

CHAPTER FIVE

THE TRAINING PROCESS: TEN AREAS OF WISDOM AND LIFE SKILLS

- Bible Study: pp. 188— 197
- Lecture: pp. 198— 233
- Summary: pp. 234— 235
- Post Study Projects: pp. 236— 244

Scripture Memory Verse— Prv 4:11

“I have directed you in the way of wisdom; I have led you in upright paths.”

Chapter Five The Training Process: Ten Areas of Wisdom and Life Skills— Bible Study

The proverbs of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel: to know wisdom and instruction, to discern the sayings of understanding, to receive instruction in wise behavior, righteousness, justice and equity; to give prudence to the naïve, to the youth knowledge and discretion... Hear, my son, your father's instruction, and do not forsake your mother's teaching; indeed, they are a graceful wreath to your head, and ornaments about your neck.

Prv 1:1–4, 8–9

INTRODUCTION:

The book of Proverbs assumes the duty for the development of wisdom belongs to the parents. Prv 1:1–4 establishes Proverbs as a book of wisdom and life skills. It states clearly that the purpose of Proverbs is *“to know wisdom and instruction, to discern the sayings of understanding, to receive instruction in wise behavior, righteousness, justice and equity; to give prudence to the naïve, to the youth, knowledge and discretion,”*

Prv 1:8–10 establishes the role of this instruction as being that of parents to children. This is a recurring theme appearing in over 26 verses throughout the book. Phrases such as *“Hear my son your fathers instruction”* (1:8); *“My son do not forget my teaching”* (3:1); *“My son give attention to my wisdom”* (5:1); and *“Give me your heart my son”* (23:26), all point to the parental role in the development of wisdom and life skills.

There is a tendency on the part of parents when reading such passages to think, “See, you should be listening to me!” Yet, the Holy Spirit may very well be saying, “See, you should be more involved in your children’s lives. Imparting wisdom is more than shouting at them when you lose your temper.” The 26 verses in Proverbs do not just reveal that children should be listening to parents, but they also reveal what parents should be saying and doing.

The study, manuscript, and application section will be centered on areas of wisdom and life skills to prepare your child for independence. These look to success in school and social life. This is the second stage of child raising, which builds on the first four chapters. What we cover from here on out will presuppose that you have mastered the principles and applications in chapters one through four. The wisdom and life skills will primarily address the two key areas of success society demands of your child— success in school (and later, work), and success in Social Life (later, citizenship and society as a whole).

SUCCESS IN SCHOOL

Wisdom and life skills assure the scholastic success of your child. For example, your child's mastery of three basic life skills, as presented in the discipline section of your workbook, will place your child way ahead of the game in terms of success in the public school system. They will enable him to...

1. **Concentrate on what is being said**— having taught him hush, no and obey, he will be able to give honor to authority by looking the teacher in the face and following through on requests.
2. **Sit still**— again, having taught him no, hush and obey he will be able to sit still and exhibit the quality of self-control.
3. **Following instructions**— having taught him no, obey, come, give, hush, he will exhibit the ability to obey the instructions of his teachers.

These simple preparatory disciplines will place your child way ahead of the average student during his first years of school. Many evangelical parents look to homeschooling or private schools to solve the problems they have failed to address during their children's early years at home. The answer for success in school is not found in homeschooling or private schools. Both are solutions for other problems or a personal decision, but neither is a solution for the problem of the failure of Christian parents through discipline to prepare their children for success in the outside world.

SUCCESS IN SOCIAL LIFE

No one likes to be around a sullen, disrespectful or demanding person. This type of person is certainly not one that you would want your child to choose for his friend. You, as parents, can have a role in not only ensuring that your child attracts and is attracted to the right kind of friends, but that he is a social success as well. By social success we do not mean that he is on the cutting edge of the socially popular crowd, but rather that he is socially-fulfilled, well-liked, able to communicate easily and freely, and well-adjusted.

The right choices, however, take two qualities:

- 1. Life skills**, which make the child both desirable to others and able to make use of the doors that this behavior opens to him.
- 2. Wisdom**, to choose prudently which doors to open and which to say “no” to and walk away from.

What follows are the scriptural principles behind these two goals, as well as practical applications to aid you in training your child.

First, a brief Bible study to aid you in understanding the subject matter of this chapter.

Second, a manuscript for you and your spouse to discuss.

Third, practical projects for discussion and application are provided, to aid you in implementing those areas of the seminar which meet your needs as a parent.

Bible Study

**WISDOM, LIFE SKILLS
AND PARENTAL
RESPONSIBILITY**

My son, give attention to my wisdom, incline your ear to my understanding; that you may observe discretion, and your lips may reserve knowledge.

Prv 5:1-2

The following are a list of verses which place the responsibility of wisdom and life skills squarely in the lap of the parents. Read each verse and write out a short personal application.

<i>Passage</i>	<i>Personal application— What I will say to my child</i>
Prv 1:1	
Prv 1:8,9	
Prv 1:10	
Prv 3:1-4	
Prv 4:1-4	
Prv 5:1-3	
Prv 5:7-8	

Under Control to Self-control

Many of the wisdom and life skills which will be discussed presuppose the continuing development of self-control. This trait begins with the child being under control by his parents, and culminates with his ability to exercise self-control as a functioning member of his church and society. We live in an age of freedom, where control is considered a negative word. Yet, as Christians, we are held responsible by God to have our children "under control." This is the first step in the development of the fruit of the spirit of self-control in our children.

According to 1 Tm 3:4, what is to typify the children in our home?

In Prv 25:28, how does the Bible describe a man without control, and what does this mean in terms of his day-to-day life?

How does Prv 16:32 speak to the issue of self-control?

According to Prv 22:6,15 in order to develop self-control, what approaches would God have us take?

According to 2 Pt 1:6, whose responsibility is it to take the initiative in developing self-control?

Almost all the wisdom and life skills we will discuss in the coming chapter presuppose a degree of self-control on the part of the child. Reflect on your child. What needs become apparent in your child's life and in your training of your child, as it pertains to this important trait?

Needs in Your Child's Life in Terms of Self-Control:

Areas That Need to be Addressed in Terms of Your Training of Your Child:

Parental Responsibility

Whose responsibility is it to develop wisdom and life skills in our children? Is it the responsibility of society, the school system, the state, the extended family, tutors, house help, nannies, camps???

In this exercise, first, read the passage, then isolate who is speaking, i.e. who is taking the responsibility to instruct the child in the areas addressed, and, lastly, what are they passing on to the children in terms of wisdom and life skills; i.e. what areas are being addressed?

Prv 1:8 “Hear, my son, your father's instruction, And do not forsake your mother's teaching;”

Who is responsible? _____

What are they responsible for? (instructing or training children?)

Prv 3:11–12 “My son, do not reject the discipline of the Lord, Or loathe His reproof, For whom the Lord loves He reproveth, Even as a father, the son in whom he delights.”

Who is responsible? _____

What are they responsible for? (instructing or training children?)

Prv 4:1 “Hear, O sons, the instruction of a father, And give attention that you may gain understanding,”

Who is responsible? _____

What are they responsible for? (instructing or training children?)

Prv 5:20 “*For why should you, my son, be exhilarated with an adulteress, And embrace the bosom of a foreigner?*”

Who is responsible? _____

What are they responsible for? (instructing or training children?)

Prv 6:1–3 “*My son, if you have become surety for your neighbor, have given a pledge for a stranger; if you have been snared with the words of your mouth, have been caught with the words of your mouth, do this then, my son, and deliver yourself: since you have come into the hand of your neighbor, go, humble yourself, and importune your neighbor.*”

Who is responsible? _____

What are they responsible for? (instructing or training children?)

Prv 6:20 “*My son, observe the commandment of your father, and do not forsake the teaching of your mother;*”

Who is responsible? _____

What are they responsible for? (instructing or training children?)

Prv 10:5 “*He who gathers in summer is a son who acts wisely, But he who sleeps in harvest is a son who acts shamefully.*”

Who is responsible? _____

What are they responsible for? (instructing or training children?)

Prv 13:1 *“A wise son accepts his father's discipline, but a scoffer does not listen to rebuke.”*

Who is responsible? _____

What are they responsible for? (instructing or training children?)

Prv 19:27 *Cease listening, my son, to discipline, And you will stray from the words of knowledge.*

Who is responsible? _____

What are they responsible for? (instructing or training children?)

Prv 24:21 *My son, fear the Lord and the king; Do not associate with those who are given to change.*

Who is responsible? _____

What are they responsible for? (instructing or training children?)

Prv 28:7 *He who keeps the law is a discerning son, But he who is a companion of gluttons humiliates his father.*

Who is responsible? _____

What are they responsible for? (instructing or training children?)

Prv 31:1–10 *The words of King Lemuel, the oracle which his mother taught him: Do not give your strength to women, or your ways to that which destroys kings.*

Who is responsible? _____

What are they responsible for? (instructing or training children?)

It is not for kings, O Lemuel. It is not for kings to drink wine, or for rulers to desire strong drink, lest they drink and forget what is decreed, and pervert the rights of all the afflicted.

Who is responsible? _____

What are they responsible for? (instructing or training children?)

