parents and look at your parents and love them. Jesus said, "If you love me, you'll keep my commandments." And so as you look at your parents, realize you are looking at people who love you and care for you. Do what they ask you to do because they love you. They've cared for you and they've done a lot of things for you, and they've paid a high price to take care of you. So be very kind to your parents, alright? Let your hearts be turned towards your fathers and towards your mothers. Not just your mothers, but your daddies too, okay??

No Blowing Smoke

J: *Something that qualifies a man to be a shepherd is if he can raise his family well*. If he can do that, then he can probably function in the household of God well. If he can't function well in his family, then he won't be effective in the church. If you can't be sensitive to what's going on in the heart and life of a child, then as much as you think that God has given you all this great wisdom to deal with the church, in reality, you probably won't notice that someone over here in the corner is struggling. You'll be busy expounding great truths or something and won't even see what God is doing. It really is in God's heart that we grow in sensitivity to the children. That's what will train all of us to be sensitive in dealing in the house of God.

H: There's a responsibility level in all of this that comes with the territory. *Don't allow anybody to blow smoke*. If you see that in some way I'm abusing my children, then don't let me sit here and talk about "great truths", and then just keep right on going. There is no place whatsoever for any of us allowing any of the rest of us to blow smoke. So watch and pray. This isn't just food for thought.

The Pharisees and the Scribes taught in riddles and taught in cerebral terms, but *Jesus taught as one having authority*. In times past, God spoke to the forefathers, through the prophets and in various ways, but now He speaks through his Son. And His Son speaks as one having authority! So, the issue has to do with putting into practice, not just acknowledging or racking up ideas. There has got to be a responsibility to that. If you see I'm irresponsible with my children, or if I see that you're irresponsible with your children, let's work together to refine our hearts.

Together, As Always

The pillar and foundation of truth is the ekklesia. The ability to build towards God has everything to do with the ekklesia. Not just a bunch of individuals racking up ideas,

but the ekklesia of God allowing us to put into practice the Word of God, the pillar and foundation of truth. The support of truth has to do with God's people together working out truth. And so we need each other to help one another apply truth. Don't allow thinking that says, "Well, probably somebody else sees it and will say something..."

Please take responsibility to walk it out with brothers and sisters. We all need the encouragement and the admonishment. The Word of God is very useful for teaching and rebuking, for correcting, and for training. If we are not willing to apply the Word of God in one another's lives, then it's not really the Word of God. We've turned it into some sort of external kind of project. Please, let's all help one another to apply the Word of God with love in our hearts and with wisdom. Don't let smoke blow through the whole thing and turn it into just a theory.

D: Reading in Job has sensitized my heart in regards to listening to what younger people have to say and what impact they can have.

"So Elihu son of Barakel the Buzite said: "I am young in years, and you are old; that is why I was fearful, not daring to tell you what I know. I thought, 'Age should speak; advanced years should teach wisdom.' But it is the spirit in a man, the breath of the Almighty, that gives him understanding. It is not only the old who are wise, not only the aged who understand what is right. "Therefore I say: Listen to me; I too will tell you what I know. I waited while you spoke, I listened to your reasoning; while you were searching for words, I gave you my full attention. But not one of you has proved Job wrong; none of you has answered his arguments. Do not say, 'We have found wisdom; let God refute him, not man.' But Job has not marshaled his words against me, and I will not answer him with your arguments. "They are dismayed and have no more to say; words have failed them. Must I wait, now that they are silent, now that they stand there with no reply? I too will have my say; I too will tell what I know. For I am full of words, and the spirit within me compels me; inside I am like bottled-up wine, like new wineskins ready to burst. I must speak and find relief; I must open my lips and reply. I will show partiality to no one, nor will I flatter any man; for if I were skilled in flattery, my Maker would soon take me away. "But now, Job, listen to my words; pay attention to everything I say. I am about to open my mouth; my words are on the tip of my tongue. My words come from an upright heart; my lips sincerely speak what I know. The Spirit of God has made me; the breath of the Almighty gives me life." Job 32:6-33:4 (NIV)

It speaks of the freshness that can come from youth. The freshness and the wisdom from a child who sat there and listened to these three wise older men counseling Job on all his concerns and his losses of his family and wealth and health. That whole conversation must have taken some amount of time, and Elihu sat there patiently and quietly. This youthful person, and we don't know how old he was, was bursting inside because he had the Spirit of God within him to pour out his life. For Job to have the ability to listen to him was excellent. For Job to be able to hear the words from someone youthful was probably extraordinary humility.

To hear your son say, "Dad, are you sure you should have done that?" To be able to hear something simple like that from a child and let it pierce your heart shows great

humility and softness before God. This dialogue we read about in Job really struck a chord in my heart as to the value of listening. It also reminded me of the perception that new eyes and ears have, and how we should let that affect our lives as we walk and talk with the children, whether it be your children or younger brothers and sisters in Christ.

H: Children, pay attention because we're going to sing this song to you, okay? Listen very closely because we really mean this from the heart. And we want God to help us mean it even more.

“Children, let us be your servant. Let us be as Christ to you. Pray that I may have the grace to let you be my servant, too. We are pilgrims on a journey. We are brothers on the road. We are here to help each other walk the mile and bear the load. I will hold the Christ-Light for you in the nighttime of your fears. I will hold my hand out to you, speak the peace you long to hear. I will weep when you are weeping. When you laugh, I'll laugh with you. I will share your joy and sorrow 'til we've seen this journey through. When we sing to God in heaven, we shall find such harmony born of all we've known together of Christ's love and agony. Children let me be your servant. Let me be as Christ to you. Pray that I may have the grace to let you be my servant, too.”

H: Earlier in the evening we were talking about God's Heart for His people around the world. We were discussing that it is God's idea that the gospel will go into all the nations and that His people would be strong and of one heart and mind and faith. To some it may have seemed like we were talking about two different things tonight. One topic having to do with the children and our hearts being turned to them in the last days. And then the other having to do with a vision towards a global thing that God wants to do also in the last days as it relates to wisdom and finding a unity and oneness amongst His people. What if the two things are the same? How are they connected? What if the key to being one as Jesus and the Father are one, is to be a son like He was a Son? What if the key is to love the Father and to love the children? What if the key is partly found in the sensitivity that we would use in loving our own children, the commitment we would have to loving them until they grow up? “Well, I'm sorry. You're not growing fast enough for me. You're not in my family any more.”

What if the thing that He's wanting to teach us is that the two “topics” are really one? In the last days, God is wanting us to see the oneness and to see the unity, to see God spanning the globe with a unity and an agape. What if the ability to deal with the children in our midst is the barometer of our ability to receive what God is doing on the face of the earth? What if the two really are the same? Just something to ponder, huh? ☺

Youth is for Living in the Body of Christ

Hey, I was wondering if you or someone else has ever written about a suggested model for youth groups and its role in the church. Do you have youth groups...whether it be in the traditional or non-traditional way? In other words, is there any sort of program that encourages the youth of the church to come together...whether it be in a spiritual setting or just to hang out??

I have recently been asked to help out with the youth group/ministry at my church. The youth pastor is young and open to suggestions and his desire is that it would not conform itself to being just another typical pizza party youth group. Statistics show that close to 75% of youth groupers fall away from the Lord in their later years. This is unacceptable for him and he has asked me if I had any ideas. In his own words he said, "The old model just doesn't work and I want to do this the way God wants it to be done." I was wondering if you had ever written anything in the past concerning the youth of the church that I could share with him.

Hi, Brace yourself! Do you believe in having special dinners for all of (and ONLY) the Chinese Christians in a church? How about a special night out for ONLY blondes? Any other kind of segregation around "flesh" come to mind as a good idea? How about a "Black people only basketball game?" No? Doesn't that sound "ill"??!! It does to me!! For fifteen years we've endeavored to OBEY the Command to "see NO man after the flesh" and not be like "mere humans" by doing so. "What's born of FLESH is flesh." We've had NO need for the unBiblical process of separating people by color or age, "neither Jew, nor Greek," or education — or any category at ALL (other than whether the "ANCIENT OF DAYS" lives inside, making EVERYONE the same age!). Consequently, the "best friends" of many of the younger people are twice or 5 times their age! It's super cool, and VERY powerful. We don't WANT anyone, young or old, to be "discipled by their peers"!! It only breeds foolishness and unSpirituality, thus the 70% (or whatever the number) of young people that reject Jesus as they get "free" to do so. ***The church world builds foolishly on the sand***, and wonders why the storms bring down the young people's houses?!

