

Seminar on Child Rearing

by Dr. and Dr. Vern and Diane Poythress
Feb. 18, 2006

I. Children 0-5 years old

A. Where to find guidelines?

1. What do you desire for your children? But your own desires can be selfish or mixed.

2. People claiming to be experts can have both good and bad ideas. Be careful. And do not think that some mechanical recipe is the secret to success. Children are not machines but human beings.

3. Your foundation should be in God.

a. Genesis 1:26-28. God made you.

b. Psalm 139. God knows you and your children.

c. "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom." (Psalm 111:10)

B. What is your goal for your children?

1. Not intelligence, fame, material success.

2. Rather, being made in the image of God (both boys and girls, Gen. 1:26), to be like Christ. Col. 3:10-11.

C. Building foundations for your young child

D. The challenge of having wisdom and righteousness yourself

1. The LORD blesses those who follow him. "The wicked are overthrown and are no more, but the house of the righteous will stand" (Prov. 12:7). "The desire of the righteous ends only in good; the expectation of the wicked in wrath" (Prov. 11:23).

2. "The wisdom of the prudent is to discern his way, but the folly of fools is deceiving" (Prov. 14:8). 2.

E. Applications for your young child

F. The main emphasis

1. Lots of love.

2. Lots of training and discipline.

a. "Whoever spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is diligent to discipline him" (Prov. 13:24).

b. "Folly is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of discipline drives it far from him" (Prov. 22:15).

c. "Do not withhold discipline from a child; if you strike him with a rod, he will not die. If you strike him with the rod, you will save his soul from Sheol" (Prov. 23:14).

3. Lots of prayer for your child.

4. Lots of forgiveness from God, and from you.

II. Children 6-12 years old

A. Parents need to know God

1. Are you discouraged?
 - a. Does parenting seem overwhelming?
 - b. Do you feel that you have already failed?
2. You need to know God as Father.
 - a. God is your creator (Gen. 1:1).
 - b. God made you (Gen. 1:26).
 - c. You have rebelled against him. (Romans 3:23; Gen. 3).
3. You need to be forgiven.
 - a. Jesus is "the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29).
 - b. Jesus is the way back to God. (John 14:6)
4. Believe in Jesus Christ. (Romans 10:9)
5. Renew *your* foundation, and only then are you in a position to build solidly for your children.

B. Foundations for your child.

1. Commitment to Christ.
2. Bible.
3. Prayer.

C. Parental guidance

1. Teaching opportunities from Deuteronomy 6:4-9
2. Imitate God your Father. Matt. 6:9
 - a. God instructs you (Matt. 23:10)
 - b. God trains you (Deut. 8:5; Heb. 12:5-11)
 - c. God is with you (Matt. 28:20).
3. Spend time with your children. Don't idolize career. (Luke 9:25)
4. Mothers, be at home when children are growing up.
5. Fathers, don't leave it to your wife and the school.
 - a. Take the family to church
 - b. Lead in morning and evening devotional time
 - c. Train children in their relation to Christ.
6. Be humble (Ephesians 4:2). Engage your children on their level.

D. Applications for your child.

E. Heading off quarreling

1. "Honor your father and mother" (Ephesians 6:2; Deut. 5:16). Turn down automatically any request not given respectfully. (And make clear why: "whether or not that was reasonable to ask for, I cannot give it to you because you were whining.")
2. Allow respectful request to alter a command. "I appeal."

III. Teenagers (13-18 years old)

A. Goal: spiritual adulthood

1. Son and daughter adopts and *internalizes* biblical principles.(Psalm 1:2-3)
2. Not merely outward conformity until he is out of your sight (college).
3. Proverbs 22:6.
4. Key role of the Bible in training: 2 Timothy 3:17.

B. Foundations in the heart

C. Christian virtues

1. Self-discipline, self-control, humility (Gal. 5:22-23)
2. Adult relationships with others (Eph. 4:14-15)
3. You change as parent to dialog with your child as more of as equal.

D. Applications

E. Who can do this?

1. "What is impossible with men is possible with God" (Luke 18:27).
2. Jesus' burden is light. Matt 11:28-30.
3. For yourself, and for your child, don't fall into the traps:
 - a. Antinomianism: "I'm saved, so I can relax and live like the devil."
(You need to be a true disciple of Christ.)
 - b. Neonomianism: "I have to accomplish my goals by self-empowered moral sweat."
(You need to be empowered by fellowship with Christ.)

IV. Expansion of the outline

A. Christian Child Rearing, age 0-5

Deut. 4:9. "Only take care, keep your soul diligently, lest you forget the things your eyes have seen, and lest they depart from your heart all the days of your life. Make them known to your children and to your children's children."

FOUNDATIONS

1. Your Faith. Let's start with the foundation. Are you a Christian, not because your parents were or because Americans in general are, but because you have understood there is one God who is holy and whom you have offended by your sin, that your sin requires the punishment of Hell, but that he gave His only Son Jesus Christ to be a substitute for your punishment so you could be forgiven and have peace with God? John 3:16 "For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." Have you confessed your sins to Him, believed in Christ, submitted to Him as Lord and served Him in love? That is the foundation of all else. If that is not there, you are building a beautiful castle on the illusory stability of a cloud.

2. Your Marriage. Assuming that you have been born again, then your heart desire is to love and please God which means obeying His Word and trusting Him. What does His Word say about the purpose of marriage? In Genesis 3, God says: to subdue the earth, have dominion over it, and fill it, thereby bringing all things into submission to the glory of God. The wife is to be the helper to the husband in his work. This is a creation ordinance from God for all people, in all places, at all times. If your marriage is not built on this foundation, then it perhaps is time as a Christian to realign any slippage with the plumb line of God's Word.

3. Your Children. Building on the first layer of faith in Christ and the second layer of an intentional God-structured marriage, the third layer is an ancillary, an extension. Getting married means submitting yourself to God's intent of your being fruitful, of multiplying, of having children. If you do not want children, then you should not get married. God has promised in Psalm 127:5 that children are a blessing and you certainly don't want to reject any blessing God has, nor to disobey Him. Because you are here, presumably you have already had children; but it is good to rethink why you had them and to again align your foundation with God's Word. God wants you to multiply image bearers of Him for His glory (Gen. 1:26-28)--notice that this is not an image bearer of you or your family or even your culture, but an image bearer of the most holy God Himself.

4. Your Goal. Christ. Now we come to the fourth layer, what is the goal for your child? The foundation and the end point must agree--just as a pyramid must have its point immediately above the center of its foundation or else everything will begin to shift toward an inevitable destruction. We have already mentioned the goal--to be an image bearer of God, to look like Christ and bring Him glory. What foundations will lead to this pinnacle? First and foremost, faith.

a. Faith. I Cor. 3:11 "For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ." Above all else you should be praying for the salvation of your child before it is conceived, before it is born, while it is in the womb, while it is nonverbal, crawling, running, driving a car, going to college. Salvation is not only a one time rebirth but an ongoing disentanglement from sin and idols of the world. When both of our children were two years old, I sat them down with a piece of paper and drew a line saying, "This is the earth. What did God put on the earth?" Then I drew a cloud layer and pointed above it asking, "This is heaven; who lives here? Yes, God and angels and all those who believed Jesus died for them and loved Jesus before they died." Then I drew some zigzags below the earth line to represent flames of fire and said, "This is Hell. Who lives here? Yes, Satan and demons and those who never believed in Jesus." I left it at that and prayed for them. Each on his own came to me and asked how he could be sure he was going to Heaven. Each wanted to ask Jesus to give him a new heart because he had been bad. You might think this is rather early, but the next day one son came to me, saying, "Mommy, if my friends don't believe in Jesus then they will go to Hell. So I better tell them about Him now." I cried because it was a confirmation from the Holy Spirit of the work He had done in my son. At some point you may want to be more directive and ask, "Do you believe that Jesus took your punishment that you deserved when He died on the cross? Then tell Him that and ask Him to forgive you and give you a new heart. Then write down that date in a Bible where it will never be forgotten so they can always remember their commitment. Since both of my boys gave their lives to Jesus on the exact same date, we always have a born-again birthday cake to remind them that this was the day God remade them. For a covenant child this may have happened before they were born, but it is good to remember the time when they publicly committed their lives to Him.

b. Scripture. I Cor. 1:18 "For the Word of the cross...to us who are being saved it is the power of God." Rom 10:14 "How will they know unless they hear?" the Scripture asks. Tell them the Gospel constantly their whole lives, not just John 3:16 but through every day events. For example: "That bird can fly because God has fed it and cared for it, just like He cares for you especially when He was punished instead of you." Or, "See the wind move those leaves? God's Holy Spirit is like that. You can't see Him, but He moves on people's hearts to give them faith." Read Scripture to them daily, pray with them, explain God's person and works, take them to Church and fellowships, punish them when they disobey God's Word, help them memorize the Bible, love them. All of this is foundational.

c. Trust. I Cor. 1:[God says] "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart." You cannot do this in your own strength or wisdom. You cannot ever be wise enough to make a godly man or woman. Only God can do that. You must turn to Him in prayer, in His Word, in your life and ask for His power and mercy. You will sin. Your child will sin. You both need God. A famous actor/singer named Pat Boone was once asked on TV how he raised his wonderful four daughters. He said, "It wasn't because my wife and I didn't make mistakes. We made plenty. But God in His grace heard our cries and was merciful to our children." If you think in your pride that you can do this apart from Him, you have already failed. Only God can change a child's heart--not information. So you must pray, and preach the Gospel to your child and lean on God's Spirit of power. Your child must also lean on Him, not you.

APPLICATIONS (0-5 year olds); "What Stage"

This is the age group which I call the "what stage" because there is so much information

to learn about how to walk, talk, eat, ride a bike, read, pray, worship, obey, and trust God.

A. ENCOURAGEMENT

1. INFORMATION.

Dt. 6: 6-7 "And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise."

a. Your information.

Know your child. (Ps. 139:1-6.) Does your child like action or quiet? Does he sleep with only absolute quiet darkness or does he need music to go to sleep? When he is angry, does he have to run or hit the bathroom floor with a towel to get rid of the adrenaline before you can talk to him or does he need to sit quietly? Does he learn through eye, ear, or touch? Is there a physical or mental disability that has to be accounted for? Our one son was dyslexic, and although we found a doctor who in God's grace treated him successfully to heal him 85%, it was still a consideration in his training. A study which hung tape recorders on children for their first five years determined that little girls start talking like little adults. Little boys make noises like police cars, horses, rockets blasting into space. But every mother already knows that. What are his sins and which ones keep recurring? What is their developmental level? You can't get an apple yet from a seedling. But you can teach every concept to them at every age in a way that is appropriate to their age. Get a book on child development and know what to expect and be sure to screen out all the modern psychology and evolution that perverts God's Word. Look for what gifts God has given them by exposing them to singing, drawing, building with legos, telling stories, throwing balls, organizing a game, cooking, praying with a sick child, and so on. Don't impose on him the gifts you want him to have, but look for the gifts God has given. You will be delighted to see things appear even when they are older, such a leadership or ability to formulate apologetic arguments or to gently counsel people.

b. Child's information.