Open your mouth for the dumb, for the rights of all the unfortunate. Open your mouth, judge righteously, and defend the rights of the afflicted and needy.

Who is responsible? _____

What are they responsible for? (instructing or training children?)

An excellent wife, who can find? For her worth is far above jewels.

Who is responsible? _____

What are they responsible for? (instructing or training children?)

The Training Process— Ten Areas Of Wisdom And Life Skills—Lecture

INTRODUCTION

In accordance with the continuing theme of the workbook, this chapter seeks to help the child be successful in life and, ultimately, in leaving his home by developing in him those skills which are necessary for success and independence. This chapter emphasis areas of wisdom and life skills to prepare your child to live a fruitful and fulfilled life apart from his parents and in fellowship with God and man. This chapter looks to the success of your child in school and to success in your child's social life. This is the second stage of wisdom and life skills, which builds upon first, covered in Chapter Three. These afford the child the opportunity for success in the four crucial areas of his life while at home: School, Social Life, Church, and Family.

I. Insuring Success

A. SUCCESS IN SCHOOL

For a child to be a success in the modern public school, in a secular or evangelical private school, or in the homeschooling situation, he must be able to:

1. Concentrate on what is being said. (Honor) This fulfills the injunction in the Word of God to show honor to authority, be it parental or institutional. For a child to be a success in school he must be able to demonstrate this ability. Having acquired this important wisdom and life skill will put him on the inside track of learning. If he has the ability to look directly at the teacher and concentrate on the instructions being given, your child will be ahead of his peers from the start. He will grow in wisdom in the academic setting, just as he did at home. Teachers will immediately see a difference in this child from his peers and will respond to his earnest attention. As a result, he will receive that added attention and motivation from teachers that is the key to success in school.

2. Sit still. (Control) This fulfills the injunction in the Word of God as it pertains to his preschool training in the home as a child who was under control (1 Tm 3:4), and the teachings in Proverbs concerning the importance of self-control (Prv 25:28). The Apostle Paul, in I Cor 9:27, writes "*I discipline my body and make it serve me...*" and again in Galatians as an attribute of a fruit of the spirit, "*self-control.*" The Apostle Peter, in 2 Pt 1, places early in his list of Godly character traits the admonition to "*add self-control*". We do our children a great disservice if we do not instill this skill in them as a preparation for their school experience. Again, in the classroom situation with the hundred and one opportunities for distraction, your child will be the exception as he is able to sit still and wait patiently for the next assignment or for the teacher to finish. The ability to work quietly at his desk, to entertain himself between lessons, to sit and wait for the teacher to begin, are skills which will set him apart from his peers in the eyes of his teachers.

3. Follow Instructions. (Obey) This fulfills the injunction in the Word of God as it pertains both to parents (Eph 6:1–3) and to authority (Rom 13:1–3). A child who has grown up with this response to authority as a normal expectation will find no difficulty at all succeeding in school. To be able to concentrate on what is said, to sit still and control his body, and then to follow through on instructions will be powerful combination in the classroom.

Eleanor had just hung up the phone and was asking me for counsel. Rachel had just called and, once again, they had a long talk. El had listened sympathetically. Rachel's child had never been given a great degree of discipline in the home, either by mother or father. His antics were always excused, romanticized or explained away in some manner or other. Now, he was falling further and further behind in school and at the same time his social sphere was narrowing. Rachel simply could not understand it. She had him tested and he showed that he was solidly in the intellectual mainstream of his peers. She had him diagnosed, and there were no chemical imbalances or learning disorders. His eyes were fine and his development was right on track. She just could not understand it. What could the trouble be? To me, the answer was clear and the root problem was not little Joey.

Yes, Joey did have a problem. I had been around him many times. When addressed by authority, Joey would rarely look you in the face or concentrate on what you were saying. Sitting still was almost an impossibility for him, as he wiggled and squirmed and kicked and fidgeted. He was not interested in following instructions or doing things which did not interest him. His life was almost completely tied up in himself and his own pursuits. No wonder he was not learning and his social sphere was narrowing. Neither teacher nor child found Joey a pleasant person to be with! If Rachel were to help Joey, she would first have to face the fact that Joey lacked the wisdom and life skills necessary to be a success in school and it was up to her to discipline and train him in these while there is still hope. Rachel knew she could not homeschool Joey, but was thinking of putting him in a private Christian school. No doubt, if this did not work, she would soon be thinking of homeschooling.

For Joey, and many children like him, the answer is not a Christian school or homeschooling. Both are solutions for other problems. Both are good and admirable before God for those parents who are so led, or are financially able to pursue them. But, they are not a solution for the failure of Christian parents to discipline their children and train them in wisdom and life skills. In fact if, by putting him in a Christian school or homeschooling him, Rachel was able to alleviate the academic symptoms of Joey's problem, she would do both him and herself a great disservice. Joey would continue in his present state until again his behavior conflicted with his environment and, again, Rachel would be faced with how to deal with it. Only this time Joey would be older, less pliable and more entrenched in his habits and lifestyle.

The same can be said with children's church. If Rachel searches for a church until she finds one with a program which will keep Joey distracted and entertained so that she can sit through the service on Sunday, she does both Joey and herself and disservice. Now I am not against "children's church." Both Eleanor and I have been involved in programs such as this. They are not, and should not be, solutions to the failure of Christian parents to discipline their children and train them in wisdom and life skills. Personally, even when children's church was offered, we had our children sit with us during church. I enjoyed having them with me and it was good for them to see their parents worshipping, learning from pastor, concentrating on what was being said and taking notes. This was our choice, though it was made possible by our disciplining and training of our children. Many parents do not have a choice. It's either a children's church or an hour of distraction for them and for those around them as their child swings his legs, bangs his head, wiggles, squirms, demands paper and gum and more paper, sits, lies down, sits, gets down, gets up and generally demonstrates his inability to concentrate, sit still and follow instructions.

What Rachel did not realize, and in fact, never considered, was how her failure to discipline and train Joey would affect his social life. Those cold institutional teachers in the public schools could not be expected to realize what a gifted and emotionally tender child her little Joey was. Even the Christian teachers in the Christian schools did not seem to be able to grasp his hidden and untapped potential. (Although helped along by the fact that they did not want to lose his tuition-paying parents and the benevolence of their Christian philosophy, they did seem to be less critical of Joey). But, what really bothered Rachel was that Joey didn't seem to have any friends, or at least as many friends as he used to. She was not quite sure when she first noticed this. It did not happen all at once, but Joey was spending more and more time by himself and just did not seem to be very popular with the other children.

Tonya could not understand why it just wasn't working out for Sam and Billy to get together. Tonya had discovered Sam at a school function and decided that this bright, well-mannered child was just the friend Billy needed. Even though it was just the third grade, Billy was already exhibiting the early signs of discipline, academic and social problems brought about by a failure on his parents' part to discipline him in wisdom and life skills. As a result, Tonya lit upon the idea (as many parents do) that what Billy needed was the right kind of friends. Now she would have been shocked if I were to have verbalized to her that, I was not interested in me, nor Eleanor, nor Sam raising her little Billy or straightening him out for her and, given the injunction of 1 Cor 15:33 that "bad company corrupts good morals," I was not going to roll the dice on my child in the hopes that Sam would influence Billy as opposed to the other way around. Furthermore, it was a pain to have Billy around. He would not respond. He got into things he shouldn't, and threw a temper tantrum every time his Mom came to pick him up. I cringed at the thought of the kind of supervision he and Sam got if they were to play at his home. So, it just did not seem to work out for them to get together.

It just didn't seem to click with Rachel that no one likes to be around a sullen, disrespectful, disobedient child who always has to have his own way.

You can ensure the social success of your child. Not necessarily that he is popular, but rather that he is socially fulfilled, well-liked by others and well-adjusted. This requires a few things on your part:

First, that you are committed to disciplining your child in wisdom and life skills. Do not approach it as a matter of convenience but of obedience, both on yours and the child's part.

Second, that you have laid (or are willing to begin laying) the groundwork of the big five: "No;" "Obey;" "Come;" "Open/Give;" and "Hush."

Third, that you are willing to keep the three goals of Submission to Authority, Self-Control and Wisdom and Life Skills before you, as you discipline and train your child.

Finally, that you view honor (concentrating on what is being said), control (sitting still), and obedience (following instructions) as virtues and skills which you are important for your child to have, and are willing to discipline and train your child in these areas.

During the elementary and secondary years, parents of "good kids" want their children to play with "good kids." Teachers want the "good kids" to be the models of leadership in the classroom. Coaches and PE teachers want the "good kids" to set the pace on the playing field. In church, Sunday school teachers want the "good kids" to take the seat in the front so as to influence the class. And, "good kids" like to hang out together because they are more fun to be with. If you make sure your child is a "good kid" before he enters school, instill in him a few basic wisdom and life skills, and you will insure not just his academic success, but that he is happy and socially-adjusted as well.