"Youth Groups," "Christian Camps," and "Turkey-Fests"

Youth groups, "christian" summer camps, sports camps, "christian" schools, turkey-fests, car washes, or song-fests or "choirs" or "bible studies" or "services" or "praise and

worship” seminars or *any activity of any kind that finds its origins in the ways of men* bears awful fruit for individuals, as well as whole masses of people, because it is **BUILT ON THE WRONG FOUNDATION**. The “tower” in Gen. 11 was a “great idea” too – to carnal men.

I currently know of MANY people from MANY DIFFERENT religious backgrounds and regions who could testify with first hand knowledge of the BAD FRUIT from these “pizza party ministries” and “christian camps.” We know of first hand knowledge of smuggling in alcohol and pornography, stealing the wine for the “Lord’s supper” and trying to get drunk on it, guy/girl goo-goo junk, making out in the woods, strip poker, and even a young lady recovering from an abortion. Whether in the “building,” or at the camp or potluck dinner, the “warm fuzzies,” pretty “scenery,” colorful decorations, catchy tunes and “campfires,” are a very thin veneer over a deeply corrupted scheme of projecting God to the masses. Naïve or lazy parents and adults try to convince themselves “not here” – but they are wrong. If a person is helped by a sermon or some other truth that comes through to them, it is not that they are helped BECAUSE of the system, but IN SPITE of the system. God will work through whatever means He can to help someone, out of His Kindness and Mercy. But it is NOT His intent that it be built the way that it has been for 2000 years. Like you said, the old way doesn’t work. Let’s do it GOD’S Way for a change. Sure, some mean well, but that’s how Ishmael was born and how Saul became King. Man’s ways are rejecting God. And the fruit proves it in the end.

Few people escape unscathed. Most of God’s lambs never even know it’s a problem and remain blinded to God’s TRUE INTENT FOR HIS PEOPLE. We know people all over the world who have experienced these heartaches and pains and scars. It is not just “isolated” bad situations. It happens everywhere.

Now, I realize that busting the paradigm isn’t going to help add bells and whistles to that faulty and unBiblical paradigm, so I guess my answer is not too helpful, eh?!! ;) But, you love me anyway, right? :) Sleep well, dude

QUESTIONS FROM A NON- INSTITUTIONAL SETTING

Question: We, like most, come out of a background where “nursery school,” “bible classes,” “children’s church,” “youth groups,” and the like are all that anyone ever knew. So now what? We’re meeting now in a much less formal manner, in homes, but we are SO tempted to lean on institutional tricks rather than God’s Wisdom. It seems like “what to do with the children” is one of our continual challenges. Could you offer a few thoughts about how things work with your experiences over the years? Do the kids just kind of filter in and out? Does someone (or someones) rotate in and out with them? Do your teens sit and listen? and/or participate? The video tape, “Consuming Zeal for the Father’s House”, talks about working with the children ‘as you walk along the way’ etc... but it never specifically says what you do in the meetings. – Lawrence

Truthfully, this is a large problem for those who are used to nurseries and “children’s church” and “youth groups” to “keep the children out of the way”. However, this is, unbeknownst to most, *not* the “number one problem” as folks come out of institutional settings into something else! Those would probably be more related to “What is a Christian? What is a Church? What is a leader REALLY to be – who IS one, what do they look like, what do they do, how does that relate to Gifts? What is “leaven”? How does a “priesthood of Believers” express itself daily and during meetings?” Anyway, those are some of the biggest problems, but the children’s roles in it all is important, and can *SEEM* like the biggest imaginable problem while it’s happening – if it is not handled wisely!

Question: I am in a “house church” environment, although the problem seems to be the same in a religious facility also. It seems as if the children are pushed away as “objects” or hustled off to some stifling hot “cry room” or a “children’s church” where we often would have no idea of the quality of the leader’s life. How should we view the “interruptions” that children make if we continue to have them with us when the saints are together? If the children are loud or distracting to others, isn’t the cost of pushing them aside even higher?

I think sitting in an edifice and having to deal with the ten thousand side issues that arise from building terribly wrong in the first place – has everyone scratching their heads worldwide. There is NO doubt that the children are often the MOST precious part

of any time saints are together. It would be TERRIBLY wrong to embrace an attitude or practice that the children should be “seen but not heard”. It is ALSO true that everyone (young and old) must be CARING about something from Heaven more than they do themselves – so wandering around catering to undisciplined children should not be the norm either! Like the thousands that “forgot to eat” after the days of following Jesus into places where there was no known food... Like those that “forgot” that the next day was a “work day” and would not leave to “get a good night’s sleep” so they could do all of their everyday stuff the next day. Those people were there because NOTHING was more important than whatever God was doing in a situation like that, and if they died of hunger or of sleep deprivation, that would be fine. They were CONNECTED with what was Happening more than their own small lives and loves just as we should be connected any time saints are all together.

That should be said, though NOT to say that a whisper of direction or correction or explanation to a young one would be wrong in any way! For the most part, the standard for child rearing in most people’s daily lives worldwide is so low that it can’t help but manifest itself in chaos when staying quiet and focused is the call of the day. Poor daily child rearing has certainly caused many other sorts of problems. Add to that the neglect of God’s Plan of “a hundred fathers, mothers, brothers, and sisters, and children” as a *defining observable quality of any true church*, and it is very unlikely that “meetings” could ever be “right”.

Over the last two weeks or so here, there have been dozens of children in a large living room nearby (along with a couple of dozen of the adults in the church here also). It was a walk through the last 2000 years of church history, for the children. The sit-down times were (I think) three hours, three hours and five hours – and the scores of children were totally attentive, never loud or rude or unaware that there was something Happening that was quite special. A couple dozed as we hit the 2am hour, naturally! But, it was incredible to see four-year-olds and nine- and twelve-year-olds (along with a few teens that had snuck in) sit for hour upon hour, totally entrenched and caring deeply. THAT was the point – not “seen but not heard” – but people caring deeply, to a man, woman and child. If they are all “from the least to the greatest” (the prophecy of what the NEW Covenant would be) totally plugged in and caring to the point of risking their lives – then if someone “falls asleep” that is a little different.

In most cases in today’s religious world, it is just everyone doing what is right in their own eyes, with very little reverence for God’s Voice in the midst of conversations and gatherings of God’s Elect. It is something to “attend” and “try to get something out of” rather than something and SOMEONE to get as lost into as Zacchaeus or Bartimaeus did. The religious world has just ruined so many people worldwide it is unbelievable. But, SOMEDAY...!!

Anyway, dragging the children away as if they are some kind of interruption, or keeping them hidden away so they don’t interfere with anything is a long way from Father’s Heart – as is rustling, chaos, or continual distractions because of untrained children or a lack of hunger for hearing God’s Voice in His Priesthood!

Question: What if it seems as if the parents are totally oblivious to the noise or disrespect or disobedience of the children? Is that something that someone should speak with the parents about?

Most definitely it would have come up for loving discussion VERY early on in our acquaintance with them, if they were visiting with us here for any length of time. And after 15 years, we've never regretted having any kind of discussion that would help folks towards Jesus, and help protect their children from harm.

The Thought is something like this: the children belong to GOD, not people. Parents are not owners, but simply servants of Jesus. SO, our primary role as parents is to Represent. We MUST be "Ambassadors, as if God were making His Appeal through us." A Priesthood, for real! Now, in Representing, GOD doesn't let *us* run wild and be irresponsible around others with our tongues or hands or feet. God doesn't allow us to be disconnected and so busy that we can't hear His gentle whispered Voice. If God doesn't allow that in us, then we, as parents, don't have the RIGHT to misrepresent God by allowing our children to be out of control so that they would not hear and quickly obey our gentle whisper in a crowded noisy room. If we are not reflecting to the children the Father's Ways in dealing with us, then we are *mis*-representing their TRUE Father to them. And *that* is CRIMINAL, not personal preference.