1. God.

(Ps. 119:111.) At 0-6 months old I began reading a children's prayer book each morning in bed with them, sang hymns to them as we rocked in a chair, talked to them about God, prayed aloud, read Scripture aloud to them. When we went for walks with the stroller, I would stop and pick up a leaf, let them feel it, and talk about how God clothes the trees and provides food through leaves and protects birds. We colored pictures together of Bible stories and played with animals from a Noah's ark toy, always talking about the meaning as we did it. Dt. 6.

(Ps. 119:104) (1-3 years old) As soon as they begin to talk, ask the the first questions of the children's catechism at breakfast each morning "Who made you? God. What else did God make? Everything. Why did God make you and everything? For His own glory." Then continue teaching them the catechism questions and answers as they are able to understand them until they are 12 years old. While in the car I played Scripture songs from Judy Rogers and *Wee Sing Bible Songs* which helped me to memorize Scripture as well as them. Even now

that they are in college we can still sing those songs together.

(Ps. 119:102.) (3-5) As you continue teaching them about God, also build their faith. Keep a book of Ebenezers, perhaps in the back of their prayer journal, where you write down the date of God's special answer to a prayer or His special faithfulness--for example, how Daddy wasn't hurt in a car crash, how God had someone bring milk when ours was gone.

2. God's Word.

(Ps. 119:105.) (1-3 years old) I also taught them their alphabet--why? Because they must know God's Word and be able to witness in a land where other people read. It is not so that I can say my child is smarter than yours because he read 5 books before he was 2 years old or something like that. It is for the Kingdom of God. We had a little book called *My Jesus Pocket Book of ABC's* which went through the alphabet while also explaining the life of Jesus. While at church, I always brought a special bag of Bible books and activities which were only to be used on Sunday.

(2-5 years) As they got a little older, I would draw stick figure pictures to explain the sermon as they listened (this suggestion came from Dr. Francis Schaeffer's wife Edith Schaeffer.) Your family devotions should include Daddy reading the Bible such as *The Bible in Pictures for Little Eyes* by Kenneth Taylor where there are pictures on each page and 2 or 3 easy questions to answer. We also acted out each story after reading it, sometimes doing it several times and switching parts with props. One time the playpen was Noah's ark and we were all different animals. Vern read the Bible onto a tape sometimes with animal or background sounds which the boys could then listen to as they fell asleep at night or during naps.

(Ps. 119:97.) (3-5 years old) They are now old enough to begin reading the Bible for themselves. So make sure they have a children's Bible with maps and charts and diagrams, and assign them about 1/2 chapter each day from appropriate places sequentially through the Bible so they can get a taste of the whole Bible in one year.

2. ACTION.

a. God.

(Ps. 119:103.) (1-4) Show them how to have a quiet time by cutting out pictures to make their own Bible memory book and prayer list. We had a little book to guide us called *Train Up a Child* by Thomas G. Kay that gave verses to know at each age through the teens. Have them tell Bible stories to the rest of the family by using a flannelgraph. Play charades as a family where each person acts out someone in the Bible and everyone else has to guess who they are. We colored in coloring books with Bible stories. I found these "magic pads" with Bible pictures and words where if you scribble across the page, a hidden picture is revealed. We made puppets and acted out Bible stories. If you have a girl, she will want to play dolls, which is an excellent time to train her in how adult godly behavior and thinking applies to lives as you act out stories together. Do things to make the Lord's Day a special day of rest for them as well, so if they make their beds every day all week for example, allow them to rest from that work on

Sunday.

You can also look around for fill in the blank devotionals from different agencies or make your own. If they cannot write yet, then you write for them a blessing from God that day to be thankful for and a prayer request to God. Keep it simple so that it doesn't become a drudgery.

(Ps. 119:101.) (5) By the age of 5 they should know all the major Bible stories, have their own prayer book where they write requests and praises to God, have at least 10 verses memorized, be able to explain the Gospel, be able to give their own testimony of faith (assuming they have believed), and be evidencing fruits of the Spirit in life and showing God's love to others. Now their prayers should begin to reflect the Bible reading for that day. Teach them how to pray the Scripture and not just their own thoughts so they learn to think Christ's thoughts after Him.

3. TESTIMONY

(Eph. 6:5-7.) (2-3) I taught them how the world works by acting out jobs when they were 2 such as grocery clerk, teacher, doctor or fireman; how to distinguish colors, how to enjoy classical music by marching and dancing as we listened to it and began some piano instruction and singing; by building their bodies with good food and regular nap times. Why? Because they must know how the world works and how best to be lights in that dark world. At this age and a little older they will begin to ask about clothes. If you tell them that they should wear this because they look cute in it then you have repeated the world's words, not God's. If you tell them that they should wear it because God wants us to cover our private parts and not cause people to want to see more of our body which makes them sin, or because it will protect the body God gave us from the weather, or because we want to be good stewards of His money, then you have glorified God and taught them His ways. Do not let your children choose their own clothes nor be their servant by asking them what they want to wear at this 0-5 age. Simply tell them that after they show themselves to be an adult, they can begin to make decisions under your supervision.

(1 Cor. 11:3-7.) (4-5) Even before this age, they will begin to ask about marriage. If you tell them, "It is what two people do when they love each other," you will have taught them what the world says and not what God says. Begin now to lay a foundation for teenage purity and faithful marriage by telling them "Marriage is when God brings a man and woman together to be committed to each other and to Him in love all their lives." To the boy, "No, you can't get married until you can take care of a woman by giving her a home and buying her medicine and loving her and God more than you love yourself." To the girl, "No you can't get married until God sends a boy who can take care of you by giving you a home and buying medicine for you and your children and who loves you and God more than he loves himself."

(Matt. 25:35.) Also by this age, they should have learned charity, loving and serving others. Give them chores at home where they can serve the family as a whole such as making their bed, dumping a waste basket, drying dishes, washing a floor, cleaning a bathroom sink. And have them follow you to pray with sick people in their homes for whom they can make cards or pick flowers. My sons once went with me to help clean the bathrooms at our pastor's house when the wife was ill after childbirth. They can help you make cookies and tie into pretty packages for elderly. Read

missionary stories to them and play mission story tapes for them. Read stories that teach them about Jesus when they go to bed and pray with them again as you did at family devotions and individual devotions and times throughout the day. They can draw a picture for a missionary child or a Compassion child and pray for him, or help fill a Christmas shoe box for Franklin Graham's overseas work with children. They can earn enough money to buy milk for another child for a month through Samaritan's Purse, but make sure they learn to take away 1/10 of what they earn for God and His church. Look at craft books to find gifts children can make for family for birthdays and Christmas or New Years. The point is to learn they are not the center of the world and must lay down their lives in service to God, for Luke 9:23-25 says, "If anyone would come after Me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow Me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it. For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses or forfeits his soul?"

B. DISCIPLINE

(Colos. 3:20.) (0-2) Even at 3 months old I would not let my child fuss to be nursed. If he had been quiet and suddenly began to cry as I got him ready to nurse, I suddenly stopped moving and gave him no eye contact until he quieted down. If I had fed him at that point, I would have been teaching him to cry whenever I was getting ready to nurse. At this age, especially pre-verbal, you want to keep rules and commands simple. "Come" was an early command. It broke my heart when my beautiful smiling baby crawled to the kitchen door, looked back when I said "come" and kept on going. He was a sinner as much as I had somehow hoped he wouldn't be. But discipline must be administered quickly and in such a way that the child associates it with what he did wrong. So every time our babies cried, we flicked their cheek by their mouth while saying "no." If they grabbed at something forbidden, we took their hand, tapped the back of it while saying "no." The problem is that just saying "no" could mean anything. The child has no idea what is no--crawling, looking, speaking, wetting--he doesn't know unless you also communicate physically.

(Eph. 6:1.) Your rules must be simple at first but never varied. Make sure that you can enforce every rule. (For example, you cannot force a child to speak, so how will you enforce a command to speak?) Don't just threaten. Teach them that obedience is immediate, willing, and complete. If any one of these is missing then it is not obedience. We had 3 places in the home where we had dried flowers at the baby's level. They were all "no." One child reached his hand out to grab them. And when I said "no" he withdrew his hand and went on to play something else. The other child at that age reached his hand out to touch the flowers and when I said "no"--he did it anyway. I took his hand and gave it a pat while saying no. We did this 9 times in a row before he stopped. I was in tears by the time it was over, but he had learned a lesson about authority. If they don't learn to submit to you, they won't submit to God. You are acting out the position and orders of God. They must learn to submit their will to yours whether or not they understand why. But don't forget that true obedience is willing. Here is where you must take time, praying God will change the heart. Talk to them about how sin wants to master them but when they act in the power of faith in Christ, they can defeat sin. Be patient, Be prayerful.

(2) Ex. 20: 12 "Honor your father and your mother that your days may in long in the land the Lord your God gives you." This is particularly the case when they are two years old. A friend once told us a proverb that if you win a child when he is 2, you have won him as a teen. She was right. If your child is out of control as a 2 year old, you will have a very difficult time with him in his teens. Whatever behavior you allow will continue. By the age of 2, children

know certain rules in the home. If he has broken a clearly defined rule, then a spanking is now appropriate.

(Prov. 13:24.) Spanking biblically. "Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod removes it far from him" (Prov. 22:15). Make sure that the rule was clearly understood before justice is meted out. Let's take for example the rule, only Mommy takes cookies out of the cookie jar to give the child. The child is caught climbing up and taking a cookie for himself. What do you do? I take the child to a chair in the kitchen and I sit down to look at him eye level. Then ask the child, "What did you do? What is the rule? You disobeyed, so you have chosen a spanking instead of obedience." I then have the child bend over my lap and give him two whacks on his bottom with a wooden spoon that hangs in our kitchen. (I also always kept one in my purse.) Stand the child up. Hug him and encourage him to ask forgiveness from you and God. Then while hugging him, pray for him that God will forgive him through Jesus being punished for him and that He will change his heart so that he won't do it again. We gave the child spanks according to his age, 2 for a 2 year old, 3 for a three year old, 4 for a 4 year old and so on until the age of 12. That controls your anger and helps the child to know exactly what is coming. Don't break this rule and thereby break your child's trust in you and justice. Make sure you let them understand that you love them enough that you won't let Satan influence them and you don't want them to go to Hell. Love them enough to not let sin take root in their hearts and destroy their witness. You are not loving them or being kind by making excuses for their sins or passing over them. God held Eli responsible for his sons' behavior even after they were married with children. Look carefully at what is in their heart and ask God to change them and show you ways to guide them into paths of righteousness for His name's sake.

