

Lesson 7 | January 15, 2023

Principles for the Christian Household

Study Text: Deuteronomy 5:16; Proverbs 4:20–27; 13:24; 19:18; 22:6; Luke 2:41–52; Ephesians 6:1–4; Colossians 3:16–17, 20–21; Titus 2:1–8

Central Truth: God blesses the family that lives by His Word

Key Verse: Proverbs 22:6

Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it (KJV).

Direct your children onto the right path, and when they are older, they will not leave it (NLT).

Learning Objectives

- Students will reaffirm that the Bible provides instruction for families that results in God's blessings on them.
- Students will value the guidance God provides in His Word for building happy, healthy families.
- Students will adopt scriptural guidelines to promote godly living in families.

Introducing the Study

Say: When adults play games with younger children, they may not always be strict about making the children follow the rules, allowing them to bend or break rules. Perhaps they think the child may not be old enough to understand the rules and so allow it. Others may see the game as a way to spend time together, so enjoying that time is more important than following the rules. As children get older, however, most adults (excluding grandmas!) begin to be more strict about the rules. They see it as a way to teach a life lesson on the need for and benefits of following rules.

Opening Activity—Evidence of Interests

Ask. What hobbies do you enjoy, and what items might be found in your home that would indicate you are interested in them? (You might get answers such as fishing/fishing poles or boat, sewing or crafts/sewing machine or craft supplies, etc.)

Say: Most people have items in their homes that point to the activities they are interested in. Likewise, if we claim to be a Christian family, our homes and our daily lives will speak of that commitment. (Share your highlights from the following text.)

Today's lesson focuses on the Bible's principles for being a Christian family and how our lives should demonstrate our commitment to live for God as a family.

What are some guiding principles we should see in Christian homes?

Part 1—Be a Christlike Example

Christ-Centered Focus

Colossians 3:16–17

[Col 3:16-17 KJV] 16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. 17 And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, [do] all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.

Say: Families tend to live at a hectic pace. For parents to build a godly home, they must intentionally incorporate spiritual practices into the family’s daily life. Paul gave some specific instructions to the Colossian church that apply both to the family unit as well as to the Church. (Share your highlights from the following text.)

Paul’s words to the Colossian church provide guiding principles for individuals, families, and churches. First, he says, “Let the message about Christ . . . fill your lives” (verse 16, NLT). The message about Christ is the Scripture. Spending time in God’s Word as individuals and as a family lays a solid foundation for Christian living. Discussing how Scripture applies to everyday life and its influence on our relationship with God and others sets the stage for us to “teach and counsel each other” (NLT), as Paul instructed. The next instruction, “Sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs to God with thankful hearts” (NLT), suggests that filling our lives with Christian music provides an atmosphere of worship, whether we are at home or engaged in corporate worship. Finally, he sums it up with “whatever you say or do . . .” (NLT), encouraging us to be representatives of Jesus in everything we do.

Parents need to show, not just tell, their children how to live with a Christ-centered focus (verse 17). Children learn this best when they see their parents practice what they preach. A vital personal relationship with Jesus that influences a parent’s lifestyle is a powerful testimony to their children that can help them choose to follow Jesus too.

These fundamentals of Christian living—the Word, worship, and witness (godly living)—are essential if parents are to train up children in the way of the Lord. Making them a part of everyday living can be a challenge. But the Bible points to the blessings that come with a Christ-centered focus.

Resource Packet Item 1: Filling the Jar

Distribute the work sheet to students, then give them time to fill it out. Ask volunteers to share their responses as you lead the class in discussing the work sheet. As an alternative, bring in a jar, some stones, pebbles, and sand and do the object lesson in class, then discuss the questions.

Discuss

? Colossians 3:16–17 speaks of thankfulness. How is thankfulness related to being a Christlike example?

? How would you rate your effectiveness in being a representative of Jesus in all you do and say in your home? Explain.

Teach to Promote Godly Living

Titus 2:1–8

[Tit 2:1-8 KJV] 1 But speak thou the things which become sound doctrine: 2 That the aged men be sober, grave, temperate, sound in faith, in charity, in patience. 3 The aged women likewise, that [they be] in behaviour as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things; 4 That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, 5 [To be] discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed. 6 Young men likewise exhort to be sober minded. 7 In all things shewing thyself a pattern of good works: in doctrine [shewing] uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity, 8 Sound speech, that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you.

