

How to Raise Your Child to be spiritually strong...
THE RESEARCH RESULTS ARE IN!

PRACTICAL & PROVEN TIME-TESTED SUCCESS STRATEGIES

RAISING THE REMNANT

A Portrait of Successful Christian Parenting

by author, speaker, and teacher

Scott Ritsema

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Raising the Remnant:
A Portrait of Successful Christian Parenting

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The Adventist Home; Child Guidance; Christian Education; Counsels on Health; Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students; The Desire of Ages; Education; Fundamentals of Christian Education; Mind, Character, and Personality, vol. 2; The Ministry of Healing; Selected Messages, Book 3; Testimonies for the Church, vol. 3, 6; The Voice in Speech and Song; periodicals: Australasian Signs of the Times; Review & Herald

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Key to Abbreviations of Ellen White Writings

Key	Title
AH	<i>The Adventist Home</i>
BEcho	<i>Australasian Signs of the Times</i>
CG	<i>Child Guidance</i>
CE	<i>Christian Education</i>
CH	<i>Counsels on Health</i>
CT	<i>Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students</i>
DA	<i>The Desire of Ages</i>
Ed	<i>Education</i>
FE	<i>Fundamentals of Christian Education</i>
MCP	<i>Mind, Character, and Personality</i>
MH	<i>The Ministry of Healing</i>
RH	<i>Review and Herald</i>
SM	<i>Selected Messages</i>
T	<i>Testimonies for the Church</i>

NOTE: Whenever there is a number preceding an abbreviation, it represents the respective volume or book of that writing (e.g. 2T represents *Testimonies*, vol. 2)

Table of Contents & Key to Abbreviations

Introduction

“And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up”

(Deuteronomy 6:6, 7).

We are now living in the last days of this earth’s history. That is both a sobering and exciting fact. What does that mean for you as an individual and for you as part of the remnant church? The matter uppermost in our thoughts should be the salvation that our Savior Jesus Christ offers to every person on this planet. His final work of redemption will soon be finished. Soon is the day of His coming and the beginning of eternal life with Him. So what is our role in these last days, in preparation for His judgment and His second coming?

In the history of our world, there are three most significant events that both have occurred and are occurring for the redemption of the human race. They are: the Exodus, the Cross, and what is currently happening right now, the Judgment. In the time of the Exodus, God saved His people from the tyranny of the pharaoh in Egypt and gave them the Ten Commandments, a transcript of His character. In the time of Jesus, His very life was given for our salvation. Now, as Jesus is completing His work in the Most Holy Place in heaven, the salvation of every person

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that ever lived on this earth is being determined. Do you know who plays a key role in all three of these events? Children.

At the time of the Exodus, God had chosen Moses as the leader of His people, as His representative. However, when Moses was just a babe, his life was in danger. It was his sister Miriam, only a child herself, who was integral in saving him and returning him to their mother to be trained in the service of God (Exodus 2:1–10).

When Jesus enters Jerusalem, He comes as a King in fulfillment of prophecy (Zechariah 9:9) and in preparation for His crucifixion. Again, children are key; they are the ones who herald Him as the Messiah, crying, “Hosanna to the Son of David” (Matthew 21:15).

Today, the pen of inspiration tells us that history will repeat itself and that it will be our children who again point others to the One who desires—and has always desired—to give all of us the gift of eternal life: “As the children sang in the temple courts, ‘Hosanna; Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord,’ so in these last days children’s voices will be raised to give the last message of warning to a perishing world” (6T 202).

In the following pages is the content from Belt of Truth’s *Raising the Remnant* presentation. Every quote used from the writings of Ellen White is cited as well as the findings from The Barna Group. Also included are occasional personal stories from what my own family has learned from following God’s instruction. View the inspired counsel and the Barna research as *the model* to follow, not a flawed person. But I do hope you enjoy the occasional anecdote from my family.

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Prayerfully follow God's will for your own family. I highly recommend reading and re-reading Ellen White's *Child Guidance* and *Adventist Home*, books from where the majority of these quotes are taken. These are guides that will transform your understanding of how to rear your children.

The Barna Group, founded by George Barna, is a research organization renowned for its studies on Christian culture, society, and influences. It has a series of studies entirely devoted to parenting, covering specifically how spiritually strong young people raised. In conducting their surveys of families with grown children, the Barna Group defined "spiritual success" as young adults who turn out to read their Bibles, to believe what they read in the Bible to be true, and to live their lives based on those beliefs.

What Barna discovered was, amazingly, already espoused in the writings of Ellen White on parenting, prophetically given by God. The very same principles were published 100 years before the Barna Group ever existed. It is a complete God-given guide on how to raise your child to be a spiritual soldier for Him in this day and age.

As a note of warning, beware of selective reasoning as well as taking quotations out of context. In order to gain an accurate understanding of biblical and inspired counsel, we must study these writings as a whole. As an example of that, look at the following two quotes from Ellen White:

"[Children] should not be led to feel that they cannot go out or come in without being watched. Suspicion demoralizes, producing the very evils it seeks to prevent...." (CG 158.1).

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“Parents generally put too much confidence in their children; for often when the parents are confiding in them, they are in concealed iniquity. Parents, watch your children with a jealous care” (CG 185.2).

One of these quotations in isolation may appear to propel either a more liberal or a more conservative bent to parenting. But read together, they give a clear view of a godly parent’s behavior. We as human beings have a tendency to fall on one side or the other, either too controlling or too lackadaisical, but the pen of inspiration teaches that we need to have the balanced persona of Christ, especially when it comes to raising our children:

“[B]e one with the children in their exercises and amusements, without leaving the impression that you are watching them...” (FE 116.1).

Also, this book is never to replace your own studies in how to be a godly parent. Learn for yourself God’s will for your life and for your children. Do so in the knowledge and motivation that “[i]t [the training of parents to train their children] is the very most important work before us as a people” (Spalding 202).

SECTION 1

It Takes a Radical

Raising the remnant is in the interest of all church members of any age and demographic, and especially for those wanting or planning to become parents. Ellen White encourages us that “[a]s a church, as individuals, if we would stand clear in the judgment, we must make more liberal efforts for the training of our young people ...” (CT 43.1). The commission of a Christian, a duty given by Jesus Christ Himself, is to win souls for Christ. We as the remnant church know that we are living in the last days of earth’s history. As we come ever closer to that glorious day, the Word of God clearly foretells that our children will be the ones who will witness of our Savior when others are unable. Knowing this, why would we not want to invest in preparing our youth for this most important time in their lives?

It Takes a Radical

Chapter 1

The Importance of Raising the Remnant

“**W**hen heavenly intelligences see that men are no longer permitted to present the truth, the Spirit of God will come upon the children, and they will do a work in the proclamation of the truth which the older workers cannot do because their way will be hedged up.

“In the closing scenes of this earth’s history many of these children and youth will astonish people by their witness to the truth, which will be borne in simplicity, yet with spirit and power. ... In the near future many children will be endued with the Spirit of God and will do a work in proclaiming the truth to the world that at that time cannot well be done by the older members of the church.” (AH 489.2–489.3)

When a child recites a verse of Scripture or when a child sings a hymn, people pay attention. They expect it from a pastor—not a child. This gift of youth, used to the glory of God and with the guidance of the Holy Spirit, is a mighty tool in these last days. The youth will be the ones to reach the lost. What a powerful prediction!

“Before taking upon themselves the possibilities of fatherhood and motherhood, men and women should become acquainted with the laws of physical development—with physiology and hygiene, with the

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bearing of prenatal influences, with the laws of heredity, sanitation, dress, exercise, and the treatment of disease; they should also understand the laws of mental development and moral training. ...

“To assume the responsibilities of parenthood without such preparation is a sin.” (CG 63.3–64.2)

“Parents may well inquire, ‘Who is sufficient for these things?’ God alone is their sufficiency, and if they leave Him out of the question, seeking not His aid and counsel, hopeless indeed is their task.” (CG 64.3)

This may sound like a daunting task, indeed. But remember God’s promise that whenever He calls you to do something, He always enables you to do it. He never requires something without making provision to fulfill it. The Lord will “make you perfect in every good work to do His will, working in you that which is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever” (Hebrews 13:21).

“The sin of parental neglect is almost universal.” (CG 234.4)

“The burden is upon you, whether you are sensible of it or not, to train these children for God—to watch with jealous care the first approach of the wily foe, and be prepared to raise a standard against him. ... You are not secure a moment against the attacks of Satan. You have no time to rest from watchful, earnest labor ...” (CG 185.1)

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This epidemic against our children is rampant. The family unit has been and is being heavily attacked. In the United States there have been nearly 60 million babies killed before seeing the light of day. And LGBTQIA?

This assault on children should come as no surprise. It is not the first time that the devil has targeted our children. In the time of the Exodus and in the life of Jesus Christ (the other two important redemption events in history) the devil inspired both Pharaoh and King Herod to issue orders to mass murder the babies. It is a horrific, unthinkable act - one that has only accelerated under the guise of “personal freedom” to engage in elective killing of unborn children.

“[T]hey [Parents] give their children to Satan with their own hands, like the apostate Jews making them pass through the fire to Molech.” (CG 277.2)

This quote refers to a spiritual assault on the souls of our children – even more serious. It is a deliberate, strategic warfare. Knowing this, we, more than soldiers fighting for their country, ought to prepare our children for and protect them from the enemy. Do not approach parenthood in a cavalier manner; do not think that whatever happens happens, that this is just life, that this is no big deal. It is a huge deal. Eternal life is at stake.

“One well-ordered, well-disciplined family tells more in behalf of Christianity than all the sermons that can be preached.” (AH 32.1)

Barna’s studies show that spiritually successful children had parents who invested time in educating

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themselves on how to be a parent. They watched parenting seminars; they read parenting books. They were intentional about the relationship they developed with their children and the goals they wanted to reach with their children.

“Other families will mark the results attained by such a home [a godly home], and will follow the example set, in their turn guarding the home against Satanic influences.” (AH 31.2)

This is one of the main reasons that Satan is attacking the family. The family is a powerful witness, a powerful tool for God. However,

“Parents may do everything in their power to give their children every privilege and instruction, in order that they may give their hearts to God; yet the children may refuse to walk in the light ...” (CG 173.3)

There is no guarantee that your children will grow up to be righteous, god-fearing men and women. In this universe of free will, you could be the perfect parent and your children, at the end of the day, still have to make their own choices for themselves. God was the perfect parent, and look what happened with Lucifer, who had every advantage; and the Jewish nation, who was given so much light and blessing. Says God of His chosen people, “I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me” (Isaiah 1:2).

No, there is no guarantee, but there is hope and there is a path. We can parent in ways that *increase* our children’s chances; we can behave in ways that will give them every

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advantage and opportunity to choose the way of life. Even if at some point in their lives our children reject the Gospel, remember that in their innermost hearts they know the truth. They have had the experience of God in their lives. The wisest king on earth knew: “Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it” (Proverbs 22:6).

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Chapter 2

The Behavior of the Parents

There is one aspect of parenthood more important than how to be a good parent and more important than how to raise a good child. The single biggest factor in your child's spiritual success is not who the child is but *who you the parent are*. It is your character and how well it represents Christ that needs the primary focus. How can you have Christ's character?

“The work of education in the home, if it is to accomplish all that God designs it shall, demands that parents be diligent students of the Scriptures. They must be learners of the great Teacher. Day by day the law of love and kindness must be upon their lips. Their lives must reveal the grace and truth that was seen in the life of their Example. Then a sanctified love will bind the hearts of parents and children together, and the youth will grow up established in the faith and rooted and grounded in the love of God.” (CG 66.2)

Barna Research Finding: Successful parents are theologically conservative, meaning that they believed what they read in the Bible to be true and lived by it. In other words, they studied the Bible!

Study the Word of God. Live the Word of God in the home. This is the essence of parenting. It is the basic

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motivation and principle of how you parent your children.

