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# THE PARENTHOOD PLAN

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DR. BILLY WILSON

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# THE PARENTHOOD PLAN

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GOD'S A TO Z  
FOR SUCCESSFUL  
PARENTING

DR. BILLY WILSON

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All Scripture passages are from the King James Version of the Bible unless otherwise noted.

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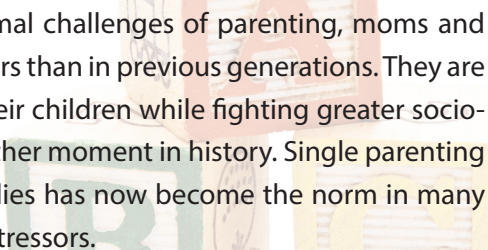
# PREFACE

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**P**arenting remains one of the most challenging jobs in the world. Whether you have two children like my wife and I have or 22 children like one father I know, none of us can claim to have mastered the task of parenting. Yet being a mother or a father is the most important mission we will ever attempt. For those of us in this “job of a lifetime,” help is always needed and appreciated. This small booklet is meant to offer God’s hope and help for today’s parent.

There is not much assistance or on-the-job training available prior to becoming a parent. Schools rarely teach “Parenting 101,” and you have probably never met anyone that held a B.A., M.A., or Ph.D. in parenting. Millions of public dollars are invested each year in organizations that promote planning when to become a parent; however, very little time or money is spent in planning for successful parenthood. Many people become parents without any plans beyond purchasing a baby bed and a car seat until, suddenly, they find themselves thrust into this challenge of a lifetime.

In addition to the normal challenges of parenting, moms and dads are working more hours than in previous generations. They are spending less time with their children while fighting greater sociological forces than at any other moment in history. Single parenting or balancing blended families has now become the norm in many societies, adding to these stressors.

Three wooden alphabet blocks are visible in the bottom right corner of the page. The block in the foreground is green and has the letter 'B' on it. Behind it and to the right is a yellow block with the letter 'C'. To the left of the 'C' block is a red block with the letter 'A'. The blocks are slightly out of focus and appear to be resting on a light-colored surface.

Parents today are fearful about the world in which their children are growing up.

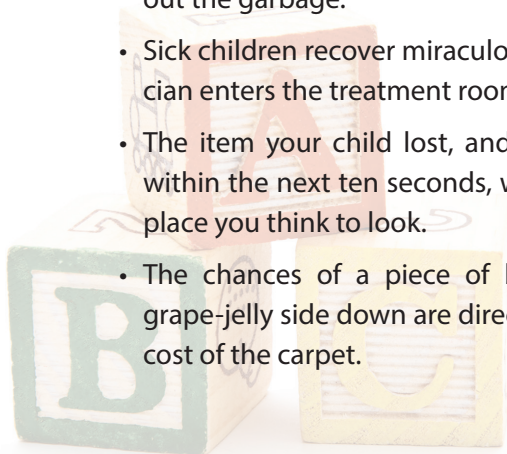
Top parental fears in North America include the following:

- Easy accessibility to drugs and alcohol
- Excessive exposure to inappropriate sexual content
- Possibilities of abduction and abuse
- Rising costs of higher education
- Negative peer influences

Many of today's parents are feeling bewildered and disoriented by it all. The hand-me-down theories of parenting are simply failing the tests of our present environment. Many parents would agree with John Wilmot, who said, "Before I was married, I had three theories about raising children. Now, I have three children and no theories."

People throughout the world may relate and heartily agree with the one theory that always seems to apply—Murphy's Law of "What Can Go wrong Will Go Wrong." Here are a few examples of how this theory could prove true in your situation.

- The tennis shoes you must replace today will go on sale next week.
- The garbage truck will be two doors past your house when your teenager remembers it is his turn to take out the garbage.
- Sick children recover miraculously when the pediatrician enters the treatment room.
- The item your child lost, and must have for school within the next ten seconds, will be found in the last place you think to look.
- The chances of a piece of bread falling with the grape-jelly side down are directly proportional to the cost of the carpet.

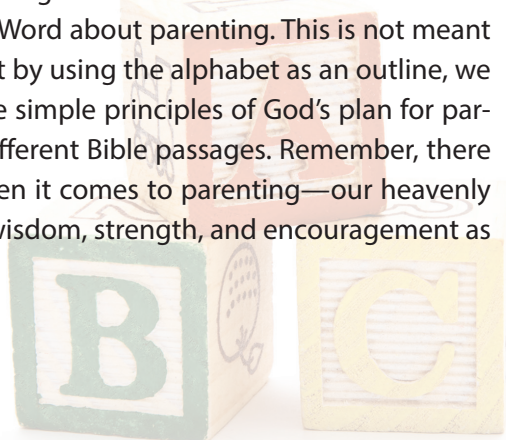


Actually, even Murphy's Law is not dependable for parenting in real life. So where can you find a parenthood plan? Where can you obtain help for the most important job you will ever pursue? When values erode, communities suffer, neighborhoods deteriorate, and cities become less than what they should be, the church should be a place that offers help and healing. However, a large percentage of parents facing incredible difficulties may never enter a church sanctuary before they find themselves faced with critical parenting decisions and issues. Even if they do attend church, they may encounter a congregation that is not equipped to offer quality parental aid.

## The Most Successful Parenting Source

There is only one source and book available that gives the most effective plan needed for successful parenthood—the **Bible**. Throughout God's Word, from the very beginning of the account of Adam, Eve, and their sons, Cain, Abel, and Seth, we learn much about parenting. We learn how a godly parent responds, and we also learn how parents should never respond. From Hannah's blessed motherhood to David's difficult fatherhood, today's moms and dads will learn much from the pages of Scripture. Even the Ten Commandments directly address parenthood with the admonition, "Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the Lord your God is giving you" (Exodus 20:12 NIV). Obviously, parenting is important to God.

This small booklet is designed as a brief overview of some of the things God says in His Word about parenting. This is not meant to be an exhaustive list, yet by using the alphabet as an outline, we will be guided through the simple principles of God's plan for parenthood found in many different Bible passages. Remember, there is only one real expert when it comes to parenting—our heavenly Father. May God grant us wisdom, strength, and encouragement as we learn from Him!



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# THE A TO Z OF GOD'S PLAN FOR PARENTHOOD

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# AVOID

## PROVOKING OUR CHILDREN

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**P**aul warns parents in the Colossian church to avoid provoking their children to anger. “Fathers, do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged” (Colossians 3:21, NIV). The word provoke in this passage comes from a word that means “stir up or to make bitter.” We should avoid stirring up emotions in our children that cause them to be embittered against us. This provoking of our children can be from neglect, lifestyle inconsistencies, erratic discipline or unreasonable demands. One of the best ways to prevent young children from becoming angry teenagers is to model a life of kindness, consistency, understanding, and compassion before them.





