

# Child Rearing

## A Catholic Guide To Family Happiness

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“BEHOLD THE INHERITANCE OF THE LORD are children: the reward, the fruit of the womb,” exclaimed an appreciative parent some 3,000 years ago. (Psalm 127:3). [In the Vulgate it is Psalm 126:3] Indeed, the joy of parenthood is a precious reward from God, one that is available to most married people. However, those who have children soon realize that along with the joy, parenthood brings responsibilities.

### TRAIN YOUR CHILD FROM INFANCY

Especially today, rearing children is a formidable task. Nevertheless, many have done it with success, and the inspired psalmist points the way, saying: "Unless the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it. Unless the Lord keep the city, he watches in vain that keeps vigil over it." (Psalm 127:1 [126:1]) The more closely you follow God our Father's instructions, the better parent you will become. The Bible says: "Have confidence in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not upon your own prudence and understanding." (Proverbs 3:5) Are you willing to listen to God our Father's counsel as you embark on your 20-year child-raising project?

Review Question: To whom should parents look for help in raising their children?

Remember that since Marriage is one of Christ's Sacraments, there are many graces available to couples who prayerfully ask for them. God provides special helps in difficult times. These aids are especially valuable in assisting in the rearing of children.

### ACCEPTING THE BIBLE'S VIEW

#### ACCEPTING GOD'S VIEW

In many homes around the world, men view child training as chiefly woman's work. True, the Word of God points to the father's role as principal breadwinner. However, it also says that he has responsibilities in the home. The Bible says: "Prepare your work without (out of doors), and diligently till your ground: that afterward you may build your house and build up your household." (Proverbs 24:27) In God's view, fathers and mothers are partners in child training. - Proverbs 1:8-9 says, addressing the child to be taught the Wisdom of the Chosen People: My son, hear the instruction of your father, and forsake not the law of your mother: that grace may be added to your head, and a chain of gold to your neck.

Review Question: What responsibility do fathers have in the raising of children?

How do you view your children? Reports state that in much of Asia baby girls often receive a poor welcome. Bias against girls reportedly still exists in Latin America, even among "more enlightened families." The truth is, though, girls are not second-class children. Jacob, a noted father of ancient

times, a 'Father in Faith,' described all his offspring, including any daughters born up to that time, including Dinah as "the children with whom God has favored me." (Genesis 33:5; (You can read for yourself the story of Jacob's encounter with his brother, Esau in Genesis 33: 1-5. Jacob is trying to reconcile himself to his estranged brother and hopes that the sight of his young sons and daughters will soften Esau's heart. It does! We know from Genesis 37:35 that Jacob had both 'sons and daughters') Likewise, Jesus blessed all "the young children" (boys and girls) that were brought to him. (Matthew 19: 13-15 tells the story: "Then were little children presented to Jesus, that he should impose hands upon them and pray. And the disciples rebuked them. But Jesus said to them: Suffer the little children, and forbid them not to come to me: for the kingdom of heaven is for such. And then he had imposed hands upon them.") We can be quite sure that he reflected God his Heavenly Father's view in this. - Deuteronomy 16:14 instructs the Chosen People to celebrate certain yearly religious feast-days: "You shall make merry in your festival time, you, your son, and your daughter, your manservant, and your maidservant, the Levite also as well as the stranger, and the fatherless and the widow that are within your gates." No one is to be excluded. All are equal in God's sight.

Review Question: Why should we not view male children as superior to female?

## FAMILY HAPPINESS

Fecundity or fruitfulness is a gift, an 'end' or purpose of marriage, for conjugal love naturally tends to be fruitful. A child does not come from outside as something added on to the mutual love of the spouses. The child springs from the very heart of that mutual giving, as its fruit and fulfillment. So the Church, which is "on the side of life," teaches that "it is necessary that each and every marriage act remain ordered per se (in and of itself) to the procreation of human life." "This particular doctrine, expounded on numerous occasions by the Magisterium, (the Teaching Authority of the Church) is based on the inseparable connection, established by God, which man on his own initiative may not break, between the unitive or uniting significance and the procreative significance which are both inherent to the marriage act."

Called to give life, spouses share in the creative power and fatherhood of God. (See Ephesians 3:14 and Matthew 23:9 "Married couples should regard it as their proper mission to transmit human life and to educate their children. They should realize that they are thereby cooperating with the love of God the Creator and are, in a certain sense, its interpreters. They will fulfill this duty with a sense of human and Christian responsibility."