“In order to interest our children in the Bible, we ourselves must be interested in it. To awaken in them a love for its study, we must love it.” (Ed 187.1)

“Every day they [parents] should be receiving the light of heaven into their souls, every day be receiving the impressions of the Holy Spirit upon heart and mind. Every day they should be receiving the Word of truth and letting it control the life.” (CG 477.2)

Children are sponges. They are also very observant. If parents rarely read their Bibles or if parents love to read their Bibles, their children take note. Parents are their children’s window into the spiritual world. They are their children’s perception of who God is.

“Day and night I am burdened with the thought of our great need of converted parents.” (CG 477.2)

“If there is any post of duty above another which requires a cultivation of the mind, where the intellectual and physical powers require healthy tone and vigor, it is the training of children.” (CG 67.4)

Raising the remnant is not for the faint of heart. The duties of doctors, politicians, and Navy Seals pale in comparison to a parent’s rigorous demands! But the task is great because the reward is of the greatest importance.

Give yourself the best possible chance to parent your child by maintaining a healthy life. Start by preparing for

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the next day in how you end the previous day. Go to bed at a reasonable hour in order to get a good night's rest and be fit in mind and body for the next day's duties. This also helps to start your day off well by giving you enough time for morning devotion.

Barna Research Finding: Successful parents lived out what they were teaching their kids.

The result of parents' spending time with the Lord, living healthfully and walking with God throughout the day, is a spiritually strong child. Parents become what they want to teach their children.

The common phrase, "Do as I say, not as I do," is a perfect example of ineffective parenting. What you *say* actually means very little in comparison to who you *are*.

"Above all things else, let parents surround their children with an atmosphere of cheerfulness, courtesy, and love. A home where love dwells, and where it is expressed in looks, in words, and in acts, is a place where angels delight to manifest their presence. ...

"The atmosphere thus created will be to the children what air and sunshine are to the vegetable world, promoting health and vigor of mind and body." (CG 146.1–146.2)

"Smile, parents; smile, teachers. If your heart is sad, let not your face reveal the fact." (CG 148.1)

The atmosphere in the home is manifested by the parents' behavior. If you are peaceful, loving, and gracious,

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then your child will be the same.

Thank your child when he completes a task and see the beams of pleasure on his face. Ellen White advises to “[c]ommend your children whenever you can” (AH 18.3). Conversely, when parents are openly tense and frustrated, the child similarly reflects that type of behavior.

Follow the Golden Rule of Matthew 7:12: Treat others the way that you would like to be treated—that includes your children. Your children are brothers and sisters in Christ too. The fact that they are younger does not give you an excuse to be rude to them.

“Few realize the effect of a *mild, firm* manner, even in the care of an infant. The fretful, impatient mother or nurse creates peevishness in the child in her arms, whereas a *gentle* manner tends to quiet the nerves of the little one.” (CG 32.1, emphasis mine)

No doubt there is stress in parenting. But how can we counteract those intense moments? Start with something simple: Breathe deeply. In her book *The Voice in Speech and Song*, Ellen White writes, “A good respiration soothes the nerves” (191.1).

Science has since proved that statement in its study of the vagus nerve, which connects to the brain’s limbic system, the area that houses emotions. When in tense situations, breathing deeply from your diaphragm stimulates your vagus nerve, which in turn calms the limbic system and reduces your anxiety and anger.

Barna Research Finding: Successful parents love their child unconditionally.

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When you love God, devoting your time to Him, respecting His will, and following the laws by which He has designed for us to live, the result is that you will love your child the same way that God loves us—unconditionally. Regardless of your child’s behavior or performance, you will love that child. That kind of love manifests itself in every interaction you have with your child. Even when your child misbehaves, he never earns your anger or impatience but is shown only kindness and respect. Revelation 3:19 says, “As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten.”

Unconditional love is so much more than a feeling; it is a principle. It means that even when you do not feel like showing love to your child, you do anyway. My children and I have a nightly ritual before they go to sleep where I rub each child’s back and pray for them. One day, as I was disciplining one of my children, he asked me, “Dad, does this mean you’re not going to rub my back and pray for me tonight?” Of course, I was! Just because he had behaved badly did not mean that I stopped loving him. Our children need to be assured of this godly kind of love.

Barna Research Finding: Successful parents make sacrifices for their children. They give up their aspirations and preferences for the benefit of their children.

“Fathers should unbend from their false dignity, *deny* themselves some slight self-gratification in time and leisure, in order to mingle with the children, sympathizing with them in their little troubles, binding them to their hearts by the strong bonds of love, and

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establishing such an influence over their expanding minds that their counsel will be regarded as sacred.” (AH 220.2, emphasis mine)

Parenting is a life of daily self-sacrifice. A four-year-old’s idea of fun and joy is usually different than a 34-year-old’s. How many parents want to play hide-and-seek 20 times in a row? But it is no longer solely about your idea of happiness. It is no longer a life where you get to do what *you* want to do all the time. A child is not a fun thing that you take out every once in a while to play with and then put away once you get bored of him. Your goal as a parent is to “[m]ake *their* lives as happy as possible” (AH 18.3, emphasis mine).

Barna Research Finding: Successful parents engage in “God Talk.”

“Christ is not a stranger in their homes; His name is a household name ...” (AH 322.3)

“[S]how in your life that Jesus is everything to you ...” (AH 317.2)

“[H]elp them to weave Jesus into their experience ...” (CG 541.3)

“[W]hen her children do wrong she may present as a reproof the words of God ...” (CG 41.2)

Another result of spending time with God is that you will naturally practice “God Talk.” You will talk about God

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frequently and regularly. In my household our children were taught that Jesus is a member of our family, just like dad, mom, and themselves.

Pray with your children all the time, not just at meal times or bedtime. Include your children in a family prayer journal. Encourage them to talk to God when they are alone, afraid, or playing outside. They will begin to pray about something before you even think to! And when my children pray, I have experienced prayers answered in the most miraculous ways. God loves to answer the prayers of children!

For example, we grow our own food at home, and in our garden we have a whole row and a half of carrots. Each year, we pull up our carrots the day before the frost comes and store them in bins of sand. Ideally we will have dry weather on this day, since the carrots will be more likely to spoil if stored while wet. But there was a year when it was forecast to rain the day we were to pick the carrots. So, the whole family prayed for the rain to be delayed until we had finished storing our carrots. And get this: just as we stuck the last carrot in the plastic bin of sand, buried it, and secured the lid on the bin with a ‘click’ – that exact moment the rain began. And not only that, but the very next year, our same prayer was answered yet again!

“Ministering angels will guard children who are thus dedicated to God.” (CG 519.2)

Here we say another key time to pray: when the family is to separate for a time – dad goes to work, a child goes to school, whatever the situation.

The Behavior of the Parents

Chapter 3

The Role of the Parent

Barna Research Finding: Successful parents believe that parenting is their number one job in life.

This is a revolutionary way to view parenting. Even if these parents had a career or profession, they still viewed their role as parent as their most important occupation. Interestingly enough, many were themselves the product of inferior parenting. In their own lives they underwent a complete paradigm shift on how to raise children.

“Let not home education be regarded as a *secondary* matter.” (CG 18.2, emphasis mine)

“We need to make the education of our children *a business*, for their salvation depends largely upon the education given them in childhood.” (CG 27.1, emphasis mine)

“To the mother and father the right training of their children is the *most important work of their life*.” (CG 556.1, emphasis mine)

“When parents see the importance of their work in training their children, when they see that it involves

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eternal interest, they will feel that they must devote *their best time and thought* to this work.” (CG 184.2, emphasis mine)

“Make it your *lifework* to form the characters of your children according to the divine Pattern. ... There is no more important missionary field than this [your own household]. ... The management and instruction of children is the noblest missionary work that any man or woman can undertake.” (CG 476.3–476.6, emphasis mine)

Barna Research Finding: Successful parents’ parenting values were a result of seeking to obey God.

“God Himself established the family relations. His word is the only safe guide in the management of children.” (AH 306.3)

No wonder these parents were successful! They went directly to the source, asking for the ultimate guide to parenting: God.

“[T]hey [Mothers] bear a greater responsibility in their work than does the king upon his throne.” (CG 71.2)

“Next to God, the mother's power for good is the strongest known on earth.” (AH 240.1)

“An angel could not ask for a higher mission ...” (AH 231.3)

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Here is the truth of the mother's role in parenting: In the hierarchy of influence upon children, first is God, next is mothers, third is angels, then kings, and finally others.

“How sad it is that many parents have cast off their God-given responsibility to their children, and are willing that strangers should bear it for them!” (AH 187.3)

The powerful opportunity of a mother, of a parent, is often outsourced to others, like (God forbid) the worldly media or the public schools. What a tragedy that we are giving up this gift of raising our own children!

“If you ignore your duty as a wife and mother and hold out your hands for the Lord to put another class of work in them, be sure that He will not contradict Himself; He points you to the duty you have to do at home. If you have the idea that some work greater and holier than this has been entrusted to you, you are under a deception.” (AH 245.4)

The feminist movement believes that motherhood is a degrading, oppressive social construct. It advocates for women to break those bonds, put their kids in day care or school, and pursue a career instead. But this is a “deception.” “The mother must ever stand preeminent in this work of training the children ...” (CG 24.3).

“I saw that but few fathers realize their responsibility.” (AH 211.3)

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“The father’s duty to his children cannot be transferred to the mother. If she performs her own duty, she has burden enough to bear. Only by working in unison can the father and mother accomplish the work which God has committed to their hands.” (AH 216.1)

“Fathers, spend as much time as possible with your children.” (AH 222.1)

That last quote literally changed the direction of my life. I was teaching full time and beginning to develop a self-supporting ministry. One of the two commitments had to be discarded. The Lord led us to retire the teaching job.

“If he is engaged in business which almost wholly closes the door of usefulness to his family, he should seek other employment which will not prevent him from devoting some time to his children.” (AH 221.1)

This is the mandate for men. While the mother’s role is of utmost importance, the father’s role is irreplaceable. One should not be done without the other.

Barna Research Finding: Successful parents’ homes had one full-time parent. Their socioeconomic status was not a factor.

But what about keeping up with the Joneses?

“Poverty, in many cases, is a blessing; for it prevents youth and children from being ruined by inaction.” (CG 342.2)

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“Thankful hearts and kind looks are more valuable than wealth and luxury, and contentment with simple things will make home happy if love be there.” (AH 108.1)

Committing to having a full-time parent indeed takes sacrifice. However, these *supposed* sacrifices may end up as blessings. Indeed, there must be a balance. Income must be earned to provide necessities and quality of life for the family, but reflect on whether you are sacrificing the spiritual well-being of your children in exchange for unnecessary comforts and conveniences, or worse yet, excessive luxuries and entertainments that spoil children.

Barna Research Finding: Successful parents spent hours in dialogue with their children.

Exactly as Deuteronomy 6:6-9 says! Also, there’s no need to demean them with baby talk. Speak to them as fellow human beings. Have regular conversations with them. (They will also have a better vocabulary this way.) Induct them into grown-up culture and, as a result, they will be able to better interact with people of all ages – their peers, as well as their elders. Speaker, author, and friend Joshua White of *A Thinking Generation* says it best: We are not training our children to become children. We are training them to become godly adults.

Barna Research Finding: Successful parents invested enormous quantities of time with their children—quality and quantity.

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“Cultivate friendship with them, especially with your sons. In this way you will be a strong influence for good.” (AH 222.2)

“The hearts of parents and children *need* to be welded together.” (CG 271.1, emphasis mine)

I cannot stress enough the importance of parents’ forming and maintaining a genuine connection with their children. The joy that my children have when he knows that he and I will be spending one-on-one time together is incomparable. Our children desire to spend time with us; they want to be with us. Isn’t that what we want, too?

As a parent, you are to be not only the authority figure but also someone in whom your children can confide, someone with whom they enjoy spending time. Our God is not only our Father who upholds rules and is the Head of our heavenly government; there is also Jesus Christ, Friend of all sinners, who understands our sorrows and joys and guides us on the path to righteousness. Just as our relationship with God is, so should the children’s relationship with their parents be.