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# BECOME EXAMPLES FOR OUR CHILDREN

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**P**arents are still the number-one influence in their children's lives. Research by the Barna Group indicates that 78 percent of teenagers identified their parents as the people who most influence their behavior. One writer said that leadership is influence. Parents must lead their children, not the other way around. God gives parents a position of influence, so they can use it positively. The most positive influence any parent can have on their children is the influence of example. In 1 Timothy, we are encouraged to be examples before believers (including our children): "... in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity" (4:12 NIV).



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# CARE

## FOR OUR CHILDREN

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**G**odly wisdom teaches that parents are to care for and about their children. Nothing is as powerful as the caring heart of a godly mother or father. One of the wisest men of all time demonstrated his wisdom and God's heart toward caring parents in an account related to us from 1 Kings 3. Two women came to this wise man, King Solomon, and both claimed to be the mother of the same baby. Solomon commanded that the child be divided in half with a sword, giving a half to each woman. The imposter was ready for this action to be taken so that neither would have the baby. However, the real mother was willing to sacrifice her rights to allow the baby to live and be given to the other woman. Her true heart of care and compassion for her child was revealed in her unselfish sacrificial attitude. Solomon and God granted custody to the parent that cared.



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# DISCIPLINE

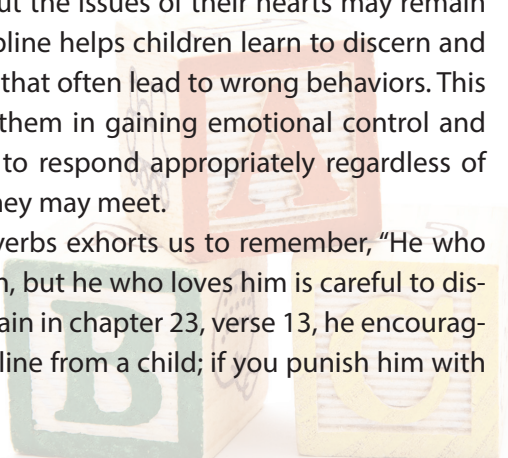
## OUR CHILDREN

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**S**tudies have consistently demonstrated what parents have a difficult time believing. Children whose parents discipline them actually feel more loved than those who do not receive discipline. When discipline is administered consistently and lovingly, it meets critical needs in the lives of children. Every child needs protection and parameter. When children learn that someone cares enough to interact with them concerning their behavior, set boundaries for them and assist them in avoiding those things that will damage their future, they feel loved.

Often when parents discipline, the focus is only on correcting the misbehavior. Children who are disciplined in this way learn a correct code of conduct, but the issues of their hearts may remain unchanged. Effective discipline helps children learn to discern and correct wrong motivations that often lead to wrong behaviors. This self-understanding assists them in gaining emotional control and confidence in their ability to respond appropriately regardless of the behavioral challenge they may meet.

The wise writer of Proverbs exhorts us to remember, “He who spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is careful to discipline him” (13:24 NIV). Again in chapter 23, verse 13, he encourages, “Do not withhold discipline from a child; if you punish him with



the rod, he will not die" (NIV). God not only allows for physical discipline, He actually encourages it. Please note, however, that physical discipline should never be administered in anger or in moments of impulse. Great care should be taken to communicate parental and godly love during moments of correction. Once again, a parent who disciplines correctly will gain both the respect and devotion of their children over the long term. Like our heavenly Father, who corrects us for our own good, even so we should correct our children in such a way to communicate to them that the discipline is for their ultimate good.



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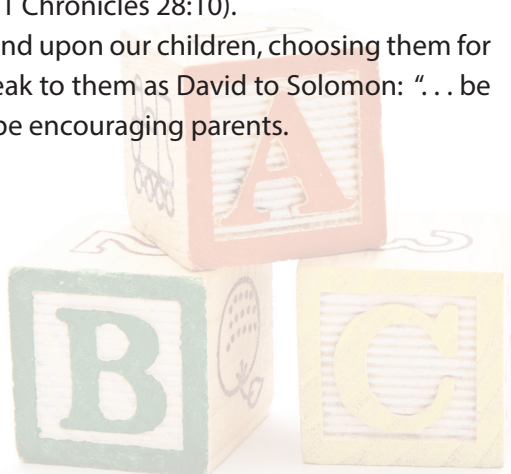
# ENCOURAGE

## OUR CHILDREN

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**T**he word *encourage* means “to put courage in.” Whether our children are facing their peers with the strength to say “no” to bad choices or facing the next test at school, they need courage. They need the ability to stand strong for what is right and to do their best at all times, even when it is difficult. Parents can make a huge difference in their children’s courage level by being an encourager. Anyone can be a basement person, continually pulling someone down with negative words and harsh criticisms, but children need balcony people who will be their cheerleaders, urging them to pursue higher goals. When David was preparing Solomon to build a temple for the Lord, he encouraged him with these words: “Consider now, for the LORD has chosen you to build a house as the sanctuary. **Be strong and do the work**” (1 Chronicles 28:10).

As we witness God’s hand upon our children, choosing them for His service, we need to speak to them as David to Solomon: “. . . be strong, and do it.” We can be encouraging parents.



# FORGIVE

## OUR CHILDREN

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**F**orgiveness is releasing someone from prison, setting them free, giving them the freedom to fail again without repercussions from prior errors. Forgiveness is commanded by Jesus and demonstrated by our heavenly Father. Every great marriage is comprised of two great forgivers, and every great family requires parents who know how to forgive. When we refuse to forgive, we tear down the bridge over which we must one day cross, for everyone has need of forgiveness at some point in our lives. In chapter 15 of Luke's Gospel account, Christ shares a parable, which has come to be known as the story of the Prodigal Son. This account wonderfully illustrates the love and forgiveness our heavenly Father offers to us when we have failed or turned from Him to follow our own pursuits. This parable is also an exemplary challenge for fathers to forgive and restore full privileges to children who disappoint or offend. Every prodigal son or daughter needs a father who is ready to forgive and set him or her free.