A particular aspect of this responsibility concerns the regulation of procreation. For just reasons, spouses may wish to space the births of their children. It is their duty to make certain that their desire is not motivated by selfishness but is in conformity with the generosity appropriate to responsible parenthood. Moreover, they should conform their behavior to the objective criteria of morality.

When it is a question of harmonizing married love with the responsible transmission of life, the morality of the behavior does not depend on sincere intention and evaluation of motives alone; but it must be determined by objective criteria. These criteria are drawn from the nature of the person and his acts. They are criteria that respect the total meaning of mutual self-giving and human procreation in the context of true love. This is possible only if the virtue of married chastity is practiced with sincerity of heart.

"By safeguarding both these essential aspects, the unitive and the procreative, the conjugal act preserves in its fullness the sense of true mutual love and its orientation toward man's exalted vocation to parenthood."

Periodic continence, that is, the methods of birth regulation based on self-observation and the use of infertile periods, is in conformity with the objective criteria of morality. These methods respect the bodies of the spouses, encourage tenderness between them, and favor the education of an authentic freedom. In contrast, "every action which, whether in anticipation of the conjugal act, or in its accomplishment, or in the development of its natural consequences, proposes, whether as an end or as a means, to render procreation impossible" is intrinsically evil.

Thus the innate language that expresses the total reciprocal self-giving of husband and wife is overlaid, through contraception, by an objectively contradictory language, namely, that of not giving oneself totally to the other. This leads not only to a positive refusal to be open to life but also to a falsification of the inner truth of conjugal love, which is called upon to give itself in personal totality.

The difference, both anthropological and moral, between contraception and recourse to the rhythm of the cycle involves in the final analysis two irreconcilable concepts of the human person and of human sexuality.

"Let all be convinced that human life and the duty of transmitting it are not limited by the horizons of this life only: their true evaluation and full significance can be understood only in reference to man's eternal destiny."

These last 8 paragraphs rely heavily on the solemn teaching of the Church to be found in the Vatican Council, the writings of Popes Pius XII, Paul VI and John Paul II. Details can be found in the Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2366-2371.

Does your community expect a woman to give birth to as many children as possible? Rightfully, how many children a married couple have is their personal decision based on what has been said already. The State should not interfere in this area of life. What if parents lack the means to feed, clothe, and educate numerous children? Surely, the couple should consider this when deciding on the size of their family. Some couples who cannot support all their children entrust relatives with the responsibility to raise some of them. Is this practice desirable? Not really, though it is in some circumstances unavoidable. But it does not relieve the parents of their obligation toward their children. Saint Paul in the Bible says: "But if any man (anyone) has not care of his own, and especially of those of his house, he has denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel." (First Timothy 5:8) Responsible couples try to plan the size of their "house" so that they can have 'care of those who are their own'.

Can they practice birth control in order to do this? Only in conformity with the guidelines set out above and never using methods which are in opposition to God's plan and Providence.

"My grace is sufficient for you" Paul was told by the Lord (2 Corinthians 12:9). Hard it may be to follow God's law but His grace WILL help us. "For every one shall bear his own burden." Paul warned us (Galatians 6:5) "In the world you shall have distress: but have confidence, I have overcome the world." These are the reassuring words from the lips of Christ Himself. (John 16:33)

Moreover, beware that many forms of modern birth control, including 'the pill' can often involve some form of abortion. (For example, the newly conceived child is unable to implant in the lining of

the womb.) This provides a further incentive to shun artificial contraception as any form of abortion goes clean contrary to Bible principles. Abortion and infanticide are indeed abominable crimes. The Lord God our Father is "the fountain and source of life." (Psalm 36:9, [Psalm 35:10 in the Vulgate]) Therefore, to snuff out a life after it has been conceived would show gross disrespect for God our Father and is tantamount to murder.

- Exodus 21:22, 23 began the education of the Chosen People. They first learnt via Moses that the loss of a pre-born child was a very serious matter, even if the child was not yet given the full status, in law, of its adult mother: "If men quarrel, and one strike a woman with child, and she miscarry indeed, but live herself: he shall be answerable for so much damage as the woman's husband shall require, and as the arbiters shall award. But if her death ensue thereupon, he shall render life for life." Next David in Psalm 139:13-16 (Psalm 138 13-16 in the Vulgate) taught that from the earliest moment in the womb this was a human child known by God and precious to Him. David wrote in his poem: "For You have possessed my reins {my inmost self}: You have protected me from my mother's womb. I will praise You, for You are fearfully magnified (and am wonderfully made): wonderful are Your works, and my soul knows it right well. My bone is not hidden from You, which You have made in secret: and my substance in the lower parts of the earth {the depths of the womb} Your eyes did see my imperfect being, and in Your book all shall be written: days shall be formed, when as yet there was none of them." Jeremiah, in his prophecy, 1:5 had David's insight confirmed by a revelation, when God spoke to him and said. "Before I formed you in the bowels [womb] of your mother, I knew you: and before you came forth out of the womb, I sanctified you, and made you a prophet unto the nations."