“ ‘No time,’ says the father; ‘I have no time to give to the training of my children, no time for social and domestic enjoyments.’ Then you should not have taken upon yourself the responsibility of a family. By withholding from them the time which is justly theirs, you rob them of the education which they should have at your hands. If you have children, you have a work to do, in union with the mother, in the formation of their characters.” (AH 191.3)

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“You have brought children into the world who have had no voice in regard to their existence. You have made yourselves responsible in a great measure for their future happiness, their eternal well-being.” (CG 185.1)

“It is the cry of many mothers: “I have no time to be with my children.” Then for Christ’s sake spend less time on your dress. Neglect if you will to adorn your apparel. Neglect to receive and make calls. Neglect to cook an endless variety of dishes. But never, never neglect your children. What is the chaff to the wheat? Let nothing interpose between you and the best interests of your children.” (AH 191.4)

In this day and age the equivalent of this advice may be: Neglect to keep up on Facebook posts; neglect to watch television; neglect to be on your phone. All of it is rubbish in comparison to the eternal interest of your child.

“Let not a mother allow her mind to be occupied with too many things....” (CG 97.1)

“She must allow nothing to divert her mind.” (CG 101.1)

“Not until the final settlement, when the cases of all will be decided, and the acts of our entire lives will be laid open to our view in the presence of God and the Lamb and all the holy angels, will parents realize the almost infinite value of their misspent time.” (3T

145.1)

There are indeed so many causes—good causes—that draw us away from caring for our children: our commitments at church, our commitments to friends. But those things, good though they may be, are not to displace the priority of our children. As my wife says, we can't be all things to all people, but we *are* all things to our children.

“The right conception of God through the knowledge of Christ, who died that we might be saved, should be impressed upon their [children's] minds.

“You may think, parents, that you have not time to do all this, but you must take time to do your work in your family, else Satan will supply the deficiency. Cut out everything else from your life that prevents this work from being done, and train your children after His order. Neglect anything of a temporal nature, be satisfied to live economically, bind about your wants, but for Christ's sake do not neglect the religious training of yourselves and your children.” (AH 323.6–324.1)

This is the point, the thesis, of this book. Parents, it is our responsibility to take up our duty to ‘disciple’ our children for God. You are 99 percent of the spiritual mentor for your children. (See the next chapters.)

But did you know that of all the various facets of parenting, it is in spiritual training that parents rank themselves dead last in how they feel they're performing?

SECTION 2

The Big Task: Making Little Disciples

Guiding our children to become disciples of Christ is the absolute goal for a parent. The Word of God and Spirit of Prophecy gives explicit instruction as to how to make these little disciples. It is no easy task, but with much prayer, sacrifice, and submission to the will of God, it can be done.

The Big Task: Making Little Disciples

Chapter 4

Habitual Discipling

Barna Research Finding: Successful parents disciple their children. They do not look to the church or the school to take the lead in spiritual training. They are involved in church, using it as a support for their efforts.

“Every family is a church, over which the parents preside. The first consideration of the parents should be to work for the salvation of their children.” (CG 549.1)

“It is perilous to leave this solemn duty in the hands of others.” (AH 324.3)

Did you heed that? Perilous! Not optional. The aim and object in parenting is to save our children’s souls and to train them to be missionaries for God.

“Age has nothing to do with it. ... As soon as a child can love and trust his mother, then can he love and trust Jesus as the Friend of his mother.” (CG 486.3)

“One of the first sounds that should attract their attention is the name of Jesus, and in their earliest years they should be led to the footstool of prayer. Their minds should be filled with stories of the life of the

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Lord, and their imaginations encouraged in picturing the glories of the world to come.” (CG 488.3)

“Let the first baby lispsings be of Christ.” (CG 487.2)

Children do not need to reach a certain age before they can become Christians. The moment a child is born, begin to teach her about Christ. When my sons were each learning how to speak, one of their very first words was “Jesus.” Because we would regularly pray together as a family, it was only natural that the children quickly learned to fold their hands for prayer and say our Savior’s name.

“It was in hours of solitary prayer that Jesus in His earth life received wisdom and power. Let the youth follow His example in finding at dawn and twilight a quiet season for communion with their Father in heaven. ... Could our children learn these lessons in the morning of their years, what freshness and power, what joy and sweetness, would be brought into their lives!” (Ed 259.1)

Encourage and lead your children in their own personal devotional time at the feet of Jesus. Our Savior Himself led this kind of life when He was on this earth, in prayerful solitude with God the Father, and He is to be our example.

Barna Research Finding: Successful parents delve into matters of faith as a family unit.

“Spread out the word of God before your families in love, and ask, ‘What hath God spoken?’ ” (AH 19.1)

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“The teaching of Bible truth is the great and grand work which every parent should undertake. In a pleasant, happy frame of mind place the truth as spoken by God before the children.” (CG 510.3)

“In all that men have written, where can be found anything that has such a hold upon the heart, anything so well adapted to awaken the interest of the little ones, as the stories of the Bible?” (CG 514.3)

“[I]nstead of speaking vain words and telling idle tales to their children, they will talk with them upon Bible subjects” (CG 513.4)

Never ever skip worship. And read the Bible together throughout the day, not only at worship.

“[I]f they have no knowledge of Christ, no connection with heaven, they will have no moral power, and they will yield to earthly potentates who have assumed to exalt themselves above the God of heaven in establishing a spurious sabbath to take the place of the Sabbath of Jehovah.” (CG 491.3)

“Then why is it that there is such a lack of the missionary spirit in our churches? It is because there is a neglect of home piety.” (AH 33.2)

Did you know that less than 10% of families ever open the Bible? It is no wonder then that people believe the

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manmade invention of Sunday as the Sabbath. If you never or infrequently open the Word of God, how is God to write His law, His character, in your heart and mind and in your children's, as He has promised to each of His disciples?

“Under a wise instructor the Word will become more and more desirable. It will be to them as the bread of life ...” (CG 514.1)

“[P]arents have themselves to blame if they do not make it [the Bible] intensely interesting to their children.” (CG 510.2)

“Parents should feel it a sacred duty to instruct their children in the statutes and requirements of God as well as in the prophecies.” (CG 512.1)

“In order to do this work, parents must themselves become acquainted with the Word of God....” (CG 513.4)

Another name for “parent” is “teacher.” You are your children's teacher. It is primarily from you that they will learn of the Bible. And a parent, like any other teacher, must know the material that he is teaching. In order to teach your children from the Word, delve into the Word yourself. The home was God's original classroom and still is the best place for all variety of learning.

“Fathers and mothers, obtain all the help you can from the study of our books and publications. Take time to read to your children.... Form a home reading circle in

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which every member of the family shall lay aside the busy cares of the day, and unite in study.” (CG 38.1)

“The use of object lessons, blackboards, maps, and pictures, will be an aid in explaining these lessons, and fixing them in the memory. Parents and teachers should constantly seek for improved methods. The teaching of the Bible should have our freshest thought, our best methods, and our most earnest effort.” (Ed 186.1)

There are a ton of resources available to aid you in teaching the Word to your children. Audio resources are especially helpful for children who cannot yet read: Scripture songs, audio Bibles, devotionals.

“The Word of God should be judiciously brought to bear upon the youthful minds and will require time, perseverance, and prayer. This should be attended to even if some things about the house are neglected.” (CG 506.3)

“Observe system in the study of the Scriptures in your families. Neglect anything of a temporal nature, ... but be sure that the soul is fed with the bread of life. It is impossible to estimate the good results of one hour or even half an hour each day devoted in a cheerful, social manner to the Word of God.” (CG 511.1)

“The most successful methods of assuring their salvation and keeping them out of the way of temptation is to instruct them *constantly* in the Word of God. And as parents become learners with their

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children, they will find their own growth in a knowledge of the truth more rapid.” (CG 498.1, emphasis mine)

Discuss stories from the Bible with your children as you go about your day. Make it personal to them. For example, when they are being helpful, compare them to a Bible character like Samuel.

The added blessing is that we learn the Word *with* our children as we are teaching them.

“When they are tried, tempted, or discouraged, cite them to its precious words of comfort, and gently lead them to put their trust in Jesus.” (CG 242.3)

In this way children will learn that the Bible is to be used in all circumstances that arise, in the happy as well as the sad times.

Barna Research Finding: Successful parents used the Bible in ways that were relevant to a specific incident or phase in the child’s life.

The Bible is already naturally relevant. Your job as a parent is to help your child to be aware that it is. And again, never ever skip family worship: “The hour of prayer should not be neglected for any consideration.” (CG 520.4)

Barna Research Finding: Successful parents emphasized their children’s learning how to pray, studying the Bible, and worshipping.

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“You are not to pray occasionally and, when you have a large day’s work to do, neglect it. In thus doing you lead your children to look upon prayer as of no special consequence.” (CG 520.2)

Family worship is essential, not optional. Abraham sacrificed regularly on an altar every morning and evening. We too are to lift our voices in praise, thanksgiving, and supplication to God. As regularly expected as mealtime, as sleeping, as breathing, is to be our time in prayer and worship. In fact, even more than physical food are we to feast upon the Bread of Life, which is the Word of God, Jesus Christ. Skipping a family worship sends a powerful lesson to your children, but consistently insisting each morning and evening that the family gather together in prayer and study—even for just five minutes—sends an equally powerful lesson.

“There is no reason why this should not be the most interesting and enjoyable exercise of the home life, and God is dishonored when it is made dry and irksome. Let the seasons of family worship be short and spirited.” (CG 521.3)

“[A]void tedious remarks. Short talks, right to the point, will have a happy influence. If there is much to be said, make up for brevity by frequency. ... Long speeches tire the minds of the young. Too much talk will lead them even to loathe spiritual instruction ...” (CG 495.2)

Quantity is not as important as consistency. Do not

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make family worship a dull, laborious exercise that your children dread.

“Moses directed the Israelites to set the words of the law to music. While the older children played on instruments, the younger ones marched, singing in concert the song of God’s commandments.” (CG 523.5)

“Let the services be brief and full of life, adapted to the occasion, and varied from time to time. ... To make such a service what it should be, thought should be given to preparation. ... No doubt it will require effort and planning and some sacrifice to accomplish this; but the effort will be richly repaid.” (Ed 186.2–186.3)

While children must learn to sit still, do not solely use this time of family worship to enforce this lesson, especially for smaller children. As part of your worship, try including some appropriate tactile, physical exercises, which will be especially useful for kinetic learners.

“Let the father select a portion of Scripture that is interesting and easily understood; a few verses will be sufficient to furnish a lesson which may be studied and practiced through the day. Questions may be asked, a few earnest, interesting remarks made, or incident, short and to the point, may be brought in by way of illustration. At least a few verses of spirited song may be sung, and the prayer offered should be short and pointed. The one who leads in prayer should not pray about everything, but should express his needs in

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simple words and praise God with thanksgiving.” (CG 521.4)

“It will add to the interest of the children if they are sometimes permitted to select the reading. ... [L]et them join in song, if it be but a single verse.” (CG 522.1)

“In teaching children the Bible, we may gain much by observing the bent of their minds, the things in which they are interested, and arousing their interest to see what the Bible says about these things.” (CG 512.3)

For very young children, try including things that will help them to connect to the Bible stories during worship time. During my family worships we use props and felts in order to pique the interest of the kids, who are fascinated with anything that moves: a model boat for Noah’s ark, a toy wagon for the Exodus. Guide the children in participating, in holding the props or acting out certain parts of the story. Include the children in prayer time so that they may also voice their praises and petitions to the Lord.

“That God is love is to be taught by every lesson. ... Christ should be associated with all the lessons given to children.” (CG 487.1–487.3)

Whether you are studying creation or prophecy, Jesus is found throughout the whole Bible. The goal of worship should always be to point your children to Jesus.

Additionally, I implore you to read chapter 79 of *Child Guidance* for a complete guide to worshipping as a family

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on the Sabbath day. It is a beautiful section that explains the importance of instilling in your children a genuine joy of keeping the Sabbath the way God desires us to, and I could not say it any better myself.