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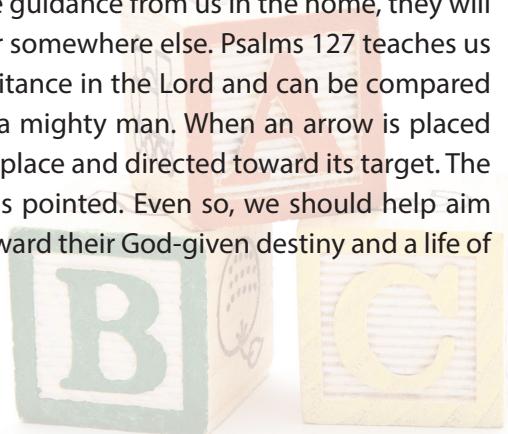
# GUIDE

## OUR CHILDREN

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**T**he familiar statement, “Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it” (Proverbs 22:6), is more than a Christian cliché. It is a foundational truth from the pages of Scripture. Guiding or training children in the way they should go basically means that we limit their options. Children left with the opportunity to explore damaging worldly influences will naturally be inclined to pursue them. However, those whose choices are limited to godly influences and positive instruction will have less difficulty deciding which path to choose as they grow older and begin to make choices for themselves.

Most Christian parents find the need to give guidance to their children in the importance of church attendance, tithing, giving, decision-making, and morality. It is important to remember that if our children do not receive guidance from us in the home, they will receive it from someone or somewhere else. Psalms 127 teaches us that children are our inheritance in the Lord and can be compared to arrows in the hands of a mighty man. When an arrow is placed on a bow, it must be set in place and directed toward its target. The arrow will fly wherever it is pointed. Even so, we should help aim the lives of our children toward their God-given destiny and a life of effective service.



# HUG

## OUR CHILDREN

**T**he Hebrew blessing recorded in Scripture involved three aspects—the spoken word, the physical touch, and a commitment to the fulfillment of the blessing. Physical touch was uniquely important in conveying love, assurance, and God’s favor. In Genesis 27, we read of Isaac reaching out and touching Jacob when he was blessing him. Just before he died, Jacob embraced his grandsons Ephraim and Manasseh and spoke prophetic words over each of them. While he was still a long way off, the Prodigal Son’s father saw him and was filled with compassion for him. He ran to his son, threw his arms around him, and kissed him. In one account in Scripture, Hagar removed herself a distance from Ishmael because she could not bear to see him die, but God told her to take him in her hand or arms and embrace the child.

Children need love expressed through appropriate physical touch. Jesus Himself used this method to convey love and blessing to children: “And he took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them” (Mark 10:16).

Several years ago in Romania, studies were conducted with a group of orphans who were neglected and deprived of touch. The studies revealed that physical touch makes a significant difference in the quality of life for children. Children who were hugged, embraced, or touched were healthier, happier, and better learners than those left alone. Deprivation of touch can cause tension, sleep disorders, cardiovascular problems, along with many other physical problems. Hugging a child is not only a healthy thing for a parent to do, it helps us convey approval and blessing.



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# INSPIRE

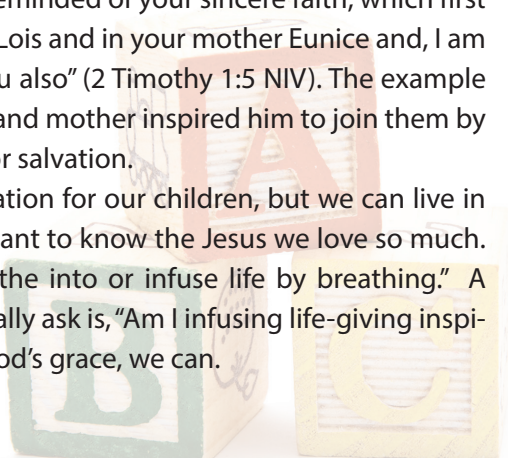
## OUR CHILDREN

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**T**o have a child look you in the eyes and say, “When I grow up, I want to be just like you,” is one of the most humbling and intimidating things we can experience. To think someone wants to grow up to be just like me—now, that is scary. Yet, as parents, there is a great likelihood that our children will grow up to be like us in many ways. This definitely can be intimidating for us as parents.

For those of us who believe in Jesus Christ, the desire of our children to walk in our footsteps is a great opportunity for good. This means that if we are committed, on-fire Christians, our children will be inspired to be the same. The influence and inspiration of a parent in the life of his/her children is a lasting memorial to the faith or lack of faith in that parent. Paul spoke to the young minister Timothy and said, “I have been reminded of your sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice and, I am persuaded, now lives in you also” (2 Timothy 1:5 NIV). The example of Timothy’s grandmother and mother inspired him to join them by placing his trust in Christ for salvation.

We cannot obtain salvation for our children, but we can live in such a way that they will want to know the Jesus we love so much. To inspire means, “to breathe into or infuse life by breathing.” A good question to occasionally ask is, “Am I infusing life-giving inspiration into my child?” By God’s grace, we can.



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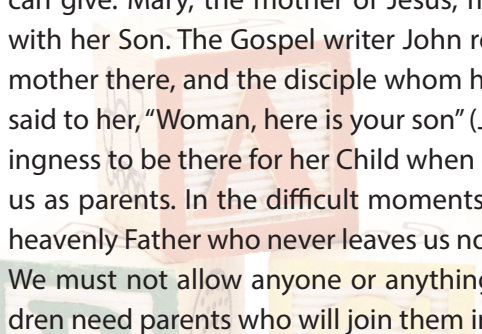
# JOURNEY

## WITH OUR CHILDREN

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**T**he story is related of a little girl who became afraid during a storm one night. She called to her parents, who tried to reassure her that God would protect her, and she need not be fearful. After several unsuccessful attempts to comfort her, the parents were becoming quite frustrated. Finally, the dad went into her bedroom and made one last attempt to assure her that God was right in the room and nothing could happen to her without His notice. She looked up at her dad with tears streaming down her face and said, "I know that God promised to never leave me nor forsake me, but tonight I need a God with skin on."

Children need to know that someone is taking the journey with them. They need the reassurance that only someone "with skin on" can give. Mary, the mother of Jesus, made the journey to Calvary with her Son. The Gospel writer John records, "When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to her, "Woman, here is your son" (John 19:26, NIV). Mary's willingness to be there for her Child when everyone else fled speaks to us as parents. In the difficult moments of life, we must be like our heavenly Father who never leaves us nor forsakes us as His children. We must not allow anyone or anything else to fill our shoes. Children need parents who will join them in their journey.



# KEEP

## OUR PROMISES

**C**hildren acquire their perspective of their heavenly Father through the example of their earthly parents. A friend of mine, who loves to fish, shared that his father was always a hard worker and required that his children be diligent in their responsibilities as well. This was not a negative characteristic; however, on one particular day, he had promised his son that he would take him fishing after school. All day long, my friend could hardly concentrate on his studies because of his daydreaming about going fishing with his dad that afternoon.