Modern science leaves us in no doubt that what is conceived in the womb, and what is killed in abortion is a human being. The only distinction evident is that the human being in the womb is so much younger than those human beings who are eligible to vote.

Review Question: What considerations should govern a couple's decision as to the size of their family?

## FILLING YOUR CHILD'S NEEDS

### TRAIN YOUR CHILD FROM INFANCY

Proverbs 22:6 says: "It is a proverb: A young man according to his way, even when he is old he will not depart from it." This means - Train up a boy according to his way. Training (or educating) children is another major parental duty. When, though, should that training start? Very early. The apostle Paul noted that Timothy had been trained "from infancy." (2 Timothy 3:15) and he had been taught the Holy Scriptures from that young age. The Greek word used here can refer to a small baby or even an unborn child. (We can see this in Luke 1:41 & 44 where we learn that the pre-born Jesus – only days after his conception in His Blessed Mother's womb - caused such an out-pouring of grace that the pre-born John leapt for joy in the womb of Elizabeth. {This is a further proof, if proof were needed, to establish the Biblical sanctity of all life in the womb and the abhorrence of abortion.}); We also find this word used in Acts 7:18-20 where Saint Stephen speaks of the babies killed by Pharaoh and of the birth and rescue of the baby Moses) Hence, Timothy received training from when he was very young - and rightly so. Infancy is the ideal time to begin training a child. Even a young baby has a hunger for- knowledge.

Review Question: When should the training of a child begin?

## FAMILY HAPPINESS

"When I first saw my baby," says one mother, "I fell in love with him." So do most mothers. That beautiful attachment between mother and baby grows as they spend time together following the birth. Nursing adds to that intimacy. (Compare 1 Thessalonians 2:7. Here St Paul compares his love for the believers to a mother's love for her children. "Whereas we might have been burdensome to you, as the apostles of Christ: but instead we became little ones (babies) in the midst of you, as if a nurse should cherish her children: So desirous of you, we would gladly impart unto you not only the gospel of God, but also our own souls: because you were become most dear unto us.") A mother's caressing of her baby and talking to it are crucial to filling the baby's emotional needs. (Compare Isaiah 66:12.) But what about the father? He too should form a close connection with his new offspring. God our Father Himself is an example of this. In Isaiah 66: 13 he himself compares His love with the love of a mother; "As one whom the mother caresses and comforts, so will I comfort you, and you shall be comforted in Jerusalem. [Jerusalem is the prophetic name for God's kingdom, firstly on Earth, as His Church, and secondly in Heaven at the final resurrection of the dead.]" Similarly, a good father cultivates a warm, loving relationship with his child right from the beginning of the child's life. "Show lots of affection," says one parent. "No child ever died from hugs and kisses."

Footnote: Since we are considering the role of fathers in the rearing of children, it is necessary to digress a little because many early Christians were led astray by Arius and began to think that God the Father was a father in the sense of begetting a son in time. The Truth is that God the Son, the Word, was eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten not made, of one Being with the Father. These followers of Arius and their modern adherents, the Unitarians and Jehovah Witnesses misunderstood many of the scriptures because they ignored the true interpretation of the Church, which is "the pillar and foundation of the truth" (1 Timothy 3:15). In the book of Proverbs, they misunderstood Proverbs 8:22 which says: "The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his ways, before he made any thing from the beginning." Some insisted it should read "the Lord created me" and must be understood literally. But this is not how the Church understands it. Verse 30 says: "I was with him forming all things: and was delighted every day, playing before him at all times".