SO, we DEFINITELY would have some conversations with the families where things mis-Represented God to His little ones. And, if the family "loves the Light" – then you can "have fellowship with one another." If they resent the Light, or "hate it" as Jesus said, then we CANNOT have "fellowship one with another" and our joy will be incomplete. Things may not CHANGE totally overnight, but a TRUE disciple, according to Jesus, will at LEAST love the Light and be glad you spoke to them about it, and ask for help, and ask for more input as things come up. ANY problem is resolvable in the arena of Father's Kingdom of LIGHT, in time. If someone doesn't "lean into it" and care deeply about what folks are discussing with them, then welcome them back when they are willing to "walk in the Light" so you can "have fellowship one with another". A follower of Jesus is not one that is totally perfect in their execution of Truths, or even knowledgeable of what IS True in every area – BUT, NO case can be made for a person that does not "LOVE the Truth, and so is Saved". Automatically agreeing or understanding everything is not required. LOVING THE TRUTH, LOVING THE LIGHT IS TOTALLY REQUIRED IN ORDER TO HAVE ANY CONFIDENCE THAT THEY ARE SAVED, ACCORDING TO JESUS AND PAUL. And, we aren't permitted to offer "fellowship" with those who won't "walk in the Light". SO, the little things of life that Father brings to the foreground to talk about (whether children or work-related, or personal habit or hobbies or time usage or treatment of others, or tongue, or _____) are just "windows" to deepen Relationship with Jesus and the inseparable Body of Jesus, or to reveal darkness as Jesus taught in John 3, and John in 1 John 1, and Paul in 2Thes. 2, etc...

All of that to say, we're not doing the Work if we won't dive in, gracefully but thoroughly, with follow-up and consistency, to the "windows" Father presents to us.

OUR activity in sharing Truth actually drives more deeply into US “every good thing we have in Christ”. It’s good for all of us when we’re all Priests and Ambassadors on the Highway of Holiness towards His Kingdom of Light in the Beloved Son, and His “ever-increasing Government”. It works out so practically that it can be scary! But, oh, so Good!

More Regarding Children in “Meetings”

When the entire church is together, we are in some larger place since we would not come close to fitting in any one home. We have several places we can rent on one or two days’ notice that are large enough for us. Sometimes the youngest children are in various homes at that time, with ample responsible adults loving on them in each home. Usually though, all the children are generally just with us, intermingled. Really, there aren’t any particular disturbances, although we may get some young snores if we are there more than three or four hours. The couple of children who would have the hardest time with that might have a brother or sister (who is especially close to the family the child is from) ask the parents if he or she could sit with that young one for the night. The child would then get a lot of one on one interaction, asking him in whispers if he understands the words to that last song, if he knew what that last brother meant when he said, “__” and such. If they need to “take a step out of the room” for some more clear correction, they may do that too.

At homes, when it might be just 20-50 people, there would be two different possible scenarios. If the evening or day is “loose” where there are just 15 different conversations happening (perhaps shifting from something someone just read in an Andrew Murray book, to the Colts last game and back :)), then the parents would do one of a couple of things. Either the parents would just stay especially sensitive to the whereabouts and situation of the child, or they would ask a brother or sister to help them do that if the child moves too quickly for the parent to be engaged in a Watchman Nee conversation or the reading a poem that a brother just had written, and also keep an eye on the child. They would ask specific ones to help with the tag-team child-care.

In another scenario in a home, where perhaps the reading of that poem and conversation that followed soon engaged the entire load of folks in the home, (and thus) “a meeting” emerges. At that point, perhaps all of children would “circle up” with us, intermingled, or perhaps they would all (the youngest ones) be pulled off into another room (or rooms) with some adults. If there are maybe 18 children there, just for purposes of description, we would probably have five or six adults with them. Maybe every 20 minutes or so we might rotate three or four of the adults into the main room and swap (invisibly, seamlessly) with three or four that had been in the main room. And you can keep swapping throughout the evening or day, with everyone then being able to be with

everyone else for the vast majority of the time. If the children were at a nearby house, the same could be true. If they were at homes a bit of distance away, then probably the adults would just settle in with the children for the entire duration, providing things to do and reading together and doing projects, or having conversation that would point them towards their approaching Destiny/Destination with Jesus.

With the “safety-challenged” over-active child, maybe we’d just have an adult (perhaps rotating as mentioned earlier) with them one-on-one always, in the midst of whatever other things are going on.

Question: Hi, we need some advice about dealing with the children when we gather. Being a small group of believers and having an equal share of children to grown-ups puts us in a difficult situation when we need to discipline. We have been practicing the advice given to us by keeping up the practice of disciplining when we all come together. When we do this, we gently take the child out of the room and bring him to another room and help/discipline him there. I have a two- and four- year-old and Todd has a two- and one-year-old. At times we are in and out of the room so frequently that this gets disruptive to others and makes it hard to completely focus on what is being said. And if we decide to just take the child out and stay with him, there will be, basically, no one left in the room. ☺ We have been diligent at home in our discipline. In one way if we keep on taking them out to deal with them, the gathering seems un-orderly and that is against the Lord. But on the other hand, if we stay and try to discipline later we are not obeying Jesus either. We thought about pinching the children when they act up instead of bringing them out of the room, but are concerned that might be upsetting to them or make it even more un-orderly. What can we do? Help! Do you have any advice? -Brent

Hi Brent... For SURE don’t “wait” until some other time, and I really don’t believe you will communicate all that Jesus wants you to communicate to them with the “pinch” idea. I get the feeling they will consider the “living room times” something to be dreaded if you do that. I’d say, just keep being VERY consistent at home, and even train them to sit in a lap quietly for blocks of time during every day. Have them sit against a wall and read, totally quiet without moving, for blocks of time every day. Train them in the process of quiet sitting, on a *daily basis*. You’ll need that for times to pray also, where you can depend on them to be quiet and trouble-free. John Wesley’s mother, with 12 or 15 children, trained the children in a way that when she was sitting at the table with a napkin over her head, there would be *no noise* and *no problems*, even if she was praying for *two hours*. They learned to respect and enjoy this. SO, this is the MAIN issue – DAILY TRAINING in how to be quiet and productive by themselves, requiring no attention whatsoever.

The second issue is what to do when things DO come up when folks are together. For one, having one adult for every three or so children off in a side room or side house, and rotating adults through to care for them every 30 minutes or so, is quite effective. That would be for times when they are not all with you, which is often preferable, but not essential at all times. But, whatever you do, don't train them by *neglect* or *delay* by putting them in situations where they can rebel against your word and the consequences are not readily apparent. Well, need to go! Love,

IN OUR HEARTS

“Before that great and terrible Day of the Lord comes, He will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to the fathers...”

TASTE the Powers
of the Coming Age... and pass it on

The Real World

It ought to be very clearly on your mind that it is incumbent upon you to make sure that every one of the children understand that this world we are living in is not the real world. It's not the real thing. It's not what we live for, it's not what we put our energy in, and it's not what we care about. ***The REAL world is a world that is UNSEEN.*** All the unseen issues of Authority, Love, Grace, Prayer, Worship, Forgiveness, Angels, Freedom, Wisdom, True Relationship, Light – ***THESE*** things are the REAL and tangible things from God's View of planet earth. And the reality of all of those things is in the unseen world – ***NOT*** the seen world.

“Mere humans” (as God called those that can ONLY see temporary and 3-dimensional objects) are BLIND to the only things that are REAL, and controlled by things that are only “shadows” and “object lessons” in the visible world. I think it is so important to see that our job is to raise up a generation that can see these things and comprehend what this planet is for. ***They need to see their place in the world, and need to learn how to see through the image into the reality.*** We want them to see through the shadow to find what the shadow points to. They need to run with all their might after the real things and not after the shadows.

Tell, Tell, Tell Them

Take this seriously. These things have to be so much a part of you that you could actually, in turn, help others to see something in this present age that is beyond the end of their nose. Teaching others to taste the powers of the coming age is a responsibility ***you can't neglect.*** “I'm going to show these people something that you, satan, don't want them to see.” That's your job with co-workers, neighbors, relatives, and your children. Show them something the enemy does not want them to see. Show them that the world has been pulled over their eyes to blind them to the truth. Teach them to see what is real – that ***they are prisoners, slaves in this present dying, decaying age.***

YET, they were born to live and to have *abundant life*. They were born to have true life – to taste the powers of the coming age and to be seated with Christ in heavenly realms. They are not meant to be slaves bound to this decaying, fallen world. They are not meant to be slaves to their lustful pursuits and the futility of their thinking. They are not to be bound by the empty darkness of their hearts and understanding – being slaves *pushed around by hormones and moods and selfish desires* that have enslaved the present age and those that have lived for pleasure.