C. SUCCESS IN CHURCH

For the child, success in one's spiritual life and success in Church are synonymous. Outside the family, the child's spiritual life centers around the social activities of the church. An undisciplined child will not sit still during family devotionals, will not bow their head and be reverent during family prayers, will not answer questions and think during the Bible reading, will not sit still during church, will not participate in the order of worship during the worship hour and is not well-liked by the Sunday School staff. This has an immediate and adverse effect on the child's spiritual development.

A child who can sit still, hush, obey, follow instructions and cooperate will be way ahead in his spiritual development and understanding. Participating in family worship, participating in the worship hour at church and being well-liked and cooperative in the Sunday School hour, will prepare the child spiritually for discipleship, will create in the child's mind good memories concerning church and worship, and, most importantly, will create a wise and spiritually-sensitive child, whose heart has been prepared at an early age for service to the Lord.

In 1 Sm 2:18, the Word of God says, concerning the child Samuel, "*Now Samuel was ministering before the Lord, as a boy wearing a linen ephod.*" Can you imagine your child participating in this type of worship responsibility as a child? As a minister, I cringe when I see the bride's little brother, or cousin or nephew being coaxed into service as a ring bearer. Few children have been disciplined these days so as to accept this type of responsibility, much less to wear the linen ephod of service in the house of God. As we raised our children, we raised them to be children in the model of Samuel. One who could behave and participate at an early age in the service of God.

The Word of God goes on to state in 1 Sm 2:26 "*Now the boy Samuel was growing in stature and in favor both with the Lord and with men.*" This child's behavior before God and before men was such that as he grew, so did the favor which was bestowed on him. They were not surprised as he succeeded at each level in life. It had come to be expected of him. This is an attitude which is cultivated over time, the behavior of our children can put them on this road, if they are disciplined at an early age.

Finally, the Word of God reveals in 1 Sm 2:26, "*Now the boy Samuel was ministering to the Lord before Eli.*" Is the level of discipline you are using the standard of behavior you are expecting? Is the behavior of your child such that it is preparing him to be a Samuel? If your child cannot cooperate without clowning as a ring bearer, if your child cannot make it through a Christmas pageant without clowning around or misbehaving, if your child cannot make it through the children's choir program without creating a disturbance, then you are not raising a Samuel. Think through on your standards, reflect carefully on your spiritual expectations, and then decide on a behavior level which will allow your Samuel to grow in favor with God and man.

Somewhere in the development of the attitudes within in the evangelical church, ill-mannered, precocious and disobedient behavior became synonymous with childhood. This is not the historical standard within Christendom, nor is it the biblical standard presented within the Word of God. Do not let secular cultural inroads cheat your child out of being a well-mannered, spiritually mature child of God.

D. SUCCESS IN THE FAMILY:

For a child, success in the family means two things. First, it means that his parents enjoy being with him and second, that he has a close, loving relationship with his brothers and sisters. In both cases, this means that the parents have taken the time to discipline and

train him in such a way that these relationships are possible. There is a difference between loving a child and enjoying a child. Many parents, if they are honest, although loving their children deeply, are not enjoying their children in the way that they had imagined they would. In some cases they are enduring their children, but in many, they are just putting up with their children’s behavior.

They are resigned to not being able to do certain activities or go to certain places without a level of stress that either precludes their enjoyment of the activity, or excludes the activity altogether. This is unfortunate because it is not necessary. A well-behaved child grows closer to the parent through shared experiences, just as an ill-mannered child drifts from the parent through deprivation of shared experiences. In the same vein, many parents marvel at the relationship our children have with each other. They “wish” their children could be this close, just as they “wish” their children would “turn out right” as if it were a lottery and some people got good kids and some bad.

The truth is that all parents get bad kids. God says in Rom 5:19 *“For as through the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners...”* you see our children are born with the sin of Adam stamped on their little hearts. They sin because they are born sinful. That is why the Word of God says in Prv 22:15 *“Foolishness*

You can choose if and when you marry.

You can choose if and when you have children.

But, you cannot choose if and when you raise your children. It starts immediately. You can only choose how you do it, whether biblically and conscientiously, or worldly and poorly. But, you cannot choose whether or not to do it.

Dr. Stanely Mukolwe, Nairobi, Kenya

is bound up in the heart of a child; the rod of discipline will remove it far from him.” It is not that some parents draw foolish, ill-behaved children in the lottery of life, and some nice little angels. Rather, all draw sinful, foolish children. The difference is that some parents discipline and train their children in the biblical model, driving out foolishness and retraining in wisdom. As a result, they have a close and loving family. Meanwhile, other parents settle for a worldly model where the children are ill-mannered and the family characterized by sibling squabbles, bickering, and rivalries. The decision is the parent’s. The children have no choice. They are born foolish and sinful. The choice is the parent’s and not the child’s.

II. The Ten Areas of Wisdom and Life Skills— to be mastered by the child before entering the first grade

1. CONCENTRATION

Concentrating on what is being said is an essential life skill, and particularly important for school. When given instructions or corrections, **the child should look the parent in the face, in a non-rebellious manner, and listen to what is being said without looking down, looking away, pouting or glaring.** Training: three spansks for rebellion.

The failure to concentrate on what is being said is the decision to supplant your authority with his. For most young children, instructions deal primarily with issues of safety and are very important. A child cannot afford the luxury of viewing his parents' instructions as optional listening material. Why some parents raise children who for the most part ignore them, and then are surprised when they ignore their teacher, is a constant source of amazement. Why should a child who will not concentrate on his mother's conversation be willing to concentrate on what is being said by a stranger who is trying to relate to 20 children at once?

Training: this presupposes "Come," "Hush," and "Obey."

To concentrate on a parent's instructions, the child must first be there, looking in the parent's face. This presumes that when you call to the child in a normal tone of voice, the child comes to you with the purpose of finding out what you want. Secondly, it assumes that once in your immediate presence the child will listen to what you are saying without interrupting, arguing or crying. In most cases, no doubt, you will want to dialog with the child, but if you ask the child to hush and listen so as to hear you out, that the child will do so. Consequently, it presupposes the child will obey you when you say "come," "hush," and "look me in the eye." Having laid the ground work in these three areas, the parent can expect the child to concentrate on what is being said. The parent can also expect the child to do well in school, as child who in the midst of a busy, noisy classroom, stops their

It was the first day of classes and Mrs. Thompson was feeling a little haggard. Her first graders were equally excited and as they talked, giggled, and wiggled in their seats, Mrs. Thompson struggled to gain some semblance of order. "Quiet, class" she commanded as she clapped her hands, "Let's get quiet and get out our reading books." The classroom still continued to rustle and bustle with activities, the children, not used to responding to anyone the first time, continued with whatever they were doing. All except for one.

Phillip immediately sat up straight, made eye contact with Mrs. Thompson, tuned out the noise and commotion around him, concentrated on what she said, took out his reading book, opened it on his desk, folded his hands over it and again made eye contact. This is not at all lost on Mrs. Thompson.

She quickly checks her roll. Phillip is made class monitor. He now takes notes to the office, passes out papers and holds the flag during the pledge of allegiance. As the year goes on, word of Phillip and a few select students like him in other classes leaks out. Teachers begin coveting these exceptional students and the best and most-experienced second grade teacher will have first choice in the makeup of her classes. Phillip, on the first day, sets himself on the inside track of success. When he comes home, he excitedly tells his mother all about school, proudly reveals his responsibilities and is a source of praise at the dinner table. Later that night, a call to grandpa is made and more praise is heaped on. Phillip is sold. School is great and being good at school has great rewards.

To concentrate on a parent's instructions, the child must

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Everyone, that is, except Cliff. He was in a pushing match with a little girl for a seat he wanted. This was not at all lost on Mrs. Thompson. In the teacher in-service, Cliff's Kindergarten teacher had mentioned to her in a sarcastic manner that she was going to have her hands full.

Cliff is immediately moved to the far desk situated near Mrs. Thompson's desk, where children sit who can't keep quiet or keep their hands to themselves. Other children snicker and stare as Cliff is singled out. When classroom duties are passed out, Cliff is passed over. He greatly resents Phillip. Why does he get to have all the fun? Cliff's resentment towards Mrs. Thompson, the school and the good kids begins to set in. When Cliff gets home he is sullen and uncommunicative. At the dinner table, it comes out that Cliff has been singled out for discipline. Mom and Dad immediately get in an argument about this. Later that night, Cliff hears his Mom complaining on the phone to her mother over Cliff's behavior. "I just don't know what to do. Why can't he act right? He just does not seem to be turning out" she complains. Back at school, in the teacher's lounge, Mrs. Thompson shares her horror stories along with the other teachers. These are not lost on the second-grade teachers. Cliff will be left for the new second grade teacher along with the other problem children next year. Cliff is sold. School is a bummer and the teacher already has favorites. It is no use even trying.

activity, looks the teacher in the eye and concentrates on what the teacher is saying. He will be seen as a gift from God.

The best evaluation time is when there are distractions, or when it is a subject the child dislikes. When there is a group activity going on, such as when dropping the child off at Sunday School, or a party, or while the TV is on. Irrespective of distractions, a child can concentrate on what is being said. If a child can tune you out when watching TV, then he can tune out the TV and concentrate on you. Other situations, such as being told to do something they do not want to do are also good indicators. How does your child respond to being instructed on how to clean up something, on when and where to play, on restrictions of movement or freedom, when he would rather be somewhere else and be doing something else? These are times to decide how he is doing in concentrating on what is being said.