(Heb. 12:9.) (3-5) In general, the punishment needs increasingly to fit the sin as they grow older. If he steals a grape to eat at the grocery, then he must confess to the manager and do work at home to repay twice over what he has stolen, according to Biblical law. If he has offended someone publicly with his words, then he must apologize publicly. This does not mean saying "I'm sorry" because that is often a lie. The child is not sorry. So he should say, "I apologize. What I did was wrong. Please forgive me." Make sure you are saying this to your child when you sin against him as well. Every child will say "I hate you" at some point. Expect it. But if you let that change what you do then the child will say it again and again. If you let the child know that he can hate you but you still have to obey God and do what is right, you probably won't hear it again.

(1 Thess. 5:11.) Positive Discipline. Ask God to show you ways to encourage them in doing good. Through the years we did many different things such as a duty chart where they got stickers for having their quiet time, saying nice things to people helping without being asked, and so on. They also began getting an allowance when they were about 4 for doing their chores in the house (didn't do duties then no allowance). Part of the money went to God and part for a project that would honor God. We had a Valentine tree even through their teens where we would each write on a heart a service we would do for each person. At the end of the week when we each collected hearts addressed to us off the tree, we had a bountiful gift of love. Sometimes we would choose a family member to be kind to each day for a week and then choose another for the next week. Or we would each pull out of a bowl the name of a family member to do secret kind things to that week and then reveal ourselves at the end of the week. Whenever they saw a child being bad, I would remind them that they would be like that if we did not love them enough to discipline them. They must understand that discipline is something to be thankful for although at the time it seems painful as the Bible says in Hebrews 12:11. I would tell them how I didn't like it when God disciplined me but afterward I knew it was for my good and that I became more like

Christ when He was done with me and a better reflection of Jesus. Try each day to make sure you have said something encouraging to each child and especially as you tuck them into bed.

(Luke 13:18-19.) Use physical stuff to teach spiritual truths. For example concerning being a good reflection of God's glory. Take a mirror. let the child look at the clear reflection of himself. Then take toothpaste, smear it all over the mirror, and have him look at himself again. Then explain how hard it is for the world to see Jesus in us when our lives are smeared with sin. Or for example concerning wasteful goals, take magazine pictures of things they like such as TVs, computers, computer, games, clothes, balls, jewelry and a paper clip that you have shaped into the form of a cross. Put them in a dish and burn them showing that only what is done for Christ will last. I Cor. 3:13-15

EXAMPLES:

(Prov. 21:23.) Screaming. Do you want your child to scream for his meal every night? Then give it to him when he screams. He has then learned that if he screams, he will get what he wants. If you don't want him to scream, then hold the meal in front of him and refuse to give it to him when he screams. At the first sign of quiet, give it to him. You can even do this when they are 0-6 months and nursing.

(Colos. 3:17.) Whining. If you want your child to whine, then pay immediate attention to him when he whines, even interrupting your conversation with others in order to pacify him. If you want him to stop whining, tell him that you will not listen to anything he says until he uses a normal voice. If he wants something while you are in discussion with someone, then he can come and stand quietly next to you until he is recognized by you.

(2 Tim. 2:24.) Arguing. If you want your child to argue about every command you give, then listen to their reasons and argue back and forth with them. If you do not want him to argue, then tell him he is allowed to state an appeal to you decision once. You will then consider it and make the final decision, but if he persists then the appeal will definitely be denied. This keeps you as the authority, but allows the child to not internalize bitterness over injustice. For example: Mommy: Go make your bed. Child: I appeal. Daddy just told me he needs me to help him outside. Mommy: Okay. You can help your daddy first and then when you are done go make your bed.

(Ps. 51:6.) Excuses. If you want your child to rationalize by always make excuses for his sin, then ask him why he did things. Or, make excuses for him yourself (He hasn't had his nap and so he hit your child.) A proverb in our house was, "There is always a reason for sin, but that doesn't make it right." If you want your child to confess sin and be forgiven and take responsibility for his actions, ask "What did you do? How did that break God's law?" Then give them a punishment as defined elsewhere in this paper and show them how to make some restitution if possible. Make sure that you confess your own sins in front of him so that he learns not to be a hypocrite either.

(Matt. 25:40.) Selfish. If you want your child to be selfish, then always let him have his way, giving him everything he asks for and even things he doesn't ask for. If you want him to be generous and self-sacrificing like Jesus, teach him to share. Say "no" to him, and make him work for what he wants even if all the other kids at school had it handed to them by a parent. Teach him to save his money, giving him extra chores to do for you and others by which he could make the money. Don't forget to teach him to tithe 1/10 of the money for God's work.

(Prov. 16:32.) Angry/Violent. If you want your child to be, angry, hot-tempered, volatile and eventually violent, let him hurt others without any punishment and let him explode in tantrums and rages whenever he wants. If you want your child to have a peaceful, self-controlled spirit which is fruit of the Holy Spirit, pray for him, teach him Scripture and alternatives. Know

your child. Does he have lots of adrenaline that has to be released from his body through running or privately in the bathroom taking a towel and hitting the floor till he is tired out? Or, does he need to sit quietly, not aggravating his spirit with any activity until he is calm? Never let him throw a tantrum. He should learn correct methods for handling his anger where he doesn't sin and does not cause a public commotion. Eph 4:26 As he grows older, teach him paths of righteousness which include turning the other cheek, doing good to your enemy, praying for God's will and not your own, asking God to show you constructive paths that would honor Him. For example, he is angry about how a teacher graded his paper. He shows it to parents. Was it a fair grade? Pray for the teacher. Pray about whether this should be overlooked, whether he should respectfully ask the teacher to reconsider the grading, whether the parent needs to ask the teacher if there is some way to help the child. Pray that he can submit and suffer for Christ's sake if that is necessary.

(1 Peter 5:5.) **Pride.** If you want a prideful child, then continually praise him and brag about him and allow him to do the same. Let him demand whatever he wants and have others bow to his wishes. If you do not want him to be prideful, teach him to be thankful to God for giving him a gift which He didn't have to give (child could have been born blind or crippled), to give all of his honors to God, and to have mercy on others by helping weaker people with his strong gifts. "Pride goes before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall" (Prov. 16:18). You should rarely be asking a child at this age what he wants to do. For example, "Would you like to sit in the grocery cart?" Of course he would rather run around and keep you busy searching for him and taking his fingers off of every pretty box. You don't ask. You just put him in the grocery cart. You are the adult, the authority, the one with responsibility. You teach the child right and wrong--not so you have a good robot but so this child is fit for Kingdom work, reflecting the glory of God from a heart that loves God above all else.

(Matt. 7:1-5.) **Critical.** If you want your child to be critical, then constantly pick at his imperfections and teach him to refuse food, clothes, or activities that he doesn't like, and to say bad things about other children and teachers. If you want him to be encouraging and humble, teach him to eat what is put in front of him and to thank God. You can even thank God for food with him while he is still nursing. Another proverb in our house was, "You don't have to like it, you just have to eat it." Teach him to speak kind words about others by doing it yourself. (All these sins which must be overcome in each one of us is best modeled as well as taught.)

(Phil. 2:14.) **Complaining.** If you want your child to complain about everything http://www.frame-poythress.org/poythress_articles/1999How.htm, then allow him to say rebellious things even though he may be obeying. Remember it is the heart that needs changed, not the outward actions which are merely a showing of what is in the heart. If you want a child who obeys God's command to "do everything without complaining" (Phil. 2:14), then teach him the Scripture as with every other sin, and make him do it again. For example, if you complain about making your bed, then I will do an inspection and pull the covers down and you will have to make it again. If you complain about the food, then you will get another helping of it.

Rudeness. Lev. 19:32 Do you want a child who is rude and offends others, then never correct him at the moment. Even in public, a child should be verbally corrected and taught to speak correctly. Sometimes the offense will mean having to find a bathroom or back of the car for a spanking right in the middle of grocery shopping. Tell him what the correct words should be, have him practice them, then have him go back and apologize and say the right words to the person.

(2 Tim 1:7.) **Fear.** If you want your child to be fearful, then run to him overreact

whenever he has a problem and make sure that you let him hear you say things like, "I don't know what we will do. I'm so worried. " and other words that sound as if there is no God who is able to hear and help or who cares about you. Instead when there is thunder or lighting or a big storm, quietly sit with him and tell him how thankful you are that God has given you a warm house, how the Bible says that He sends His thunder so that people who do not believe in Him will know how powerful He is (Job 36:33) and he is there to keep them at night (Psalm 4:8). I wrote this verse out and put above their bed. I also at one point took a white paper table cloth and drew two huge angels with swords and taped it to the ceiling so they would remember that the angel of the Lord camps about those who fear Him Psalm 91:11.

Bar Jeshua/ Bat Jeshua

We also began at this age to tell them of the future goals at a Bar/Bat Jeshua which we will explain in the next age section.

How I Have Helped My Boys to Become Christian Men

Vern S. Poythress, Ph.D., Th.D.

1999

God gave me two boys to raise, Ransom and Justin. Ransom is now 14 years old and is already a Christian man. Justin is a Christian boy 12 years old, and is training to become a man before he is 13.

What is going on here?

Something special. I believe that God has given to my wife Diane and me a special idea about raising boys, an idea that may be of use to you if you have sons in your family. We have created a special celebration and ceremony to introduce them to Christian manhood. This celebration we call "Bar Jeshua," that is, "son of Jesus." This celebration marks the point at which a boy becomes a man, a mature disciple of Jesus.

Is such a thing weird? We don't think so. Let me tell you about it.

The Idea and the Challenge

Almost every culture in the world has something to mark the difference between a boy and a man. A boy goes through a "rite of passage," after which he becomes officially a man. The rite of passage may involve an ordeal, a test, or a training period of some kind. The boy who has reached a certain age must kill a crocodile, or train with a bow and arrow, or go on a long journey alone, or join in a dangerous hunt with the men.