Those people are dead even while they live. No matter how nice they are, no matter how talented they are, no matter how intelligent they are, no matter how accomplished they are in a fallen world – what difference does it make? “I’m an expert shadow maker.” So what? “I’m an expert at manipulating shadows.” So what? The real issue is what are you going to do in the real world, in the unseen world, which is eternal? Is that where you will live and will that be where you make your mark? Will you just push around little piles of sand your whole life and allow everyone else around you to do the same? Are you going to pat them on the back? “Oh, you did such a good job when you did basketball, or soccer, or your job so well. You pushed that pile of sand from here to there. Congratulations! You should feel really good about that. You should just drool all over yourself about how wonderful it is to push a pile of sand from point A to point B.”

See Through The Mirage

We can’t let our children grow up thinking that this present age has any meaning in and of itself. This life is an opportunity to stand tall and say, “I’m going to show everyone around me what you don’t want them to see satan. I’m going to show them that this world has been pulled over the eyes of the whole population. Satan wants us to be a whole race of slaves that think we are having fun, that think we are free, that think our lives have meaning. Then, “Poof! Flush!” down everyone that lived for themselves, religious or not, goes into the abyss with nothing left to show for it all. Let’s make sure there is a *clear focus* in our own hearts day-to-day and with any job that we have. The vendors, the employees, the co-workers – whoever they are, it’s just an opportunity to say, “You’ve had a world pulled over your eyes to blind you to the truth. And I want to tell you about something that the enemy doesn’t want you to know. This world is a *mirage*. That’s a sand castle that you have just spent your life building, and it’s going to blow away! It’s going to dry up and blow away. It doesn’t mean a thing. You need to understand there are heavenly realms. There is a whole unseen universe that you can’t see because you are dead in your transgressions and sins. You are darkened in your heart and mind in the futility of your thinking. You are darkened because you have decided to worship the created thing rather than the Creator, who is ever to be praised. You’ve been given over to a depraved mind, and yet Jesus is extending His hand to pull you into the *real world*. **THE ONE** raised from the dead, can see things as they really are and can pull you into the real world where you are not a slave anymore.”

Time Is Short: Use It Wisely

That is the opportunity that lies in front of us with these children who live among us as students. They are here to be *raised as a tribe*, as a race. They are not here so that we can simply feed them and educate them in math, science and handwriting. This is not just another one of our jobs. We do the laundry, we go to work, we mow the lawn, we piddle in the yard, we paint the walls (and paint them again and then we paint them again), and we also educate our children. That's not really what children are for. Our responsibility is to take our live-in students and *show them what life really is*. Not what everybody else *thinks* it is, but what it really is. They are *live-in students*. We want to use our opportunities wisely. The days are both short and evil.

The phrase, "say a little prayer for me" has made me sick to my stomach long before I was a Christian, except back then I didn't know why. "Say a little prayer for me." What does that mean? That is so pathetic. That is so sickening – so much of a fallen world and superstition. It's disgusting. We don't teach our children to "pray," we teach our children to commune with the Godhead. That is *very different*. We don't teach them to say "little prayers." We teach them that this world means *nothing*. We teach them that this world is *an illusion*. And we teach them to speak to the author of the unseen realm and the conqueror of everything that is in the seen world. This little papier-mache' world that you can stick your hand right through is so meaningless, so trivial. We teach our children to go past that. We teach them to see past that and to talk to the God who created all of this illusion, this cardboard world that we live in. We teach them to talk to, communicate with, and present requests before the One who made all of this – the One that lives in the unseen realm. We don't teach them to say their "prayers." We teach them to look past the seen world – and **THAT** is what this thing called "prayer" is!

Life vs Illusion

Hi, I have not had much sleep the last few nights as I've been wrestling with a few things and could sure use your input and prayers. A brother gave me a copy of the song "I've Come to Realize" and asked me if it stirred any thoughts. One of the things that came out of our talk last night is that I have been functioning more as a "family man" than a Kingdom man, and that I have been far too disconnected from others. I feel like I'm starting to see the truth about this and seeing some ways I can repent, but it is still in and out of focus for me. Many times in the evenings, I have invested more heavily in the direction of my family than investing in others. This seems like some sort of family idolatry. I don't

have the same concern for others that I do for my physical family. I also see a lack of abandonment and lack of trusting completely in God's provision. I know my convictions need to deepen about this. I do want to "lose my life for the saints and the murdered lamb" as WELL as for my physical family. Previously, I admit I have not put the emphasis where Jesus wants it - in His teaching and in His life. Could you give me some extra perspective, if you will? Love, John

Hi John, as I was asking Father for your guidance and cleansing and hope for the future, I was reminded of this from a few days ago:

A "Good" Mother or Father

What is the definition of a "good" mother or a "good" father? It's not about simply providing the children with food, clothing, and shelter, or taking them to the zoo, golfing, flying kites, riding bicycles, "family dinners and devotionals," growing gardens, passing or dribbling a ball with them, painting pictures, and educating them. A "good" mother or father is one who leads the children to the REAL Jesus, in intimacy, and zeal, and love, and total abandonment - and demonstrates all of that daily, amongst the Saints themselves. Anything less is subtly but surely DESTROYING our children (as nice and warm and fuzzy as it may seem), by teaching them a value system that will lead them towards dullness, deception, and death. Let's do it Right, in Him and through Him, for His Glory!

That is to say, imagine that I lived in a third world country such as Mozambique. Trees are rare there, as you know. Now, what IF (hypothetical illustration) generations have taught that feeding sawdust to children was what made and kept children healthy? I might fight and kick and scratch, and travel extensively and work sacrificially, to find a way to "GET SAWDUST FOR MY DEAR CHILDREN!" If I *thought* sawdust was extremely nutritious, and my children's illnesses were caused by sawdust deficiency, I would pour great energy into acquiring sawdust, at the expense of other personal goals and desires.

John, by your admission (and admirable honesty) on more than one occasion, you are viewing the temporal (sawdust) as nutritious and essential for your "family's" well being. You are CONVINCED of it, based on your upbringing and your inherited value system, and your lack of clear vision of the UnSeen Realm. In what you described of your daily functioning, you feed your children that which will KILL them, thinking that it is life-sustaining. Sawdust or methanol in the bloodstream is TOXIC and ACCUMULATES UNTO DEATH. They are not nutritious. We serve a MYTH when we do that! Education, emotional bonding, food and shelter, fun, etc...Your efforts are misguided if you are seeking primarily to provide that which cannot bring or protect life at the expense of the ONLY things that CAN sustain and protect. Only focus, sacrifice,

and passion (and decisions and time which reflect this AS Priority ONE, “seeking FIRST the Kingdom”) for Jesus of Nazareth and that which are His — are ALIVE with Possibility and Miracles and Meaning. We find our lives...by LOSING them. Ouch! The other stuff takes care of itself, as Jesus said. And it truly does, at a level FAR beyond what we could achieve by our own efforts and skills and meager individual gifts and time.

Well, I do appreciate your heart in bringing it up, and always have. We have a couple of guys who live near us who know their urgent need to come to grips with this, also. You do need to ACT in your daily life as if the UnSeen is the passion of your life. You must, OF COURSE, stop feeding sawdust to your biological family on the MYTH that it is nutritious and essential! You’re NOT doing them any favors by demonstrating a FAULTY priority system. As in the note at the beginning about a “good” father or mother, we are HARMING — not loving — our children if they don’t SEE our priority system as serving HEAVEN. This is to be distinguished as far as the east is from the west from “christian culture and christian philosophy” that’s added to an otherwise purposeless and shallow life and self-serving worldly affections (or even “my ministry” foolish religious affections).

Make the UnSeen the primary objective you have for your biological family by LOSING YOURSELF AND THEM INTO JESUS AND INTO HIS BODY AND WHAT IS HIS. In so doing, you are giving them MORE, not less! It “feels” risky maybe, but both the Scriptures and more than fifteen years of WATCHING it happen with triple digit numbers of children locally, including my own, give me the idea that God is right, after all! Duh! So... blindness, and not “discerning the Body,” and continuing in our own ways — always having to be in the driver’s seat ourselves — is sick or even lethal, according to God (1Cor.11, 12; Heb.3, 10, 12; Rev.2-3; Luke 9:57-62).