Eleanor likes to have a quiet time alone with God in the morning. The children, especially the youngest, react to this by vying for her attention. She disciplined and trained them to sit quietly and amuse themselves on the floor without disturbing her while she met with God each morning. This can be accomplished as early as 9 months to a year.

2. SITTING STILL:

(ESSENTIAL FOR SCHOOL, CHURCH, SOCIAL TRIPS, DINNER TABLE ETC..)

When told to do so, the child should be able to sit quietly and wait for whatever is being quietly waited for. This includes sitting at the dinner table, sitting in the doctor's office, sitting in the grocery cart, sitting in the car, sitting at a guest's house or anywhere else. It does not mean the child will always, on his own, sit quietly. It means that when told to do so, he will obey.

Training: one training spank, and "hush" when needed; then move up as the situation requires.

A child can be trained to sit quietly on his own without any amusements at all. This is sometimes necessary due to the situation at hand. Whenever possible, you will not want to make obedience a form of punishment in and of itself. Therefore, when appropriate, I include playing quietly or entertaining oneself as falling within the realm of obedience in this area. In fact, the ability to play neatly and quietly is a good skill. Many children, even if given a toy, pen and paper, or book to entertain themselves with, still cannot play quietly and leave others alone, be they children or adults. Many a

Right before dinner at the Mahon house things are a little hectic. We trained Megan to sit quietly in her high chair while the table was set and the meal served. All children should be able to sit quietly while the meal is being served so that the evening meal can be an enjoyable time for everyone and especially for Mom.

Our church had a nursery for all children up to the age of three. After that, they had an optional "children's church." We chose to discipline our children and train them to sit quietly during the service so that we could be together as a family. This was an important time of bonding for our family, and I look back on it with fond memories.

Kevin and Laura decided that they wanted their children to grow up seeing them focusing on God's Word during the sermon, so from the earliest age they taught them to sit quietly with the family in church. Laura discovered added benefits. The children received from the sermon much more than the average grownup would give them credit for. Many discussions and questions came up during the week as a result of the sermon being remembered by the young preschoolers. This was truly time well-spent that yielded benefits throughout the week Not only this, but grateful adults, surprised at these four pre-schoolers, sitting quietly during church began to heap praises on them before and after the service. It was wonderful for the children's egos. Last, but not least, the Pastor, when he needed a child for an illustration or responsibility, always thought first of these children, who could sit so quietly during church.

Mom has found to her dismay that the very thing she gave the child to distract it and quiet it down was used to create an even greater disturbance.

Presupposes "No," "Obey," and "Hush" To accomplish this, the child must first be disciplined in the area of "No," not doing that which his mother wants him not to do. No, do not bother your sister. No, do not move from here. No, do not make noise. No, do not distract or bother others. No, do not wiggle and squirm. Then, the child must be disciplined in the area of "obey," doing that which his mother wants him to do. Yes, sit still. Yes, read this story or play with this toy. Yes, sit in this spot. Yes, color quietly. Finally, the child must learn to do this in a quiet manner. Hush, no whining. Hush, no complaining. Hush, no talking. Hush.

Best evaluation time: The best time to see how you are doing in this area is the dinner table, especially when you have guests, or at church, during a special event such as wedding, funeral, business meeting or choir presentation. Do not make the mistake of shrugging off poor behavior because of special circumstances. This is when you most need good behavior. A child should not learn that he has to obey unless you really, really need him to obey. Then all bets are off. It is even more important that a child obey under special circumstances. This shows that it is a part of his character and not merely environment.

Larry looked forward to sitting next to his Dad and quietly falling asleep in his arms during the sermon. He was given a pencil and paper and encouraged to draw a picture of something the pastor said. This was fun. Having done this, he would snuggle up close to his Dad, and in the warmth of the closeness of his family all sitting together in the pew, would quietly drift off to sleep, his head slipping down his Dad's arm and into his lap. He felt secure and at peace as his father, attentive to the sermon, Bible open, quietly stroked his son's head as he drifted off to sleep. He was sold. Church is a good place to be.

I was speaking at a small church in an outlying, rural community. Eleanor and the children were with me. For some reason, Sam chose that Sunday to test the limits on squirming. Twice during the sermon, Eleanor, as agreed, got up, marched out the center aisle with Sam, and into the church foyer, "Wham, Wham, Wham," followed by tears and then a crying but contrite Sam marching back down the aisle to sit with his sisters. The lesson, not lost on them, sat very, very still. Sam, convinced that squirming during the sermon was foolish and that sitting still and concentrating on his father was wise, sat very still throughout the sermon. On the way home, I praised Sam for deciding to obey his mother and the girls for being a good example to Sam. Alone with Eleanor, I confided that that was, in all probability, the last time I would be invited to that church to speak.

"I know dear," Eleanor emphasized, "but what could I do? You have asked me to discipline them and I did just what we agreed on."

"I know. I know honey. You didn't do a thing wrong. You handled it perfectly. I could not have been more pleased. Just, why did he choose today to test the limits?" I sighed.

To my surprise, on Monday, the pastor was in my office. The deacons had met with him. They wanted him to receive help on child raising from me and had sent him to set up a weekly meeting. "Boy, you must have perfect kids!" He blurted out. The church was very impressed. I have seen this over and over. People are more impressed with real children who learn obedience, than with the mythical "good kids".

Heb 5:8 "Although He was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered."

3. FOLLOWING INSTRUCTIONS: (ESSENTIAL FOR SCHOOL, FOR HOME CHORES, AND FOR SPORTS)

The child, when addressed by an adult, should concentrate on what is being said (at their level), and follow through, unsupervised, (again, at their level). This means that the child's training frees him from the absolute need of individualized instruction, and that he can function and work as part of a group, class or family. The child has chores around the house and he can do them. This is essential training for the future. The ability to follow instructions will make him a great student

and faithful employee. It will insure that he has fun at sports and actually will help him be a better cook and handy man as well.

Training: one spank for training unless the child rebels, then three. In training the “with Him” principle is crucial. This principle is taken from the Word of God, where the Bible states in Mk 3:14, “*And He appointed twelve, that they might be with Him, and that He might send them out to preach,*” Before Jesus sent men out to preach, they first followed Him around learning not just what it meant to preach, but what it meant to be The Preacher. By doing things with our children, we not only assure them of learning the wisdom and life skill of following instructions, but they learn many things just from being with us that we could never take the time to codify and type out into a syllabus...and if we did, it would overwhelm both us and them.

John was halfway through putting the grill together and was having to start all over. Once again, he had started off without following instructions and once again he had a part that he had to back up and redo to complete the project. He remembered Lorne Sanny, the president of the Navigators’ admonition, “If you have time to do it over you had time to do it right the first time.” John coveted in his heart to teach his new baby son this important lesson and he did. He and Sam never did any project together without first mastering the instructions. It was a key element of Sam’s discipline and training in life skills from the very earliest responsibilities, “Follow instructions” was drummed into his head. Now Sam was an honor graduate from high school, starter on the baseball team and leader in his church and school. As John reflected on this, he praised God for leading him to emphasize this important trait in his son’s life. He had passed up many of the frustrations and hard knocks that his father had gone through in learning this the hard way. This is an important point to realize. God can teach our children these lessons if we are unfaithful. It is just a lot harder on them— and many of the early benefits are lost.

In teaching our children any skill, be it picking up the room, setting the table or mowing the lawn, I followed a simple procedure:

Tell them why and how (at this point, especially if the child is young I break it down into small increments).

Stage One: Do it for the child— pick up several of the blocks and place them in the basket.

Stage Two: Do it with the child— get down on your knees, with the child and pick the blocks up together.

Stage Three: Supervise the child as he does it (if the child is young or the task is daunting I break it down into small increments). An example is cleaning up the room. “OK, pick up all the Legos, put them in the box and put the box where it goes, then come tell me. Good, now get everything out from under the bed and put it up on the bed, then come tell me. Very good, now put all the toys on your bed where they belong, then come tell me. Great, now make your bed. Terrific! and on it goes...

Stage Four: Have the child do it without direct supervision (At this point you will still check on the completed job, just not the increments and not direct supervision.) “Clean up your room, then come tell me when you are done so I can check it.

Stage Five: Turn the responsibility over to the child so that he owns the task. At some point the child needs the reward of your confidence. This comes from not checking his work. If you are going to teach all these things, you will have to lower your standards. A job well done by a three-year-old is not the same as a job well done by a thirty-year-old. If the child gets sloppy, then I go back to stage three, which they hate because it is so much below them. I counter, “Hey, if the batter gets sloppy, he goes down to the farm team. If you don’t want this much supervision, then just do it right on your own.”

Presupposes "Come," "Obey," and "Give" instructions, and, as a rule, is proactive. They are things you want your child to do. The ability to follow instructions can be taught at a very early age, and the child who is disciplined and trained in this wisdom and life skill is prepared by his parents for success in life. "Come"— Stop what you are doing and come to me to do something I want you to do. "Obey"— do this task the way we want it to be done. "Give"— relinquish control of these items, put them up, put them away, etc. These three simple commands grow slowly into a responsible, successful, and helpful child.