Chapter 5

The Character of the Child

Barna Research Finding: The number one focus of successful parents was to develop their children's characters.

“God has given parents their work, to form the characters of their children after the divine Pattern. By His grace they can accomplish the task; but it will require patient, painstaking effort, no less than firmness and decision, to guide the will and restrain the passions. A field left to itself produces only thorns and briers.” (CG 169.1)

“From babyhood the character of the child must be molded. ... The parents' work must begin with the child in its infancy ...” (CG 193.2–193.3)

As previously stated, your job as a parent from day one is to train your child to be like Christ. You may think that babies are unteachable until a certain age, but even babies can be taught to come when called.

“If Christian mothers will present to society children with integrity of character, with firm principles and sound morals, they will have performed the most important of all missionary labors. Their children,

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thoroughly educated to take their places in society, are the greatest evidence of Christianity that can be given to the world.” (CG 163.1)

Here’s what contributes to a character fit for heaven:

Health

“The first study of the young should be to know themselves and how to keep their bodies in health.” (CG 103.3)

“The importance of training children to right dietetic habits can hardly be overestimated.” (MH 383.3)

“Recklessness in regard to bodily health tends to recklessness in moral character.” (CG 104.1)

Contrary to popular opinion, a child’s physical health is intrinsically connected to their spiritual health. So much misbehavior in children is caused by their having eaten too much sugar, not having slept enough, or by snacking in between meals.

“Do not neglect to teach your children how to cook. In so doing, you impart to them principles which they must have in their religious education.” (CG 374.2)

My family grows much of the food we eat. For my children learning to work in our family garden has given them an excitement about cooking. Seeing the process from seed to meal has made cooking both fun and real to them.

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“Parents should train the appetites of their children and should not permit the use of unwholesome foods.” (MH 384.2)

“Grains, fruits, nuts, and vegetables constitute the diet chosen for us by our Creator.” (MH 296.1)

“Meat should not be placed before our children. Its influence is to excite and strengthen the lower passions and has a tendency to deaden the moral powers.” (CG 461.1)

Truthfulness

Our God is perfect in honesty and integrity. Hebrews 6:18 says, “[I]t is impossible for God to lie.” In my family we have made it a point to reserve some of our most serious consequences for lying, as it is a grave offense to our God. Also refrain from joking in a sarcastic or exaggerated manner; it distorts the truth and is confusing to children.

Reverence

“These messengers [angels] are shut out from many a home where iniquity and impoliteness to God abound.” (CG 99.2)

“By your own example teach your children to pray with clear, distinct voice. Teach them to lift their heads from the chair and never to cover their faces with their hands. Thus they can offer their simple prayers, repeating the

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Lord's prayer in concert." (CG 522.2)

"The hour and place of prayer and the services of public worship the child should be taught to regard as sacred because God is there." (CG 539.3)

"Parents should not only teach, but command, their children to enter the sanctuary with sobriety and reverence.

"In some cases they are even allowed to run about the house, play, talk, and manifest their evil tempers in the very meetings where the saints should worship God in the beauty of holiness. ... This is enough to bring God's displeasure and shut His presence from our assemblies." (CG 540.2–540.4)

"They [Children] are too often found in groups, away from the parents, who should have charge of them. Notwithstanding they are in the presence of God, and His eye is looking upon them; they are light and trifling; they whisper and laugh, are careless, irreverent, and inattentive." (CG 542.1)

As a part of reverence, avoid silliness. Spiritual matters are not to be taken lightly or flippantly.

Orderliness

Barna Research Finding: Successful parents provided an orderly, predictable world.

"If the youth would form habits of regularity and order,

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they would improve in health, in spirits, in memory, and in disposition.” (CG 112.1)

“Mothers, teach your children from their earliest years that they are not to look upon everything in the home as playthings for them. By these little things *order* is taught.” (CG 101.1, emphasis mine)

“Do not give the children playthings that are easily broken. To do this is to teach lessons in destructiveness. Let them have a few playthings, and let these be strong and durable.” (CG 102.1)

In our consumer society it is easy for a child’s toys to build up very quickly. But instead, use playtime as an opportunity to edify your children, teaching them generosity, sacrifice, and industriousness. For example, they can learn to share their toys, giving them to those who have nothing or less.

“Let them have a place to lay their things away and be taught to fold every article neatly and put it in its place. ... This work of teaching neatness and order will take a little time each day, but it will pay in the future of your children, and in the end will save you much time and care.” (CG 111.2)

Cleanliness

“Show them that uncleanness, whether in body or in dress, is objectionable to God.” (CG 106.4)

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Teach children to eat in a clean manner, to keep the premises tidy, to take a daily bath. This may not seem like a trait important to a Christian, but the Book of Leviticus focuses on keeping these kinds of sanitary practices. While it is unnecessary to continue the ceremonial rites detailed in there, modern medicine still uses God's laws of sanitation to prevent disease. The way we treat our bodies, both inside and out, is important to God, as the body "is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you" (1 Corinthians 6:19). The body represents your visible witness for Christ.

Frugality

"Whether supplied by their parents or by their own earnings, let boys and girls learn to select and purchase their own clothing, their books, and other necessities; and by keeping an account of their expenses, they will learn, as they could learn in no other way, the value and the use of money." (CG 136.1)

"Let the children be given little pieces of land to cultivate, that they may have something to give as a freewill offering." (CG 126.2)

Our son Levi, at age four, was given a small plot of land in our garden and was in charge of weeding, picking off potato beetles, and checking what was ready to harvest. He also chose which kinds of vegetables he wanted to grow.

Simplicity & Humility

"Vanity should not be encouraged by praising their

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looks, their words, or their actions. Nor should they be dressed in an expensive and showy manner. This encourages pride in them and awakens envy in the hearts of their companions.” (CG 139.3)

“In many families the seeds of vanity and selfishness are sown in the hearts of the children almost during babyhood. Their cunning little sayings and doings are commented upon and praised in their presence, and repeated with exaggerations to others.” (CG 140.2)

With frugality comes simplicity and humility. One tends to beget the others.

Helpfulness

“Let every mother teach her children that they are members of the family firm and must bear their share of the responsibilities of this firm” (AH 282.2)

“The satisfaction that children will have in being useful, and in denying themselves to help others, will be the most healthful pleasure they ever enjoyed.” (CG 342.3)

Choose to think of your family as a team, a company of people who work together to accomplish tasks.

“Those children for whom parents do the most, frequently feel under the least obligation toward them.” (CG 156.2)

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You do not do yourself or your children any favors by spoiling them.

“From infancy children should be trained to do those things which are appropriate for their age and ability.”
(CG 122.3)

“Keep these children with you. Let them ask questions, and in patience answer them. Give your little children something to do, and let them have the happiness of supposing they help you. ... If they make mistakes, if accidents happen and things break, do not blame them.”
(CG 119.3–119.4)

Ellen White encourages mothers to have an “almost constant association” (AH 184.4) with their children. Whatever task the parent is doing, the children are doing too, whether out shopping or at home. When my wife dusts, our children dust the windowsills. When she folds laundry, they fold hand towels and match socks. When she picks hundreds of green beans, they pick ... about 30.

Remember that the goal is not how you can be the most efficient; the goal is to build the best spiritual character for your children. The truth is that you will not get everything done that you need to get done. But that is not the point either. The point in doing a chore is to raise your children to know the Lord, to have characters fit for heaven.

Of course, that is not to say that we should be lazy in our work; whether the children are with us or not: “[I]f your habits are of a lazy order, you will make a long job out of a short one; and it is the duty of those who are slow to reform and to become more expeditious” (CG 125.2). In this way

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“the hands will move with dispatch.”

“It can be so given that the child will find pleasure in learning to be helpful. Mothers can amuse their children while teaching them to perform little offices of love, little home duties.” (CG 301.2)

“Bring all the pleasure possible into your exercises as teacher and educator of your children.” (RH October 9, 1900, par. 5)

“Make the life of your children pleasant, and at the same time teach them to be obedient and helpful, bearing small burdens as you bear larger ones.” (CG 120.1)

“The little child finds both diversion and development in play ...” (Ed 215.1)

To very young kids, work and play is the same thing! As they get older, work can still be playful, but there are some guidelines and expectations when doing their work. At this stage in the child’s development, begin to enact the principle of “work before play.” Our kids have kid-sized tools, wheel barrows, dump wagons (and dump trucks), and everything useful for them to use in labor.

“He [The father] should help in devising ways by which they [his children] may be kept busy in useful labor agreeable to their varying dispositions.” (AH 221.4)

Be proactive. For instance when an occasion calls for

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the giving of gifts, such as on your child's birthday, try asking relatives for gifts that will specifically help with your child's practical development. My mother once gave 4-year-old Levi an entire chef's outfit and plastic cookware. And of course there should be no surprises when other people give gifts to your child; it is perfectly within your rights to know what your child will be opening and to have the foreknowledge to decide between gifts in line with or against your values.

Industriousness

Industriousness goes hand-in-hand with helpfulness.

"All, from the child six years old and upward, should understand that it is required of them to bear their share of life's burdens." (CG 120.3)

"To allow a child to take an hour or two in doing a piece of work that could easily be done in half an hour is to allow it to form dilatory habits." (CG 129.1)

"Work is good for children; they are happier to be usefully employed a large share of the time; their innocent amusements are enjoyed with a keener zest after the successful completion of their tasks." (AH 286.2)

"It will teach them that they are not to center their thoughts upon themselves, to do their own pleasure, or to amuse themselves." (CG 36.2)

“Let us teach them that innocent pleasure is never half so satisfying as when it follows active industry.” (CG 127.1)

Self-reliance

Along with industriousness and helpfulness naturally comes self-reliance, a particularly important character trait in these last days.

“Parents should now encourage their children to become more independent. Serious troubles are soon to be seen upon the earth, and children should be trained in such a way as to be able to meet them.” (CG 122.3)

“So far as possible every child should be trained to self-reliance.” (CG 156.1)

“If they would stand in a position where they shall influence others, they must be self-reliant.” (CG 157.1)

“[T]each self-denial, economy, largeheartedness, and self-reliance.” (CG 131.3)

These four components work together to paint a character of a godly child. Deny your own desires in order to give generously to others. Practice frugality, which leads to industriousness: Do not embellish your homes; do not throw away things that can be used; do not seek after style and ostentation.

“Children of two to four years of age should not be

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encouraged to think that they must have everything that they ask for. Parents should teach them lessons of self-denial and never treat them in such a way as to make them think they are the center, and that everything revolves about them.” (CG 132.3)

In my family my wife and I tell our children, “We won’t do anything for you that you can do for yourself.” This does not mean that we neglect them entirely, leaving them to their own devices. When Levi was learning to put on his pants by himself, he would want me to do it for him. I would stay with him, coaching and encouraging him, but he would be the one doing the action. This process naturally led him to form this next character trait.

Perseverance

“Children frequently begin a piece of work with enthusiasm; but, becoming perplexed or wearied with it, they wish to change and take hold of something new. Thus they may take hold of several things, meet with a little discouragement, and give them up; and so they pass from one thing to another, perfecting nothing. Parents should not allow the love of change to control their children. They should not be so much engaged with other things that they will have not time to patiently discipline the developing minds. A few words of encouragement, or a little help at the right time, may carry them over their trouble and discouragement; and the satisfaction they will derive from seeing the task completed that they undertook will stimulate them to greater exertion.” (CG 128.1)

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Perseverance includes overcoming your fears or hesitations. Once, my family visited some friends without me, and there was a horse that all of the children were taking turns riding that day. But Levi was afraid and did not want to try. So, I arranged for he and I to visit that same horse on another day so that Levi could overcome the fear. Levi decided to pray to God to give him the courage to sit atop the horse. He not only got up on the horse but also rode it. Afterwards, Levi was overjoyed at his accomplishment, saying to me, “Dad, I was afraid and didn’t want to get on the horse. But I did and actually I really liked it. It was actually fun!” His achievement is now written in our prayer journal as a reminder of how prayer, courage, and perseverance are bound together.