Here’s a BIGGEE. You need to know that all of THIS is what the planet is even here for: *to separate the blind and self-centered from the Genuine*. After having separated and purged, the planet’s systems and pressures - by the Holy Spirit’s Guidance - will then continue to test and equip and prepare for the Glorious Assignment those for whom Destiny is rapidly approaching - the Offspring and co-Workers of God. Who are those who will be shown to be of a different Breed, breathing different Life? It won’t be the “good person” versus the “bad person” - but it will be those who can See and will Respond, versus those who FAKE IT. Some are merely trying to get along with the “christian culture” and not stir up any trouble that will upset anyone, but they are still blind, self-centered, and self-willed. Some want to be “somebody” within religion (“house church” or “institutional christianity,” or by themselves) with borrowed revelations, human adrenaline and pride. Some hide behind fear or “hurt” as their reason for not responding to the Shepherd’s Voice. Everyone will be shown for what they are, and receive appropriate compensation, according to Jesus and those whom He Instructed. The planet and this present age EXIST to apply the pressures that will separate and then equip.

In the (edited) “Matrix” movie, the weasel-of-a-man eating the steak with the enemy (what was his name? “Zilch”?) was willing to live for what wasn’t real. Why? Because, in his selfishness and lack of comprehension, he was WILLING to be deceived by illusions, and eventually even OPPOSE what was True, in order to be comfortable. Physical comfort,

religious comfort, “family” comfort, social comfort, occupational comfort, leisure time comfort, ego or financial comfort, religious ambition comfort... it’s all the same.

Well, I’m glad you were willing to endure sleepless nights for a Worthy cause...

I’ll continue to pray, of course, John. Your heart wouldn’t be stretching towards these things if Father didn’t mean to bring them to pass in your life and family! Love,

I Choose Life (response to “Life vs Illusion”)

Hi. I just wanted to say thank you for your help. It was painful to hear but ultimately very good for the work of God in my life.

I’ve read your letter many times and cried a few times, not because I’ve felt particularly emotional, just convicted. I have also reread the “Virus of 1918” and related scriptures, which helped to clarify a few things.

So far I’ve seen that many times I’ve made decisions based on what I thought was best for my family and not based on seeking first the Kingdom. I know that at times I have chosen to invest in my family because it was the easier thing to do for various reasons. I also know there have been too many times when I have been at work and have not discerned the Body enough to stop what I was doing to call someone. I know it’s all very wrong and stinks and I’m very sorry for making those choices. I’ve asked forgiveness from practically everyone here. I’ve felt a closeness to some of the children that I haven’t felt as strongly before, and I see a deep need to learn to love them more. I have asked God to forgive me and have felt His affirmation of love. This has clearly felt like discipline from Him.

What’s next? In your e-mail you said, “Make the unseen the primary objective you have for your biological family, in part, by losing yourself and them into Jesus and into His body.” And in the Virus paper you said, “the most important single thing we can do for starters is to adopt God’s point of view about this world - which will set our priorities accordingly.”

Do you have any other thoughts about seeing the world clearly or what I need to repent of? I think I have some pretty clear direction and have begun to make practical changes in the way I'm functioning but if you have more to say please don't hold back as time is short. Thanks again for caring.

Love, John

Hi John... Yes, time IS surely short. But, sounds like you have the puzzle pieces you need to start putting a Life together His way for now. It's a Journey, and we're all taking it together, so there will be more we'll all need each other for on any given day. ☺ Thanks for the integrity of thought. Now, put some legs on it! Love,

Question regarding "Life vs Illusion"

Hi, could you elaborate on something? I read the post yesterday about life versus illusion. You were talking about our children seeing that we serve Heaven as our priority. You said, "this is to be distinguished as far as the east is from the west from 'christian culture and christian philosophy' added to an otherwise purposeless and shallow life and self-serving worldly affections (or even 'my ministry foolish religious' affections)." Can you elaborate on the difference? I guess one difference would be the difference between a child watching their parents agonizing in prayer (or praying with them), and watching their parents give every decision over to Jesus, and all throughout the day seeing their parents worship the living God and living life for Him, versus a mom putting her child in daycare and then public school so she can "serve God" by being a "church secretary." Or a "pastor" who never has time for his children because he's so busy with the "church," which is mostly externals (budget, sermons, building, programs). But I'm wondering - that "pastor" and that "church secretary" both think they're doing great things for God, right? They think they're setting this wonderful example of living a life for God for their children. So, what's the difference? Is the difference which side of the matrix you're on (or in)? Is it a difference of seeing truth? Or selfishness? Or what? Love, Kate

Hi Kate ☺ You described the difference pretty well already. ONE is seeing the focus of ALL of life on Jesus and His Kingdom, and the other is man-made religious

effort, lost in the machine. EVEN IF the children may not get all of the attention that they want from you (“Focus on the Family” BLAH!), they clearly see your FIRST emphasis is advancing His Kingdom and changing lives! Maybe some woman is at your house to hear about Jesus and you don’t get dinner cooked when the children want it or are “used to.” Maybe you don’t get them home “to bed” at the culturally acceptable time. Maybe money or other desires are clearly ending up in advancing Jesus and His Kingdom, rather than their toys or play. They will REMEMBER FOREVER that your HEART was for Jesus. When they see your tears in prayer, maybe you weren’t paying attention to THEM for a time, but THEY WILL REMEMBER what you WERE paying attention to - and that it was your heart and your life, not just a hobby or an occupation. The hobby or occupation thing, in the “wood, hay, and stubble” of “attending religious meetings and programs” is external, and of little value to God, or to the children’s perspective of the PERSONAL Jesus. Jesus never did, nor does He currently do those things. But a PASSIONATE LIFE? Well, that’s impossible for the children to miss! It may not serve THEM as “the focus” - but it will impact them forever. The little “devos” are only religious nonsense, if the children don’t SEE “ALL your heart, ALL your soul, ALL your mind, and ALL your strength” poured into the PERSON of JESUS and HIS Work. And certainly you won’t neglect them either, to stroke your own religious ego. MERGE the two worlds into ONE. See??! Love,

Thoughts to Gain a Clearer Focus

from a sister:

We MUST be close to God; we MUST have a consciousness of God and a considering of His thoughts if we expect to change and influence the world around us for Jesus’ Sake. There just is no way around it! And we aren’t looking for a way around it anyway! :) He made us by His design, by His initiation and by His decision. Therefore, it only makes real sense that He has His Life in store for us. He has specific thoughts, hopes and dreams for us and how we might live.

More specifically, it only makes sense that if we hope to have a positive effect on our children for Jesus’ sake, that we have a Life that is kept very close to him, *connected to the Vine*. How can we positively influence and guide them and encourage them if we are not receiving Life from God Himself? We can only hope to touch them with Jesus’ Love, Liberty, Promises, and True heaven borne influence if we are vitally connected to the Vine, *which is the Person of Jesus Himself!*

What kind of dreams, aspirations and vision do we have for our children? Do we have a clear picture in our minds and hearts of how we would like them to “turn out”? What do we expect? What do we “see” for them in their futures? “Without vision” we

lose our way. Without vision for their lives, it must also be true that we'll have a tough time pointing them in a clear direction.

But, It Can Be So! We can have a Hope for them and a Vision for them that burns brightly in our hearts. We CAN have a fire in us to see them be God's person; to see them truly HATE sin and LOVE righteousness. We CAN really, really want that for them – to KNOW JESUS from their own hearts with their OWN experiences of touching Him, Hearing His voice and responding in a holy way to His lead and His Word. Are we ourselves, personally on that course? Are we setting our children on that course as well? The ONLY WAY we can set them on a course to be “*set apart*” (In Hebrews 1, Jesus was “set apart” from his peers because he HATED sin and LOVED righteousness) is that we ourselves are also on that same path.

In order to be “*leading*” a child down a forest trail, you have to be going first, *guiding the way, moving the brambles, pointing out the pitfalls along the path.* But you can't stand at the edge of the forest and “yell them” through it!! You can't “coach” them from the sidelines on how to play the game. You (and I) have to get right in there on the “Game” and lead the way, set the course, blaze the trail, set the example, demonstrate the techniques, point out the advantages, warn of the disadvantages. It's not “coaches” that we are called to be, but experienced “players.” The blind can't lead the blind. A student is never above his teacher. We should not expect that our children will rise to be MORE than we are simply because they have godly people living next door or because they are in a generally good environment.