The best evaluation time: for most kids, it is cleaning up around the house. Here, kids learn to follow instructions as well as to serve and be a responsible member of the family. It is one thing for a child not to do a “good job” simply because the child is five, and not twenty five. It is another thing altogether when it is a result of not following instructions. Be thorough in cleaning the room. Is the child following instructions or just fulfilling the letter of the law? “Aw, Mom, you told me to pick up my toys. You didn’t say anything about my clothes.” “Geeze, Mom, you said to pick up my clothes. My baseball uniform is not one of *my* clothes; it belongs to the school.” “What do you mean, it is not clean? It’s clean to me and I have to live there.” These and other little word games are completely unacceptable. The child must learn to follow the spirit of the law. Do not agree to play Solomon and create long, exhaustive lists of responsibilities. This does not prepare the child for success. Demand responsibility and discipline all gray areas. Discipline and train

Sandy was very frustrated. She had been excited about cooking dinner but felt cramped and constrained by the recipe. She wanted to create. She wanted to experiment with all those spices and all those different colors. “Let’s go for it,” she thought to herself. But Mom would have none of this and Sandy was fortunate to have a mother who was disciplining her and training her to follow directions. Others would have to eat this meal. A periodic meal to be thrown out because of an experiment gone wrong was not built in the budget; and, most importantly, Sandy was learning that it is after you have mastered the basics, the skills and the knowledge of something, after you have followed others who have successfully gone before you, that you, based on this wisdom, begin to branch out and develop your own style. To do this takes discipline, and Sandy was lucky to have a mother who was committed to teaching her this important life lesson.

Caroline is tired all the time. Her children require her constant attention and she never has a moment's rest. It is not that they are "bad," it is just that they are unrelenting. Whenever she thinks she has a moment to herself they always seem to be getting into something, a squabble with each other, an object that is supposed to be off-limits, an accident or small hurt. Without fail, these things occur anytime she is trying to create a little space for herself. As a result, she is emotionally tired all the time.

This is especially frustrating for her when her husband Tom comes home. She just doesn't seem to have anything left for him. When the kids finally get to bed, she is not far behind them.

Caroline needs to take the bull by the horns and create some boundaries in her life. She can begin by disciplining her children to play quietly on their own while she gets some time to herself each day.

your child in this wisdom and life skill, and you do him a great service.

4. ENTERTAINING THEMSELVES:

(ESSENTIAL FOR SCHOOL, CHURCH AND FAMILY HARMONY)

When told, the child should be able to go to room or play area and entertain themselves quietly and without distracting others. Mom should be able to have friends over, have a quiet time, prepare dinner, take a nap, pursue a craft or hobby, do a chore which requires her concentration in peace, (and yes, go to the bathroom in peace).

Most people are very aware of the fact that others will take advantage of you if you don't create boundaries. It is not that they will necessarily do so in a vindictive manner, it is just that they will. People will take what

they can get, or in this case, what you are willing to give. Yet, for parents in general, and mothers in specific, it is especially hard for them to recognize this in their relationship with their children.

For teens, it is money. If a teen knows that every time he asks you for money, you will give it to him, he will not hesitate to always ask for money. If he finds that whining will get it, he will whine. If fighting, he will fight. If nagging, he will nag. It becomes his work. This is how he earns his living. You have defined it, and he is playing by the rules. He does not think about the grocery bill. He does not think about the light bill. He does not think about the house payment. He just remembers that whenever he wants money all he has to do is play by the rules and you will give it to him. The parent can't sit around and think, "Gee, we can't pay the gas bill this month. I wish little Freddy would not ask for so much money, but what's a parent to do?" No, the parent needs to say,

Becca was our early, early riser but her brother Sam was even worse. I remember one night I woke up and it was pitch dark outside. Somewhere in the house I could hear people talking animatedly in Japanese. This was very disorienting. I looked at the clock and it was four in the morning. As I got up, I noticed a faint glow in the play room. As I made my way closer, the Japanese became more and more distinct and was accompanied by an occasional roar. I peeked in and there was Sam, age four, sitting in front of the TV, his little form silhouetted by the eerie glow of the TV in the otherwise dark room, watching Japanese motorcycle racing being broadcast live via satellite. The two Japanese commentators were talking excitedly in their native language and every once in a while, a motorcycle would come roaring by. "What are you doing Sam?" "Watching TV" was his reply. Sam had to learn what Becca had to learn. You cannot get out of bed until it is light, and then you must play quietly in your room until seven a.m.

Gloria was trying to teach her child this important wisdom and life skill, but was having little or no success. The problem soon became evident. She was making two common mistakes: first, living by the law; second, allowing too many exceptions.

By living by the law, I mean that Gloria was allowing her son to get around this by his requiring her to cover every contingency. This goes back to disciplining the gray areas. The law does not teach wisdom, just manipulation. "Mommy is going to have a Bible study with friends, now remember, no shouting or fighting." Five minutes later, the kids are banging pots with wooden spoons with a racket that could wake the dead. "We weren't fighting or shouting, you did not say anything about pots and spoons" is their innocent reply. Quiet is quiet, and anything else is disobedience. Do not let a child manipulate you with the law. The child must work at understanding your expectations. You do not have to work at this. He does.

Gloria's second problem was she was giving in to every little exception—"I am thirsty," "I hurt my finger," "Tommy is teasing me," "I am scared," "I don't know how to do this," "Fix my bow," "My shoe came untied," "Fix my Barbie," "How do you work this?" The child must understand that this is Mommy's time. Any interruption that is not a genuine emergency will be responded to as disobedience. All "accidents" will be responded to with a training spank. "I am sorry you 'fell down' but you have to learn to take care of yourself so that Mommy can have her quiet time. Now, lie down on the bed and put your hands on your cheeks while Mommy gets the wooden spoon."

Gloria's children needed to learn that Gloria's primary reason for being here on earth was not to meet their every need instantaneously. She was surprised to find that as long as she was willing to do this, they were willing to let her. When she was no longer was willing to do this, they were not happy about the change at first. Who would be? But, life went on with no damage to them, and great relief to her.

“Sorry, Fred, we don’t have the money for this, you will have to do without.”

Now, that is clear to most parents and moms. Money is money, but when it comes to their time, they draw a blank. In the same way that you have to say “No” to a teen’s constant requests for money if you want to have something left over in order to be able to pay the bills, you have to say “No” to your preschooler’s demands on your emotional energy if you want to have something left over for yourself and for your spouse. The best way to do this is to teach your child that the universe does not indeed revolve around him, that Mommy is not on 24 hour-a-day, instant alert, on demand, “on call,” and to discipline and train them in the skill of entertaining themselves quietly.

Caroline, Tom, *and even the children* would all be much happier if this wisdom and life skill were imparted.

Training Use one training spank and “hush” when needed. Do not hesitate to discipline for rebellion, if the child decides that he will not be willing to allow Mom to do this. The child can be taken by Mom to the “play area.” This may be a room, a spot on the floor, etc. The child is then given plenty of things with which to play and entertain themselves. The child is clearly made to understand that, except for using the bathroom, to quietly get a toy, or in case of an emergency, to stay here and play. Mom can give him a specific time, such as “When the big hand is on ten” or a specific length of time, “when the timer goes off” or a specific duration, “when Mommy finishes her Bible study,” “when Mommy finishes fixing dinner,” “when Mommy’s friends are through praying together.”

Presupposes "No," "Hush," and "Obey." A child must learn "No." No, he cannot leave his room. No, he cannot leave the play area. No, he cannot ask Mom for a drink. No, he cannot get conveniently hurt. No, he cannot disturb his brothers and sisters. No, he cannot disturb Mom. No, he cannot break something. A child must learn "Hush," to play quietly, without whining, crying, or interrupting, and to simply stay put and play quietly. The child must learn "Obey." These are the parameters. This is what is expected. This is what you may do during this time period, and if you do not obey, then these are the consequences.

Best evaluation time The best time to evaluate this is for moms to first figure out what times during the day she needs to herself in order to be a better wife and mother. These

Marla could not understand what the big deal was, as the mothers shared their frustrations and victories in disciplining and training their children in this wisdom and life skill. “What are TV’s for?” she laughed. “I bet my kids know (names a recent children’s movie) by heart. They have watched it on the VCR a million times.”

No, I do not view the TV as the great Satan that some of my fellow professionals do, but sitting a child down and distracting them by electronic stimulation is not a wisdom and life skill, it is simply a distraction. It does not require No, Obey, or Hush. It does not require obedience. It does not require self-control. And, it does not require character. All it requires is enough stimulation to distract the child, and then hold the child’s attention. The only thing I can think of as less constructive than this model is the mother who told me that her kids were disruptive during long car rides so she gave them Dramamine to knock them out. Now that is a great skill for both parent and child to learn.

