

THE CHRISTIAN HOME

by

Norman V. Williams

Copyright © 1952

CHAPTER EIGHT

FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES OF CHILD TRAINING

Proverbs 22:6

1. *Begin Early.* The earlier the training the more effective it will be. Bridges says,

It is a matter of experience that what is early learnt is most firmly retained. It stands the friction of time with the least injury. Far better, instead of waiting for the maturity of reason, to work upon the pliability of childhood. The gardener begins to graft in the first rising of the sap. If the crooked shoots of self-will and disobedience are not cut off, their rapid growth and rapidly growing strength will greatly increase the future difficulty of bending them. Present neglect occasions after [later] risk and great future perplexity. We may begin our work too late, but we can scarcely begin it too soon (see Ecclesiastes 11:6; Isaiah 28:9, 10; Lamentations 3:27). If the child be too young to teach to read, he cannot be too young to teach to obey. Never let the watchfulness to check the buddings of evil and to cherish the first tenderness of right feeling be relaxed. The ceaseless activity of the great enemy teaches the value of early training. Be beforehand with him. Pre-occupy the ground with good seed, as the most effectual exclusion of his evil tares. Be at the very beginning of the way with wholesome food, ere Satan has the opportunity of pouring in his “**bread of deceit**” ere nature is hardened by the habits of sin—brutalized by familiarity with vice.

2. *The training must be practical.* Mere talk about Christ that is sandwiched in at irregular intervals is neither practical nor effective. Mere talk to a child about the Word of God without bringing it to bear upon his loose habits and self-willed tempers is utterly ineffective. Hannah began her training of Samuel with his dedication to God, and then prayed the prayer that every mother and father should daily pray: “**How shall we order the child, and how shall we do unto him?**” (Judges 13:12) Hannah wanted to train her child in a practical way and with effective results. If the child’s training in the Word of God (II Timothy 3: 15-17) is to be effective, the child must observe consistency in his parents. They must be what they say. Their words must be answered to by their lives.

3. *Be patient.* Sometimes the fruit of a child’s training is immediate, rich, and permanent to the end (see I Samuel 1:28; 2:26; 12:2, 3; cf. Psalm 92:13-15). But often the bread cast upon the waters is found not till “**after many days**” (Ecclesiastes 11:1)—perhaps not till after the godly parent has gone to heaven. Yet the fruit, though late, will not be less sure (Habakkuk 2:3). Pastor John Flavel has said, “It is no small mercy [alluding to his own case] to have thousands of fervent prayers lying before the Lord, filled up in heaven for us.”

The child may in some cases (we believe these cases will be few indeed) depart when he is young; but when he is old, smothered convictions will bring back the power of early impressions. The seeds of instruction sown in the early and tender years will without any doubt burst forth into life. The Scriptures early bound on his memory will force themselves upon him many a time and with many a sharp and painful thrust. Conscience so trained will disturb his sinful pleasures and embitter all the sweetness which he had found or hoped to find in his sins. The remembrance of his parent's godly house will one day bring the prodigal "**to himself**," and he will come home with shame, tears, and godly sorrow (Luke 15:17-20).

4. *Be in faith—nothing doubting.* Let parents cultivate daily the sweet exercise of faith, trusting not to what is seen but to what God has promised; in some cases even like our father Abraham, "**against hope, believing in hope**" (Romans 4:18-20). Expect the fulfillment of Proverbs 22:6 as much as any other promise of the Gospel. If your children observe you moving about them with a bright, immovable faith for their souls' obedience to the Lord, they will be deeply affected for good by such faith and expectancy. If they see gloom, doubt, and fear they will be adversely affected, and the powers of Satan will have a grip more firmly fixed upon their souls. Let us remember that the children tend to become just what we expect of them.

With such rich promises in God's Word, every faithful parent has an abundant basis for a bright faith and a fervent expectancy for the very best for his children spiritually. God has promised, "**I will be a God to thee, and to thy seed after thee. I will pour out my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thy offspring**" (see II Corinthians 1:20; Genesis 17:7; Isaiah 44:3-5). Bridges has a most beautiful passage concerning the promise in Proverbs 22:6. He tells us we can expect the fulfillment of Proverbs 22:6 as well as the fulfillment of John 6:37. Observe his beautiful analysis:

John 6:37 is couched in the same grammatical terms—a promise connected with a duty, as the encouragement to the duty: "**Him that cometh—he that traineth; in no wise cast out—will not depart**," yet the latter (Proverbs 22:6) is often considered a general promise, admitting of various and indefinite exceptions. The other (John 6:37) is "**Yea and Amen**." But we might ask, How can we loosen the ground of one promise without shaking the foundation of all? And do not admitted exceptions to the educational promise give occasion to many an exercised Christian to find his own exception in the gospel promise? We fully concede that the ground here is more clear to the exercise of faith. We have the demonstrable certainty of the work of the Son, the faithfulness of the Father and the agency of the Spirit, drawing the "**given to come**" (vv. 37, 44, 65) the compact of the Eternal Three unchangeably fulfilled. In this parental promise the manifestly imperfect training of the parent, and the wanton rebellion of the child, obscures the ground of faith to our vision.

But this touches only the apprehension of the ground, not the ground itself. If the performance of the parent's duty in the one promise were as certain as the work of God in the other, would not the assurance of the promise in both cases be equally firm? Is it not far safer and more satisfactory to take all the promises of the Bible upon the same ground? The cases that appear to contradict the educational promise (Proverbs 22:6) seem to be fairly explained. Not that the promise is falsified, but that the Lord's time of fulfillment is not yet come. Or has not some important element of education been omitted? Has not some disproportion of one or other part of the system hindered the efficiency of the whole? Has instruction and discipline been always accompanied with prayer and faith? Or has prayer been always confirmed by consistent practice?

Does not man's indolence, self-indulgence, unbelief, unfaithfulness to the conditions implied wither the blessing? While Abraham— training up his family for God—shall find Him “**faithful that hath promised**” (cf. Genesis 18:19 with Hebrews 10:23), the Elis and the Davids—good men but bad parents (I Samuel 3:13; 1 Kings 1:16)—shall know “**God's breach of promise**” (Numbers 14: 23). It is too deep for man to reconcile the absolute election of God with weak, imperfect, unfaithful fulfillment of duty. Nevertheless in all cases—

“**Let God be true, and every man a liar**” (Romans 3:4).

FOR A DISOBEDIENT CHILD

Look down, O mighty Searcher of the soul,
Upon my wayward, disobedient child
And drive away perverse and sinful tempers,
From this young heart; without Thy Holy Spirit,
Strengthening our better wishes and instilling
Heaven-seeking thoughts, all hopeless were the struggle
Between our passions and our good resolves;
Be near with thy assisting grace, I pray Thee,
To this poor wanderer from the path of peace;
And pour upon the sin-tormented breast
The soothing medicine of contrite love;
And this be mine, blest happy talk indeed!
With kind and gentle words to tell how pardon
Is offered here on earth, how help is given
To the sincerely penitent to curb
Each evil tendency with hope of heaven,
For His dear sake whose death our ransom paid,
And in whose name my every prayer is made.

~ end of chapter 8 ~

<http://www.baptistbiblebelievers.com/>