When he arrived home, he quickly changed his clothes and gathered together his small amount of fishing gear. Finding his dad in the garden working, he ran to him and said, "I'm ready to go fishing!"

Disregarding his son's obvious enthusiasm, the man gruffly replied, "Oh, you can go fishing any day. We've got some work to do in this garden today. Put that stuff up, and come help me."

The fact that my friend's dad did not go fishing with him was not nearly as devastating as the fact that he broke his promise. Many people in this generation have a difficult time believing that God will keep His promises because often parents do not keep their promises. More important, the writer John warns us regarding one's failure to be truthful: "But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars—their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death" (Revelation 21:8 NIV).

# LOVE

## OUR CHILDREN

**S**omehow, loving that cute little bundle we carry home from the hospital is quite different from loving the strong-willed child that defiantly refuses to obey anything we ask him to do. Regardless of how diligently we pursue being a good parent or how adept we become at the task, all children are not mild, compliant sweethearts. This does not change the fact that they are worthy of our unconditional love regardless of how they misbehave or rebel. In his instructions to Titus, Paul encouraged him to have the older women teach the young women to love their husbands and their children (Titus 2:4). The greatest need in any family is unconditional love. When love abounds in a family, our ability to endure hardship and adversity is elevated greatly. The resiliency of children who know they are loved is amazing. God's love in a home makes a home an oasis, a place of heaven on earth. Are our homes filled with God's love? How do we recognize this kind of love? One of the greatest chapters in Scripture gives a word picture of what our heavenly Father's unconditional love looks like on earth:

***Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered. It keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails. . . (1 Corinthians 13:4–8 NIV)***

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# MOTIVATE

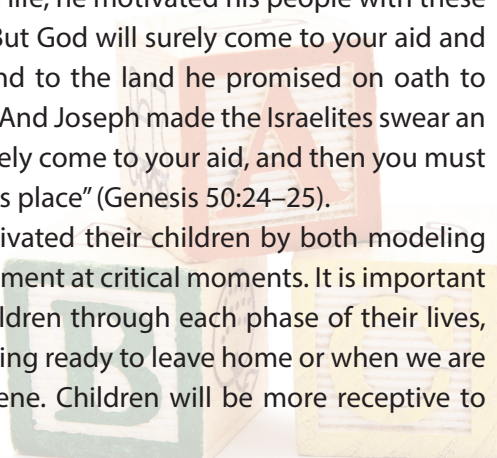
## OUR CHILDREN

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One of the best ways to motivate our children to live strong, Christian lives is by modeling lives of integrity and sincerity before them. Model attentiveness. Model intimacy. Model encouragement. Near the end of his life, Jacob (Israel) called his sons to him and, with keen, spiritual insight, began to prophesy what he believed was ahead for them. When speaking to his son Joseph, Jacob encouraged him by saying, "Joseph is a fruitful bough, even a fruitful bough by a well; whose branches run over the wall" (Genesis 49:22).

The words of Joseph's father were fulfilled, and, later, Joseph came to a similar point in his life. Although his family had been placed in forced labor for Pharaoh in Egypt, Joseph believed in his heart that, one day, the Israelites would return to their homeland. As he neared the end of his life, he motivated his people with these words: I am about to die. But God will surely come to your aid and take you up out of this land to the land he promised on oath to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob." And Joseph made the Israelites swear an oath and said, "God will surely come to your aid, and then you must carry my bones up from this place" (Genesis 50:24–25).

Jacob and Joseph motivated their children by both modeling and by words of encouragement at critical moments. It is important that we encourage our children through each phase of their lives, not just when they are getting ready to leave home or when we are about to pass from the scene. Children will be more receptive to



our words of motivation and encouragement if they are a natural part of our relationship. Our children were meant to be champions. God put them on our family team and gave us the responsibility to be their coach. We can motivate them by modeling a winning lifestyle before them and by our inspired exhortations at the critical moments of their lives.



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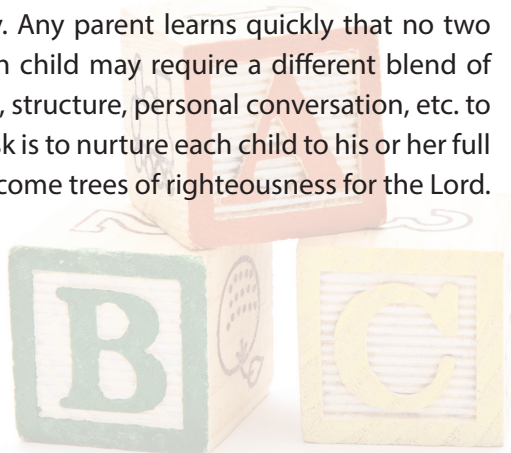
# NURTURE

## OUR CHILDREN

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**N**urturing is the whole training and educating of children relating to the cultivation of mind and morals. It also includes the training and care of the soul, especially by correcting mistakes and curbing passions. Nurture is instruction, which aims at increasing virtue. Paul told the Ephesians, "Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4 NIV).

Psalms 128 states that the children of the blessed are like olive plants around our table. In many ways, our children are our personal spiritual garden. They will flourish or wither according to our ability to nurture them. Ultimately, they can bring forth fruit to bless the world. Just as a gardener must learn what is required for each plant species to thrive, even so, we must learn what our children need to grow and thrive spiritually. Any parent learns quickly that no two children are identical. Each child may require a different blend of encouragement, discipline, structure, personal conversation, etc. to be at their best. Our life-task is to nurture each child to his or her full potential and see them become trees of righteousness for the Lord.





# OFFER

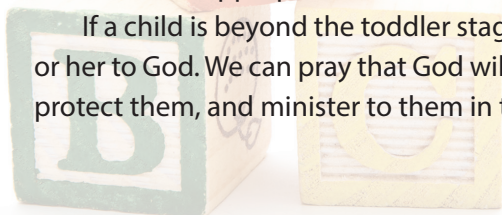
## OUR CHILDREN TO GOD



ften when children are small, we offer them to the Lord symbolically through an infant dedication or similar service with a minister at a church. This is an active form of releasing them to God while accepting our responsibilities to love, nurture, and train them. We are committing to God and before others that we will be wise stewards. A beautiful illustration of offering one's child to the Lord is seen in the life of Hannah. Scripture records that she offered her son Samuel to God with these words: "I prayed for this child, and the LORD has granted me what I asked of him. So now I give him to the LORD. For his whole life he will be given over to the LORD" (1 Samuel 1:27–28 NIV).