“Instead of calling attention to every trifling pain or hurt, divert their minds; teach them to pass lightly over little annoyances or discomforts.” (CG 132.5)

Silas, our middle child, when he was learning to climb stairs would just raise his arms to anyone and say, “Mama,” (which, translated, means “hold me”). Instead of holding him, I would take his hand and we’d climb the steps one at a time together at his pace, teaching self-reliance and perseverance.

Self-sacrificing service

This is the most important of all the character traits and actually encompasses all of the others. This is the very character of God.

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Barna Research Finding: Successful parents raise families that regularly serve others together.

We are training our children to understand that they do not exist for themselves. Their lives are meant to be a blessing to others; they are to be missionaries, to win souls, to do the work of God. Remember that we are to prepare our children for their special work in these last days. Self-sacrificing service is the very crux of this work.

“In their early years children may be useful in God’s work. ...

“The children should be so educated that they will sympathize with the aged and afflicted and will seek to alleviate the sufferings of the poor and distressed. They should be taught to be diligent in missionary work; and from their earliest years self-denial and sacrifice for the good of others and the advancement of Christ’s cause should be inculcated, that they may be laborers together with God.” (AH 486.3–487.1)

As my family has begun to include our children in ministry and outreach, I have seen how powerfully the Holy Spirit can work in and through them. By learning Scripture songs from very early on, they can easily memorize the gospel message. We picked three texts and devised a simple, short Bible study that a child can give to others from memory. With some practice, our first-born at age 5 shared the Gospel with family during special holidays, with fellow sellers at the farmer’s market, and even with people we met on the street.

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One time, when Levi and I were passing out copies of *The Great Controversy* at a nearby rest area, Levi gave his three-verse Bible study to an older lady who was going through some tough circumstances. She took the copy of *The Great Controversy* he handed to her and crouched down beside him. At her asking Levi told her that the book was about the fact that Jesus is coming soon. At my suggestion he then began to give his Bible study. Before he could even finish, the lady broke down in tears, shared with us her troubles, and told us that this was exactly what she needed. That day, the Holy Spirit used Levi in a mighty way—and He can do the same for all of our children who we submit to Him!

“Children are to be educated to deny themselves. At one time, when I was speaking in Nashville, the Lord gave me light on this matter. It flashed upon me with great force that in every home there should be a self-denial box, and that into this box the children should be taught to put their pennies they would otherwise spend for candy and other unnecessary things....” (CG 132.1)

When teaching all of these character traits to your children, try breaking them down one at a time and working on one per week. Perhaps make them part of your lesson studies together. Make them applicable to your children’s everyday lives.

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Chapter 6

Guarding Your Children's Hearts

Barna Research Finding: Successful parents intentionally guarded their children's hearts: They were strict on the kinds and amount of media to which they exposed their children; they were heavily involved in every aspect of their children's lives, even as they grew older; they stuck to their guns despite what other parents were doing and saying; and most importantly, they involved themselves in their children's choice of friends.

“Do you allow your children to associate with other children without being present to know what kind of education they are receiving? Do not allow them to be alone with other children. Give them your special care.” (CG 114.3)

“[L]et them visit your children in your presence; and in no case allow these associates to lodge in the same bed or even in the same room.” (CG 460.2)

Realize that just because an event or organization is supposed to be safe, it does not necessarily mean it is. Even while your children are in church or Sabbath school or attending Pathfinders or a Christian school, it is your responsibility to know the environment in which they are.

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“It is impossible to overestimate the importance for this world and the next of the associations we choose for ourselves and, more especially, for our children.” (AH 459.3)

“Could my voice reach the parents all through the land, I would warn them not to yield to the desires of their children in choosing their companions or associates. Little do parents consider that injurious impressions are far more readily received by the young than are divine impressions...” (AH 466.2)

“I have tried to keep them from associating with rough, rude boys and have presented inducements before them to make their employment at home cheerful and happy. By keeping their minds and hands occupied, they have had but little time, or disposition, to play in the street with other boys and obtain a street education.” (CG 114.4)

“ ‘We are in the world,’ they say, ‘and we cannot get out of it.’ But, parents, we can get a good way out of the world, if we choose to do so. We can avoid seeing many of the evils that are multiplying so fast in these last days. We can avoid hearing about much of the wickedness and crime that exist.” (AH 406.3)

I have heard other parents say this exact thing to me, that they “cannot get out of the world.” This is a deception. It is absolutely possible to get yourself and your family out of the world, not to mention your God-given duty: “But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation,

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a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light” (1 Peter 2:9).

“I have been shown that there should be a sacred shield around every family.” (AH 177.1)

“[S]hield their children from contaminating influences...” (CG 113.2)

“From their infancy the youth need to have a firm barrier built up between them and the world, that its corrupting influence may not affect them. Every Christian family should illustrate to the world the power and excellence of Christian influence ...” (AH 19.3–19.4)

You will have an influence upon others, upon your children, *by* being different! People are not influenced by someone who is the same as they are.

The term “sheltered” has a negative connotation in this day and age. But in actuality sheltering your children, protecting them from influences that may endanger their very souls, is the job of a parent. However, this does not mean that you protect them from all things. Protecting them from any sort of difficulty, from adversity, from the consequences of misbehavior creates only a spoiled, fearful, and childish adult.

“Since they cannot always have the guidance and protection of parents and guardians, they need to be trained to self-reliance and self-control. They must be

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taught to think and act from conscientious principle.”
(CE 34.1)

The goal of parenting is to get your children to the point where you do not have to parent them anymore! Guarding their hearts does not mean doing their thinking for them nor does it mean making spiritual robots. Your job as a parent is to disciple your children to submit to the Word of God and to the promptings of the Holy Spirit. From this training they may go forth as independent people, making their own choices based on biblical beliefs.

Barna Research Finding: Successful parents are counter-cultural, and this causes them little stress or concern. They accept from day one that their parenting will be different from most.

“There should be less care for what the outside world will say and more thoughtful attention to the members of the family circle.” (AH 108.1)

“Mothers should never allow their sisters or mothers to interfere with the wise management of their children.”
(CG 288.1)

“The votaries of fashion will never see or understand the immortal beauty of that Christian mother’s work, and will sneer at her old-fashioned notions and her plain, unadorned dress; while the Majesty of heaven will write the name of that faithful mother in the book of immortal fame.”
(AH 238.3)

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Successful parents concern themselves with what the Word of God says, not with what other parents say. You may be called “weird” or “crazy,” but that should not deter you from the choices you make concerning the spiritual welfare of your children.

All of these daily challenges and feelings of failure will one day see their eternal result, not because you were a perfect parent, but because you walked with God, getting back up after falling, doing your utmost to weave Jesus into the lives of your children. It is not to your credit as a parent but speaks only to your willingness to be led by God as He transforms the hearts of your children. Let this be our charge: “Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you” (2 Corinthians 6:17).

SECTION 3

Weighed in the Balance

The Bible's approach to godly parenting is one of balance and temperance. God is our perfect example. We can look to His interactions in His Word and with us to understand and meet our children's physical, emotional, and spiritual needs daily and throughout their different stages of development.

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Chapter 7

United Parenting

Barna Research Finding: Successful parents are good listeners.

“Parents should encourage their children to confide in them and unburden to them their heart griefs, their little daily annoyances and trials. Kindly instruct them and bind them to your hearts. ... Teach them to make you their confidant. Let them whisper in your ear their trials and joys. Children would be saved from many evils if they would be more familiar with their parents. Parents should encourage in their children a disposition to be open and frank with them, to come to them with their difficulties and, when they are perplexed as to what course is right, to lay the matter just as they view it before the parents and ask their advice.” (AH 190.5–191.2)

There is a time for parents to instruct and teach but equally important is the time spent listening to your children. Just as we reverence God as the authority figure, similarly do our children respect us. But God is also our Friend and our Comforter, desiring to hear the burdens of our hearts poured out in prayer to Him. As parents, we must likewise be an open ear for our children.

Be in tune with their emotional needs. If we do not listen to their hearts, we end up missing opportunities to

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connect with them on a deeper level and to take advantage of those significant life-changing moments.

Barna Research Finding: Successful parents avoid being too soft and also too intimidating.

“Uniform firmness and unimpassioned control are necessary to the discipline of every family. Say what you mean calmly, move with consideration, and carry out what you say without deviation.” (AH 309.1)

“Let authority and affection be blended.” (AH 198.1)

Parents should not be either-or; they should not be sometimes one way or another. They should be always authoritative *and* always loving to their children.

“Fathers, ... combine affection with authority, kindness and sympathy with firm restraint.” (AH 222.2)

“... It sometimes happens that, of the mother and father, one is too indulgent and the other too severe.” (AH 312.2)

“Parents are to work together as a unit. There must be no division. But many parents work at cross-purposes, and thus the children are spoiled by mismanagement....” (AH 312.2)

The Bible tells us that God is love. Nowadays, however, people’s common conception of love is rather

lopsided. On one side, there are those who think of love as solely sentimentalism; on the other there are those who believe love to be only harsh rebuke. But neither is an accurate depiction of what love is. Biblical *agape* love is both mercy and judgment; it is both feeling and principle, both forgiveness and chastening. We must reflect this blend, this true love, accurately to our children.

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Chapter 8

Meeting Your Children's Needs

Barna Research Finding: Successful parents meet their children's emotional and physical needs.

Taking care of each of these needs sets your child up with the best opportunity to form a Christ-like character. As a result, many issues in disciplining subsequently disappear.

Physical:

Here is a list of common physical needs that ought to be met regularly and abundantly. In other words, these needs are met on a consistent schedule and the resources to meet these needs are never lacking.

- Healthy nutrition
- Sufficient hydration (i.e. drinking plenty of water)
- Abundant and regular sleep
- Outdoor physical activity

“Parents wonder that children are so much more difficult to control than they used to be, when in most cases their own criminal management has made them so. The quality of *food* they bring upon their tables and encourage their children to eat is constantly exciting their animal passions and weakening the moral and

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intellectual faculties.” (CG 188.1, emphasis mine)

“The importance of regularity in the time for eating and sleeping should not be overlooked. Since the work of building up the body takes place during the hours of rest, it is essential, especially in youth, that sleep should be regular and abundant.” (CG 363.2)

“If all would eat at regular periods, not tasting anything between meals, they would be ready for their meals and would find a pleasure in eating that would repay them for their effort.” (CD 387.5)

“After the regular meal is eaten, the stomach should be allowed to rest for five hours. Not a particle of food should be introduced into the stomach till the next meal.” (CD 389.2)

“Parents, inaction is the greatest curse that ever came upon youth.” (CE 16.4)

“The health cannot be preserved unless some portion of each day is given to muscular exertion in the open air.” (CG 342.4)

“Small children should be left as free as lambs to run out of doors, to be free and happy, and should be allowed the most favorable opportunities to lay the foundation for sound constitutions.” (CH 176.3)

“Equalize the taxation of the mental and physical powers ...” (CE 183.4)

As children grow older, they develop more mental stamina. Note that the time spent in mental exercise and physical exercise should be equally distributed throughout the day. Children are not to spend the majority of their days in desks or in front of screens.

Emotional:

Following is a list of emotional needs your children have. And did you know this startling fact? Male addiction to pornography is shown to stem from emotional detachment to their families in their youth.

Time together! (Covered that already).

Adversity (yes you read that correctly).

“Let the child and the youth be taught that every mistake, every fault, every difficulty conquered becomes a steppingstone to better and higher things. It is through such experiences that all who have ever made life worth living have achieved success.” (CG 130.1)

“It is obstacles that make men strong. It is not helps, but difficulties, conflicts, rebuffs, that make men of moral sinew. Too much ease and avoiding responsibility have made weaklings and dwarfs of those who ought to be responsible men of moral power and strong spiritual muscle.” (CG 156.3)

There is a good type of adversity and a bad type of adversity. By no means must a child go through abuse

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to meet his emotional need. One study concluded that children who have been victims of abuse are far less equipped to manage life's challenges as an adult. The same study also showed that children who have had no exposure to adversity faced similar challenges in adulthood. The good type of adversity that succeeds in benefiting a child is a moderate amount of adversity. Also, keep in mind that hardship does not mean harshness.