The concept of a Personified Wisdom is a mere literary device in Proverbs 14:1. It was further developed, when Polytheism was no longer a threat to true religion. In Job Chapter 28 and Baruch 3:9-4:4 Wisdom is represented as a thing distinct from God and man, desirable in itself. In Proverbs 1:20-23; & 3:16-19 and 8-9 it is represented as a person. Here in chapter 8 of Proverbs Wisdom herself reveals her origin (acquired or 'begotten' before all other creatures, verses 22-26). She reveals the active part she plays in the creation, vv. 27-30, and the function she discharges among men in leading them to God in verses 31, & 35-36. This doctrine will be further developed in the book written by Sirach. Sirach 1:1-10 recalls Job 28, but Sirach 4:11-19; & 14:20 to 15:10 and especially 24:1-29 are in line with Proverbs 8. Wisdom is personified in all these texts but, as in the case of the Word and the Spirit, it is difficult to discern how much is poetic device, how much the expression of older forms of religious thought, and how much the appreciation of newly revealed truths.

Importantly, Wisdom 7:22 to 8:1 gives the impression that wisdom an 'outpouring of God's glory', has a share in the divine nature, although the abstract terms used may equally well apply to a divine attribute as to a distinct personality.

The doctrine of wisdom, thus outlined in the Old Testament, will be resumed in the New Testament, which will give it new and decisive completion by applying it to the person of Christ. Jesus is referred to as Wisdom itself, the very Wisdom of God, (See Matthew 11:19 & Luke 7:35. Look up Luke 11:49 and also consult Matthew 23: 34-36; and finally investigate 1 Co 1:24-30.) Like Wisdom, Christ participates in the creation and preservation of the world, Col 1: 16-17, and the protection of Israel. (See 1 Co 10:4, and compare it with Wisdom 10:17 and the following verses.

Finally, St John in his prologue attributes the characteristics of creative Wisdom to the Word. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him: and without him was made nothing that was made." (John 1: 1-3) "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw his glory, the glory as it were of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." (John 1: 14) and John's gospel throughout represents Christ as the Wisdom of God, see, for instance, John 6:35. Hence. Christian tradition from St Justin (died in 165 AD) onwards sees in the Wisdom of the Old Testament, the person of Christ himself.

### Review Questions

- (a) Why is it important that both parents develop a close relationship with a baby?
- (b) What terms can be used to describe the relationship existing between God the Father and his only-begotten Son?

No child ever died from hugs and kisses. But babies need more. From the moment of birth, their brains are ready to receive and store information, and parents are a primary source of this. Take language as an example. Researchers say that how well a child learns to talk and to read is thought to be closely related to the nature of the child's early interaction with his parents. Talk and read to your child from babyhood on. Soon he will want to copy you, and before long you will be teaching him to read. Likely, he will be able to read before entering school. That will be especially helpful if you live in a country where teachers are few and classrooms are crowded.

Review Question: What mental stimulation should parents give babies as soon as possible?

The foremost concern of Christian parents is filling their child's spiritual needs. (See Deuteronomy 8:3.) With what goal? To help their child to develop a Christ-like personality, in effect, to put on "the new personality." (Ephesians 4:24 says: "Put on the new man, who according to God is created in justice and holiness of truth.") For this they need to consider proper building materials and proper building methods.

Review Question: What is the most important goal that parents need to remember?

### INCULCATE THE TRUTH IN YOUR CHILD

#### TRAIN YOUR CHILD FROM INFANCY

The quality of a building depends largely on the sort of materials used in the structure. The apostle Paul said that the best construction materials for Christian personalities are "gold, silver, precious stones." (1 Corinthians 3:10-12 says "According to the grace of God that is given to me, as a wise architect, I have laid the foundation; and another builds thereon. But let every man take heed how he builds thereupon. For other foundation no man can lay, but that which is laid; which is Christ Jesus. Now if any man build upon this foundation, gold, silver, precious stones, or wood, hay, stubble." The foundation is Christ and his doctrine: or the true faith in him, working through charity.

The building upon this foundation in gold, silver, and precious stones, signifies the more perfect preaching and practice of the gospel. The wood, hay, and stubble, signifies such preaching as that of the Corinthian teachers who affected the pomp of words and human eloquence, and such practice as is mixed with much imperfection, and many lesser sins. Now the day of the Lord, and his fiery trial, in the particular judgment immediately after death, shall make manifest of what sort every man's work has been. During this life, it is hard to make a judgment. But then the fire of God's judgment shall try every man's work. They, whose works, like wood, hay, and stubble, cannot abide the fire, shall suffer loss; these works being found to be of no value; yet they themselves, having built upon the right foundation, by living and dying in the true faith and in the state of grace, though with some imperfection, shall be saved, yet so as by fire; being liable to this punishment, by reason of the wood, hay, and stubble, which was mixed with their building.