Say: When Paul wrote to Titus regarding his pastoral role and duties, he gave practical instructions on teaching believers how to live godly lives. He was to teach them in their roles both in their homes and in the church. Older believers were expected to model godly living for their children and other younger believers. Mentoring relationships were encouraged. Wholesomeness and integrity were to mark all believers in order to undercut the criticism of unbelievers. The same principles apply in the family of God as in the family at home. Even those who do not have children should actively mentor younger believers. (Share your highlights from the following text.)

Paul reminded Titus that instruction in the Scriptures must be more than head knowledge. It must reach the heart to result in godly living. When believers live out their faith, they exalt the name of the Lord Jesus and make the gospel more attractive to unbelievers.

Whether believers see themselves as older or younger, characteristics such as self-control, wisdom, love, patience, purity, productivity, and humility are to be qualities displayed by how they live. Older believers are to accept their responsibility to mentor and train those who are younger in practical ways to live out the faith. Younger believers should value the practical and spiritual wisdom gained by those who are older. Does the devil try to bring a dividing line between the young and old in the church?

Yet it is foolish to view insight and encouragement as flowing in one direction only: older to younger. Younger believers may encourage older believers to reevaluate what they do and why, rekindling spiritual passions that have grown into cold traditions.

Discuss

? What is an example of practical spiritual wisdom you have learned from an older believer that has helped you?

? Describe what it means to “live wisely” (Titus 2:2,6, NLT).

Part 2—Provide Godly Instruction and Discipline

Godly Instruction

Proverbs 22:6; 4:20–27

[Pro 22:6 KJV] 6 Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.

[Pro 4:20-27 KJV] 20 My son, attend to my words; incline thine ear unto my sayings. 21 Let them not depart from thine eyes; keep them in the midst of thine heart. 22 For they [are] life unto those that find them, and health to all their flesh. 23 Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it [are] the issues of life. 24 Put away from thee a froward mouth, and perverse lips put far from thee. 25 Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee. 26 Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established. 27 Turn not to the right hand nor to the left: remove thy foot from evil.

[Pro 4:20-27 NLT] 20 My child, pay attention to what I say. Listen carefully to my words. 21 Don't lose sight of them. Let them penetrate deep into your heart, 22 for they bring life to those who find them, and healing to their whole body. 23 Guard your heart above all else, for it

determines the course of your life. 24 Avoid all perverse talk; stay away from corrupt speech. 25 Look straight ahead, and fix your eyes on what lies before you. 26 Mark out a straight path for your feet; stay on the safe path. 27 Don't get sidetracked; keep your feet from following evil.

Say: Remember how excited you were when you heard you were going to be a parent? Later you discovered this wonderful child had a mind of his or her own. The child tended to be self-centered and selfish. That bundle of joy had to be taught to be polite, to share, and to be patient. A child also needs to be instructed on spiritual matters. Godly instruction teaches a child how to have a right relationship with God and other people. Parents can find strength to push through the tough times of parenting by holding to the encouragement found in Scriptures. (Share your highlights from the following text.)

Proverbs 4:20–27 provides excellent guidelines for parents concerning godly instruction. **These guidelines should encourage parents to push through and be consistent in directing children along the path of right living.**

The first is to recognize the value of godly instruction. Such instruction will encourage children to grow into healthy, happy adults who love the Lord and serve Him (verses 20–22; 22:6).

Second, understand the need for children to internalize godly values, making them their own, and to make their own commitment to living in relationship with God (4:23). This is why teaching must include not only what to do (or not do), but why. The importance of parents modeling godly behaviors and attitudes cannot be overstated.

Finally, stay focused on living to please the Lord (verses 24–27). Keeping communications wholesome (Ephesians 4:29) and priorities in the right place (Matthew 6:33) are two ways for parents and other adults to set a good example for children.

Discuss

? What can help parents be consistent in providing godly instruction even when life seems hectic?

? How can parents guide children toward developing a relationship with God?