Choice:

The ability to become an independent thinker, to make good decisions, is born out of adversity.

Barna Research Finding: Successful parents did not dictate to their children what they should think. They taught critical thinking based upon the Bible.

“There are many families of children who appear to be well trained, while under the training discipline; but when the system which has held them to set rules is broken up, they seem to be incapable of thinking, acting, or deciding for themselves. These children have been so long under iron rule, not allowed to think and act for themselves in those things in which it was highly proper that they should, that they have no confidence in themselves to move out upon their own judgment, having an opinion of their own. And when they go out from their parents to act for themselves, they are easily led by others' judgment in the wrong direction.” (CG 226.1)

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“There are many who believe, without a reason on which to base their faith, without sufficient evidence as to the truth of the matter. If an idea is presented that harmonizes with their own preconceived opinions, they are all ready to accept it. They do not reason from cause to effect. Their faith has no genuine foundation, and in the time of trial they will find that they have built upon the sand.” (2MCP 535.3)

“[L]et them learn to draw lessons and discern truth for themselves.” (CG 35.1)

Structure:

As previously explained, children of all ages thrive on routine and schedule and inversely become more anxious when there is none. Understanding that their parents are in control reassures them, allowing them to feel secure and safe.

“Haphazard work in the home will not pass the review in the judgment.” (CG 25.1)

“As far as possible, it is well to consider what is to be accomplished through the day. Make a memorandum of the different duties that await your attention, and set apart a certain time for the doing of each duty.” (CG 124)

“In every family there should be a fixed time for morning and evening worship.” (CG 520)

“At an early hour of the evening, when we can pray

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unhurriedly and understandingly, we should present our supplications and raise our voices in happy, grateful praise.” (CG 520)

“In the morning *the Christian’s first thoughts* should be upon God.” (CG 519, emphasis mine)

Avoid “haphazard work in the home” by creating a schedule. For me it is tremendously helpful to have an outline for the day. Every morning, the first things we do as a family are to drink water and have family worship. Meal times do need to be on a stricter time frame than other activities for the health of yourself and your children. Understand, though, that even something great like a schedule can be taken to extremes, attempting to dictate things down to the minute. And certainly, there will be days, like special occasions or when you are traveling, when you do not follow your typical schedule at all. But do keep water, worship, meals and sleep as regular as possible all the time.

Fun:

“Bring all the pleasure possible into your exercises as teacher and educator of your children.” (3SM 229.3)

“If they [parents] would gather the children close to them and ... manifest an interest in all their efforts and even in their sports, sometimes even being a child among children, they would make the children very happy and would gain their love and win their confidence. And the children would sooner respect and love the authority of their parents and teachers.” (AH

192.4)

“Young children love companionship and can seldom enjoy themselves alone. They yearn for sympathy and tenderness. That which they enjoy they think will please mother also, and it is natural for them to go to her with their little joys and sorrows. The mother should not wound their sensitive hearts by treating with indifference matters that, though trifling to her, are of great importance to them. Her sympathy and approval are precious. An approving glance, a word of encouragement or commendation, will be like sunshine in their hearts, often making the whole day happy.” (AH 190.4)

Affirmation & Commendation:

God the Father said to His Son Jesus Christ, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (Matthew 3:17). Our relationship with our children ought to similarly be one of encouragement. There are many who may not have received affirmation from their parents when they were young. Go to our heavenly Father; receive from Him words of lovingkindness and in kind bestow them upon your own children.

“Children need appreciation, sympathy, and encouragement, but care should be taken not to foster in them a love of praise.” (Ed 237.3)

“Commend your children whenever you can. Make their lives as happy as possible.... Remember that children need not only reproof and correction, but

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encouragement and commendation, the pleasant sunshine of kind words.” (AH 18.3)

“Be kind and tenderhearted, showing Christian politeness, thanking and commending your children for the help they give you.” (CG 260.4)

Recall that we are not to put our children on display as prodigies of wit and wisdom. Point them to Jesus as the Object of praise and the Source of goodness. Thank them for allowing Jesus to use them to be helpful.

Actual Jobs & Accomplishments:

Refrain from praising children for made-up accomplishments or tasks that did not require much effort on their part. Children know when they have worked hard on something. For you to acknowledge *that* gives them satisfaction as a part of the “family firm.”

Physical touch:

There are bonding hormones that are released when we hug, when a mother holds her infant. Showing physical affection for your children is part of having fun. As Dr. Dimitri Christakis says, “Children need laps not apps!” I couldn’t agree more.

Chapter 9

At the Right Time

Barna Research Finding: Successful parents advance their children at a pace that is natural for the children.

Boys are different from girls; children have different gifts and strengths. My second eldest, Silas, did not begin talking as early as Levi did; Levi overall is the more loquacious one. But just because your child may develop at a different speed than his sibling or than an online article states, it does not mean that he is slow or disabled.

“The little ones should be educated in childlike simplicity. They should be trained to be content with the small, helpful duties and the pleasures and experiences *natural* to their years.” (Ed 107.2, emphasis mine)

“True education is not the forcing of instruction on an *unready* and unreceptive mind. The mental powers must be awakened, the interest aroused.” (Ed 41.2, emphasis mine)

“Mothers, let the little ones play in the open air; let them listen to the songs of the birds and learn the love of God as expressed in His beautiful works. Teach them simple lessons from the book of nature and the things

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about them; and *as their minds expand*, lessons from books may be added and firmly fixed in their memory.” (CG 34.1, emphasis mine)

Our society is one of achievement. We have been consistently gravitating to more hours in a school desk at an earlier and earlier age; we now have full-time kindergarten! But are we jumping the gun with our children’s minds? There is a specific time in a child’s life when his mind becomes ready for academics.

“The powers of [Jesus’] mind and body developed gradually, in keeping with the laws of childhood.” (DA 68.2)

“Little children, whose limbs and muscles are not strong, and whose brains are *undeveloped*, have been kept confined indoors to their injury.” (FE 19.2, emphasis mine)

“During the first *six or seven* years of a child’s life, special attention should be given to its physical training, *rather than the intellect*.” (CG 300.3, emphasis mine)

“Too much importance cannot be placed on the early training of children. The lessons that the child learns during the first *seven years* of life have more to do with *forming his character* than all that it learns in future years.” (CG 193.1, emphasis mine)

“Parents should be the only teachers of their children

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until they have reached *eight or ten years of age*.” (CH 177.1, emphasis mine)

“The only schoolroom for children from *eight to ten* years of age should be in the open air, amid the opening flowers and nature’s beautiful scenery.” (CH 177.1, emphasis mine)

According to the pen of inspiration, there are laws of childhood development. Certain types of learning are appropriate for certain age ranges. These above quotations are also perfectly in-line with recent research: Science has shown that the right hemisphere of our brain; the area that houses faith, belief, spirituality, and creativity; develops most acutely until seven or eight years old in girls and nine or 10 in boys. After this age is reached, the left hemisphere of the brain; where logic, math, and reading are learned; becomes the dominant area of development.

“Many children have been ruined for life by urging the intellectual, and neglecting to strengthen the physical powers.” (CE 8.3)

Barna Research Finding: Successful parents are sensitive to their children’s stress and burnout level.

Barna Research Finding: College degrees and intellectual and economic advancement were considered secondary to character and service.

This does not mean that academics, intellect, and career are not important. Upholding the academic standard is very

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important. It is the timing and priority that are being called into question.

“The more quiet and simple the life of the child—the more free from artificial excitement and the more in harmony with nature—the more favorable it is to physical and mental vigor and to spiritual strength.” (CG 139.1)

“To live in the country would be very beneficial to them [children]; an active, out-of-door life would develop health of both mind and body. They should have a garden to cultivate, where they might find both amusement and useful employment.” (AH 142.1)

Bringing up children away from the environment of city life is a key element in these last days. Both my wife and I were “city” kids. It was the Lord who converted us to raise our children in the country. At first, we were anxious about the time and effort it would take whenever we needed to travel to the nearest city, but now we do not even miss it and would actually rather not go.

“Some parents give much time and attention to amusing their children, but children should be trained to amuse themselves, to exercise their own ingenuity and skill. Thus they will learn to be content with very simple pleasures.” (CG 132.5)

“Let the mother ... find time to cultivate in herself and her children a love for the beautiful things of nature.” (CG 48.1)

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“Next to the Bible, nature is to be our great lesson book. To the little child, not yet capable of learning from the printed page or of being introduced to the routine of the schoolroom, nature presents an unfailing source of instruction and delight.” (CG 45.1–45.2)

This concept is actually not that radical. In the beginning God put Adam in a garden. Being in nature was our Creator’s ideal for us as human beings, not crowding entire populations into small, artificial cities and suburbs. Here is a call for us to return to how we were created to live and find the joy in God’s original plan for our lives.

SECTION 4

Those Whom I Love, I Discipline

Is obedience legalistic? Is it unnecessary or even harmful for the Christian life? No, indeed. Obedience, rules, discipline are an extremely important part of the Christian life and are actually an essential factor in forming the characters of our children.

Those Whom I Love, I Discipline

Chapter 10

The Benefit of Obedience

Barna Research Finding: Successful parents established and consistently enforced rules.

“Many souls will be eternally lost because of the neglect of parents to properly discipline their children, and to teach them submission to authority in their youth.” (CG 176.2)

“The parents have thought they loved their children, but have proved themselves their worst enemies. They have let evil go unrestrained. They have allowed their children to cherish sin, which is like cherishing and petting a viper, that will not only sting the victim who cherishes it, but all with whom he is connected.” (CG 177.2)

“Every Christian home should have rules ...” (AH 16.3)

“They [Parents] should not leave the children to guess at what is right, but should point out the way in unmistakable terms and teach them to walk therein.” (CG 87.3)

“These rules should be few and well considered, and

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once made they should be enforced.” (CG 323.3)

“Lessons on obedience, on respect for authority, need to be often repeated.” (CG 88.1)

Put your rules into practice. If you do so, your children will actually end up being the best enforcers of those rules!

Barna Research Finding: Successful parents’ children knew that their parents were the bosses and in control.

While there may be different rules of your household, the overarching rule comes straight from Scripture: “Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right” (Ephesians 6:1).

Study the very different parenting styles of these Bible characters, Eli and Abraham. From Eli’s lax and loose parenting, his two sons learned rebellion and disrespect. Ultimately, he became his children’s worst enemy. From Abraham’s consistency and order we were given the times of morning and evening worship, as before stated, and an exemplary character of faith in God. What a contrast!

In the post-modern age in which we live, we are unfortunately extolling the strategy of Eli instead of that of Abraham. Today, we continue to enforce that there is no definitive right and wrong, that the only law is the one of your own desire: Do what thou wilt, not what God wills. It now borders on criminal to say “No” to your child!

The absurd trends of today’s parenting range from the likes of “Yes Days,” where the parent does not refuse the child anything he asks, to “free play,” in which the parent refrains from definitely naming toys and other things with

which the child is involved and instead allows the child to define them. Times of “free play” also include purposefully not identifying the gender of dolls or people; that also is for the child to decide. These kinds of teaching tactics were born out of an opinion that rules mean tyranny. But parental discipline is not some oppressive dictatorship. Correctly identifying a child’s model airplane does not quash the child’s creativity; it actually helps the child to function in the world in which he lives.

There is a clear, frontal assault happening on everything Bible-based. According to today’s leaders, your children do not belong to you, the parent; they belong to the collective body of humanity. The United Nations has even created a treaty entitled Convention on the Rights of the Child, in which Article 13 states that every child has the right to access and choose his own media, regardless of parental restrictions. This virtually means that your child has the right to decide his own values. Society today will say that to do anything less would be to rob your child of his rights. But it is actually the other way around: You are the one who is being robbed of your God-given right to parent your own child.