'Gold, silver, precious stones' represent qualities such as faith, wisdom, discernment, loyalty, respect, and loving appreciation for God our Father and his laws.

Psalm 19:7-11 [Psalm 18: 8-12 in the Vulgate] says: "The law of the Lord is unspotted, converting souls: the testimony of the Lord is faithful, giving wisdom to little ones. The justices of the Lord are right, rejoicing hearts: the commandment of the Lord is lightsome, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the Lord is holy, enduring for ever and ever: the judgments of the Lord are true, justified in themselves. More to be desired than gold and many precious stones: and sweeter than honey and the honeycomb. For your servant keeps them, and in keeping them there is a great reward.

Proverbs 2:1-6 says: "My son, if you will receive my words, and will hide my commandments with yourself, that your ear may hearken to wisdom; incline your heart to know prudence. For if you shall call for wisdom, and incline your heart to prudence, if you shall seek her as money, and shall dig for her as for a treasure, then shall you understand the true fear of the Lord, and shall find the knowledge of God. Because the Lord gives wisdom: and out of His mouth comes prudence and knowledge."

Proverbs 3:13 & 14 says: "Blessed is the man that finds wisdom and is rich in prudence. The purchasing thereof is better than the merchandise of silver, and her fruit better than the most refined and purest gold." How can parents help their children from earliest childhood to develop these qualities? By following a procedure outlined long ago.

Review Question: What qualities do children need to develop?

Shortly before the nation of Israel entered the Promised Land, God our Father told Israelite parents this instruction through the ministry of the inspired leader, Moses. "These words, which I command you this day, shall be in your heart. And you shall tell them to your children, and you shall meditate upon them sitting in your house, and walking on your journey, sleeping and rising." (Deuteronomy 6:6-7) Yes, parents need to be examples, companions, communicators, and teachers.

Review Question: How did Israelite parents help their children to develop godly personalities?

#### HANDY HINT

Parents, be examples, companions, communicators, and teachers

#### FAMILY HAPPINESS

Be an example. First, God our Father said: "These words, (which I command you this day,) shall be in your heart." Then, he added: "You shall tell them (inculcate them) to your children." So, godly

qualities must first be in the parent's heart. The parent must love the truth and live it. Only then can he reach the child's heart. (Proverbs 20:7 says "The just that walks in his simplicity, shall leave behind him blessed children.") Let me repeat my advice. The parent must love the truth and live it. Only then can he reach the child's heart. Why? Because children are influenced more by what they see than by what they hear. – See Luke 6:40; and 1 Corinthians 11:1.

Review Question: Why is it vital that parents be good examples?

Be a companion. God our Father told parents in Israel: 'You shall tell them to your children, and you shall meditate (and speak of them to your children) sitting in your house, and walking on your journey (or on the road).' This requires spending time with the children no matter how busy the parents are. Jesus evidently felt that children were deserving of his time. During the final days of his ministry, "people brought to him young children, that he might touch them." What was Jesus' reaction? "Jesus embraced them, and laying his hands upon them, he blessed them." (Mark 10:13, 16) Imagine, the final hours of Jesus' life were ticking away. Still, he gave these children his time and attention. What a fine lesson!

Review Question: In giving attention to their children, how can Christian parents copy Jesus' example?

## TRAIN YOUR CHILD FROM INFANCY

Be a communicator. Spending time with your child will help you to communicate with him. The more you communicate, the better you will discern how his personality is developing. Remember, though, communicating is more than talking. "I had to develop the art of listening," said a mother in Peru, "listening with my heart." Her patience bore fruit when her son began to share his feelings with her.

Review Question Why is it beneficial for parents to spend time with their child?

Children need "a time to laugh... and a time to skip about," a time for recreation. (Ecclesiastes 3:1&4 remind us: "All things have their season, and in their times all things pass under heaven. (There is) a time to weep, and a time to laugh, a time to mourn, and a time to dance." Zechariah in 8:5 prophesied that after Israel had been punished for its sins and had repented, then, "the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls, playing in the streets thereof.") Recreation is very productive when parents and children enjoy it together. It is a sad fact that in many homes recreation means watching television. While some television programs may be entertaining, many destroy good values, and watching television tends to stifle communication in a family. Therefore, why not do something creative with your children? Sing, play games, associate with friends, visit enjoyable places. Such activities encourage communication. In any case always ensure that the amount of television watching is strictly limited

Review Question: What needs to be kept in mind when it comes to recreation?