When does a boy become a man in white American culture? When he gets a driver's license? When he graduates from high school? When he moves away from his parents? When he can vote? When he gets his first full-time job? When he is 21? When he gets married? When he owns his own home?

No one can say. There is no clear point of transition. There is no one "rite of passage." One of the unfortunate effects can be that boys are insecure. They don't know when they are men. Again and again they may try to prove that they are "grown up." Sometimes they may choose destructive ways-join a gang, go hotrodding, learn to smoke, get drunk, take a girl to bed.

What do we do to give proper guidance? I know and you know that there is no magic formula. God must be at work in teaching us and our boys, and he must be the one who causes them to grow (1 Cor. 3:7). But you and I can plant and water.

I decided that one way I could help my sons was by showing them what it was to be a man. What is a man? What marks maturity? In the Bible, true maturity does not consist in being able to kill a crocodile! The true maturity is spiritual. It is wisdom in knowing God and his will, and being able to carry it out in your life (Prov. 1:1-7).

I must set an example by my manhood. I must be like Paul, who said, "Follow my example as I follow the example of Christ" (1 Cor. 11:1). That is an awesome challenge. I fail to live up to the biblical standard. But part of being a man is being able to admit it when I fail and then to ask

forgiveness.

Passing to Manhood

In addition to all the regular things that must go into Christian living, I decided that my boys should have a rite of passage. It involves training and testing. It is not easy for them. They must prove themselves to be Christian men.

My son Ransom, 13 years old, has been through it. He knows that he is a man. He knows it not only because he worked and sweated at it, but because we had a celebration at the end. We sent out invitations. At the party, in the presence of about 90 people, his friends and our family friends, we reviewed some of the testing, and then I declared in front of everyone that he was now a man. "As your father, I declare that you are no longer Master Ransom Poythress. You are Mr. Ransom Poythress. You are now a man."

The change of name is significant. White American culture still has a tiny fragment in which it recognizes manhood. According to formal etiquette, a boy is "Master" until he is 12; after that, he is "Mr." (Mister). One of my Latino friends tells me that they have a celebration of manhood at the 12th birthday. The Jews have a "Bar Mitzvah" for a boy when he is 13.

The Jews became a model from which we attempted to learn. Though Diane and I are not Jews by birth, Jesus is a Jew. The Jews of the Old Testament are therefore our spiritual ancestors. In addition, we live in a neighborhood with many Jews. So in our neighborhood the idea of having a ceremony for manhood was not strange. We created a celebration called "Bar Jeshua," "son of Jesus," by analogy with "Bar Mitzvah," son of the commandment, the Jewish celebration for entering manhood. We can also point to the incident recorded in Luke 2:41-50. At 12 years old Jesus, our Savior and Representative, shows his manly maturity in his understanding of the Bible and his understanding of his role.

The Bible does not require us to imitate slavishly any one culture. But we see wisdom here.

So what did we do? We tried to do the normal things that go into Christian parenting. But in addition, we told the boys from an early age about the Bar Jeshua we were planning for each of them. We told them that they would become men when they were 12. They were going to have to train for it beforehand.

The Training

In what does the training consist? Christian manhood is the goal. The training must match the goal. So we set for them projects. They acquire and demonstrate skill in each of several overlapping areas.

1. Knowledge of the contents of the Bible.
 - Know the names of books of the Bible in order.
 - Know Bible history.
 - Read the Bible all the way through.
 - Know main themes of biblical books.
 - Understand how Biblical teaching centers on Christ.
 - Know Greek and Hebrew (amount of knowledge tailored to the child's ability)
2. Memorization of selected verses and passages of the Bible.

3. Knowledge of the major teachings of the Bible (doctrine).
 - Memorize a children's catechism as a summary of doctrine.
 - Be able to explain doctrines and respond to questions using one's own words.
4. Personal piety.
 - Using devotional materials
 - Prayer diary
 - Day-long personal retreat for prayer and fasting with Daddy
 - Growth in understanding of means for overcoming sin
5. Projects of service and mercy.
 - Serving the church; serving the needy.
6. Wisdom in dealing with various spheres of life.
 - Finances: tithing, drawing up a year-long budget; checkbook balancing; investing.
 - Etiquette: table etiquette, greeting etiquette, letter etiquette, conversational etiquette, sexual etiquette.
 - Apologetics: answering questions and objections about Christian faith; understanding the Christian world view and the main competing worldviews and ideas in the United States.
 - Sexuality: knowing Christian teaching and standards for thoughts and actions. Understanding how God designed male and female bodies.

They work on these areas over a period of years. Many times we just integrate the work into our family devotional times. At other points we have periods where they have concentrated study in one area. When the boy is 11 years old, we assess progress. If our boy is honestly far from ready, we are willing in principle to put things off for another year. But if he is showing more maturity, we have a time of more concentrated preparation.

In the two or three months before the Bar Jeshua celebration, we enlist our pastors, young people's leaders, and (in my case) my seminary professor friends to test the boy privately in each of the areas (1)-(4). I am present at these tests to provide moral support, but not to coach my boy on the answers. We also reserve the fellowship hall at our church as a site for the coming celebration. We send out invitations. We draw up a program sheet and buy decorations and food.

The Celebration

The day of the Bar Jeshua celebration is a Saturday, so that more people can come. I explain the celebration to all present. Our boy reads a short passage from the Hebrew Bible and explains it (as does the Jewish boy at Bar Mitzvah). The boy reads a short passage from the Greek Bible and explains it. The people who previously tested our boy come and give a "mini-test" as part of the celebration. But our boy already knows that he has passed the private tests, so he does not have to fear the result. We sing our boy's favorite hymn. We pray for him. I declare that he is a man. Then we eat and converse. That's it. Many of the guests bring gifts for the boy, because they can see that it is like a big birthday celebration.

Thinking It Through

What do our boys think of it? They are intimidated. At times they get discouraged. "It's too hard," they say. "I don't like it." "Why do I have to do this?" We did make it hard. Manhood is not easy. This life is not easy for a Christian. We keep encouraging them. But we also challenge

them. And we avoid showing any sign of giving in to the pressures around us. "Why are we different?" they say. "This is what Mommy and I have decided to do. God has given us a responsibility to train you to be a man. Because you are in this family, this is what you have to do."

We have to strike a careful balance. We have to match the projects to our children's capabilities. We can't make the work so hard or so time-consuming that it exasperates our children or is just an oppressive burden (Eph. 6:4). On the other hand, we don't want to give way to the lazy feeling of much of American culture, where many people just float along, without clear goals, and seek to be entertained and avoid hard work. Other people in America work very hard, but for unworthy goals: to be "successful," to get fame or wealth. We encourage hard work toward the worthy goal of serving Christ. We try to hit the positive note of encouragement many times for every one time that we have to criticize them. But we don't hide the fact that we are swimming against the cultural tide.

Having Another Man in the House

What happens after our boy becomes a man? He has the privileges of a man. The privileges must be real and meaningful. This part is scary for Diane and me. But we told ourselves, "It is better to give our young man lots of freedom now, while he is still at home. At 14 he is still young enough to come and ask us for advice. He is young enough to know that he doesn't know everything. For him to explore under these conditions, when he is still in our home, is far better than waiting until he goes away to college and we don't see him or talk with him about all the challenges."

When our boy becomes a man, lots of changes take place in many areas, some big, some small. As a man, he no longer needs a baby-sitter. He can baby-sit younger children himself. He sets his own bedtime and rising time. He decides when he does his homework and how long he works on it. He decides what TV programs he watches and how long he watches. He can (at first with supervision) teach a children's Sunday school class. He participates in the "family council" when my wife and I discuss, plan, and make important decisions. He can buy and care for his own pet. He excuses himself from the table rather than being asked to be excused. He buys his own clothing, school supplies, and gifts. He pays rent once a month, based on an estimate of his share in the utilities, food, and other costs. And he has an allowance to match these new responsibilities! In addition, if I pay him to do an extra job, I pay him at a going rate—at least the minimum wage, and more than that for jobs that are demanding.

But even when our son is a man, he is still part of the family and still lives with us. We love him just as much. We kiss and hug him just as much. We play together. We have certain rules that we would have for anyone living with us, even people outside the family. We expect him to be at meals on time. We expect him to be considerate of other members of the family. If he goes somewhere, we expect to know where he is. On Saturday night we meet as a family and assess the week. We continue to talk with him about where he is spiritually. If we see sin in his life, we will exhort him as we would exhort an adult who was on intimate terms with us. We continue to encourage one another and teach one another as fellow believers in Christ (Col. 3:16; 1 Thess. 5:14).

Christianity, after all, does not isolate adults from one another, but puts them in the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12). In that body we are answerable to one another. So Ransom's freedom is not freedom for immorality. If I were to see my brother in Christ filling his mind with raw TV

programs, or neglecting his homework, or even just staying up too late every night and then dragging in the morning, we would sit down and talk. We would ask, "Is this really wise for a Christian man?"

I must say that, so far, we are pleased. It has been work for us. But Ransom is a man now. Sure, he has energy and interests like many other fourteen-year-olds. But in matters that count, he acts like a man. Not perfectly. Not without some stumbles and signs of immaturity. But he does. We noticed a big change right after his Bar Jeshua.

Some Resources That We Used

- Larry Burkett, *Surviving the Money Jungle: A Junior High Study in Handling Money* (Gainesville, GA: Christian Financial Concepts, 1995).
- *Catechism for Young Children: An Introduction to the Shorter Catechism* (Philadelphia: Great Commission, n.d.)
- Paul Little, *Know What You Believe* (Colorado Springs, CO: Chariot Victor, 1987).
- Paul Little, *Witnessing; How to Give Away Your Faith* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1996).
- Susan S. Macaulay, *How to Be Your Own Selfish Pig* (Colorado Springs, CO: Chariot Victor, 1982).
- Theodore C. Papaloizos, *Alfabetario: Pre-School Reader* (n.l.: Papaloizos Publications, 1990). (Introduction to Greek letters and pronunciation.)
- Amye Rosenberg, *Alef Bet Mystery* (New York: Behrman House, 1980). (Introduction to Hebrew letters and pronunciation.)
- R. C. Sproul, *Choosing My Religion*, tape series (Orlando, FL: Ligonier Ministries).
- R. C. Sproul, *Objections Answered*, tape series (Orlando, FL: Ligonier Ministries).

[This material about the Bar Jeshua also appears on the internet at <http://www.frame-poythress.org/poythress_articles/1999How.htm>.]