“What kind of love is it that permits your child to develop traits of character that will make him and everyone else miserable? Away with such love! True love will look out for the present and eternal good of the soul.” (CG 186.2)

“Wherever we go, we see children indulged, petted and praised without discretion. ... Self-will and pride are evils that turned angels into demons and barred the

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gates of heaven against them. And yet parents, unconsciously, are systematically training their children to be the agents of Satan.” (CG 178.2)

“Oh, that the Eli’s of today, who are everywhere to be found pleading excuses for the waywardness of their children, would promptly assert their own God-given authority to restrain and correct them. ... If, instead of unlimited indulgence, the chastening rod were oftener used, not in passion, but with love and prayer, we would see happier families and a better state of society.” (CG 276.1)

“Children will be happier, far happier, under proper discipline than if left to do as their untrained impulses suggest.” (CG 79.2)

“Children who are allowed to have their own way are not happy.” (CG 213.4)

Discipline is primarily for your children’s happiness, not your own. And it is a fact of life that consistent and clear rules produce happiness in children: “Children who are under this firm, decisive rule know that when a thing is forbidden or denied, no teasing or artifice will secure their object. Hence they soon learn to submit and are much happier in so doing. The children of undecided and overindulgent parents have a constant hope that coaxing, crying, or sullenness may gain their object, or that they may venture to disobey without suffering the penalty. Thus they are kept in a state of desire, hope, and uncertainty, which makes them restless, irritable, and insubordinate. God

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holds such parents guilty of wrecking the happiness of their children” (CG 284.1).

“The mother allows misdemeanors to pass at one time for which she will severely punish at another. The children never know just what to expect, and are tempted to see how far they can transgress with impunity.” (AH 314.5)

Children naturally want to know how life works, and so they test the limits of what they can do. It is your job as a parent to place firm and consistent boundaries so that your children can understand, learn, and grow. They are secure and content in this knowledge.

“In respecting and rendering obedience to their parents, they may learn how to respect and obey their heavenly Father.” (CG 83.2)

Godly discipline naturally brings children to trust and obey their parents. We acquire trust from our children when we do what we say; obedience to what we say follows suit. As always, the ultimate goal of this is that they may form a similar kind of relationship with our heavenly Father, to trust and obey Him in all things. This is the root of the Christian life, salvation by faith.

When Abraham was about to sacrifice Isaac upon the altar, Isaac, a hardy youth, could easily have overpowered his aging father. But he did not. He trusted Abraham implicitly and was willing to lay down his life in that trust. Job trusted God with his life: “Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him” (Job 13:15). We are to have that same trust

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in God and instill that same trust in our children.

Chapter 11

Teaching Obedience

“**B**egin in the baby life to teach obedience....” (CG 82.2)

“Frequently mere babes show a most determined will.” (CG 230.2)

“Parents, you should commence your first lesson of discipline when your children are babes in your arms. Teach them to yield their will to yours. This can be done by bearing an even hand and manifesting firmness. Parents should have perfect control over their own spirits and, with mildness and yet firmness, bend the will of the child until it shall expect nothing else but to yield to their wishes.” (CG 230.4)

“The little ones, before they are a year old, hear and understand what is spoken in reference to themselves, and know to what extent they are to be indulged.” (CG 91.2)

Start from infancy to teach your child obedience. Babies are not so helpless as one may think; they can even be taught sign language. When he was a baby, Silas would tend to throw his head and arch his back when having a tantrum. My wife would calmly bring his head back up and tell him that he was not to do that. Eventually, he stopped.

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“Touch the hand a little severely, if necessary. When he reaches after the forbidden object again, say, ‘No, no! No, no! Mustn’t touch! Mustn’t touch!’ If thus trained in their babyhood and early childhood, they will learn to obey while very young.” (BEcho March 9, 1903, par. 2)

“Mothers, be sure that you properly discipline your children during the first three years of their lives. Do not allow them to form their wishes and desires. The mother must be mind for her child.” (CG 194.2)

It is important to note that mothers must take this stance only in the very early stages of infancy.

“[A]s soon as he is capable of understanding, his reason should be enlisted on the side of obedience.” (CG 223.1)

“If you have waited until your children were three years old to begin to teach them self-control and obedience, seek to do it now, even though it will be much harder.” (CG 194.3)

“Those who realize their deficiency in this respect should make the subject of family government their most diligent study.” (CG 238.2)

There is an ideal time for instilling obedience in your children, but it is no lost cause if that window is missed. Do not give up if you are a parent whose child is older but

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persevere all the more.

“The word of the parents should be law, precluding all arguments or evasions.” (CG 85.2)

“[R]equire prompt and perfect obedience ...” (CG 86.1)

“A child should be so trained that a refusal would be received in the right spirit and accepted as final.” (CG 273.2)

“[I]t is better to request than to command; the one thus addressed has opportunity to prove himself loyal to right principles.” (Ed 290.1)

Remember that balance is of the utmost importance. You are not a drill sergeant; neither are you a doormat.

“Give *few* commands, but see that these are obeyed.” (CG 247.3, emphasis mine)

“*Some* commanding may be necessary in the place of consulting the inclination and pleasure of the children.” (CG 234.1, emphasis mine)

“The mother should not allow her child to gain an advantage over her in a single instance ...” (CG 82.7)

This kind of waffling spirit in the parent gives way only to an affinity for gambling in the child.

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“It is not the greatness of the disobedience, but the disobedience itself which is the crime.” (CG 80.1)

“Satan will devise every possible means to break down this high standard of piety as one altogether too strict.” (CG 80.3)

Perhaps there are some who think this kind of obedience impossible for a child to accomplish. But do not be deceived. Remember that the training of your child in obedience is not an isolated factor. At the same time that you are providing discipline for your child, you are also practicing all that was previously discussed, walking with God in matters of health, play, bonding, and your child’s emotional and physical needs. Disciplining your child will become a loving act, just as all the other parts of life with your child are.

“[M]ake obedience ... as easy as possible.” (CG 210.4)

“Instead of kindly asking the children to do this or that, they order them in a scolding tone. ... They do your bidding, not from love, but because they dare not do otherwise. Their heart is not in the matter. It is a drudgery instead of a pleasure, and this often leads them to forget to follow out all your directions, which increases your irritation and makes it still worse for the children. The faultfinding is repeated, their bad conduct arrayed before them in glowing colors, until discouragement comes over them, and they are not particular whether they please or not. A spirit of ‘I don’t care’ seizes them, and they seek that pleasure and

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enjoyment away from home, away from their parents, which they do not find at home.” (CG 281.2)

Here is a list of tips that will help your children to follow your instructions:

Do not provoke.

“Often we do more to provoke than to win. I have seen a mother snatch from the hand of her child something that was giving it special pleasure. The child did not know the reason for this, and naturally felt abused. Then followed a quarrel ...” (CG 279.2)

Be reasonable.

Do not ask too much of them that they are too challenged. Do not set them up to fail so that you may discipline them. The goal is to have them succeed and to help them to do so.

“The requirements of parents should always be reasonable ...” (CG 86.2)

“Sometimes everything seems to go wrong in the family circle. There is fretfulness all around, and all seem very miserable and unhappy. The parents lay the blame upon their poor children and think them very disobedient and unruly, the worst children in the world, when the cause of the disturbance is in themselves.” (CG 247.1)

Get their attention.

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Before requiring something of them, be sure that your children are paying attention to you first. Making eye contact is helpful here.

Do not surprise them.

A little bit of advance warning goes a long way in helping your children to obey your requests.

Be clear.

Be extremely exact about what you want them to do. Do not assume and do not hold them accountable to guessing your desires.

“Tell your children exactly what you require of them. Then let them understand that your word is law and must be obeyed.” (CG 225.1)

Use few words.

You do not need to prove to your utmost the reason you are asking your children to do something.

Differentiate between suggestions and commands.

Asking your child to throw you the ball when you are playing catch is different from asking him to pass you the dishes to be washed. Be certain that your child understands the difference and that he acknowledges your request directly.

Do not speak irritably or angrily.

This is akin to not provoking your child.

“Passion is not necessary to secure prompt obedience.

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... [B]e sure that the tone of your voice betrays no irritation.” (CG 261.2–261.3)

“They speak irritably and in a manner to excite wrath in their children, and are sometimes exacting and fretful.” (CG 206.4)

Do not ask questions; make statements.

Questions are confusing and may sound like options instead of requests.

Phrase commands in the positive.

Do not tell them *not* to do something. Rather, tell them what they *ought* to be doing instead. For example your child is standing on the coffee table. Instead of telling him, “Do not stand on the coffee table,” say to him, “Please get down from the coffee table.”

“[S]eek to correct their faults by encouraging opposite traits.” (CG 206.2)

Stay focused on the task at hand.

Do not ask your child to do something and then busy yourself with other things to the point that you ignore your child. This creates in your child a habit of disobedience, as he will know that he need not do what is required of him and need only wait some time before you have forgotten about what you have asked him to do.

“Do not ... in your discipline of children release them from that which you have required them to do. Do not let your mind become so absorbed in other things as to

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cause you to grow careless.” (CG 247.4)

“It is not enough that you say, Do this, or, Do that, and then become utterly regardless and forgetful of what you have required, and the children are not careful to do your commands.” (CG 31.1)

Be consistent in enforcing obedience.

Parental discipline should be as predictable and constant as gravity. This builds trust in your children.

“When it is necessary for parents to give a direct command, the penalty of disobedience should be as unvarying as are the laws of nature.” (CG 284.1)

Chapter 12

Managing Temper Tantrums

How do you handle your child's temper tantrums? There are well-tried methods for managing them in a healthful and beneficial way.

“While they are too young to reason with, divert their minds as best you can ...” (CG 244.3)

When a baby or a very young toddler is having a tantrum, try at times to focus his attention elsewhere. For Levi all I had to do was carry him to the window; the outside world would entirely distract him. For Silas I would carefully turn him upside down and walk back and forth around the house. This new point of view completely captivated him until he forgot about what had made him so upset.

Every child is different. Different diversions will be solutions for different children. Their tantrums will look different as well. Silas' tantrums matched his mild personality: He would lie on the ground and subtly kick his legs while looking at us. It did not look like a typical tantrum, but my wife and I recognized it as Silas' version of making a fuss in his own way.

“There are times when the determination of the mother meets the determination of the child. ... *This is a crisis*

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that should seldom be permitted to come, for both mother and child will have a hard struggle. Great care should be shown to avoid such an issue.” (CG 211.1–211.2, emphasis mine)

This counsel is useful for children of any age, not just for toddlers. It is unnecessary to invite conflict in order to prove your authority. Your consistency should do that for you. Besides, there are enough conflicts between parent and child that will naturally come about without baiting or encouraging a fight. Avoiding conflict will also make for a better relationship with your child and a more welcoming environment at home. But at the same time by no means are you to excuse misbehavior in the child.

“I have often seen the little one throw itself and scream if its will was crossed in any way. This is the time to rebuke the evil spirit.” (CG 93.1)

“They [Mothers] should not allow them to pound their heads on the floor.... Let the mothers educate them in their infancy. Commence with the songs of Bethlehem. These soft tunes will have a quieting influence.” (CG 93.2)

“They [Mothers] see Satan working in the self-willed child of even but a few months of age. ... [I]t is the greatest cruelty to let Satan have the possession of that tender, helpless child. Satan must be rebuked. His hold on the child must be broken. If correction is needed, be faithful, be true.” (CG 289.1)

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“The mother is to keep her words under perfect control. There are to be no loud-voiced commands. Nothing is to be done that will develop a defiant spirit in the child. The mother must study how to deal with him in such a way that he will be drawn to Jesus. She must pray in faith that Satan shall not be victor over the child’s will. The heavenly angels are watching the scene.” (CG 211.2)

Primarily though, meet willful and violent disobedience with earnest prayer to God.