Laura found herself the wife of a graduate student in a one-bedroom apartment with three small children. It was essential for her sanity and the safety of the children that they all have boundaries and that the children learn to entertain themselves quietly. I was in their home once and noticed tape on the floor blocking off certain areas: the computer; the stove; and the book shelf. Laura commented, “Oh those, those are ‘off limit tapes’, the children know not to go beyond those or to touch anything on the other side.” For a young mother coping with the confines of a cramped living area with three small children, I thought this was an excellent idea. What a blessing for both Laura and her children that she was committed to disciplining and training them in wisdom and life skills.

are usually phone calls, evening meal preparation, daily quiet time with God, the weekly women's Bible study, having a friend over to talk or a time for a short afternoon rest. Other key times are those when the environment changes. This assures you that the child is learning wisdom and not just routine. Good examples include the doctor's office, the waiting room, the car repair shop, etc. The absolute litmus test, though, is long car rides. This skill totally transforms family outings and long, vacation trips.

5. MANNERS:

(ESSENTIAL FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT, SUCCESS IN SCHOOL, AND CLOSENESS IN THE EXTENDED FAMILY.)

The child should be able to conduct himself, both in the privacy of the home and in public, in such a way as brings honor to the parents, reflects the order and control of the father, and enhances the reputation of the parents in the community.

If you take care of the little things, the big things will take care of themselves

Sign above the desk of the Vice Principal, in charge of behavior and dress code, at Nimitz high school where my children attend.

Training—Repetition and praise is the key.

Presupposes "Come," "Obey," "Hush." As in so many areas, in the development of good manners in your children, praise and repetition are the key. It presupposes some definite skills that have required discipline. "Come," "Obey," and "Hush," all combine to make a mannerly child. The manners themselves rarely require discipline, except for the occasional training spank or disciplining for rebellion when the child is rude or simply refuses to honor his mother or his father. This is the exception rather than the rule. For the most part, manners are reinforced throughout the day with praise, repetition and modeling by the parents, so that they slowly become a way of life, the manner in which the child functions, his manner of life, or manners. Below are listed the manners in which we trained our children. You may choose others, but we found these to be of great benefit to both the child and the family.

A. TABLE MANNERS

At our table for the evening meal, the children come to the table when called with their hair combed and neatly dressed. If not, they are sent back to their rooms or the bathroom to take care of their personal appearance. No baseball hats for the boys to cover up the failure to neatly comb the hair. Hands are washed, faces are clean and shirts are tucked in. The boys stand behind the chair at the table until the mother is seated. Girls sit quietly until the mother is seated. This shows honor

Tom was a well-educated minister from out of town. As we all came to dinner, Tom immediately sat down and began to serve himself. The children know not to embarrass adults who do not have manners and broke the usual routine. Tom was oblivious to all. He began eating first, he helped himself, talked with his mouth full, reached across the plates of others to get food, asked for a condiment which was not on the table, and asked questions about dishes before accepting or rejecting them. I could see the children's suppressed smiles as they watched this adult and minister in action. What a shame that Tom was never taught table manners, and now as an adult, children snicker in their rooms as they laugh and talk about his table antics.

to the mother and appreciation for the fact that she has been on her feet cooking the meal. It is a time for the children to slow down and re-focus on the fact that many things that are done for them that they take for granted and this is a time where they realize that Mom is a special person. Preparing the evening meal is a special act of love on her part,

which they should honor. It also helps the boys to focus on the fact that women are the weaker vessel and, as such, certain courtesies and manners are due them.

Then, as the father, I seat Mom, the boys seat any female guests.

Next, no one eats until the mother begins. Most women go through life serving the family meal and do not eat a hot dinner until the last child has left for college. A mother may not sit through an evening meal, eat it hot and still enjoy it for some twenty-five years. She is up and down throughout the entire meal at the whim of her capricious and ungrateful children. Not so at the Mahon home. No one eats until Eleanor does. We are all served, the evening prayer is said and then Eleanor picks up her utensil to eat. Only then may the others do so. This encourages self-control, thankfulness and respect. It discourages greed, selfishness and unmannerly behavior.

In Lk 22:25–27 Jesus states, *"The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who have authority over them are called 'Benefactors.' But not so with you, but let him who is the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the leader as the servant. For who is greater, the one who reclines at the table, or the one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines at the table? But I am among you as the one who serves."* It was clear to both the disciples and to Jesus that the one who sits at the table rules the one who serves. At your table, who sits and who serves? Generally, it is the children who sit and the mother who serves. At our table, my wife is no man's *servant*. She sits in a place of honor, and the children show her honor by serving her.

The Word of God says, in Prv 31:28, *"Her children rise up and bless her; Her husband also, and he praises her, saying..."* and again in Mt 15:4 Jesus Christ states, *"For God said, 'Honor your father and mother,' and, 'He who speaks evil of father or mother, let him be put to death.'* How do you instill this wisdom and life skill to your children? How do you insure that your wife, the mother of the children, is honored, and that the children rise up and bless her? You do not have to do it the way we do it, but you do have to see that it is done. This type of blessing and honor is not done on the side. It does not come naturally to the children. It is the responsibility of the father to see that the mother is honored, that the children rise up and bless her.

Certain words or phrases are expected at our table. The children need to use these, not only with the parents, but with each other. "Please pass...", "May I please...", "Thank you," etc.. Children do not reach over the plates of others or across the table to get food, but wait patiently as food is passed to them. This fosters a spirit of love and respect within the family members.

The children are expected to eat what is set before them, without comment, with their mouth closed, using serving pieces and silverware correctly.

We teach them it is rude to ask for something that is not on the table. In other words, if ketchup is on the table, it is perfectly all right to ask someone to please pass the ketchup. However, if

you look down at your plate and decide it might not taste good, you do not look up at Mom and say, "Can I have some ketchup?" Similarly, if salt is on the table, it is perfectly acceptable to say, "Please pass the salt." On the other hand, it is not acceptable to taste

Jake was a young college student in our ministry who wanted to be a missionary. The only thing was that he had grown up being allowed to be a very picky eater. One of his foibles was that he would not eat ground meat. We had Jake over for the first time, and El was serving Mexican food. Jake and four other students were at the table. Jake looked down at his burrito, scraped the ground meat out and then announced, "Sorry, I cannot eat ground meat." and that was it. There his plate sat and El had to get up and fix him something else. I can guarantee you that this man was not going to the mission field with that level of social intolerance and inflexibility.

your meal and say, “Yew, this needs salt. Can I have some salt?” It is also not acceptable to make Mom get up from the table and go get the salt.

Mom has spent a lot of time and effort on the recipe. The children can accept it as it is and eat it all, without negative comments. It is rude to separate things you don’t like and leave them on the plate. If the child does not like lima beans, it will be good for his character to eat them. At the end of the meal, there should not be little piles of food separated out from the stew or mixed vegetables that the child has rejected. It is rude to make comments about how things smell, look or taste if you do not like them. Children can learn to be thankful and honoring of Mom's efforts.

Can you imagine a child bringing her mother a picture she has drawn and her mother saying, “Yew, what’s this? I don’t like that color.” and then scribbling over it, “I have enough already.” or “Don’t you have anything else?” Yet we allow our children to make all these rude comments towards the meal Mom has worked very hard on. Mom worked very hard on the meal. Dad worked hard to pay for it. Mom and Dad have worked hard to create the opportunity for the family to sit down together and have the evening meal together. The children can work hard at making it a pleasant experience.

We have always made the children eat what is set before them. First, this is good for them. We feed them what they need to be healthy in their active childhood, and they need to eat it. Second, it is disrespectful to turn down a gift, especially one prepared in love and over a period of concentrated time. Mom is not their short-order cook. She is their Mom and they can show her love and respect. Finally, this rude behavior can develop into eccentricities which come across later as impolite or silly.

Carla was a fine young woman and strong Christian in her sorority. She was very well-mannered... except that she had never been taught to eat what was set before her. We never had Carla over when there weren't small piles of things on her plate that she had picked out by the time the meal was over. No comment, but as she ate, she carefully separated out things she did not like and left them in little piles. This behavior came across as very immature. You can imagine the impact this had on her prospective employer the first time she ate out after a key interview. You can imagine, as well, the impression this made on her future mother-in-law.

It was from seeing the results of this in our home that El and I decided that we would give our kids the gift of the wisdom and life skill of discipline and training in manners.

Everyone gets to talk at the table and the older children must be kind to the younger ones and let them tell their stories as well. The dinner time is a wonderful period of catching up on life, sharing experiences and getting in touch on a daily basis. The children learn many valuable lessons by listening and interacting with adults at the table, especially when there are guests. When there are adult guests, the children need to show respect by asking questions and drawing the guest into the family discussions. All questions asked of children by guests should be answered clearly and in complete sentences. There is nothing more rude than to have a guest ask a child something and have the child look away and simply ignore the guest, or look down at the plate, or bury his head in his hands playing the bashful routine. We used a training spank to teach our children that when spoken to, to look the person in the face and answer in a complete sentence.

Before leaving the table the children must ask, “May I please be excused?” and accept the decision of the parent. Sometimes we will want them to stay because the family needs to be together longer or because a dessert will be served. Sometimes they are excused, in either case they must ask. If they need to use the rest room then they ask, “May I be excused for a moment, please?” and of course they are, and they then return. When the children leave the table, they thank their mother for the meal and give their parents a kiss.