Loving Discipline

Proverbs 13:24; 19:18

[Pro 13:24 KJV] 24 He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes.

[Pro 19:18 KJV] 18 Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying.

Say: The discipline of children is a much-debated topic. Sadly, the Bible has been misunderstood and misapplied to justify abusive treatment of children in the name of discipline. The rod of discipline is likely a symbolic reference to the rod a shepherd would use to guide a wandering sheep back to the flock where it would be protected and to get it moving in the right direction. The rod was not used as punishment, but as direction and protection. (Share your highlights from the following text.)

When parents don't allow their children to undergo consequences of their actions, we are not helping them. Letting a child know you could get them out of this trouble they had gotten themselves into but explaining why you are not going to do so because they need to understand the consequences of their actions.

Parents are to instruct children on what is right and wrong and on what is good for them and what will harm them. Children need limits to protect them and to allow them to feel secure. The goal is for children to learn self-discipline, so they can function safely and productively as adults. Undisciplined children often become immature adults with destructive lifestyles, unable to build healthy relationships or live productive lives.

Self-discipline comes from God. It is not manmade. It is not self-mastery or self-improvement. Self-improvement must have a focus and that focus is Christ.

The idea that love means letting our children do whatever they want without consequence is both foolish and unscriptural. Jesus said we show love for Him by obedience (John 14:15). Hebrews 12:6 states the Lord disciplines those He loves. God disciplines His children so they might share in His holiness and live right (verses 10–11).

While many styles of discipline can be adopted successfully, consistency is essential. Obviously, boundaries, freedoms, and methods change as a child matures, yet the goals do not change. Begin when a child is very young (make it age appropriate), for the longer a parent waits, the harder it is to correct wrong behavior.

We raised four children, each one was different.

Loving discipline by parents shows concern for the development of children. Hard work? Yes. Exhausting? Without a doubt. Unappreciated? At times, though not by those who deal with polite and considerate children. Worth it? Absolutely. Nothing brings more joy to the heart of a parent than to see a child grow up to be a responsible adult who loves and serves the Lord (Proverbs 19:18). Well-disciplined children will later appreciate the discipline they received from godly parents.

Resource Packet Item 2: Experienced but Not an Expert

Distribute the information sheet for students to read over. Ask volunteers to share their thoughts on suggestions included on the sheet.

Discuss

? What steps can parents take to be more consistent in disciplining children?

? Why do children need (and want) limits?

Part 3—Encourage Obedience and Kindness Children Are to Obey

Ephesians 6:1–3; Deuteronomy 5:16; Colossians 3:20

[Eph 6:1-3 KJV] 1 Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. 2 Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise;) 3 That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth.

[Deu 5:16 KJV] 16 Honour thy father and thy mother, as the LORD thy God hath commanded thee; that thy days may be prolonged, and that it may go well with thee, in the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.

[Col 3:20 KJV] 20 Children, obey [your] parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord.

Say: So far the lesson has focused on the role of the parents. **But Scripture also addresses what to expect from children: obeying and honoring their parents. It has been suggested that obeying relates to minor children while honoring relates to adult children. (Share your highlights from the following text.)**

God created families to be the nurturing environment for parents to grow closer and for children to be prepared for adulthood. Parents have knowledge and

maturity that children lack. Parents become the primary teachers of children, particularly in the areas of spirituality and values.

This is the pattern God established. Children who learn to obey their parents are better able to submit to the Lord and the authorities He has established. This leads to a better life that is pleasing to the Lord. In fact, children who learn a proper relationship with authority are also better prepared for interactions with others when they become adults.

That Scripture denotes the command to obey parents as the first commandment with the promise of God's blessings is significant (Ephesians 6:1–2). Doing things God's way is always the right thing to do. Obedience and honor for parents builds a foundation in children that serves them well throughout their lives (verse 3; Deuteronomy 5:16). It is a necessary first step in learning to live pleasing to the Lord.

Expecting obedience from children is not a power trip for parents. It is desiring what is best for children, wanting them to grow up being able to discern right from wrong, to have healthy relationships with others, and to be able to function well in society. Children who do not learn obedience likely will struggle with holding down a job and getting along with others. This is the opposite of what God desires, which is that "things will go well" for them (Ephesians 6:3, NLT).