Bat Jeshua

Dear Linda,

I looked through my files and can't find anything about the Bar Jeshua for girls. I'm not sure I will be as thorough as I was before, but here goes.

I would wait for a girl to become 16--this is in line with debutante balls and many other ethnic parties where a girl is now presented to society as fair game for marriage courting. With this in mind, her goals differ somewhat from a boy's.

1. Know enough Greek and Hebrew to look up words and find their true meaning so you cannot be deceived by cults.

2. Have memorized key verses and large portions of the Bible. One whole book would be good--even if you have to test one chapter at a time. Have read the whole Bible at least twice, preferably every year.

3. Understand the basics of theology--Westminster catechism covers this or the book *Know What You Believe*.

4. Be familiar with other philosophies and religions enough to be able to refute them and protect her own family from such ideas, recognize them, and teach and warn her own children.

5. Live a pious life--daily Bible reading, prayer, evangelism, and fruit appropriate to one who calls herself by the name of Christ. She should visit the sick and have at least one ongoing mercy project such as feeding the hungry, collecting blankets for the poor, supporting a child overseas. She should be aware of politics enough to pray for missionaries and the world. She should be serving the church with her gifts.

6. Understand child development and Biblical discipline. Have done some baby-sitting. Know how to clean herself, clothes, tubs, dishes, swimming pools, rugs, drapes, toilets, etc. Know how to organize a home efficiently with cleaning one day, laundry another, groceries another, baking another, errands another; plus how to store blankets, garments, centerpieces, birthday decorations, gift wrap, purchased gifts; how to decorate with complementary colors in inexpensive yet attractive and efficient ways. Does she know how to lead a Bible study or keep a prayer list? Plant a garden and keep house plants. Mend and sew and maybe crochet and knit and embroider. Does she understand nutrition and how to complement meals with appropriate colors, textures, flavors, how to set a table and serve guests? She better know how to cook well since she will do it 3x/day, 365 days a year, for 50 years if she is blessed. How are her party manners? Since women are very social, I also recommend some basic understanding of Biblical counseling. She should be able to keep a check book, write a budget and keep on it, know how to purchase cheap items and food, proper use of a credit card. Can she pump gas, read a map, change a tire? I would want her to understand men (*Let Me Be a Woman* by Elisabeth Elliot) and how to interact and submit to a husband and resolve conflict Biblically, how to recognize the characteristics of a godly man (E. Elliot, *The Mark of a Man*).

This is all I can currently think of--(oh I forgot how to iron clothes) but there are probably dozens of areas I neglected. After doing all these, she is presented at a big party where she is publicly tested, wears a long evening gown, her father gives her roses and dances with her, has a little meal or dessert for all in attendance and then is allowed to ballroom dance with other men and is available to be courted (not the same as getting married just because you are 16).

Any questions? Love you, Diane

Dear Linda,

So glad to hear of your joy in mothering. I love this time between 5-10. Anyway, I would explain the age difference between a boy becoming a man and a girl becoming a woman by

society and goal. By society, I mean that previously a boy in Jewish society was understood by that whole society as being a man. This applies to American Indians, (Ortiz says Latino, too) and even Medieval when a boy left home to be apprenticed in his life-long career, manage his own budget, pay for his own food and utilities, etc. We try to do that in our home, but present society is not on the same page. We have this precedent clearly given in Scripture whereas for the girl it is more implied through cultural history. By goal, I mean that the girl is ready to get married. The boy is not. He must be able to earn enough money at a skilled labor in order to care for a wife and children, pay for their housing, food, and medicine. When he becomes a man, he is able to begin this process, but is by no means ready to assume that responsibility. He becomes a man not by career completion, but by being a godly man. He is only ready to assume the beginning of a career--it would be impossible (especially in our society) for a 12 year old to gain enough employment to sustain a family. The girl becomes a woman not by career completion, but by being a godly woman; she is only ready to assume the beginning of her career at age 16---it would not be good for her to have babies much earlier. I hope this clarifies rather than muddies the waters.

I also was talking to Vern last night and forgot to mention a "Hope Chest." When a girl is young, give her a trunk or cedar chest where she can begin to lay away things for her home. As she learns to embroider, she can do tea towels and pillowcases, placemats and table runners for her home, rather than just samplers. Those weaving racks for potholders can make gifts but also some for her Hope Chest. She can make baby doll clothes which would fit a baby. If you find a great silver set or crystal set at a rummage sale, buy it for the hope chest. I made one of these for both of two girls from old thrown out trunks which I painted and lined with pretty contact paper and painted their names on the outside with nailpolish for flowers.

May God sustain you in all the hundreds of decisions you make every day. You are building precept upon precept. By the way, Precept Ministries has about 8 Bible study books covering a different book of the Bible for children 7-12. Also a fabulous resource is Doorposts, 5905 SW Lookingglass Dr., Gaston, OR 97119, tel. 503-357-4749 web page www.Doorposts.net They have a book called *For Instruction in Righteousness* that goes through every sin you can think of with all the Bible verses about it and examples from the Bible of people who fell into or resisted this sin and then work projects to think through about that sin. We still use it. Great stuff! They also have a book especially for raising boys into men *Plants Grown Up* and for girls into womanhood *Polished Cornerstones*. I have all three books and love them. The one for girls covers the following characteristics of a godly woman: reliable, honest, loyal, attentive, loving, submissive, peacemaking, humble, pure, patient, devoted, diligent, skillful, thrifty, wise manager, wise time user, feeds family well, organized, goal-oriented, makes things grow, handles money wisely, studious, memorizes God's Word, prayerful, self-disciplined, seeks wise counsel, committed to Church, determined, hospitable, merciful, evangelistic, just, prudent, domestic artist, gracious, modest, respectful, supportive, enterprising, thankful, trusting, courageous, controls tongue, trains her children, teaches, good steward, reverent, joyful, family-centered, exemplary, truly beautiful. The books are about \$40 each but you can ask about damaged corner or cover books or check internet for resales. It really covers almost everything that a girl needs in a course of growing into godly womanhood.

CHRISTIAN CHILD-REARING (6-12)

I. FOUNDATIONS (6-12) "WHY STAGE"

I call this the "why stage" because now the focus becomes more on explaining the reasons behind the facts or actions. As their thinking develops, you must guide it to develop Biblically. That doesn't mean you haven't been doing this previously, nor does it mean that you stop feeding them factual information, but it does mean that their development requires a different emphasis.

A. Family Devotions

(Ps. 5:3.) 1. Morning family devotions should begin to be a habit at the breakfast table where the father reads the Bible. This can be followed by mother going over the Bible memory verse, having the children repeat it separately until they each have it. Younger ones will need more help and repetition apart from breakfast in order to keep up with older kids. (I usually wrote the verse on their napkin which I slipped into their school lunch which I packed so that they would have a remembrance of God and His Word at school.) Then take out the hymnal, begin at the beginning and sing the first verse of the first hymn twice every day for a week. Next week, do the same with the next hymn, until you have gone through the whole hymnal. Sometimes, such as Christmas, you may want to skip to a special hymn for a week or two. After the singing, the mother or one of the older children can take the prayer journal, add to it any requests, fill in the date of answered prayers, and lead the family in prayer for all the prayers remaining in the journal. This should take a total of 15-20 minutes. If the children are young and less hurried, you may want to add a story time from the life of a missionary or some or from the *Book of Virtues* or something similar. You can also ask the children what they learned in their personal Bible reading that morning, if they normally finish it before breakfast. This way everyone starts the day upholding one another in prayer, worshipping God, and hearing His Word.

(Ps. 141:2.) 2. Evening family devotions could be held either right after dinner while everyone is still at the table or later at a specified time in the evening. Again, a structure helps to build in a permanence around God's Word and presence in the home. Here is one that we found helpful. The father reads the Bible. Sometimes as the children get older they can begin to read aloud as well. The father then asks 2-3 questions about what was read. Ask in such a way that you are not just getting information, but whether or not the child knows how to apply this in his life and how he is applying it. We suggest reading through the Bible consecutively at this stage. Sometimes everyone can take turns reading the next part of the passage and then explaining what it means. Here is where the father guides the children into the correct understanding of God's Word and yet helps them to begin thinking about it themselves. We then prayed about the following subjects on assigned days so that prayer time would not take up the whole evening. On Sunday we prayed for Saints which means other Christians and the Church universal; Monday was Missions at which time we read about one country each week from *Operation World* and then prayed for our Compassion children as well as missionaries; Tuesday was Tasks or whatever duties the Lord had assigned each of us so we prayed for work situations and teachers and classmates as well as ourselves; Wednesday was World when we focused on government, entertainment media, medicine, immoral trends, need for revival, international disasters, protection of soldiers, policemen and firemen; Thursday was for Thanksgiving; Friday centered on immediate and extended Family; Saturday was for Sinners which of course would mean everyone but which we used for interceding for the salvation of unbelieving neighbors and

acquaintances. Obviously, some family matters got prayed for every night, so the categories were not rigid but gave us a general structure.

B. Private Devotions

(Eccles. 12:1.) The child should begin reading through the Bible every year in a year. This may mean that you read 4 chapters aloud to him and he reads one or that he reads two in the morning and two at night by himself and you read one to him while he is lying down after school. But by the time he is 12, he should be reading the entire Bible at 5 chapters each day by himself. He should have his own diary or journal in which he can write to God and how God has been faithful to him. I would suggest that through this age, you keep separately a list of Ebenezers so as to strengthen and remind the child of God's faithfulness and mercy toward him. I did this only sporadically for my kids but faithfully for a friends and now regret not having that same long list for my children. Explain to them why it is important to eat spiritual food each day (Matt. 6:11) and how our faith is weak and must be bolstered.

C. Family

(Ps. 118:3.) Foundations are also built through "walking in the way." Make sure that when you gather pretty leaves in the fall to make into waxed paper mats that you talk about the creative God who made such beautiful and diverse leaves the way He made people. Ask God to open your own eyes in faith so that you may open their eyes. As you teach them other languages and how language works, remind them that God speaks to us in language which we must understand. We insisted both of our boys be able to translate Greek and Hebrew by the time they were 12 so that no one could ever deceive them about what God's Word says and so that they themselves might teach others the truth. Not everyone will want to do this, but you can find homeschool computer programs that teach this or contact the Orthodox Jewish synagogue or Orthodox Greek Church for resources which they use to teach their children. But don't teach them anything you yourself are not willing to learn along with them. Take an evening once each week to turn out the lights, cuddle each child, and ask each person, "What made you glad this week? What made you sad? mad? scared? You will be surprised how much you will learn and how they will learn about you and how you will build foundations of trust and openness for later years. Talk about why something frightens us or why it makes us happy. How did God make us to think and feel and act? Why do we do that or not do that? Talk about original sin, idols, joy in Jesus.