When their Son was eight days old, Mary and Joseph took Jesus to the temple and offered Him to the Lord. This was done in obedience to, and at the time appointed by, the law. Simeon then took the Child in his arms and blessed Him saying, "With my own eyes I have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples: A light to reveal your will to the Gentiles and bring glory to your people Israel" (Luke 2:30–32 GNB). If the parents of God's son felt the need to offer Jesus back to the heavenly Father, then it seems appropriate that we also offer our children to God.

If a child is beyond the toddler stage, a parent can still offer him or her to God. We can pray that God will accept our son or daughter, protect them, and minister to them in the future.





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# PRAY

## FOR OUR CHILDREN

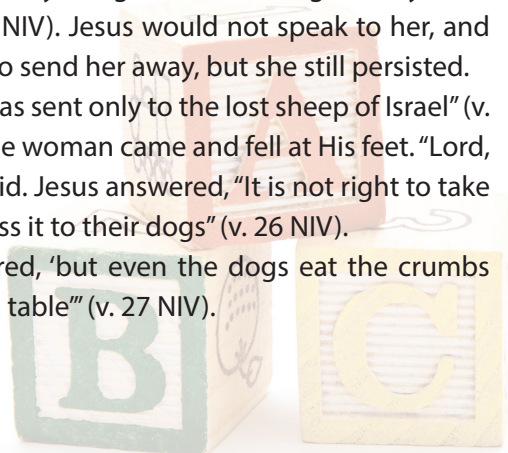
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**T**he average total cost in the western world for raising a child from birth through 18 years of age, as well as higher education, is somewhere over one-half million dollars. Many parents fear having enough material resources to adequately provide for their children according to today's standards. Yet the greatest provisions we can offer our children are our prayers. More is accomplished when a parent spends an hour on their knees in prayer each day than in the excessive hours spent working on the job. Our prayers serve as a preventative measure and as a means of intervention in times of need.

The Gospel of Matthew shares an account of a time when Jesus traveled to the territory near the cities of Tyre and Sidon. While there, a Canaanite woman came to Him and cried out, "Lord, Son of David, have mercy on me! My daughter is suffering terribly from demon-possession" (15:22 NIV). Jesus would not speak to her, and His disciples begged Him to send her away, but she still persisted.

Then Jesus replied, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel" (v. 24 NIV). Still undeterred, the woman came and fell at His feet. "Lord, help me!" (v. 25 NIV) she said. Jesus answered, "It is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to their dogs" (v. 26 NIV).

"Yes, Lord," she answered, "but even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master's table" (v. 27 NIV).



The mother's persistence in petitioning Jesus was eventually met with the response, "Woman, you have great faith! Your request is granted" (v. 28 NIV). And at that very moment, her daughter was healed (cf. Matthew 15:21–28). Her prayers were more valuable to her daughter than any material thing she could have produced. The following poem by an unknown author illustrates the ongoing power of prayer to reach and protect our children wherever they are:

### **Mother's Covers**

*When you were small  
And just a touch away,  
I covered you with blankets  
Against the cold night air.*

*But now that you are tall  
And out of reach,  
I fold my hands  
And cover you in prayer.*



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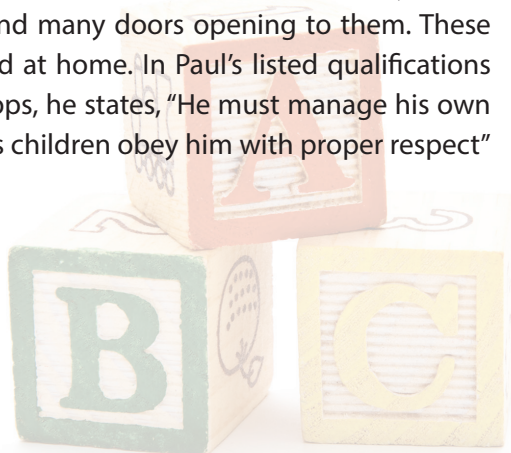
# QUIET

## FOR OUR CHILDREN

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**M**any have stated that “silence is golden.” Although this statement is not found in Scripture, the Bible does state, “Better a dry crust with peace and quiet than a house full of feasting, with strife” (Proverbs 17:1 NIV). God emphasizes that peace is an extremely valuable commodity. Jesus offers us His peace in a world filled with turmoil. We need His peace in our home as well. Children today desperately need a place of rest—a place to quiet their hearts and refocus their energies. They need a place, a home, where they can experience God’s peace. We can turn off the television, lower our voices, open God’s Word, and practice the power of quietness.

Children also need to be taught that there is a time to speak and a time to be quiet. Wisdom and respect are qualities rarely championed by parents, but they are qualities revered by the work place. Young people who know how to be respectful, stay quiet, and speak with wisdom find many doors opening to them. These qualities should be learned at home. In Paul’s listed qualifications for church leaders or bishops, he states, “He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect” (1 Timothy 3:4 NIV).



# RELEASE

## OUR CHILDREN

**F**rom the moment we become parents, we are constantly releasing our children little by little. Moses' mother, Jochebed, chose to release Moses into the Nile River in faith believing God would care for him. Pharaoh's daughter sovereignly came along and rescued the floating Israelite baby. Then the princess hired Moses' natural mother to nurse and nurture him. What a blessing Jochebed experienced as she received the opportunity of training Moses in the ways of the Hebrew God before she totally released him into Pharaoh's home (cf. Exodus 2:1–10).

One of the greatest challenges for parents is releasing older children to God and trusting Him with their ultimate care. One counselor said, "When a child cuts the apron strings, it is the parents who bleed." When we have sincerely done our best to follow God's guidelines for parenting, a time will come when we must trust the roots we have given them and grant them their wings.

We must especially learn to release our children when they get married. Releasing our son or daughter to their spouse is not only critical for their health and the health of their marriage, it is scriptural. When God first presented Eve to Adam in the Garden of Eden, the Word states, "The man said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. That is why a man leaves his father and his mother and is united to his wife: and they become one flesh" (Genesis 2:23–24). Leaving and cleaving is the child's job. Letting go is ours!

# SHIELD

## OUR CHILDREN

Imagine we have been hired by a wealthy landowner to tend his garden. We will be given all that we need to do our job well and will even be allowed to enjoy the beauty of the flowers and sample the fruits of his garden. He has only one request of us in addition to caring for the garden. He asks that we build a wall to protect the plants. We begin our task with diligence; however, responsibilities of hoeing the weeds, watering the plants, and tilling the soil begin to consume our time. The construction of the wall, though started with good intentions, becomes neglected as the days and years progress.