Those who have responsibility for doing the after meal dishes remain at the table until everyone is through, and then do their chores.

Remember, the Word of God says in Prv 31:28, *“Her children rise up and bless her; Her husband also, and he praises her...”* and again in 1 Pt 3:7 *“You husbands likewise, live with your wives in an understanding way, as with a weaker vessel, since she is a woman; and grant her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered.”* It is your responsibility, as the father and head of the home, to see that your children rise up and bless their mother, that they grant her honor and learn to respect her as a weaker vessel. We chose to express these actions at meal time. You may choose other times, but you may not simply ignore these commands. It is the father's duty to see that children are a blessing to the mother, and that they bring her honor.

Pastor Carter bumped into me while downtown and greeted me with, “Well, how is the Queen?”

“What?” was my reply.

“The Queen. My boys tell me you have a Queen living in your home. I was not aware of any royalty in the family. I should like to meet her someday.”

Pastor Carter’s two sons and my boy Sam were best of friends. They had spent the night with us and reported back to their father that Eleanor was the Queen of our house. The term was never used to my knowledge, but I have had this experience more than once. Because of the manners and behavior of the children, El is referred to as “the Queen.”

B. THE DOOR

The boys should hold the door for their Mom, letting her in first. If the father is there, then he should do this, modeling it for his sons. The daughters then enter after their mother, with the sons and father following.

The girls should not be crowding or shoving or fighting for first place. If they can't do this, then the solution is easy. They go in by age, youngest to oldest. In this way, the children learn at an early age to be gracious and considerate of those weaker than themselves. The boys learn what it means to be a Christian gentleman, and the girls, what it means to be a Christian lady. Christian men and women are not necessarily viewed by society as Christian Gentlemen and Ladies, but you can give this gift to your children.

One of the key benefits to this is that daughters grow up with a sense of self worth, knowing how they should be treated by young men. They are not at all enamored with gruff young men who do not know how to treat women as ladies, and just want to use them as objects.

There are some boys who will have nothing to do with a girl who has been raised with the expectation of being treated like a lady, and that is just fine with me.

I can remember Becca, on one of her early dates, was discussing this with me. She was explaining to me that guys just don't open doors for girls anymore.

I said, “Listen Becca, just try this one time, if it doesn't work, you can do it your way. What you do is just sit in the car when they guy gets out. Don't look to the left or right. Don't change your expression. Just fold your hands in your lap and sit there looking straight ahead. He will get about one third of the way down the block, look back, see you sitting in the car, turn all red and hurry back to you. He will then open the door, and be all embarrassed and explaining all the time how he always opens the door for his date and how he forgot and how sorry he is and how it will never happen again and on and on.”

Becca came home that night and could not wait to tell me about it. “It was just like you said Dad” she related excitedly, “He got out of the car and started out, so I just sat there. After a while he looked around and saw where I was, ran back to the car explaining on and on about he always opens the door. He treated me differently for the rest of the evening.”

Dads, if you want your daughters to feel special, to feel like they are ladies, to be secure enough not to have to run with the crowd, not to have to put up with coarse young men of questionable morals, then raise them as ladies, treat them as ladies, as something special, and they will decline to be treated as anything else by anyone else.

"Thanks a lot, John. Just don't do me any more favors." I was not sure where Tom was coming from. We knew each other casually, his son played on my son's baseball team and his daughter Heather and my daughter Megan played together. So, I queried, "What gives, Tom?" He went on to explain. Evidently his daughter Heather had given him a sermon on manners. Whenever I take my daughters out with their friends I always hold the door for my daughter and the girls, get the car doors for them, etc. Often I notice that they are not used to this treatment and I tell them that they can tell their fathers that 'Mr. Mahon says a gentleman always gets the door for a young lady.' Evidently, Heather was quite impressed with the treatment of ladies at the Mahon home, and instructed her father in the way more perfect.

Dads, if you want your sons to feel special about women, to have high standards in behavior towards women, to have standards of behavior that cause women of questionable morals and coarseness of character to be distasteful to him, then raise him observing you treating your wife like a lady. Raise him treating his sisters like ladies, like people who are special, who have something different, something special and genteel to offer and then they will decline to pursue anything less than ladies who demand to be treated like this when they begin to date, court and marry.

C. SPEECH

From our children (and especially from our son) there are a few things I demand. First, a few key words which denote honor and good manners.

"Yes or No, " not, "huh-huh" and "Uh-uh," "Yep," and "Nope," "Yah," or "Nah," but "Yes" and "No." When I hear the other, I will emphasize the consonant, "Yesssssss". Demand politeness and respect and demand the consonants.

"Please/Thank You": When addressing an adult a request is always preceded by "Please," and a compliment, an act of kindness, or a gift is always reciprocated with "Thank You." With my children, I have never let shyness become a way of manipulating us into allowing rudeness. If a child is too "shy" to say "Thank You," then the child is too shy to receive the gift. If the child is too shy to say "please," then the child is too shy to get to do it. If my children were complimented, they were never allowed to bury their head in Mom's skirt or behind one of us and play the bashful child. They had to look the person in the face and say "Thank You." You can be shy and say "Thank You." The failure to say "Thank You" is not the failure to overcome shyness, but the failure to overcome rudeness.

"John, you don't know what you are doing." I was a little surprised to hear this from Doug. Doug, a graduate student in our ministry had brought Sam a gift back from an overseas trip he took. Sam had said "Thank you" looking Doug straight in the eye, visited with him a short time and then left to go show his sisters the stuffed frogs Doug had brought him.

"What do you mean?" I queried.

"Well, John, my parents never made me talk to adults. I have seen you spank Sam for not doing it. Just now he was so polite and poised. I still have trouble with confidence and poise with my graduate professors and adults at church. I wish my parents had made an issue of it like you have with Sam. You don't know now what you are doing, but let me assure you. You are giving him a great gift."

"Excuse me, please." Children who want to talk to an adult, who is talking or doing something else, can say "Excuse me, please." At this point, the parent can answer or say, "Just a minute, please, while I finish." The child can wait without interrupting further and without causing a scene due to his impatience. Patience is a learned trait... as are all good

manners. It does not hurt a child to wait. Even though I might stop my conversation immediately, I sometimes make the children wait simply because it is good for them. Who is going to teach a child patience if not his parents? I do not do this cruelly. I simply do not let children hurry my life and grow up thinking they are the center of the universe and all things come to a halt when they want to do something or say something.

When Mom and Dad are on the phone, it had better be an emergency if we are interrupted. The child can stand patiently and wait, not saying anything. The parent can excuse himself from the phone, get the gist of the situation, and then answer or postpone the child until after the phone conversation. We never allowed our children to come running in and interrupt us.

Calling to a parent is another form of interruption. I do not answer calls from across the room, across the house or across the yard. The child can come to me and talk to me. The child's dog, if he has one, comes when called. I do not. Children come when called, not parents.

"May I?" or "Can I?" We never accept demands such as, "I want to go to the park!" My reply to this would probably be, "So?" If children want to do something, they can ask. I do not demand the child differentiate between "May I" and "Can I" simply because in our culture the distinction is blurred. There is a difference between written and spoken propriety in several areas, and I feel this is one of them. If a child asks, "Can I please go to the park with Johnny?" I don't reply, "I don't know, can you?" I would simply answer. The child has asked in a polite in a culturally acceptable way. This is all I ask.

"Pidgin English." This brings us to another issue, however. That is complete and proper sentences. If a child wants to express himself, particularly if he is answering a question or requesting something, he can do it in a complete sentence. I also don't let pass phrases like, "I ain't got none," or slang phrases which would be completely acceptable with fellow ten-year-olds but not with an adult. With me, he can use standard English. You do your child a great service if you give him the wisdom and life skill of being able to politely and correctly articulate himself when the situation demands it.

"Rob, let me congratulate you on Steele's manners. He was certainly a young gentleman." Rob was obviously beaming at the complement and over the change in Steele's behavior.

As we walked out of the restaurant he confided, "Well, all I did was take your advice." He went on to explain, "I remember how you said you used to prepare Sam for times when guests were coming. You would tell him to say hello, call them by their name and say thank you. You know, just prep him a little so it didn't catch him off-guard. On the way over we talked about 'Mr. John' and what he would do and say. It really works, thanks." Rob had been working diligently with Steele, his five-year-old, on wisdom and life skills. One of the side benefits was that Steele could join us for our one-on-one discipleship times at a local restaurant. He could sit and play quietly for the hour we met, and then have a fun outing with his Dad afterwards.

D. SOCIAL SKILLS

Guests: Our children know that when we have adult guests they are expected to come immediately when called to be introduced to our guests. We have never required our children to kiss and be excited about meeting people they do not know. But we do ask them to come and meet them in a civil manner. This includes a pleasant demeanor, a firm handshake, looking the guest in the eye and a clear answer to all questions. Our children know that many times they will be asked to sit down in the living room and visit for a

few minutes. They can do so without comment and are expected to ask the guest a few questions and reply to all inquiries.