Make sure each child has a time alone with daddy at least monthly. My husband took each boy to McDonald's for a daddy time each month where they would discuss favorite school subjects and why it was a favorite and why something was hard and how to deal with people who were hard. As a family, do mercy projects such as singing in a retirement home or visiting a shut-in or praying at the hospital with someone. Let the children watch you ministering to others and then encourage them to do some on their own. For example, while you are counseling a mother, they might play in the other room with the young child. Maybe they could walk a neighbor's dog for them, or take out an elderly neighbor's trash or shovel their drive or sharpen the pencils at church or pick up discarded bulletins after service. Take field trips as a family where you can show them about God's world and talk about what He has done.

D. Discipline

(Eph. 6:11) This will be far less of a problem if you have done your work the first 5 years. There will still be sin, but not a vociferous or frequent. They will have learned that their

will must submit to the will of God and those He has put in authority over them. At this stage I began to talk to them about the methods of sin and Satan and the world. They needed to know that Satan would make sin seem good and pretty, but that he was covering a lie with a pretty blanket. I began to help them understand their own soul by drawing a picture of a castle and then having arrows coming at it. I would ask "When does this sin occur? When you are alone? When you are feeling sorry for yourself?" and then "Where does it happen? Only at school? Only at home? Only on the computer or TV?" and then how does it happen? "Do you sin with your mouth? with your thoughts? with your eyes? with your fingers?" They begin to see that the sin has found a weak place where it can attack them. They can build with you a strategy to fight against it using prayer, Scripture, memorized verses, fellowship of others guiding and guarding and praying for them. They learn to put on the armor of God in order to fight the enemy. They also learn that you are willing to get under the yoke with them, to bear the burden of fighting this sin, that you are on their side, you love them. In all of this, they begin to see the work of Christ as well. Now lead them through confession, restitution if applicable, punishment, forgiveness and prayer. Here is where you will find a book like *Instruction in Righteousness* by Doorposts very helpful. Remember we are not looking for a perfect robot, but a godly man or woman who is equipped for the calling of the Kingdom of God.

The positive discipline is primarily, for us, the Bar Jeshua, but also all the praises and encouragements along the way.

II. APPLICATIONS (6-12) "Why Stage"

The following examples of applications are to demonstrate how Deut. 6 looks at this age level. The 5th grader might look at Susan Schaeffer Macauley's book on worldviews called *How to be Your Own Selfish Pig* and later look at her father's books *How Should we Then Live* and *Whatever Happened to the Human Race* by Dr. Francis Schaeffer.

A. Parents.

1. Apologetics

(Eph. 4:14-15.) In some ways this ought to be the biggest information growth period for a parent. You have to be able to know what the Bible says on every subject and how to apply it to your child. Parents should know the current arguments on politics, ethics, life styles, music. Is "Timbuktu" the latest singing star? then you need to know what his style is, what are the words to his popular songs, what is his worldview and be able to critique all that from the Bible so you can guide your child. A helpful resource from Focus on the Family for this and movies and TV is *Plugged In*. See more about this below under "media." Pray through the news with them so that they understand that all things are under God's sovereign control and no molecule acts independent of Him.

For example, teach them not to get hardened in their souls by treating the news as impersonal information. Pray for people in the news who are injured or who have lost loved ones, for those who are poor, for those in authority, for those who have sinned, for those who flaunt, for the passage of laws which reflect God's holiness, for movie stars whose souls are empty.

For example, look over their assignments and discuss the Biblical approach to them. Do they have to do a report on an Afro-American for Black History month? Then help them choose a Christian such as George Washington Carver where they can speak in front of the class about his faith in Christ. Do they have to memorize and recite a poem? Then choose one from Hebrew poetry in the Psalms so the child can speak God's Word to the whole class.

Ask them what they discussed in English today? What funny thing happened? What did

the other kids say in history? What did you say? Don't ask questions that can be answered with a "yes" or "no." Take them to the Bible to show them retorts for wrong ideas. (For example, Christians don't care about the earth. Look here in Genesis where Adam is supposed to care for the Garden and God tells us to do the same.)

If they go to public school, you need to monitor the books they are assigned BEFORE they start to read them. Ask the teacher for a reading list for the year, then go to the library and read them or read Christian reviews of them. If it is an objectionable book then find one that meets the teacher's purposes (about disabled people or Holocaust for example) and propose a substitute. The husband should do this as representative and defender of the family. We had to do this several times, and I remember hearing Dr. Francis Schaeffer say that there were field trips he would not let his children go on. You are the Biblical filter for what you allow into your child's life.

We suggest taking an overnight retreat as a couple once each year to pray and plan home life-marriage, children, vacations, house projects. Think through each child's sin patterns and how to help them have victory in Christ. Think through each child's gifts and how to grow them so they are like the invested talent Scripture talks about. Recommit to praying through the whole Bible for your children which may take 3 years.

2. God.

(Eph. 6:15-18.) You should still be pumping their heads with knowledge of God by continuing teaching the catechism, teaching Biblical languages, assigning and reviewing Scripture memory (Psalm 1, 23, 91, 100, Isa. 53, I Cor. 13, 10 Commandments, Lord's Prayer, Beatitudes, names of all the Bible books in order, names of all the kings of Judah in order, names of the 12 disciples), a simple timeline from creation till the Incarnation. This is a good time to build a replica of the tabernacle and take a field trip to Lancaster to visit a life-size one. Draw a map or make a model of Jerusalem and then walk through the last days of Jesus' earthly life. Give them a book appropriate to their age about the Romans or Babylonians or Egyptians and ask them to give a report on it to the family. Teach them the Apostle's Creed and what it means-- R.C. Sproul has a book on it if you don't know. Give them rewards such as their own *Student Bible Atlas*, a Bible carrying case, a bracelet with the 10 Commandments, the booklet *A Shepherd Looks at Psalm 23* by Philip Keller, a wall poster, a flashlight that says "Jesus is the Light of the World." Be creative and know your child. Don't just give candy but give something that will be meaningful for years to come.

B. Children

Now is the time in the "why stage" to make them ask more questions about decisions: Does this glorify God? What did Jesus do? Does this show you love God or just yourself? What does God say in the Bible?

1. Relationships

(1 Peter 2:17.) This is a bigger area for girls than for boys and takes a lot of reading through Proverbs for guidelines. It is a vital time to remember that "Bad company corrupts good morals," and to learn what is a true friend, how do you act loyally to God first and friends second, how to stand alone against the world of your peers. There will be many tears and hurt feelings and opportunities to learn forgiveness at this age.

For example: Your son tells you that a classmate told the teacher he cheated on his test and so his was called to the teacher's desk at recess. Did you cheat? Why did he say that? Because he got a lower grade. How can you encourage him in his studies? Even Jesus was falsely accused. Let's forgive him and ask Jesus to change him. Jesus says to pray for those who

persecute you.

Let's take the example of a girl being invited to another girl's home for a sleepover party. Ask the questions that you are training your daughter to ask herself in the future. Is the girl a Christian? Is her family Christian? Do we know them in such a way that we can trust them? Will the parents be there the whole time? Are they committed to monitoring the activities instead of just going to bed? What food will be served (alcohol? is alcohol available in the parents' cupboards?) Who else will be there? Are boys invited? Is there an older brother in the family who might take advantage of one of the girls in a hallway or bathroom? Do you have previous commitments for that time? How will this affect your duties in chores and schoolwork the next day? What is the purpose of the party? What other options are available? (Go to part of the party; you as a parent go as a chaperone; have the party at your house.) Prepare her for specific temptations (ouija board games are demonic so you cannot play; summoning the dead and fortune telling about how many children you will have is demonic and forbidden, tatoos are forbidden in Leviticus, showing private parts or trying to see someone else's is immoral, mean tricks done to the first person who falls asleep are wrong. If they play the popular game Truth or Dare, then always choose Truth and never dare someone to do something that is immoral nor do it yourself.) Prepare her how to say "no" to all these situations by acting it out and asking her what she would do then and discussing it. Pray with her about God's direction, then wait awhile before responding to the invitation. If God directs you to go, then pray about non-Christians who might be there, the opportunity to witness, the presence of the Holy Spirit to give joy, the binding of evil, what modest clothing to take, how to encourage the party girl in her faith with an appropriate gift, how to suitably thank the parents for their efforts. Remind your children that all their lives, they only have to phone you and you will bring them home from wherever they are. Make sure she has a working phone and knows your number so she can do that. Never let her walk in the dark. alone. Teach her self-defense.

2. Dating.

(1 Cor 6:15-20.) The topic will come up quite young. Build on what you previously taught at the 0-5 age level and expand. Why do people in the culture date? To get to know someone; to have fun; to exploit someone for themselves; to look like everyone else; to go to social events and not be alone. Let's look at each one of those reasons in light of Scripture. *I Kissed Dating Goodbye* by Joshua Harris is a good text once they are older. You can get to know people without dating them. I bet you know everyone in your Sunday school class and how they act and what kind of person they are, but you never dated them. Can't you have fun without being so insecure that you have to have someone on your arm? Your security and identity lie in the fact that you are a child of God paid for by the blood of the King. Exploitation is mean and selfish. Everyone else was doing the same stuff in the days of Noah and what did God think of that. Dare to be a Daniel. Dare to stand in God's purposes and strength not the opinions of others. You will always be in the world and not of it since you belong to God. You will never fit in no matter how hard you try to look like them because your heart has the Holy Spirit and you have been transferred from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of light. The big question is are you ready to get married? Then you are not ready to date. What do you need to be like as a good wife or husband? Let's make a list from Scripture and work on things where you still need to grow. For older children look at *Mark of a Man* and *Let Me Be a Woman* both by Elisabeth Elliot. Place your heart in God's hands and ask Him to keep it safe until He brings you and your spouse together. We told our boys that a baby is carried; a child walks; but an adult carries others. He is still at the "learning to walk on his own" stage and is not yet ready to carry a spouse and children in their spiritual journey. This is also the stage where you need to make it

clear to a child frightened by stories around him that you and your spouse have promised in a commitment before God that you will never divorce. Teach them like Job to make a covenant with their eyes and encourage them to turn away from sexy TV commercials, to turn away from store magazines or even purposely slide them behind a nice magazine. Teach them to realize that these sexy people do not know that God loves them and so they are trying to get people to just like their body. they need our prayers because they are going to Hell.