One evening, when the plants have reached a stage of immense beauty and rich color, we go to bed feeling a bit smug and proud of our accomplishments. But during the night, a pack of wolves comes in from the nearby forest, finds the large gap in the fence, and ravages the garden, trampling all the beautiful plants. What do we suppose will be the first question the wealthy landowner asks of us? Where is the wall I instructed you to build?

Hannah had a desire to protect her son Samuel and made a linen coat to give him every year (1 Samuel 2:19). We can only imagine that each fiber of that coat had been saturated with her prayers. The priest Eli, on the other hand, failed to protect his sons with proper discipline and godly instruction. Consequently, they brought him shame by their immoral behavior and lost their lives when attacked by the Philistines (cf. 1 Samuel 3, 4).

Failure to shield our children properly leaves them open to the attack of the enemy. As parents, God calls us to be strong and courageous on behalf of our family.



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# TEACH

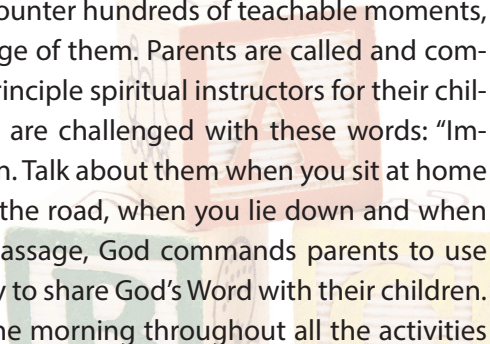
## OUR CHILDREN

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**W**hen our daughter Sara was three years old, her brother Ashley, who is four years older than she, was chasing her through the house threatening to hit her. All of a sudden, Sara turned around and stated rather emphatically to her brother, "The Bible says: Thou shalt not hit thy sister!"

As parents, we had mixed emotions. On one hand, Scriptures does not say, "Thou shalt not hit thy sister" (although it is certainly implied). So we were somewhat disturbed by Sara's incorrect quote and Bible knowledge. On the other hand, we were glad to know that she would appeal to Scripture in a time of distress. And we were pleased that at her announcement Ashley did not hit his sister that day. This incident gave us a teachable moment with both of them to bring some biblical clarity and God's Word of peace for our home.

As parents, we will encounter hundreds of teachable moments, and we must take advantage of them. Parents are called and commissioned by God as the principle spiritual instructors for their children. In Deuteronomy, we are challenged with these words: "Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up" (6:7). In this passage, God commands parents to use every available opportunity to share God's Word with their children. From the time we rise in the morning throughout all the activities



of our day until we lie down to sleep at night, we are to instruct our children according to God's Word.

It has been stated that we have not really taught until someone has learned. This is true for our children. Discovering what is required for our child to learn and know God's ways is an ongoing challenge for any parent. Practical resources to help our children learn God's Word include Bible story books, Bible games, children's videos that teach godly principles, and a good church with a quality Christian education program. Most important, our modeling a desire for God's Word in our lives as parents is the best teacher.

Teachable moments will probably happen today. Are we ready?





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# UNDERSTAND

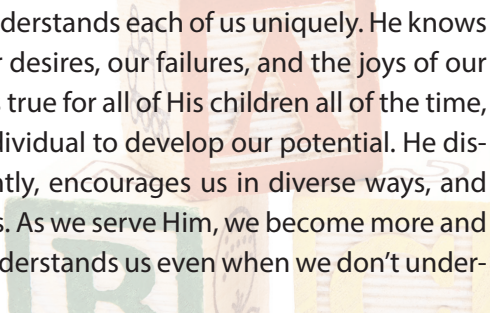
## OUR CHILDREN

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**W**isdom and insight are required to raise children. The New Testament writer James tells us, "If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him" (James 1:5 NIV). Perhaps the best definition I have heard of wisdom is "the ability to see things the way God sees them." Certainly, as parents we need the ability to see our children the way God sees them. Each child is different and will respond differently to us as parents.

Some children can be motivated by words while others need more than mere words to encourage them. Some children want to be embraced often and others do not need as much physical affirmation. Some children learn by seeing or hearing while others learn by doing. As a parent, we must pray for God's heart and insight to work with each child in helping them reach their God-given potential.

Our heavenly Father understands each of us uniquely. He knows our struggles, our pain, our desires, our failures, and the joys of our heart. Although His Word is true for all of His children all of the time, He still works with each individual to develop our potential. He disciplines each of us differently, encourages us in diverse ways, and guides us by distinct means. As we serve Him, we become more and more convinced that He understands us even when we don't understand ourselves.



Our children also need the comfort of knowing that their earthly parent is seeking to understand them more fully. God wants us to join Him in the unique work He is doing in each of our children.



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# VALIDATE

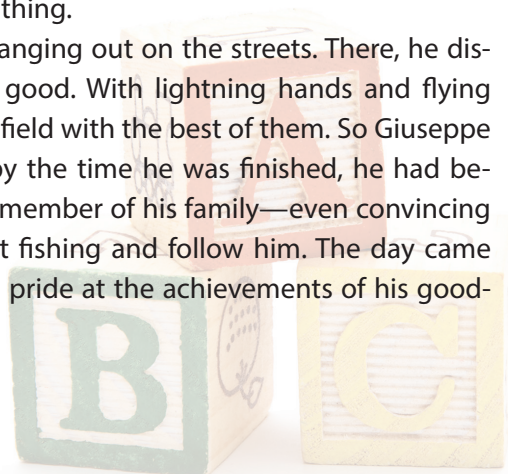
## OUR CHILDREN'S DREAMS

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**G**iuseppe Good-for-Nothing—that's what his daddy called him. Giuseppe Good-For-Nothing. The son of a San Francisco fisherman, Giuseppe, got sick at the smell of fish and turned green every time he boarded a boat. His brothers all loved the fishing business, but Giuseppe just did not fit. He tried to explain to the old man that he could work in the office or increase sales or even repair the nets, but it was to no avail. He was "good-for-nothing," and that was it. He was booted off the boat.

Giuseppe tried a few odd jobs. He delivered papers, shined shoes, and worked as a bus-boy in a local restaurant. Every dime he made he gave back to the family. But he was not fishing, so it did not count. He was good-for-nothing.

So Giuseppe started hanging out on the streets. There, he discovered stickball. He was good. With lightning hands and flying feet, he could hit, run, and field with the best of them. So Giuseppe followed his dream, and by the time he was finished, he had become the most successful member of his family—even convincing two of his brothers to quit fishing and follow him. The day came when his father wept with pride at the achievements of his good-for-nothing son.