Each of them will be making some very real, serious choices one day. They will personally need to see their own state and their own need of Jesus and His precious blood and His wonderful love for them. They will need to come face to face with Him. In the mean time, they CAN be sowing massively good seeds towards that Revelation of God by being **SHOWN HOW** and when and where to HATE what is evil and LOVE what is good. How else will they know what that means unless we personally take them by the hand and show them? They won't just meander or drift into an awareness of the Good things God has for them. If for you and me, we learn of God and His ways by specific lessons, then it will be the same for them. Let's not withhold those lessons and gloss over sin or laziness or disobedience. Don't rob your child from hearing and seeing God's word, His Ways and His love put into practice BY YOU in specific and continual ways. Let's purge ourselves of low living, bad habits, ungodly pursuits, short-sightedness and lack of Jesus, and **help our children “run the race” with us leading the way!**

And let us PLEASE not neglect our neighbors either! We all need help to stay on track and Live in the Light and keep our spiritual fervor. We NEED each other and we need to HELP one another grow and help our children grow. Okay?? For Jesus sake...

“Be Like a Child... to Become like Me...”

Another dusty day on the road,
The crowd slows down for a while,
A ripple of motion moving close,
A mother and a child...

His men, they scoff, “He doesn’t have time”
We’ve more “serious” things to do,
We’ve got big “important” plans you know!
Why should He stop for you??

Soon enough their faulty view
Of the Kingdom things at hand,
Would be exposed, their pride
Revealed in just a moment’s span.

The wee little child scrambles up,
To sit on Jesus’ knee,
Big, round eyes all a-wonder,
Blinking, dancing, free.

Jesus snuggles, wraps him up
In a bear hug, big and warm,
Ahhhhh...sweet reminder...
Of the Father’s loving arms...

All eyes on Jesus, so real, so True!
His words would hold the key,
“If Kingdom Love is your Hope and dream,
Be a child... to Become like Me”

If it’s True Greatness you desire,
The kind that’s oh so rare,
A child, simple child...
He pointed us “big” people, *there*.

Children, Listen! Take to heart
The words King Jesus speaks,
“Be like this child to be Great”....
Humble, simple, meek.

Of all the people...the great,
The Kings, the beautiful, the wise,
He chose YOU to be our goal -
Our unlikely little small fries! :)

He chose you, the precious lambs,
The last choice on our list,
You're the ones He soooo enjoys,
And smothers with His kisses.

You live in the moment, never in the past,
The present is your life.
Innocent, wide-eyed eager and smiling,
Nothing of fear or strife.

"Be like these," our Master said,
It was more than just "a teaching,"
It was a command for us, ageless Truth -
Piercing, probing, reaching,

Into our hearts and laying bear
Our self-life, pride and "problems",
Quit the fight and let them go
And be like the precious children.

They're innocent, humble, trusting, free,
Without a thought of self,
"We've got sooo much we have to do!"...
Just leave it on the shelf!

In light of that...
Give some thought to how to care
For the Lambs, the meek, the mild,
How we can lead them to their Daddy -
True "Home" for every child.

No beauty or majesty, just simple and pure,
With innocence and a smile
Gems from Father, jewels from Jesus...
Given us for a while.

So don't despise the drippy nose,
The loss of sleep, the noise,
Precious to God is a cup of water
For these precious girls and boys.

If you want Life in the Kingdom of love,
Humble yourself like them,
Then you'll be among the great,
Becoming more like Him!

Let's love the children, unconditionally, no strings attached, looking for nothing in return. They are living gifts from the Father, packed with potential for Life. Shape them well – hold no Truths back from them! Point them to their Father, to Jesus, to Life! Don't ever underestimate their understanding and their ability to grasp Truths, and their capacity to love and learn. Don't withhold the “hard things”...**they need them.** Most of all, note that Jesus esteemed the little children...

“He called a little child and had him stand among them. And he said: ‘I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.’” (Matthew 18:2-4)

And for the children...

“Then the little children were brought to Jesus for him to place his hands on them and pray for them. But the disciples rebuked those who brought them. Jesus said, ‘Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.’” (Matthew 19:13-14)

That sure is special isn't it? For Jesus to hold you up like that and point to you, as the example for the big people! That's a pretty special place of honor...so prize it, take it to heart, enjoy it and keep on lovin' Jesus! And as you grow bigger, always remain a child in your insides, in heart, purity, simplicity and love....

The Hearts Will Turn— A Prophetic Promise

“Before that great and terrible Day of the Lord comes, He will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to the fathers...”

(Malachi 4:6 the last verse of the Old Testament, the prologue to the Coming of the Messiah!)

There was a 400 year silence after that verse was spoken! Those words were definitely in God's mind as something of extreme importance – “Before the great and terrible day of the Lord, the hearts of the fathers will be turned to the children, and the hearts of the children will be turned to the fathers.”

God's heart longs to see His church and its family drawn to Him and to one another in peace and fullness before He sends His Son with a shout of the archangel and the trumpet call of God for the Second Coming. Before the Second Coming, there is going to be a turning in the hearts of the fathers to the children and the children to the fathers. ***It is a Prophetic PROMISE of God. The Elijah Church (Luke 1:17) will prepare for Jesus' Return and see this fulfilled! Jesus will not come back until the children are enlivened and empowered in the hearts of the fathers!***

Arrows In The Hands Of A Warrior

(Psalms 127:3-4) *Sons are a heritage from the Lord, children a reward from him. Like arrows in the hands of a warrior are sons born in one's youth.*

Yet, Not Ours... But His

(1 Samuel. 1:11) *Then she made a vow and said, "O Lord of hosts,... I will give my son to the Lord all the days of his life!"*

That is an attitude that is going to be pretty important. We must give our sons and our daughters to the Lord all the days of our life. They are not our possessions. They are not things that we take to use, but a precious gift to us. They are arrows in our quiver, as God said, but they are truly **God's** children. It's only as we have that attitude that God can really release a miracle. **God was waiting** for Hannah's heart to turn from selfishness to an acknowledgement of HIM before He did that miracle of turning a barren woman into a fruitful woman. He was waiting for Hannah's heart to turn that she might say, "I want this child to serve you all the days of his life." She needed a willingness to be able to let him go as soon as he was weaned, as a young child, to put him about his Father's business.

Of course, he became a type of the Messiah, Jesus Christ, dwelling in wisdom and stature and favor with men. Samuel was born out of the heart of a mother that said, "This child belongs to the Lord all the days of his life. **He is not mine.** I'm not going to idolize him, I'm not going to grab him or her and hold onto them and coddle and coo-coo them. **This child is born for service, for a purpose.** This child was born for such a time as this. This is God's child, and I will faithfully bring them into the world and serve with this gift rather than seek to be served by this gift."

(Isaiah 8:18) *Here am I, and the children the Lord has given me. We are signs and symbols In Israel from the Lord Almighty, who dwells on Mount Zion!*

Let Them COME, COME, COME

(Matthew 19:13-14) *Then little children were brought to Jesus for him to place his hands on them and pray for them. But the disciples rebuked those who brought them. Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these."*

Some of the little children were brought to Jesus for Him to place His hands on them and pray for them. But the disciples rebuked those who brought them. "We don't have time for these children – they are a bother, they are trouble. Man, what a hassle. I used to be free, now I have all these children. They make so much noise, and I can't go where I want to go when I want to go. What a burden these children are." **And Jesus rebuked them for that type of attitude.** "Let the little children come unto me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these."

(Luke 9:48) *“Whoever receives this little child in my name receives me, and whoever receives me receives him who sent me.”*

Our attitude towards God’s children, if you can grasp this idea, is very closely related to our **reception of Jesus** and the **reception of the Father** who sent His Son into the world. You can’t despise children and everything about children – their noise, their bother, their silly questions, the responsibility of always being with them – you can’t despise all of that and still receive Jesus and receive the Father. Those are very intimately tied together, and by the word of the Lord, our relationships with little ones such as these is **very closely tied** to our relationship to Jesus and His Father.

(Isaiah 40:11) *He tends his flock like a shepherd: He gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them close to his heart; he gently leads those that have young.*

That should be a description of our attitude toward our children as God dwells in our hearts. We are like shepherds gathering the lambs in our arms, carrying them close to our heart, and respecting those who are carrying lambs themselves.