Discuss

? What advice can you offer for parents with a strong-willed child?

? How does the parent-child relationship change as children grow older?

Parents Are to Nurture

Ephesians 6:4; Colossians 3:21

[Eph 6:4 KJV] 4 And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

[Col 3:21 KJV] 21 Fathers, provoke not your children [to anger], lest they be discouraged.

Say: Parents sometimes adopt "Children, obey your parents" (Ephesians 6:1) as their favorite verse and quote it often! But the instruction from Paul does not end there. **If children are expected to obey and honor, then parents must nurture those qualities by being the parents God expects them to be.** (Share your highlights from the following text.)

The passages in Ephesians 6 and Colossians 3 that provide instruction to parents are addressed to fathers. This does not overlook or negate the role of mothers in the nurture and instruction of children. Instead, it does recognize the role of a husband and father as the head of the household, and the one on whom the responsibilities of discipline and instruction fall. In many homes, a single parent has the dual responsibility of serving in both roles. It is incumbent upon the church to be compassionate and helpful in such situations.

Fathers are warned against dealing with their children in ways that anger or aggravate them (Ephesians 6:4; Colossians 3:21). This is not saying their choices will not upset children at times. Rather, it addresses the attitudes and sense of caring that motivate discipline and instruction. Fathers need to convey that their actions are out of a desire for what is best for their children and what is pleasing to the Lord, not what is convenient for them personally. Even when being corrected, children need to know they are loved unconditionally. They also need to know that their parents are proud of them and their efforts to grow.

Resource Packet Item 3: Because I Said So

Distribute the case study “Because I Said So” to students. After giving them time to answer the questions, ask volunteers to share their responses.

The need for parents to be consistent and balanced in how they raise their children is vital. This is what makes parenting hard. Life wears parents down, leaving them tired, frustrated, and feeling guilty. Under such conditions, parents often make choices that discourage children. Parents may say “no” simply because they do not feel they have the time and energy a “yes” answer would require. Perhaps a sense of resentment can creep in, leading parents to deny a child when they feel like that child has done nothing but push the limits recently. A sense of guilt often leads to excusing behaviors or allowing activities parents know are not in a child’s best interest.

Parents who establish reasonable ground rules for the family early on will find it easier to be consistent and balanced in their interactions. Such rules can be flexible, but only when both parents (in a two-parent home) agree before changes are presented to the children.

When parents raise their children using the wisdom, strength, and grace that comes from God, their children are more likely to choose to serve God. However, we must remember that God gives every individual a free will, and children sometimes make poor choices in spite of their parents’ best efforts. In those cases, we must continue to love and pray for those wayward children, trusting that the seed of God’s Word planted in childhood will germinate later and change their lives.

Discuss

? How can parents discipline a child without breaking the child's spirit?

? What are some of the challenges single parents face in raising children, and how can other believers assist them?

What Is God Saying to Us?

Say: God blesses individuals and families who live by His Word. As parents model godly attitudes and actions, children will learn from their instruction and example how to live for the Lord and express love for Him through obedience to His Word. This begins with husbands and wives establishing strong discipleship practices as individuals and as couples. Then children are included in these practices. Parents should take advantage of the many resources around them to help them in this lifelong endeavor. Extended family members, friends, the church family, and many others can walk alongside parents to assist. Add to these the abundance of quality Christian resources available on a wide array of topics related to marriage and parenting. God helps those who stand firm in their commitment, "As for me and my family, we will serve the Lord" (Joshua 24:15, NLT).

Living It Out

Ministry in Action

- Commit to spending time in God's Word as a family.
- Show your children your resolve to love and serve God through your priorities.
- Look for practical ways you can assist a single parent in your church or community who is struggling to raise godly children.