“True love is not exercised toward children when they are allowed to indulge passion, or when disobedience of your laws is permitted to go unpunished. As the twig is bent, the tree is inclined.” (AH 318.3)

Do not allow your children to work themselves into a fit under the deception of your being nice. That is not love and kindness but misrepresentation and cowardice. Correct your children but do so in a loving manner; that is the biblical definition of love.

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Chapter 13

When Your Child Breaks the Rules

Barna Research Finding: Successful parents enforced rules without malice.

“The parent who, when correcting a child, gives way to anger is more at fault than the child.” (CG 246.1)

“Ask the gardener by what process he makes every branch and leaf to flourish so beautifully, and to develop in symmetry and loveliness. He will tell you that it was by no rude touch, no violent effort; for this would only break the delicate stems. It was by little attentions, often repeated.” (CG 36.3)

“Be careful, mothers; *never* scold, for that *never* helps.” (CG 216.2, emphasis mine)

“[C]orrect their errors, and patiently teach them the right way.” (CG 33.4)

“Be patient with their imperfections, as God is patient with you in your imperfections ...” (CG 185.3)

You scold when you accuse with your tone of voice. It is meant to sound unpleasant, even harsh. The word is often used to refer to a parent’s manner of reprimanding their

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children—but *this should not be*.

The motive of disciplining is not to retributively judge your child as if under some familial penal system. It is not to give the child what he deserves or to settle some score. The goal of disciplining is not to merely make the child feel bad for what he has done. The point of disciplining is in its root word: The point of disciplining is to teach, to disciple. Hence, the only reason to punish a child is for a didactic purpose.

This means that, for example, if your child has done wrong and has come to you genuinely sorry for what he has done, then there is no need to apply the “rod of correction.” He has come to you already repentant. Now is the time to forgive him, as God does for us when we confess our sins to Him (1 John 1:9). What are you teaching your child if you do castigate him at this stage? You are teaching him that the very Gospel is worthless.

Here is the heart of the matter. The Good News tells us that Jesus Christ died for the sins of the whole world, including yours and your children’s, and that because of His sacrifice, we may have everlasting life. He took our place and was given the judgment we rightly deserve so that we could be spared. If you punish your repentant child with the rod, you are effectively teaching him that Christ’s punishment, His death, was not sufficient to cover your child’s wrongdoing.

“Your children may have done something that demands punishment; but if you deal with them in the spirit of Christ, their arms will be thrown about your neck; they will humble themselves before the Lord and will acknowledge their wrong. That is enough. *They do not*

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then need punishment.” (CG 244.1, emphasis mine)

“Do not become impatient with your children when they err. When you correct them, do not speak abruptly and harshly.” (CG 151.4)

“Neither infants, children, or youth should hear an impatient word from father, mother, or any member of the household ...” (CG 193.5)

“And think you that in the day of God’s judgment anyone will regret that he has been patient and kind with his children?” (CG 246.3)

“Harsh words sour the temper and wound the hearts of children, and in some cases these wounds are difficult to heal.” (AH 308.4)

“Never, never are you to show a tyrannical spirit in the home. The man who does this is working in partnership with satanic agencies.” (AH 213.3)

“To manifest passion toward an erring child is to increase the evil.” (CG 245.4)

The time that you deal with your children regarding their sins is the time when you most teach them about who God is. If, then, we are not to speak in frustration to our children when we are requesting something of them, how much more are we not to exhibit anger towards them when they misbehave?

So what do you do to teach a child not to misbehave?

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No, you do not punish for punishment's sake, but you do teach through consequences, both natural and imposed. If a child mistreats his sibling, the sibling naturally will not want to play with the child anymore. The child then learns from the natural consequence of his own mean behavior. If a child breaks a rule by throwing a ball inside the house, then you, the parent, impose a consequence: take the ball away. If a child is deliberately playing with his drink at the dinner table and knocks over his glass, then you, the parent, give require him to wipe up the spill. The child learns from the logical consequences that you impose on his misbehavior. Inversely, the child also learns from the positive consequences that occur when obeying the rules.

Barna Research Findings: Successful parents may have used different types of consequences or punishments, but all of them followed these guidelines:

- Their rules were reasonable and based on the Bible.
- Their rules were consistently enforced in some effective manner.
- Their rules were enforced without malice. They controlled their anger/frustration because they realized the damage they could do with words.
- Both parents were on the same page regarding enforcement of the rules.
- They lived out in their own lives what they asked of their kids.
- They always treated their kids with respect, as image-bearers of God. They did not belittle,

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accuse, or condemn them.

- They were willing to apologize if they got too upset.

“When your children do wrong and are filled with rebellion, and you are tempted to speak and act harshly, wait before you correct them. Give them an opportunity to think, and allow your temper to cool.” (CG 246.3)

“Before correcting them, go by yourself, and ask the Lord to soften and subdue the hearts of your children and to give you wisdom in dealing with them. ... You cannot make a child understand spiritual things when the heart is stirred with passion.” (CG 244.2)

“When I have felt roiled and was tempted to speak words that I would be ashamed of, I would keep silent and pass right out of the room and ask God to give me patience to teach these children. Then I could go back and talk with them, and tell them they must not do this wrong again.” (CG 254.4)

There is a wonderful power in silence. More importantly, if you are upset, *do not at this point discipline your children*: “Discipline them only when you are under the discipline of God.” (CG 245.1)

“With your heart full of pity and sorrow for your erring children, pray with them before correcting them. ... That prayer may make such an impression on their minds that they will see that you are not unreasonable.” (CG 252.3–CG 253.1)

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“As you bow before God with your child, you will present before the sympathizing Redeemer His own words, ‘Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of God.’ Mark 10:14. That prayer will bring angels to your side. Your child will not forget these experiences, and the blessing of God will rest upon such instruction, leading him to Christ. When children realize that their parents are trying to help them, they will bend their energies in the right direction.” (CG 253.3)

“Let him [the father] in love talk with his children, telling them how grieved the Saviour is over their course. ... Such disciplining will nearly always break the most stubborn heart.” (CG 286.4)

If the child does have a change of heart, after this there may still be consequences for teaching purposes, not for punishing purposes. But here is what to do if the child does not have a change of heart:

“*Some* children are so vicious in their tempers that the infliction of pain is necessary, but very many cases are made much worse by this manner of discipline....” (CG 251.3, emphasis mine)

“You *may* have to punish with the rod; this is sometimes essential, but defer any settlement of the difficulty until you have settled the case with yourselves. Ask yourself, Have I submitted my way and will to God? Have I placed myself where God can

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manage me, so that I may have wisdom, patience, kindness, and love in dealing with the refractory elements in the home?” (CG 251.2, emphasis mine)

“Whipping *may* be necessary when other resorts fail, yet she should not use the rod if it is possible to avoid doing so. But if milder measures prove insufficient, punishment that will bring the child to its senses should in love be administered. Frequently one such correction will be enough for a lifetime, to show the child that he does not hold the lines of control.

“And when this step becomes necessary, the child should be seriously impressed with the thought that this is not done for the gratification of the parent, or to indulge arbitrary authority, but for the child’s own good.” (CG 250.2–250.3, emphasis mine)

“Never raise your hand to give them a blow unless you can with a clear conscience bow before God and ask His blessing upon the correction you are about to give.” (CG 252.1)

“Never give your child a passionate blow, unless you want him to learn to fight and quarrel.” (CG 251.1)

“If you wish to ruin your family, continue to govern by brute force, and you will surely succeed.” (CG 252.1)

“I have said that to shake a child would shake two evil spirits in, while it would shake one out.” (CG 252.2)

“Be so calm, so free from anger, that they will be

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convinced that you love them, even though you punish them.” (CG 249.2)

A popularly debated topic is whether or not parents should spank their children as a form of punishment. According to the Barna Group’s conclusions, there were spiritually successful parents in both camps, those who spanked their children and those who did not. It was not the chosen method of punishment that mattered, but the fact that rules were enforced consistently without malice.

If intended to be used, the “rod of correction” should be avoided if at all possible and should be used only as a last resort. It is when the child is out-of-control rebellious that he may need the rod, “may” being the operative word Ellen White used. Scripture sheds more light on this: “Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him” (Proverbs 22:15).

It may even be that the proverbial “rod” is not literal but instead is a serious and immediate consequence that suddenly brings the child to his senses. Corporal forms of punishment may also not be suited to every child. The Barna Group concluded that successful parents did not believe that their behavior to each of their children needed to be identical in order to be fair.

“The true object of reproof is gained only when the wrongdoer himself is led to see his fault and his will is enlisted for its correction. When this is accomplished, point him to the source of pardon and power.” (CG 223.2)

“Every true teacher will feel that should he err at all, it

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is better to err on the side of mercy than on the side of severity.” (Ed 293.2)

“Instead of punishing them when they did wrong, I would hold out inducements to them to do right. One was in the habit of throwing herself on the floor if she could not have her own way. I said to her, ‘If you will not lose your temper once today, your uncle White and I will take you in the carriage, and we will have a happy day in the country. But if you throw yourself on the floor once, you will forfeit your right to the pleasure.’” (CG 249.3)

“If in your effort you can see no special improvement, be not discouraged; patiently instruct, line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little.... Press on until the victory is gained.” (CG 104.1)

Every parent goes through bouts of discouragement and dismay. I am particularly uplifted by a section in *Child Guidance* entitled “Be Not Weary in Well-doing,” found on page 242. Take heart, parents. Continue in God’s guidance, “[a]nd let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not” (Galatians 6:9).

Barna Research Finding: Successful parents prayed a lot for their children.

“I know of nothing that causes me so great sadness as a prayerless home.” (CG 518.2)

“Pray much more than you do.” (CG 478.2)

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“Your compassionate Redeemer is watching you in love and sympathy, ready to hear your prayers and render you the assistance which you need in your lifework.” (CG 173.1)

“He knows the burdens of every mother’s heart and is her best friend in every emergency. His everlasting arms support the God-fearing, faithful mother.” (AH 204.1)

“Difficulties will arise; you will meet with obstacles; but look constantly to Jesus. When an emergency arises, ask, Lord, what shall I do now? If you refuse to fret or scold, the Lord will show you the way.” (CG 478.3)

“Parents, are you working with unflagging energy in behalf of your children? The God of heaven marks your solicitude, your earnest work, your constant watchfulness. He hears your prayers. With patience and tenderness train your children for the Lord. All heaven is interested in your work.... God will unite with you, crowning your efforts with success.” (AH 205.3)

“When the judgment shall sit, and the books shall be opened; when the ‘well done’ of the great Judge is pronounced, and the crown of immortal glory is placed upon the brow of the victor, many will raise their crowns in sight of the assembled universe and, pointing to their mother, say, ‘She made me all I am through the grace of God. Her instruction, her prayers, have been

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blessed to my eternal salvation.’ ” (CG 564.1)

Your relationship, your faith, your dependence upon God is the most important factor in discipling your children. Put God first in all that you do and inevitably the training of your child will follow. Make God your all that He may also be all to your children, that He may also say to them on that glorious day, “Well done, good and faithful servant; ... enter thou into the joy of thy lord” (Matthew 25:23).

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Raising the Remnant

RAISING THE REMNANT

A Portrait of Successful Christian Parenting

DISCOVER THE SURPRISING ANSWERS!

- What are the successful parents like?
- What is their #1 priority?
- What is the single most important factor in raising a spiritually strong young adult?

Over 75,000 parenting books have been published in the last two decades alone - that's nearly 10 books per day! Indeed, opinions on parenting abound, but are there any solid facts to be found?

Are there any objective data that identify the kind of parenting most likely to produce spiritually strong young adults?

Yes! Recent research has indeed painted a remarkably clear portrait of the character, values, and practices of parents whose young adult children are now thriving spiritually. Raising the Remnant not only reports on these George Barna research findings, but also uncovers that this very same traditional advice was given in the 19th century!

You're sure to walk away from this power-packed book with practical and proven time-tested success strategies.

While there are no guarantees in a universe of free will, the principles in this book will provide your children every advantage in becoming the spiritually strong remnant in the midst of a spiritually lost generation.



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