3. Activities.

(Exod. 20:3.) You have heard that Americans are too busy, but how does that get controlled? We dealt with it by deciding that whatever one person was doing, we would all do. If one boy had a soccer game, we were all there. If one boy had a band concert, we were all there. This led to us becoming band parents, riding on the bus, helping with uniforms and instruments, going to all the football games, even when one child was still under high school age, he went with us. This quickly eliminates a lot of activities. You will find that you can probably only do one activity per child, maybe two. So be sure to pray what one activity is the best investment of that child's gifts from God. If those gifts become secondary to others, then switch to another activity the next year for that child.

Church attendance and activities come first. That does not mean they have to go on every ski trip or retreat, but it does mean that they are at church morning and evening and Sunday school and hopefully every week at youth group at least once. Encourage them to serve with their peers in the church youth group on missions projects, making meals for needy, at retirement homes, at inner city outreaches. They can begin to find ways to help out at nursery every other month or as a Sunday school teacher's helper, even learning the story of a missionary and being allowed to give a 3 minute presentation in a younger age Sunday school class. Encourage them to take responsibility in the church body. Continue to encourage them to serve one another in the home as well with gifts of service and little homemade cards or encouragements. Remind them to keep their priorities, Jesus-Others-You = JOY.

4. Media

(Phil. 4:8.) The best thing to do about TV is to throw it out. If you won't do that, then keep it in a closet so it is hard to get it out. The TV breaks through the quiet walls of our home like tornado, bringing all the refuse of the world. If you have decided to keep a TV, here are some guidelines. Put in a V chip or filter that takes out all the cursing. Record and watch on your schedule only those things that are profitable and then skip through the commercials. Get your news from a weekly Christian magazine like *World* rather than TV. Tape over your TV the words from Psalm 101:2-3 "I will walk within my home in the integrity of my heart. I will set no worthless thing before my eyes. " Never let the child watch the TV without you watching it, too. Then comment about it as it goes along (how mean DW is on the Arthur cartoon and how Arthur did the right thing by not returning evil for evil). Mock the commercials critically--(so if I buy this toothpaste, I will win the next basketball game? How stupid do they think I am?!) Don't let them mindlessly absorb the worldly trash but critique, argue with it, mock it, tear it apart where it deviates from Scripture. Prepare a check list with your child while he is still 5 or 6 with questions such as the following which our children helped us make and then tape to the end table:

Does it keep the 10 Commandments? (No cursing, murder, adultery, lying, disrespecting parents, etc)

Is there justice according to God's standards of justice? (Is the bad guy caught and punished or is

it some modern thing where the bad guys are actually the heroes?)

Is it too scary?

Are there good characters and role models?

Does it communicate facts about God correctly?

Does it reflect the richness of God's creation?

Are problems solved by God, not men?

Does it view the world the way God views it?

Does it give glory to God?

These same questions can be applied to movies, concerts, books, magazines, music, phone calls, IMing, text messaging, computer games or any games. We found that books like *Little House on the Prairie*, *Ann of Green Gables*, *the Hardy Boys* (old edition), *Nancy Drew Mysteries*, *the Bobbsey Twins*, *Five Little Peppers and How They Grew*, *Winnie the Pooh*, *Narnia Series*, *Tolkien's Ring Trilogy*, *Betsy-Tacy* by Maud Lovelace *The Redwall Series* by Brian Jacques and other such books read aloud together each night were something great to look forward to--more than a TV show. Some of these are more appropriate for older and some for younger children. But they need to ask still other questions. Is this the best thing I can do with the time God has given me? Do I have homework? Could I play outside with the neighbor? Could I help my mother or brother or sister with something? Could I be reading my Bible? Is this TV (or whatever) stealing time from my life and duties and love for God and others? Does it equip me for God and witnessing to others? This can be rationalized into saying "yes" to everything, so you have to be careful and keep it in the context of other questions. Does it make me think Philippiian 4:8 thoughts? "Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, let you mind dwell on these things." You cannot expect your child to do this if you are not doing it. Ask God to help you change your habits. Tell your child that you have done wrong in this area and ask him to pray for you, too.

5. Money.

(Matt. 6:24.) What is your attitude toward money? Is it something that belongs to God that He has entrusted to you to use according to His will? Is it yours that you earned with your hard work to do with however you please? Your attitude will be communicated to your children even without words. If you have already begun giving them money for completing their weekly chores, help them to begin accepting responsibility for other costs. Do they need a new backpack each fall? Then help them figure out how much a back pack costs, what is a reasonable price for one that won't fall apart, and how much per week he would have to save in order to achieve that amount before fall. Help him to compare prices online or at stores. His allowance money should not be just money for his own selfish whims, although some can go for a soda or new candy bar, but should be his chance to take responsibility for some of the resources God provides through work. Teach him that his first 10% each week goes to the church. Help him to choose a missionary or Compassion child or Samaritan's Purse project that he can contribute to. We found that Larry Burkett had two workbooks for young people to help them think about budgeting and finances from God's perspective that were helpful.

For example, you may have to think about clothing in particular with a girl, but make clear that she cannot go buy her own clothes until she has proven herself to be an adult and even then you as a parent would still be able to say "no." Set up rules and standards as early as possible. Tell them that your clothes tell people about who you are and what you think and they show your attitude toward you surroundings. So when we go to church we wear nicer clothing

because we are coming together on the Sabbath to worship and praise Him in a special way that is different from the other 6 days. When we go to a wedding or funeral or graduation or birthday we wear special clothes to show our respect to the people there. Different cultures have different ways of expressing this, but since we are in this culture, we do it this way. In particular, I would tell a Chinese daughter that although the American culture sees nothing wrong with exposing the back of the shoulder, it is extremely offensive and brings men to sin from the Chinese culture where she spends much of her time. She must always wear at least a cap sleeve on all her clothing. Girls in particular need to understand that boys are led into sin by their eyes and girls by touch. Therefore, girls must not let boys see their bodies either by wearing no clothes or tight clothes and boys must not touch girls. If I may quote Doug Geivett from Focus on the Family magazine, "Dressing to dazzle or titillate betrays a different agenda [than the one God outlines in the Bible], one of seeking the attention of others and trading true significance [as a child of God] for the counterfeit of approval of others."

CHRISTIAN CHILD-REARING (13-18)

I. FOUNDATIONS (13-18) "How Stage"

I call this the "how stage" because now is when they learn how to assimilate and apply everything for themselves. How do I fulfill who God made me uniquely to be? For example, if I could wear my hair any way I want, what would I choose and why and how does that fit who I am before God and how I love Him and other people? The parent used to have more control so when he told the child to get in the car and the child didn't obey quickly, the parent could pick him up and put him in the car. This is a very difficult time where teens stretch your every nerve by pushing the boundaries of their independence. I remember telling my son once, "Sometimes you make it very hard to love you." Of course we love them because they are written on our hearts the way we are carried on God's heart (Isa. 49:15), but that doesn't make it easy. They need to know we will always love them, even through pain and tears. The teen years are like being stopped at a traffic light with a board fence next to you which you cannot see through. But when you move, your eye puts together all the little glimpsed cracks between the boards and you can see what is behind. You cannot see into the future or into your child's heart, but God in His power puts all the little precepts upon precepts that you have been building into his life to form a perfect image of Christ which can be seen later.

(1 John 3:16.) A. Sacrifice. "Greater love has no man than this that he lay down his life for another." You must now lay down your life in a different way. The child previously fit into your schedule; now you fit into his schedule. Where soccer used to be 1 hour on Saturdays, it will now be 6 hour daily soccer practices in August and 2-3 games per week plus daily practices in the fall, plus an awards banquet, and team pizza party. You stay up late waiting for him to come home. You follow him to his activities. Previously they were forced to enter your world, now you must enter the world of your children. You will talk far less and listen far more. You will be severely criticized by them for any inconsistency with your own teaching, any hint of hypocrisy. Your life will come under the severe scrutiny of your children to whom you must confess sins, ask for forgiveness, ask for prayer, and humble yourself (1 Peter 5:6). All of your sins will be reproduced in your child and magnified. Humble yourself. This is extremely difficult for a controlling parent, and I myself failed repeatedly. Not only do you sacrifice yourself, but you must also lay them on the altar. Give them to God as you let them begin to make decisions, which inevitably means making mistakes. Cry for them, but realize that they belong to God, not you. By now, they should be budgeting their income, helping do their own laundry, cleaning their room, preparing a meal at least once each month, doing chores without being reminded, planning their study schedule and researching their papers on their own. This is not without exceptions, as even last week we helped our son who is a college senior find information for a research paper. The father should still check the family calendar on which everyone writes obligations and schedule in "family nights." These might be a teen choosing a game, a movie cleared with the father, a book to read together, an outing to a park, building a snow dragon, or doing a puzzle. But the family needs to have time together as a family, not just in ministry or church work or school work. This takes sacrifice on everyone's part.

(2 Peter 1:5-7.) B. God. Are you reading your Bible every day and praying for your children? What are you praying about besides healing their colds and getting good grades? Are you praying that they will fight temptation, grow in faith, love God with all their heart, mind and soul, be equipped to do battle against evil, be witnesses for God's glory, be used to build His Kingdom? Praying through Scripture helps keep your eyes on the bigger issues. Are you walking with God? Is your life only outward rules or do you truly love God and reflect that in

your life? Mothers, what clothing do you choose for yourself? What magazines do you have around? Fathers, have you ever let your child see that you sacrificed personal work or pleasure just to be with him? Have you ever offered, without their asking, to take them to a game or go hiking with them? Do you prize your image over honesty, prestige over contentment, money over people? Who you are will be whom your child imitates.

C. Child's Faith.

(2 Peter 1:3-4.) Your teen should be preparing Bible studies by this time to present to the family, to lead at the youth group, to minister with on missions trips, to build up the younger children of the church. You can begin guiding him to read more advanced Christian literature such as *The Journals of Jim Elliot* by Elisabeth Elliot or *Reasons to Believe* by Francis Schaeffer or *Surprised by Joy* and *The Screwtape Letters* by C.S. Lewis as well as missionary biographies, simplified systematic theologies, or *Sketches in Church History* by Houghton. He should be thinking about and acting on the "how"; how do I communicate God's Word to others, how do I live according to His Word, how do I assimilate and communicate the Gospel. This will vary somewhat according to his gifts of acting, writing, singing, composing, speaking, leading, or counseling. Needless to say, he should be discipling himself to read the Bible every day all the way through each year, to pray regularly for himself and others, to worship God, to edify and fellowship with God's people, to speak the Gospel clearly and effectively with non-believers. Some will want to keep detailed diaries of thoughts and prayers while others will keep a mere list of prayer subjects. Look for and encourage any signs of the Holy Spirit's fruit in their lives. Praise each baby step. A teenager is like the baby you saw many years ago. The baby walked holding your fingers and then began to walk a step or two without you but fell down. You picked him up, consoled him, and encouraged him to try walking again. The teen will hold onto you sometimes, take a few independent steps, fall down, get picked up by you, and then take a few more steps on his own. Be patient. Pray without ceasing.