## FAMILY HAPPINESS

Be a teacher. "You shall tell them [these words] to your children." You must inculcate them said the Lord God our Father. The context tells you what and how to teach. First, "you shall love the Lord your God with your whole heart, and with your whole soul, and with your whole strength." (Deuteronomy 6:5) Then, "these words... you shall tell them to your children" You must inculcate them to your sons and daughters. Parents, impart instruction aimed at developing whole-souled love



for God our Father and his laws. (Compare Hebrews 8:10.) The word "inculcate" means to teach by repetition. So God our Father, in effect, tells you that the primary way to help your children develop a godly personality is to talk about Him and His loving plan of salvation through Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour, on a consistent basis. This includes having a regular time of prayer and Bible study with them. Make time for the Family Rosary, or at least a part of it. Always say grace before and after meals.

Review Question: What should parents teach their children about God our Father, about Our Lord Jesus Christ and how should they do so?

Most parents know that getting information into a child's heart is not easy. The apostle Peter urged fellow Christians: "As newborn babes, desire the rational (and unadulterated) milk without guile, that thereby you may grow unto salvation." (1 Peter 2:2) The expression "desire" suggests that many do not naturally hunger for spiritual food. Parents may need to find ways to develop that longing in their child. May your child soon learn to pray with the Psalmist "My soul longs for the Lord more than watchmen long for the morning." (Psalm 130:6, Psalm 129: 6 in the Vulgate)

Review Question: What may parents need to develop in their child? Why?

Jesus reached hearts by using illustrations. (See Mark 13:34 and Luke 10:29-37 for some quick examples.) In fact Jesus is renowned as a teacher using parables and other illustrations to make His doctrines and teachings easy to remember and understand. This teaching method is especially effective with children. Teach Bible principles by using colorful, interesting stories, perhaps those found in the publication Catholic Bible Stories for Children or any of the hundreds of Bible story books or Lives of the Saints that are available at any good Catholic Book store. Use the Internet and search for "Catholic book store" to find your closest store. Get the children involved. Let them use their creativity in drawing and acting out Bible events. Jesus also used questions. (For example in Matthew 17:24-27) Imitate his method during your family study. Instead of simply stating a law of God, ask questions like: Why did God our Father give us this law? What will happen if we keep it? What will happen if we do not keep it? Such questions help a child to reason and to see that God's laws are practical and good. - Deuteronomy 10:13.

Review Question: What are some teaching methods of Jesus that parents are encouraged to imitate?

By being an example, a companion, a communicator, and a teacher, you can help your child from his earliest years to form a close personal relationship with the Lord God our Father and with our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. Your child will also learn to make friends with Our Lady and the Saints and angels, especially his Guardian Angel. This relationship with God will encourage your child to be happy as a Christian and Catholic. The Catholic is a 'Universal Christian', truly belonging to the Church built by Christ, Our Lord. Your child will strive to live up to his faith even when faced with peer pressure and temptations. Always help him to appreciate this precious relationship. – (See Proverbs 27:11.)

Review Question: If parents follow Bible principles in dealing with their children, what great advantages will the children enjoy?

## THE VITAL NEED OF DISCIPLINE

### TRAIN YOUR CHILD FROM INFANCY

Discipline is training that corrects the mind and heart. Children need it constantly. Paul counsels fathers: "And you, fathers, provoke not your children to anger; but bring them up in the discipline and correction of the Lord." (Ephesians 6:4) Parents should discipline in love, just as God our Father does. (Hebrews 12:4-11 says: "For you have not yet had to fight against sin to the point of death and blood, striving against sin: And you have not forgotten the consolation, in the text which speaks to you, as unto children, saying: My son, neglect not the discipline of the Lord; neither be you wearied whilst you are rebuked by him. For those whom the Lord loves, he chastises (trains); and he punishes every son whom he acknowledges. Persevere under discipline. God deals with you as with his sons; for what son is there, whom the father doth not correct? But if you be without chastisement and training, whereof all are made partakers, then you are bastards, and not sons. Moreover we have had fathers of our flesh, for instructors, and we revered them: shall we not much more obey the Father of spirits, and live? And they indeed for a few days, according to their own pleasure, instructed us: but He, for our profit, that we might receive His sanctification. Now all chastisement or punishment for the present indeed seems not to bring with it joy, but sorrow: but afterwards it will yield, to them that are exercised by it, the most peaceable fruit of justice.") Discipline based on love can be conveyed by reasoning. Hence, we are told to "Hear instruction (discipline) and be wise, and refuse it not." (Proverbs 8:33)

How should discipline be given?