Fathers...Fathers...Fathers...

(Ephesians 6:1-4) *Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. “Honor your father and mother,” which is the first commandment with promise: “that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth.” And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.*

Remember, it says “turning the *fathers*’ hearts to the children, and the children to the *fathers*.” *Fathers*, bring them up in the nurture and the admonition of the Lord. Very specific. It doesn’t say ‘parents’. It says *fathers*. As we talk about the restoration of manhood, we are talking about the restoration of men of God – not men being drawn along by religious activities. We are talking about being men full of the Holy Ghost and full of wisdom. We are talking about those who are seeing what God sees and taking a leadership as Jesus did... as Stephen did, as Peter did, as Philip did, as those men of God did! And the women are there to serve and to be co-heirs with them, but ***the men are to be restored to vision and understanding and strength and leadership***. That’s true in the church, and it is also true in the family.

(Psalms 34:11) *Come, my children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the Lord.*

Fathers, this should be on the tip of our tongues as we live our lives with the little children.

Children...Speaking The Word Of The Lord

(Acts 2:15-17) *These men are not drunk, as you suppose. It’s only nine in the morning! No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: “In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your Sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams.”*

I would like for you to envision the possibility of young children speaking the word

of the Lord. Young children not just being along for the ride, being cooched in little “bible classes,” but **speaking the word of the Lord**. That’s the nature of the New Testament church. There is not a second kind of New Testament church. This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel – the sons and the daughters shall speak forth the word of the Lord. ***They shall utter the voice of the living God. It’s the nature of the church.*** We need to view it that way. Our children are not along for the ride. They are a very important part of God’s plan. Children need to be seen that way. Envision the children not as being along for the ride, but as being a very important part of what God wants to do in His church.

...Living In The Desert

(Luke 1:80) *And the child grew and became strong in spirit; and he lived in the desert until he appeared Publicly...*

That’s John the Baptist. We have talked in the past about *how* Zechariah and his wife Elizabeth raised John the Baptist. Their raising of him as a child was to send him out into the wilderness. Doesn’t this seem like an odd thing to do? The mindset that we often have about children is “Well, you have to give them the “right” kind of education. You have to get them to the dentist. You have to make sure they have medical insurance. You have to get them involved in Little League and make sure they are dressed nice and that everything about them is good.

You have to make sure they have a car as soon as they turn 16. You have to make sure they have all the tools and all the benefits of modern 20th century society. Let’s just make them all prim and proper and conform them to the patterns of the world so they will be accepted, popular, and so they can be good citizens. That’s our attitude, and of course, ***John the Baptist never had that opportunity.*** Yet, Jesus said he was the most powerful man, the greatest man ever born of woman up until that day. No “formal” education, no prom, no Little League, no friends, no Friday night at the ballgame, no going out with the boys afterwards with an 11:00 curfew. No girlfriends. We just don’t see that mentality that is blending in with the world system. Yet, John the Baptist was the greatest man born of woman up until that day.

I want you to fix in your mind that these children are seed for Jesus and His Kingdom. That’s why they were born. They weren’t born to have a nice, lovely family that sits around the dinner table at 6:00 pm sharp every night to have a nice little discussion. “What did you do today?” “What did you learn in school today, Johnny?” It is *so much bigger than that.*

It should be said of our children from a very young age “And the child grew and became strong in spirit, and (in a sense) he lives in the desert until he appears publicly.” In a sense, he lived separated from being ***engrossed in the world system.*** There might be a time where one might be educated like Moses was in the midst of the world system, but in a sense he is still in the wilderness, and he rejects the riches of Pharaoh for the cause

of Christ. (Heb. 11) That separation of heart needs to be part of their training, part of the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

...About Dad's Business

(Luke 2:49) *"Why were you searching for me, Jesus asked. Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house? Didn't you know I needed to be about my Father's business?"*

I long for the day, and I hope you do too, for a twelve year old to have that kind of intensity, purpose, focus and vision. "I must be about my Father's business. I live for my Father, not Joseph and Mary." Jesus did honor and respect Joseph and Mary – he went back and was obedient to them. It wasn't until eighteen years later that you see him separate and appearing publicly to the people. But still remember that even at age twelve ***his passion and his heart was to be about His Father's business.*** Not just being religious, not just reciting little bible verses, not just singing, "Jesus loves me this I know (ha ha ha ha) for the Bible tells me so (elbow elbow, laugh laugh). Not trying to modify their behavior to look religious during their little religious sessions, but a passion for the glory of God and for His house. Jesus had a ***jealously*** for His Father's house even at a young age.

If we want to see that happen in the lives of the children, we are the ones who play a big part in that. Whether you are single, married, grandparent or parent or parent-to-be, it makes no difference. As we receive the little ones, so we receive Jesus Christ and his power.

Prepare Your Heart...

(Luke 15:24) *"This, my son, was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!" And they began to be merry....before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord... He will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers..."*

That's a revelation to our hearts that my son is dead – I was dead to my son and my son to me. I couldn't see. I was too dense to know what was in his heart. I didn't have eyes to know what he was thinking or even to care. I was dead to him and he was dead to me. ***Behold, my son is alive again*** and I feel what the Father feels when He looks at His son Jesus and He looks at us, his children. We see that when we see our children. We feel what the Father feels – "Behold! He was dead and now he is alive, and we make merry." That is the nature of hearts that are prepared for the return of Jesus.

Prepare The Way...

(Luke 1:17) *"He will also go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."*

That service of turning the hearts of the fathers to the children and the children to the fathers is truly a service of preparing men for the return of the Lord. To repeat what was already said, “It is a Prophetic PROMISE of God. The Elijah Church (Luke 1:17) will prepare for Jesus’ Return and see this fulfilled! Jesus will not come back until the children are enlivened and empowered in the hearts of the fathers!”

Get Ready...

(Revelation 19:7) *“Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His Bride (the church) has made herself ready.”*

The readiness of the people of God is and must be tied to the character of those people and their sensitivity to what is important to God’s heart. A people that are not sensitive to what is in God’s heart are not ready for the return of Jesus Christ.

HELP US FATHER

“Holy Father, you’ve got a Son, His name is Jesus, and in Him we see the whole entirety of your wisdom and your revelation for mankind we see that everything was created by Him and for Him, and in Him all things consist. In Jesus, your firstborn, we see the radiance of your Glory, the exact representation, the visible image of You, an invisible God. He was seen, He was visible, we could see Him and touch Him and feel Him as John said. And so we ask you to help us learn from your relationship with your Son Jesus how we might have our hearts turned towards the sons and daughters and their hearts turned towards us. We ask that we might bring them to a place where their time’s not wasted and your time is not wasted, that we might pass that torch on in full stride, at full speed, to a new generation that will usher in the return of your Son Jesus Christ and the Second Coming. Father, we pray, we beg you to help us with these things. We don’t want to make mistakes. We thank you for the grace that you’ve given us, that your Father-heart covers us just as we cover our children and their mistakes. We love and protect and trust and hope as you do for us. We thank you for that...”

But yet, Father, we don’t want to waste your time; we don’t want to birth Ishmaels that will persecute the children born in the Spirit. We want to keep the household clean and fresh and alive, and we want to walk with you and not do anything that we don’t see you doing. We don’t want to do anything apart from you that will hinder your purposes ultimately in our lives or the lives of our children. We know that sin must come, curses on those through whom it comes. Help us Father not to ignorantly, carelessly, mindlessly, or selfishly hurt our children or the children of our brothers and sisters. Help us Father to have wisdom in all these things and we pray for your Grace and your gift of Life to be able to impart the truth of your Word and the testimony of your Son Jesus as our Hope, as an anchor for our soul, as the place where there is no condemnation. Help us Father in these things. We’re thankful that you’re committed to that and you’ve given us this light, and you never give us light without the desire in your heart to make that flesh within us. So we thank you for this seed and ask that the harvest would be plentiful as we hear the Word and retain it and persevere in it. Father, produce a crop in us. We pray in Jesus’ name. Amen.”

FOR FUN!

Child Preparation Training

Mess Test

Smear peanut butter on the sofa and curtains. Place a fish stick behind the couch and leave it there all summer.