II APPLICATIONS

A. Involvement.

(Heb. 13:3.) You must now be watching your child very carefully as to whether they show signs of drugs, body image and diet problems, what is happening with their money, which sites are they visiting on the computer. If you ask them directly occasionally they will know that you care, but you must also check things on your own since teenagers are notoriously deceptive. The most important time to talk is right after they get home from school. Give them a snack and ask questions about their day while they refuel and relax. Ask things like how did Jesus help you today? Did you get to talk to anyone about Jesus? Did you hear any good jokes today? What did you say in class? Did any of your teachers say anything to you? Who did you eat lunch with? What did you talk about? Are you struggling with your relationship with anyone? Is anyone dating that you know? Has anyone ever offered you drugs or alcohol? What did you say? Do you know anyone doing drugs? What is he like? What class did you enjoy most today? Do you have any sins that I could help you pray about? Did you have an assembly? How does the class treat a substitute? Do your own homework as a parent. Every adult must cross cultural differences to enter his child's world and learn his language. Read their books. Listen to their music. Watch their TV shows. My son was particularly impressed when he turned on the radio in the car to his station and I began to sing along. It helps them to know that they are not in a private world but that you know and understand it as well. As before, read lyrics and critique media, but at this stage ask them what their opinion is first before you interact. Listen to all the

conversations discreetly when you have their friends over, and learn who they are with their friends and what kinds of concerns they talk about. Who is influencing him and how? Don't be surprised that your child is a sinner like you and like everyone else. Take him back to the Gospel. Christ died for you. And apply it to yourself as well.

B. Encouragement.

(Phil. 2:4; James 5:13.) Being a teenager is very tough with the pressures of getting good grades, choosing a college and career, controlling hormone surges, needing more sleep than they can get, being an adult but still under supervision (as was Jesus when He returned with His family after being found at the Temple talking with the elders). Are you asking each morning what they want prayer about and then praying for them? Do they have friends they want you to pray about? Put a little note in their lunches (Focus on the Family had "hugs in a lunchbox" notes) or send them an email card or tell text them a joke. Bake a special food they like and have it hot out of the oven when they come home. Let them be a child and do it with them by swinging on swings, reading old picture story books, batting a balloon back and forth and giggling. If they compete and don't get a prize, make a ribbon to pin on them to tell them they are still a winner in your eyes and God's eyes. Encourage them to take a half hour nap or so before dinner. Anything you can do to brighten their day and show them you are on their side cheering for them in everything is needed. They might not say so now but in about 10 years they will remember those things with joy. Encourage them to try their gifts in different situations to see more clearly what God's call on their life is. If they make a bad decision, hold them, cry with them, and ask gently what they learned so it won't happen again. Pray together for God's forgiveness and let them hear you intercede for them before God's throne. Fight sin along with them; pray; fast. This is a good age to begin teaching a child about fierce spiritual battles which require fasting. He will need more praise and encouragement at this time than any other time in his life. His faith will look like baby faith because it is suddenly not mere repetition of your faith. Always bring the Gospel into problems--Jesus died for you, conquered sin and death for you, is seated at the right hand of God interceding for you, has provided His Spirit to counsel you--so there is hope for peace with God, for change in your life, and for power to live life for Him.

C. Guidance.

(Prov. 3:5-6.) Children are still developing gifts which were not so visible at a younger age. Watch for how God has made them and how to encourage them in those gifts. Self-image is a perennial teen problem. Girls want to be accepted by boys as beautiful, but they need to see that the husband God is preparing for them will be made to respond to how God made her and that it is more important to work on her spirit as Peter says (1 Peter 3:3-5). You can undergird her understanding of God's approval and delight in her (in line with Genesis helpmate work) by getting her involved in service to others, especially children and charity work. "For if anyone would lose His life for My sake, he shall find it." Boys are still competing with each other in sports and for grades. Undergird the boy (in line with Genesis dominion work) by giving him opportunities to be a leader. We had to tell one son that God gave him the gift of leadership but if no one was following, it didn't do any good. A good leader is a servant. "For the Son of Man came to serve, not to be served." Show them how to organize a research project with their available time so that they don't work on the Lord's Day, but get enough done at a time that they are not overwhelmed by the weight of their assignments. For example, if they have to read a 200 page book in 2 weeks, show them how to take the 12 days available divided into the 200 means they only have to read about 17 pages each day. Then take a big calendar and plot out all their assignments for a month. Next month let them try to do it themselves, until they learn to budget their time. The father is still the head of the household. This is not a democracy; people don't

vote with the majority getting their way. So the father sets house rules: everyone goes to church, has dinner and breakfast together, etc. The father plants hedges around temptations like the computer, mail, TV, cars, dating, friends, words, obligations for the benefit of the family whom he is nurturing and protecting as his God-given job. In line with Scripture, studies indicate that it is the father who has the greatest influence on both the son and the daughter. So this is the time for him to pay more attention to them, to continue those monthly times out alone together, and to assure them of his love and support.

D. Dating.

(Heb. 13:4.) The list of specific qualities they want in a spouse and that they need to develop themselves should continue to be prayed about, as well as the faith, safety and purity of that other person. At 13 is a good time to give them a "True Love Waits" Ring to remind them of their pledge to be pure. Just because they are physically pure does not say that they are mentally pure in heart. Explain and exemplify the importance of inner character, that we are not merely physical creatures to be decorated but spiritual images of God and His temple. Teach them that their body is a gift, prepared by God for Himself and one person only who will be committed to them in marriage. Use the picture of the Jerusalem Temple where God dwells all the time and how only one person was ever allowed into that sanctum. This is a great time to act out dating temptations. Let the mother pretend to be the girl in the car with her son. Curl his hair with your finger and get really close to him and tell him how handsome and strong and smart he was, what a hero at the sports event. Imitate to some extent the lurid slut of Proverbs. He will blush and say it's silly but then have him act out how he should respond Biblically in that situation. The same with the girl. Have the father put his arm around the daughter and cuddle close and tell her how beautiful she is, then ask her how she is going to respond Biblically to such advances. Prepare them. When the real situation arises, it will be so laughable as they remember their parents that they will be fortified against the temptation. We gave the rule that our sons were never to be alone anywhere with any woman of any age except their mother or grandmother. This meant that when our one son was closed into an art kiln room at school with a girl that he went and opened the door. This is the time to discuss frankly the perversions outside of normal married sex which should have been discussed at 11 or 12. Make sure you read the Bible and books giving Biblical instruction about this. If you need direction, phone Focus on the Family for suggestions. Talk about pornography, homosexuality, masturbation, petting (Ezek. 23:3), French kissing, and lust. Impurity begins inwardly with their exploitive attitude toward others and their lack of respect for the temple of their body in which God the Holy Spirit dwells. Again I would recommend *Boy Meets Girl* and *I Kissed Dating Goodbye* by Joshua Harris, *Passion and Purity* and *Quest for Love* by Elisabeth Elliot. Go through the Scripture with them about how the attitude of their heart should be to preserve purity and edify the other person for the Lord's work. Underscore that they must avoid even the appearance, the possibility of being misunderstood as evil, for the glory of Christ (2 Cor. 8:21).

E. Cars.

(James 1:10,17.) You have the car and insurance, you lay down the rules. In Pennsylvania a child may not drive at night after 11PM. Make sure you set a curfew before that. And make it clear that 1 minute late is still considered late and car privileges will be revoked for awhile. My uncle at one point took my cousin to the police station, handed my cousin's driver's license to the policeman, and said, "If you see him on the road, arrest him." That boy later went on to be a preacher. We suggest that they never ride in a car except when a grown up is driving. They may not take anyone in their car without permission from you. No one else may drive the car. They are never to be alone in a car with a girl (or boy if you have a daughter). They must

pay for any damage done to the car through getting a job and earning the money--not just taken out of their savings. When they go out, they must always leave a phone number, address, and name of where they are, time of when they expect to be back and take their cell phone with them. Occasionally phone the home (not his cell number) to make sure that he arrived safely and that the parents are home.

F. Money.

(Heb. 13:5.) By now your child should know how to budget income, rudiments of filling out income tax forms, how to write checks, how to use and protect a credit card, how to balance a check book, how to calculate interest, and what are some basic options for saving/investing money at interest/with returns. Make sure he understands the guidelines of not spending what he doesn't have and the severe financial penalties for not making payments. Teach him how to compare phone plans, utilities options, and rental agreements, remembering that he may be living in an apartment in just another 2 years.

G. Discipline.

(Prov. 2:1-5.) Of course this takes a more difficult direction at this point, since you cannot pick the child up in your arms and carry him to where he is supposed to be. But there are other consequences: no music, no TV, no desserts, no friends over, no phone, no computer (or parent sits at computer with child if computer work is necessary), no car, no party, no college, etc. If the consequence means nothing to your child, then find another one that does. I once counseled a woman whose child was not studying and was just hanging out with friends to tell him that he had to do his duty better than that in the next two weeks or she would homeschool him. Then go and get the papers from the administration to fill out to do that. You might also consider phoning all his teachers to check on the child's behavior in class if there is some difficulty. If they think schooling isn't important, then take them out of school and make them pay for food, rent, utilities, clothing, gas, and phone by working at a paying job full time. You are still their legal guardian and have legal authority as well as God given authority over their lives.

Notice, too, that God showed in the case of Miriam (Num 12:14-16) that it is appropriate to shun a child for a short period of time in the case of a serious sin. This means not looking at him or talking to him for a few hours or a few days. You should explain lovingly to the child at the beginning what you will be doing and why. Martin Luther did this with his children. During this time, pray, pray, pray (and sometimes fast) asking God to forgive and change your child and to give you wisdom as to how best to raise him. Express your love for him, both verbally and with hugs, at the end of the time.

Who can consistently follow God and love God in all these circumstances? Seek God for forgiveness, and believe in his power to change you and to change your child. Pray for his power to be at work in you and in your child.