Review Question: What is discipline, and how should it be applied?

## FAMILY HAPPINESS

Some parents think that disciplining their children involves merely speaking to them in threatening tones, scolding them, or even insulting them. However, on the same subject and in the very verse from Ephesians that we quoted a little earlier, Paul cautions: "And you, fathers, provoke not your children to anger." (Ephesians 6:4)

All Christians are urged by Saint Paul: "But the servant of the Lord must not wrangle." Saint Paul then urges all to "be mild towards all men, apt to teach, patient, with modesty admonishing them that resist the truth: if peradventure God may give them repentance to know the truth" (2 Timothy 2:24, 25) How much more do these words apply to our treatment of our own dear children! Christian parents, while recognizing the need for firmness, try to keep these words in mind when disciplining their children. At times, though, reasoning is insufficient, and some kind of punishment may be needed.

- Proverbs 22:15 warns: "Folly is bound up in the heart of a child, and the rod of correction shall drive it away."

Review Question: What principles should parents bear in mind when disciplining their children?

Different children require different kinds of discipline. Some are not "corrected by mere words." To use the term found in Proverbs 29:19. For them, the occasional punishment administered for disobedience may be lifesaving. (Proverbs 17:10 says: "A reproof avails more with a wise man, than a hundred stripes with a fool." Proverbs 23: 13&14 says: "Withhold not correction from a child: for if you strike him once with the rod, he shall not die [that is, the 'beating' must be proportionate and mild]. You shall beat him with the rod, and deliver his soul from hell." Proverbs 29:19 says: "A certain servant will not be corrected by words: because he understands what you say, and yet will not answer.")

A child, though, should understand why he is being punished. "The rod and reproof give wisdom: but the child that is left to his own will brings his mother to shame." (Proverbs 29:15); Job, in 6:24 of his book utters the cry of all those who receive a discipline without an explanation: "Teach me, and I will hold my peace: and if I have been ignorant in any thing, instruct me."

Moreover, punishment has boundaries. "I will correct you in judgment" that is to the proper degree, said the Lord to his people. (Jeremiah 46:28b) "I will not spare you as if you were innocent." The Bible in no way endorses angry whippings or severe beatings, which bruise and even injure a child. - Proverbs 19:18 says: "Chastise your son, despair not: but to the killing of him set not your soul."

Proverbs 16:32 reminds us: "The patient man (he who is slow to anger) is better than the valiant: and he that rules his spirit than he that captures cities."

Review Question: If a child needs to be punished, what must he be helped to understand?

When the Lord warned his people, through Jeremiah, in our earlier quote from that prophet, that God would discipline them, He first said: "And thou, my servant Jacob, fear not, says the Lord: because I am with you." (Jeremiah 46:28a) Likewise, parental discipline, in whatever appropriate form, should never leave a child feeling rejected. (Colossians 3:21 says: "Fathers, provoke not your children to indignation, lest they be discouraged.") Rather, the child should sense that discipline is given because the parent is 'with him,' on his side.

Review Question: What should a child be able to discern when he is punished by his parents?

#### A NOTE ON EFFECTIVE DISCIPLINE

One meaningful form of discipline is to make children feel the unpleasant consequences of wrong behavior. (Galatians 6:7 says: "Be not deceived, God is not mocked. For what things a man shall sow, those also shall he reap." Compare Exodus 34:6, 7 which states: "Moses cried out: 'O the Lord! The Lord God, merciful and gracious, patient and of much compassion, and true, who keeps mercy unto thousands: who takes away iniquity, and wickedness, and sin, and no man of himself is innocent before you. Who renders the iniquity of the fathers to the children, and to the grandchildren, unto the third and fourth generation.'" {God would later reveal to Ezekiel that, having been taught by Moses, God would now only hold each individual responsible for the consequences of his good or bad actions. See Ezekiel chapter 18.}) Let children feel the unpleasant consequences of wrong behavior. If, for instance, your child makes a mess, cleaning it up by himself may make the strongest impression. Has he treated someone unfairly? Requiring that he apologize may correct this wrong trend. Another form of discipline is the denial of privileges for a time in order to drive home the needed lesson. In this way the child learns the wisdom of sticking to right principles.

#### PROTECT YOUR CHILD FROM HARM

#### TRAIN YOUR CHILD FROM INFANCY

Many adults look back on their childhood as a happy time. They recall a warm feeling of safety, a certainty that their parents would look after them no matter what. Parents want their children to feel that way, but in today's degenerate world, it is harder than it used to be to keep children safe.