Actually, although it was painful, getting kicked off that boat was one of the best things that ever happened to Giuseppe Good-For-Nothing; for if he had become a fisherman, the name of Joe DiMaggio would have never been heard in baseball history.

DiMaggio's father failed to understand that, many times, our children's dreams differ from our dreams as parents. When we seek to make their dreams conform to our dreams, we frustrate, stifle, and wound them deeply.

God's Word teaches us that successful parents validate their children's dreams and encourage them to pursue their vision. Jacob gave dreaming Joseph a coat of many colors although Joseph's dreams were very unusual. David actually raised money to assist Solomon in pursuing the God-given vision of building a temple. John the Baptist's father accepted God's dream for his son. Zacharias regained his voice when he emphatically stated that the child's name was to be John as God commanded. This name was not a family name, and God's dream for his son was not one that Zacharias would have necessarily desired. Yet John's father validated God's dream for John's life by his obedience.

As we validate God's dream in the heart of our children, we encourage them to pursue their God-given destiny. Who knows, we may have a hall of fame candidate or even a future prophet living in our home.



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# WORSHIP

## WITH OUR CHILDREN

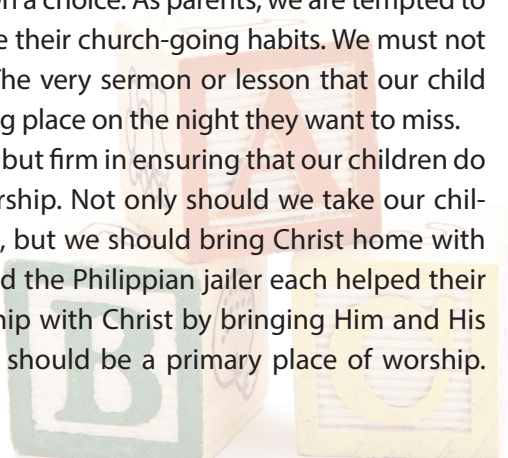
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**A** recent study disclosed that if both Mom and Dad attend church regularly, 72 percent of their children will serve Christ. If only Dad attends church, 55 percent serve Christ. If only Mom attends, 15 percent remain faithful to Christ, and if neither parent attends church, only six percent serve Christ.

One minister asked a group of children in Sunday school class, "Why do you love God?" He got a variety of answers, but the one he liked best was from a boy who said, "I guess it just runs in our family."

We can inspire our children through both our participation and our enthusiasm in worship. When our children witness our singing, praising, and devotion to God, they will want to know this Person their mom or dad loves so much. Joseph and Mary took Jesus to the synagogue. He was not given a choice. As parents, we are tempted to allow our children to dictate their church-going habits. We must not succumb to the pressure. The very sermon or lesson that our child needs may be the one taking place on the night they want to miss.

Parents must be gentle but firm in ensuring that our children do not miss their times of worship. Not only should we take our children to church for worship, but we should bring Christ home with us in worship. Zaccheus and the Philippian jailer each helped their family discover a relationship with Christ by bringing Him and His servants home. Our home should be a primary place of worship.



Christian music, devotional books, inspiring pictures, and time given from our family schedule to worship God will say to our children that our relationship with Jesus is not just a Sunday thing. He is worthy to be praised every day. We can lead our children to worship by worshiping with them.



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# X-RAY

## OUR CHILDREN'S ACTIVITIES

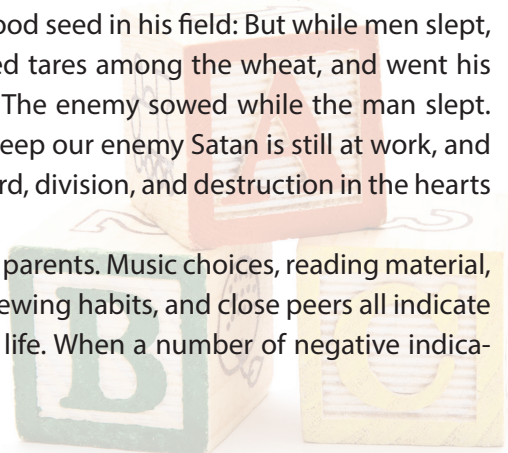
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**T**his principle of successful parenting is a bit different, but I needed to find something to fit with the X. Actually, the principle of taking a close look and gaining a keen awareness of what takes place in our children's lives is critical to our success as parents. We must X-ray or examine our children's activities.

Most children who struggle with pornography, alcohol or drug addiction, pre-marital sex or even suicide show signs of these struggles at home. We have heard it said that none are so blind as they who will not see. Many times, parents miss the blatant signals of desperation that our children are sending us because we are not examining closely what is going on in our children's lives.

Perhaps we are too busy or simply too apathetic to realize what is happening to our children. Jesus shared, "The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field: But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way" (Matthew 13:24, 25). The enemy sowed while the man slept. When we are spiritually asleep our enemy Satan is still at work, and he is sowing seeds of discord, division, and destruction in the hearts of our children.

We must stay awake as parents. Music choices, reading material, Internet visits, television viewing habits, and close peers all indicate spiritual trends in a child's life. When a number of negative indica-



tors begin to occur, we must not just close our eyes and hope our seed-sowing enemy will just go away. We must rise to action and help our child avoid the danger. We should check our child's room, track their Internet use, observe their friends, know their schedule, and seek to see beyond the behavior to its cause. We must get involved.

If we are too busy to get involved in our children's lives, we are simply too busy. If we are too apathetic to get involved, then all the seeds of destruction are being sown while we sleep. So let us open our eye, pray for spiritual insight, and depend upon the power of the Holy Spirit to help us see what is happening in our child's life.





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# YEARN

## FOR OUR CHILDREN'S SALVATION

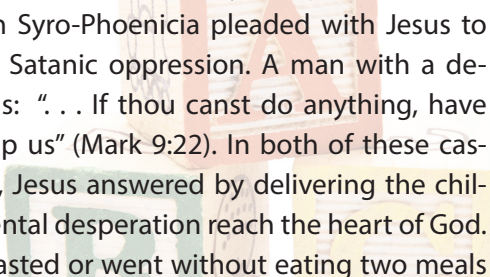
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I really believe if our children serve Christ and go to heaven, then we have been successful parents. Nothing is as important as our children discovering and maintaining a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. This is primary to all we do as parents.

The greatest moments of my life as a parent have been those moments when I have been able to participate with my children in developing a relationship with Christ. My daughter Sara was saved while kneeling with me at her bedside one night. I personally baptized both of my children in water. What an amazing honor!

