

SHEPHERDING A CHILD'S HEART Child Training and Discipleship—Part 3

I. DEVELOPING AN EXCELLENT SPIRIT

- Displays responsibility—you are individually responsible for your own attitude, words and actions (1 Corinthians 2:11).
 - Proverbs 17:27—“Whoever restrains his words has knowledge, and he who has a cool spirit is a man of understanding.”

- Displays excellence by exercising wisdom and discernment in determining what is best and not merely what is good in the process of solving problems (Psalm 8:9; 148:13).
 - Daniel 5:12—“**Because an excellent spirit, knowledge, and understanding** to interpret dreams, explain riddles, and solve problems were found in this Daniel, whom the king named Belteshazzar. Now let Daniel be called, and he will show the interpretation.”

- Displays a pure attitude and good conscience, good discernment, communion and fellowship with God and others (1 Corinthians 2:13; Ephesians 1:17,18; John 4:23).
 - Daniel 6:3—“Then this Daniel became distinguished above all the other presidents and satraps, **because an excellent spirit was in him**. And the king planned to set him over the whole kingdom.”

An excellent spirit is one who is flowing in the anointing of the Holy Spirit, presenting their minds and bodies as servants to the strength of the Lord. The diligent preparation of the mind now is filled with the spontaneous discernment of the Lord from the spirit.

Our children must be protected from destructive influences that corrupt their minds and spirits

- 1 Corinthians 15:33—“Do not be deceived: ‘Bad company ruins good morals.’”

II. IMPORTANCE OF TEACHING BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES

What are principles?

- Greek *stoicheion*: elements, rudiments, fundamental principles
- Colossians 2:8—“See to it that no one takes you captive by **philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world**, and not according to Christ.”
- Hebrews 5:12-14—“For though by this time you ought to be teachers, **you need someone to teach you again the basic principles of the oracles of God**. You need milk, not solid food, for everyone who lives on milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, since he is a child. But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil.”

Why Teach Principles?

- Romans 12:2—“Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.”
 1. The renewal of one’s mind prepares the way for the Spirit.
 2. Teaching principles provides clarity, consistency and depth to our understanding.
 3. Teaching principles provides cautions that the Holy Spirit can use.
 4. Biblical principles provide guidelines to know God’s will in our lives in the decisions we make.

What principles do I teach? (One example)

- Genesis 2:15-24—“The LORD God **took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it.** And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, ‘**You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.**’ Then the LORD God said, ‘It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.’ **Now out of the ground the LORD God had formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them.** And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him. So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. Then the man said, ‘This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.’ **Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.** And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.”

These were the first principles given to Adam in the Garden of Eden.

- **Labor**—we love to work (dress the garden)—a mark of God’s character.
- **Management**—We take care of our property (keep).
- **Liberty**—We are free to obey the rules (freely) —God’s government.
- **Obedience**—What we sow we reap (surely).
- **Power/Reason**—The source of our reasoning determines the quality (make).
- **Variety**—Everything has a purpose (name).
- **Unity**—We love to work together (cleave)—the covenant of God.

III. TRAINING YOUR CHILDREN TO BE SELF-GOVERNING

The purpose of protection is preparation.

Matthew 18:6—“But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a great millstone fastened around his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea.”

The test if a child is ready to be subjected to an environment hostile to his own world view is here: the child must be prepared to confront the world, to wrestle with principalities and powers, to cast down imaginations that oppose the knowledge of God and bring into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ. This is a tall order for all of us. The enemies of our day: naturalist philosophy, egalitarianism, God eliminating evolution, materialism, socialism, relativism, atheism, pluralism, and a sexuality obsessed culture. An important part of discipling is to prepare your children to grapple with the antithesis of what they believe. This usually takes place in the mid to late teens.

The principle of self government is “God ruling from the heart of the individual.”

Self government is not having an independent spirit; it is applying Biblical principles in their decisions and being led by God’s Spirit.

- Help your children to communicate their needs by allowing them to feel comfortable sharing what they think and feel about things and life. Help them process how they think and feel biblically. *Principle: Individuality/Power of Reason*
- Help them evaluate the consequences of their behavior and learn what satisfies. They need to understand what satisfies themselves and honors God. If they do not learn this, they will be consumed with unhealthy things in a desperate search for satisfaction. *Principle: Obedience (Sowing and Reaping)*
- Encourage them to do difficult tasks they do not feel like doing. If they fail to learn this, they will be undependable, unproductive, and consumed with comfort. *Principle: Labor*
- Provide opportunities and tools to develop their unique talents and interests. This helps them develop personal resources and talents. If they fail to develop this they will be filled with unproductive activities, despite God-given gifts. *Principle: Individuality*
- Help them to know themselves, their style, likes and dislikes, their own gifting, interests. *Principle: Variety/Individuality*
- Guide them in discovering the unique characteristics of their new heart in Christ. If they fail to develop their true identity it is easy to conform to outside influences that misshape identity. *Principle: Liberty/Individuality*
- Educate your children regarding God’s redemption plan through history (Israel, NT Church, Reformation, America, your own family). If they feel disconnected from history, they will be unable to protect themselves from family and cultural lies or the battle between good and evil. *Principle: Liberty*