One ugly threat that has grown in recent years is sexual molestation of children. In Malaysia, reports of child molestation quadrupled over a period of ten years. In Germany some 300,000

children are sexually abused each year, while in the South American country of Brazil, according to one study, the estimated annual number is a staggering 9,000,000! Tragically, the majority of these children are molested in their own home by people they know and trust. But children should have a strong defense in their parents. How can parents be protectors?

Review Question: What is one ugly threat from which children need protection these days?

## FAMILY HAPPINESS

Since experience shows that children who know little about sex are especially vulnerable to child molesters, a major preventive step is for Parents, within the family, (not the state,) to educate the child, even when he is still young. Knowledge can provide protection "from the evil way, from the man speaking perverse things." (Proverbs 2: 10-12 says: "If wisdom shall enter into your heart, and knowledge please your soul, counsel shall keep you, and prudence shall preserve you, that you may be delivered from the evil way, and from the man that speaks perverse things.")

What knowledge?

Knowledge of Bible principles, of what is morally right and wrong, of the Church's beautiful moral law. Knowledge too that some grown-ups do bad things and that a young person does not have to obey when people suggest inappropriate or sinful acts.

(Compare Daniel 1:4, 8; where we see 4 young Israelites defy the instructions of their foreign caregivers in a scruple to avoid eating food offered to pagan idols. Or look at Daniel 3:16-18 where we see three of these young men defy the king orders to adore what was no god at all, a mere golden statue.)

Do not limit such instruction to a onetime talk. Most young children need to have a lesson repeated before they remember it well. As children grow a little older, a father would lovingly respect his daughter's right to privacy, and a mother her son's- thus reinforcing a child's sense of what is proper. And, of course, one of the best safeguards against abuse is close supervision by you as parents.

Review Question: What are some ways that children can be kept safe, and how can knowledge protect a child?

## SEEK DIVINE GUIDANCE

Truly, the training of a child from infancy is a challenge, but believing parents do not have to face the challenge alone. Back in the days of the Judges, when a man named Manoah learned that he was going to be a father, he asked the Lord, God our Father for guidance on raising his child. The Lord God our Father answered his prayers.

- Judges 13:8, 12, &24. That child was Sampson.

## TRAIN YOUR CHILD FROM INFANCY

In a similar way today, as believing parents raise their children, they can also speak to God our Father in prayer. Being a parent is hard work, but there are great rewards. A Christian couple in Puerto Rico says: "You have 12 years to get your work done before those critical teen years. But if you have worked hard to apply Bible principles, it is time to reap joy and peace when they decide they want to serve God our Father from the heart." A mother and father from Fiji said, "It is not easy, but with the help of the Church, we have our beautiful children firmly in love with Our Lord. Even in their tough teenage years they never forgot their prayers and Mass. Now they are rearing their own families and doing Christ's work in various ways. One has even joined the convent, much

to our joy. Right now we are all praying for a nephew who is seriously considering becoming a priest.”(Proverbs 23:15, 16 says: “My son, if your mind be wise, my heart shall rejoice with you: and my reins (my inmost self) shall rejoice, when from your lips shall come speech which is right.”) When your child makes that decision, you too will be moved to exclaim with the Psalmist: "Behold! Children are the inheritance of the Lord, both sons and daughters!" (Psalm 127:3) [In the Vulgate it is Psalm 126:3] Thank God above for such a blessing!

Review Question: Who is the parents' greatest Source of help when they face the challenge of raising a child?

HOW CAN THESE BIBLE PRINCIPLES HELP...

PARENTS TO TRAIN THEIR CHILDREN?

Trust in the Lord God our Father.

- Proverbs 3:5.

Be responsible.

- First Timothy 5:8.

The Lord is a loving Father.

Jesus taught us to pray the “Our Father”

– Matthew 6:9.

Jesus acknowledges God as “my Father: - Matthew 7:21.

Jesus tells his disciples that God is “your Father” – Matthew 5:16

See also Matthew 5; 45, 48: & 7: 11; & Matthew 6:1, 4, 6, 8, 14, 15, 18, 26, &32.

In order not to overburden this booklet I have only included references to Matthew’s account of the Sermon on the Mount. Do your own research and discover the innumerable times the Bible tells us that God is Our loving Father.

Also see Proverbs 8:22, 30.

Parents are responsible for instructing their children.

- Deuteronomy 6:6, 7.

Discipline is needed.

- Ephesians 6:4.
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