Years ago, someone adjusted the Scripture that says, "What does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses his own soul?" (Matthew 16:26). He quoted it as, "What does it profit a man if gains the whole world and loses his own family?" I agree.

A Gentile woman from Syro-Phoenicia pleaded with Jesus to deliver her daughter from Satanic oppression. A man with a demonized son cried to Jesus: ". . . If thou canst do anything, have compassion on us and help us" (Mark 9:22). In both of these cases of parental intercession, Jesus answered by delivering the children involved. Cries of parental desperation reach the heart of God. My grandmother "Bessie" fasted or went without eating two meals



every day the last few years of her life while praying for the salvation of her sons, one of whom was my dad. God answered her expressed desperation by delivering both of them from difficult situations and securing their soul.

God has the power to touch our children and bring them home spiritually. It was said of the Prodigal Son that "... he came to himself ..." (Luke 15:17). Realizing the depths of his condition, he turned his heart toward home where his father was waiting and longing to see him. Luke records that his father saw him when he was still a great way off, ran to him, and welcomed him home. The father's yearning for his son caused him to look for the road to rebellion or turn into the road of reconciliation.

As we seek God fervently for our children, we can live in anticipation that God will turn their hearts toward home. These verses from Jeremiah have comforted parents for many years as they yearned for their child's salvation:

This is what the LORD says: "A voice is heard in Ramah, mourning and great weeping, Rachel weeping for her children and refusing to be comforted, because her children are no more." This is what the LORD says: "Restrain your voice from weeping and your eyes from tears, for your work will be rewarded," declares the LORD. "They will return from the land of the enemy. So there is hope for your future," declares the LORD. "Your children will return to their own land" (Jeremiah 31:15–17 NIV).



# ZOOM

## IN ON OUR CHILDREN

If we do not pay attention to our children, who will? A study a few years ago at Cornell University found that the average American father spends only 37.7 seconds a day with his children. The sad truth is that if we don't pay attention to our children, the wrong people might. Parental neglect has reached epidemic proportions as parents, consumed with their own difficulties, fail to give their children their best. This awareness deficit has left a generation vulnerable to those who would give them some attention even if the results are negative. Child abusers, drug pushers, and negative peer influences all prey on the vacuum created by parental neglect. Everyone wants to be loved, treasured, valued, and noticed. Our children are no different. They want our undivided attention. This will say to them that they are valuable. They are special, and they are worth more than the other things that compete for our time.

Children need both quantity and quality time from their parents. They need our best, and the consistently need to be with us. We can find ways to show interest in our children and be with them no matter how full our life is otherwise. If we have to travel often in work, we can find a way to take them with us occasionally. Make weekly appointments with them. Take time away for special family vacations. Take 15 minutes each day before bedtime to just reflect on how their day went and also share with them how things are going in our life. Our children will feel valued when we allow them into our life as well as when we enter theirs.

Remember, no one on planet earth is as important to us as the lives God has assigned to our earthly care—our children. Let's give them our very best.

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# CONCLUSION

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**P**lease remember that although parenting is a difficult task, it is not a do-it-yourself project. Our heavenly Father stands ready to supernaturally assist us with His wisdom and strength. Of all the instructions for parents, perhaps the best is to not try this alone. Prayer expresses our dependence on God and gives Him an open door into our lives. Never forget that God is the greatest parent of all time, and He can help us be successful. With His Word as our guide and His presence as our encourager, we can not only survive as parents, but we can thrive.

Because of the brevity of this book, we were unable to cover all the instructions that Scripture shares for today's parent. We encourage you personally to take time in studying the Bible to show yourself approved unto God for this most important job of your life. God's scriptural plan for parents works in every culture and throughout history.

*May God help us pursue His A to Z plan  
for successful parenting.*



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# A PARENTAL PRAYER

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**D**ear Heavenly Father, I am involved in the most important job of my life. I am a parent, and I need Your help. I know that Your parenting skills are perfect. You know when to chasten, when to be patient, when to encourage, and when to instruct. I ask You to help me be a successful parent with my children. Guide me in how and when to chasten, anoint my tongue with words of praise and encouragement, and give me insight on how to instruct my child in Your ways. Please give me special grace to participate with your work with my child's life and help me always be there for them. Today, I open my home and my heart to You. Bring Your peace, love, and joy to our home. I ask for and receive Jesus Christ as my own personal Savior and welcome the presence of Your Spirit in my entire life. I commit myself to the parenting plans revealed in Your Word and believe that Your purposes will be done as I pursue these principles. Thank You for blessing my children, and thank You for the grace I am receiving today. Most important, I ask that You help me lead my child into a personal relationship with Jesus Christ so that we can be together with You throughout eternity. Amen



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World Impact with Dr. Billy Wilson addresses the deeply felt needs of hurting people around the world. We believe that only Jesus can do a real and enduring good in people's lives. Our goal is to be:

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# THE PARENTHOOD PLAN

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One letter at a time, *The Parenthood Plan* is the A to Z guide for God's plan for parents. Whether you are a new parent, or a seasoned pro, there is something to be gleaned as Dr. Billy Wilson, shares God's hope and help for today's parent.

As society demand's on parents change, it's refreshing to know that the Biblical principals for raising healthy, happy children hasn't changed. For parents dealing with the day-to-day stressors of managing their careers and families, there are many available resources, but there is only one effective plan for successful parenting – the Bible.

In this book, readers will examine Biblical principles as they progress through the alphabet from A to Z for dealing with the various aspects of parenting.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Dr. William M. Wilson is the fourth president of Oral Roberts University. He is recognized as a global influencer with unwavering ethics and strong business acumen who has a passion for building Spirit-empowered leaders to impact the world.

Wilson has also fostered unique global partnerships through *Empowered 21*—an initiative launched at ORU that brings together ministry leaders, scholars and next generation voices from the Spirit-empowered movement. *Empowered 21* has expanded exponentially and today influences nations through 12 regional cabinets with significant ministry leaders.

Wilson is a noted Bible teacher with a weekly television program “World Impact with Dr. Billy Wilson.” For more than 15 years, the program has inspired and empowered viewers from a biblical worldview in 170 nations and in five languages.

Wilson served on the ORU Board of Trustees as vice-chair until his election as president. He is a renowned speaker and author, writing several books including “Father Cry,” “Foundations of Faith” and “Fasting Forward.”

Wilson holds a Bachelor of Science degree from Western Kentucky University in Secondary Education. He also holds a Master of Arts degree and a Doctor of Ministry degree from the Pentecostal Theological Seminary.