Daily Bible Readings

Monday:

A Family Beginning.
Genesis 21:1–8

[Gen 21:1-8 KJV] 1 And the LORD visited Sarah as he had said, and the LORD did unto Sarah as he had spoken. 2 For Sarah conceived, and bare Abraham a son in his old age, at the set time of which God had spoken to him. 3 And Abraham called the name of his son that was born unto him, whom Sarah bare to him, Isaac. 4 And Abraham circumcised his son Isaac being eight days old, as God had commanded him. 5 And Abraham was an hundred years old, when his son Isaac was born unto him. 6 And Sarah said, God hath made me to laugh, [so that] all that hear will laugh with me. 7 And she said, Who would have said unto Abraham, that Sarah should have given children suck? for I have born [him] a son in his old age. 8 And the child grew, and was weaned: and Abraham made a great feast the [same] day that Isaac was weaned.

Tuesday:

A Family Blessing.
Genesis 48:8–16

[Gen 48:8-16 KJV] 8 And Israel beheld Joseph's sons, and said, Who [are] these? 9 And Joseph said unto his father, They [are] my sons, whom God hath given me in this [place]. And he said, Bring them, I pray thee, unto me, and I will bless them. 10 Now the eyes of Israel were dim for age, [so that] he could not see. And he brought them near unto him; and he kissed them, and embraced them. 11 And Israel said unto Joseph, I had not thought to see thy face: and, lo, God hath shewed me also thy seed. 12 And Joseph brought them out from between his knees, and he bowed himself with his face to the earth. 13 And Joseph took them both, Ephraim in his right hand toward Israel's left hand, and Manasseh in his left hand toward Israel's right hand, and brought [them] near unto him. 14 And Israel stretched out his right hand, and laid [it] upon Ephraim's head, who [was] the younger, and his left hand upon Manasseh's head, guiding his hands wittingly; for Manasseh [was] the firstborn. 15 And he blessed Joseph, and said, God, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac did walk, the God which fed me all my life long unto this day, 16 The Angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads; and let my name be named on them, and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac; and let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth.

Wednesday:

A Family Restored.

[Rth 4:11-17 KJV] 11 And all the people that [were] in the gate, and the elders, said, [We are] witnesses. The LORD make the woman that is come into thine house like Rachel and like Leah, which two did build the house of Israel: and do thou worthily in Ephratah, and be famous in Bethlehem: 12 And let thy house be like the house of Pharez, whom Tamar bare unto Judah, of the seed which the LORD shall give thee of this young woman. 13 So Boaz took Ruth, and she was his wife: and when he went in unto her, the LORD gave her conception, and she bare a son. 14 And the women said unto Naomi, Blessed [be] the LORD, which hath not left thee this day without a kinsman, that his name may be famous in Israel. 15 And he shall be unto thee a restorer of [thy] life, and a nourisher of thine old age: for thy daughter in law, which loveth thee, which is better to thee than seven sons, hath born him. 16 And Naomi took the child, and laid it in her bosom, and became nurse unto it. 17 And the women her neighbours gave it a name, saying, There is a son born to Naomi; and they called his name Obed: he [is] the father of Jesse, the father of David.

Thursday:

A Family Commissioned.

Matthew 4:17–22

[Mat 4:17-22 KJV] 17 From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. 18 And Jesus, walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers. 19 And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men. 20 And they straightway left [their] nets, and

followed him. 21 And going on from thence, he saw other two brethren, James [the son] of Zebedee, and John his brother, in a ship with Zebedee their father, mending their nets; and he called them. 22 And they immediately left the ship and their father, and followed him.

Friday:

A Family Reunited.

Luke 15:11–24

[Luk 15:11-24 KJV] 11 And he said, A certain man had two sons: 12 And the younger of them said to [his] father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth [to me]. And he divided unto them [his] living. 13 And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living. 14 And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want. 15 And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. 16 And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him. 17 And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! 18 I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, 19 And am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants. 20 And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him. 21 And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son. 22 But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put [it] on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on [his] feet: 23 And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill [it]; and let us eat, and be merry: 24 For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry.

Saturday:

A Family Legacy.

2 Timothy 1:1–6

[2Ti 1:1-6 KJV] 1 Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, according to the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus, 2 To Timothy, [my] dearly beloved son: Grace, mercy, [and] peace, from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord. 3 I thank God, whom I serve from [my] forefathers with pure conscience, that without ceasing I have remembrance of thee in my prayers night and day; 4 Greatly desiring to see thee, being mindful of thy tears, that I may be filled with joy; 5 When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also. 6 Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands.