Toy Test

Obtain a 55 gallon box of Legos (you may substitute roofing tacks if you wish). Have a friend spread them all over the house. Put on a blindfold and take off shoes. Try to walk to the bathroom or kitchen. Do not scream because this would wake a child at night.

Grocery Store Test

Borrow one or two small animals and take them with you as you shop. Always keep them in sight and pay for anything they eat or damage.

Dressing Test

Obtain one large, unhappy, live octopus. Stuff into a small net bag making sure that all the arms stay inside.

Feeding Test

Obtain a large plastic milk jug. Fill halfway with water. Suspend from the ceiling with a cord. Start the jug swinging. Try to insert spoonfuls of soggy cereal into the mouth of the jug, while pretending to be an airplane. Now dump the contents of the jug on the floor.

Night Test

Prepare by obtaining a small cloth bag and fill it with 8-12 pounds of sand. Soak it thoroughly in water. At 3:00pm, begin to waltz and hum with the bag until 9:00pm. Lay down your bag and set your alarm for 10:00pm. Get up, pick up your bag, and sing every song you have ever heard. Make up about a dozen more and sing these too until 4:00am. Set alarm for 5:00am. Get up and make breakfast. Keep this up for 5 years. Look cheerful.

Ingenuity Test

Take an egg carton. Using a pair of scissors and pot of paint, turn it into an alligator. Now take a toilet paper tube and turn it into an attractive candle. Use only scotch tape and a piece of foil. Last, take a milk carton, a ping-pong ball, and an empty box of Cocoa Puffs. Make an exact replica of the Eiffel Tower.

Automobile Test

Forget the BMW and buy a station wagon. Buy a chocolate ice cream cone and put it in the glove compartment. Leave it there. Get a dime. Stick it into the CD player. Take a family-size package of chocolate chip cookies. Mash them into the back seat. Run a rake along both side of the car. There, perfect!

Physical Test (Women)

Obtain a large beanbag chair and attach it to the front of your clothes. Leave it there for 9 months. Then remove the beans. And try not to notice your closet full of clothes. You won't be wearing them for a while.

Physical Test (Men)

Go to the nearest drug store. Set your wallet on the counter. Ask the clerk to help himself. Now proceed to the nearest food store.

Go to the head office and arrange for your paycheck to be directly deposited to the store. Purchase a newspaper. Go home and read it quietly for the last time.

Final Assignment

Find a couple who already has a small child. Lecture them on how they can improve their discipline, patience, tolerance, and toilet training and child's table manners. Suggest many ways they can improve. Emphasize to them that they should never allow their children to run wild. Enjoy this experience. It will be the last time you will have all the answers.

Oh, The Things They Say...

Hi Family, I wanted to send you some of the funny quotes that some of our little tykes have said over the course of time. Hope you thoroughly enjoy them and they brighten your day!! Love, Lucy

- Hannah's first words after waking one morning: "Mommy, some people don't know Jesus, they catch bugs, and they don't obey God."

- Jessica said to her dad, "I didn't have any bad attitudes when I was asleep."

- Andy was showing Jeremy a piano part and Jeremy said, "Wow, the muscles in your arms are really big, you must be doing exercises like sprinting."

- Jeremy and Andy were in a guitar store. Andy asked Jeremy if he was going to learn guitar one day. Jeremy said his dad would teach him, "You know, if I live long enough."

- Ellen was reading a riddle book to Sean about letters and asked him if he could guess what animal went with the riddle. Sean threw his arms out in the air and said, "I have no i-clue."

- Cassie saw a picture at K-mart that Debbie has on her wall. She said, "I've seen that picture before." Debbie said that she had it at her house. Cassie then asked, "Did you give it back?"

- When discussing our bodies and how they work...Abbie was asked to give an example of an organ in her body. She replied, "That toilet paper stuff." It was Ben who finally figured out she was trying to say "tissues" because she remembered that they talked about tissues working together to form organs.

- Molly noticing x-mas trees on top of buildings said, "Jesse, look! More and more people are putting bushes on their buildings."

- Once Jesse saw a picture of Rudolph and asked, "Mom, why does that deer have a bloody nose?"

- Andy asked Benjamin, "So, how much do you know about Santa Claus?" Confused, Benjamin responded, "I don't even know what Santa claws are."

- One night at volleyball, Gabrielle saw a girl stretching against a wall. She asked Sarah, quite puzzled, "What's happening to that girl?"

- Jeremy was outside jumping rope and whistling and there were workers near-by on a roof. Later, he mentioned to Julie, "Mom, when I was jumping rope, I turned the other direction from the workers." Julie asked him why. Then he said, "I didn't want them to be jealous of me." Julie again asked him why. He responded, "Because I'm such a good whistler."

- Bethany was going to go outside the Miller's door and go into the cul-de-sac. But, Debbie and Lori were standing in front of the door talking. So,

Bethany came back to her mom and said that she couldn't go out that way because Debbie and Lori were "relationshiping."

- Wilma and Joseph were reading about Jesus' first miracle. Wilma asked Joseph if he knew what Jesus' first miracle was. Joey said no. Wilma then asked him if he'd like to guess what it was. So, Joey said, "Miracle.....whip?"

- Emily and Cara were playing pioneer children, but their grammar was really bad. J Bobbi asked Emily why they were talking so poorly and she said, "Well, our mother died before we were born."

- Vicki asked Jeremy if he liked hot dogs. Jeremy, enthusiastic as usual, said, "Oh yes, I've been known to eat two when provoked!"

- Hannah came up to Debbie and said, "I have two questions. The first question is.....are you one of my mommies?" Debbie told her yes, that she was one of her hundred mothers. Then Hannah said, "My other question is.....can we watch a video?"

- One day Hannah was upstairs with her mom when she overheard Tim, Matt and Dave downstairs, being a little loud, while watching a football game. Hannah looked at her mom and said, "Guys are so different!"

- Amos came up to his dad and asked him if he could use his upstairs bathroom. Steve said 'yes' so Amos went on up. A few minutes later, Amos came out of the bathroom and went up to his mom who was resting on the bed. Tapping her on the shoulder, he asked, "Would it wake you up if I flush the toilet?"

- In the car, after Jeremy had been in trouble a lot, Matt asked him why he thought he had gotten in so much trouble. Matt said, "You disobeyed, didn't you?" Jeremy replied, "Yeah, it just destroys life."

What does love mean?

A group of professional people posed this question to a group of 4 to 8 year-olds, "What does love mean?" The answers they got were broader and deeper than anyone could have imagined. See what you think:

"Love is when you tell your friend you like his shirt, then he wears it every day." - Noelle - age 7

"Love is that first feeling you feel before all the bad stuff gets in the way." - Charlie age 5

"When someone loves you, the way they say your name is different. You know that your name is safe in their mouth."- Billy - age 4

"Love is when you go out to eat and give somebody most of your french fries without making them give you any of theirs."- Chrissy - age 6

"Love is when someone hurts you. And you get so mad but you don't yell at them because you know it would hurt their feelings. - Samantha - age 6

"Love is what makes you smile when you're tired."- Terri - age 4

"Love is when my mommy makes coffee for my daddy and she takes a sip before giving it to him, to make sure the taste is OK."- Danny - age 7

"If you want to learn to love better, you should start with a friend who you don't like." - Nikka - age 6

"When you tell someone something bad about yourself and you're scared they won't love you anymore. But then you get surprised because not only do they still love you, they love you even more."- Matthew - age 7

"There are two kinds of love. Our love. God's love. But God makes both kinds of them."- Jenny - age 4

"Love is like a little old woman and a little old man who are still friends even after they know each other so well."- Tommy - age 6

"During my piano recital, I was on a stage and scared. I looked at all the people watching me, and saw my daddy waving and smiling. He was the only one doing that. I wasn't scared anymore." - Cindy - age 8

"My mommy loves me more than anybody." - Louie - age 5

"Love is when mommy gives daddy the best piece of chicken." Elaine - age 5

"Love is when your puppy licks your face even after you left him alone all day." - Mary Ann - age 4

"I know my older sister loves me because she gives me all her old clothes and has to go out and buy new ones."- Lauren - age - 4

"When you love somebody, your eyelashes go up and down and little stars come out of you."- Karen - age 7

"You really shouldn't say 'I love you' unless you mean it. But if you mean it, you should say it a lot. People forget."- Jessica - age 8

"God could have said magic words to make the nails fall off the cross, but He didn't. That's love."- Max - age 5