From my own childhood experience there is nothing worse than sitting in a living room, in a straight back chair, listening to adults talk about irrelevant matters, unless, of course, it was going shoe shopping with my Mom. As a result, after a little while, I will excuse them and they can go back to playing. Many times though, the children find the conversations enlightening. Many is the time when we have entertained missionaries that the children, when told they can excuse themselves, have opted to stay. I always get the missionaries to tell lots of “war stories” to the children, rewarding them for their desire. A well-behaved child can learn many, many fascinating tales of the works of God and exploits of men, if he can just sit quietly, listen and reply, when spoken, to in a polite manner.

Friends: We always required that our children go to the door with their friends when they leave and to greet their parents if they were picking them up. Toys, TV and games are not more important than people, and not more important than manners. If the child is old enough to have a friend over, he is old enough to treat that friend right.

The Amazing Performing Kids: Some parents like their kids to perform. I have especially noticed this of my fellow ministers. I guess there must be a little of the showmanship in us all. It is not good though for a child to learn to be a clown, to learn to get attention by performing.

If a guest notices a piano, or asks about a skill, or discovers your child has a gift and wants a performance, and you feel that your child is up to it and your child would actually like to, that is one thing. But, we never paraded our children before guests, churches or conferences. We never made them perform and we did not let them do childish antics to get a laugh. I don’t know how many times I have seen a first or second grader do a clownish face or little dance to get snickers. I am sure at eighteen months this may have looked cute to the mother's prayer group, but at eight or nine it looks a little on the pathetic side. Being the home clown translates into being the class clown. This is not a good skill to develop in your children. The conviction that they are, and should be, the center of attention at every gathering, is not preparing them for a fruitful and fulfilled life.

It is also not fair with young children, to allow guests to work them into a frenzy. Then the guest gets bored, the child is super wound-up and ends up getting spanked for misbehaving. This is especially true of college students and young single adults. We always told them that they were free to read the children a story or play a game with them, but no rough housing, except outside and with the condition that they see it through. We would always ask our guests not to roughhouse with the children after dinner. They were free to read a book to them or play a game. If they declined, that told us that they were not interested in being with our children, so much as using them as something to play with.

Roughhousing with older adults is not good for children as they themselves get older. In the sensitivity training of a child, a sense of when it is proper to pull back and hold off needs to be developed. As children get older, there is a point where their strength may make them equal with adults in sports and competition, but they are not equal with adults, socially. Having trained them in respect and social skills will help them through this awkward period.

Training:

1. **Repetition is the key**, with lots of praise, training spansks (when appropriate), followed by discipline spansks for refusal to learn, but mostly, praise and repetition.
2. **Presupposes "Come,"** that they will respond in politeness when their presence is required, **"Obey,"** that they will follow through with polite behavior and **"Hush,"** that they will control their speech in a polite manner.

Oh no, I could see it coming. Eleanor had told Becca to give Grandma a kiss. Becca buried her head in Eleanor's dress and ignored her. "Becca", I said, "give Grandma a kiss." Becca still did not respond.

Now, the inevitable happened, "Oh it's all right, she is just tired," Grandma protested.

But the gauntlet was down. I took Becca to the bedroom, gave her three spansks for rebellion, talked it through, loved her and sent her out. She rushed into Grandma's arms and gave her a big goodbye kiss, but the look Grandma gave me was like cold steel.

How could I have been so cruel? Well, it was an important act. It would assure that Becca would have a close and open relationship with her Grandma. Most importantly, Becca learned that she had to obey and honor her mother and her extended family in all situations— even when tired.

Moodiness and sullenness, meant to punish the parent for requiring their presence and to spoil the time together with the guest, were always treated as rebellion. This was greeted immediately with three strong strokes, coupled with an apology to the group, and the child could expect more if things did not change immediately. This will make the first few situations very awkward, but will insure that, for the duration, the family will experience pleasant social gatherings with the parents and adults being treated with honor and respect by polite and articulate children.

Best evaluation time: The best time to know that you have a handle on this is **when guests arrive unexpectedly** and the children must respond without prior notice. After that, when guests are there, when you eat out, or at church. Generally, if I know that we are having guests, I try to remind the children that they are expected to come to the door, greet the guest and visit for a while. But the children should not need this preparation to behave well. Don't make excuses. Good behavior reflects character, discipline, and training. Giving your children this important wisdom and life skill will give them a step up on life for years to come.

6. SERVANTHOOD: (ESSENTIAL FOR MINISTRY, EVANGELISM, AND MARRIAGE)

The faithful son, the servant son, is a word picture that the Holy Spirit draws upon constantly to create images He wishes to communicate. Sons are to be responsible, "a faithful Son over His house," sons are to be servants, "served with me...like a child serving his father."

"But Christ was faithful as a Son over His house whose house we are, if we hold fast our confidence and the boast of our hope firm until the end."

Heb 3:6

But you know of his proven worth that he served with me in the furtherance of the gospel, like a child serving his father.

Phil 2:22

Do these phrases reflect your children? Are your children faithful? Are they as servants in the support of the family?

Giving your children wisdom and life skills as they pertain to responsibility and servanthood is a great gift. It is essential for school, social, spiritual, and character development. Many of our generation are successful because they learned how to work, and work hard. With each generation, starting with my own, I have seen this skill being lost. The battle is won or lost in this area in the home.

In teaching this wisdom and life skill, the children should be able to accomplish daily predetermined responsibilities without being nagged, without whining or complaining, and without the work having to be done over by an adult.

Training— one training spank and then discipline, and rebellion spans as needed. Presupposes "Obey," "Hush," "Come," and "Give."

Lots and lots of repetition and praise, and lots of “with him” help. Remember, the difference between slavery and servanthood is “with him.” When you are inside watching a sports event on TV, or taking a nap, while the kids work away, not only are they not learning from you, but you are not growing close to one another. What you are seeking to accomplish is not legitimized slavery, but rather the building of a wisdom and life skill into your child’s life. As a result, teach your child to work by working with him.

Gary was a good friend and I admired what a hard worker he was. Principal of the local junior high, he was very diligent about his work. To add to his salary, he kept a kennel in the back yard of his home and trained bird dogs. In addition to this, during the “off season,” he had a roofing business. Gary also had a few homes in town that he had bought, repaired and now rented out to college students. Gary was a hard, hard worker, which is why in addition to all this he still made time to be a devoted family man. When he worked, he worked like a dog.

I once inquired of Gary about this and learned that his father was a poor country roofer. Roofing in Oklahoma is seasonal, so when they could work they worked, sometimes night and day. From his earliest memories Gary could remember helping his Dad, even if it was only picking up discarded shingles and bringing the men water. As a preschooler Gary was expected to help his Dad. This was great for Gary. It gave him an appreciation for hard work and a skill that put him through college and graduate school, and now supplemented his income during the summer.

Gary’s son, Wayne, was a royal goof off who felt the world owed him a living and that he was doing his fair share to rise before noon in the summer. I once asked Gary about this and he explained that he wanted his son to have all the freedom and carefree time that he never had. He wanted his son to have it easy. I tried to explain to Gary that this would not be a skill that would put Wayne through college or which would add to his income. I added that he ought to give Wayne responsibilities with the Kennel, and put him to work summers on the roof, but Gary just could not see it.

He could not see that responsibility, servanthood and hard work are wisdom and life skills that lead to success. I don’t now what will happen to Wayne in the future. I know that even Sam, in the third grade, could see that his lazy lifestyle was not good for him. Sam and Wayne were good friends. Sam considered him a lazy bum. What a waste. In Gary’s line, Wayne may be the first lazy person in generations.

“But what do you think? A man had two sons, and he came to the first and said, ‘Son, go work today in the vineyard.’” And he answered and said, ‘I will, sir’; and he did not go. And he came to the second and said the same thing. But he answered and said, ‘I will not’; yet he afterward regretted it and went.”

Mt 21:28–30

“And He appointed twelve, that they might be with Him, and that He might send them out to preach,”

Mk 3:14

A. LEARNING TO SERVE THROUGH RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Toddler— two: Picks up toys he plays with, puts away dirty clothes, helps with cleaning room and making bed. Hands things to Mommy or Daddy when they are cleaning up or when it is helpful.

2. Three— Makes own bed, keeps room and play area clean, sets the table.
3. Four— Goes around the house, collects the trash and takes it out, cares for pets by watering, feeding and walking them.

Early in Sam's training I began including him in my household chores. At first, he would sit in his swing as I mowed the lawn. Then, we got him a plastic mover and he followed along behind me. Later he would mow with me, pushing between my arms. Soon, I began letting him push a little by himself and doing the turns. Finally, Sam took over, leaving me free to edge and do other yard work chores. We always worked together, though, and the iced tea breaks on hot summer mornings were great times of bonding and fellowship.
4. Five— Clears the table to the sink, wipes down the table and puts place mats and napkins away.
5. Seven— Does the dishwasher and hand dishes, washes the dishes, dries them and puts them away.
6. Nine— House chores, vacuuming, sweeping and dusting, helps outside by mowing the lawn and sweeping up afterwards, wash the dog, wash the car.
7. Eleven— Helps cook meals, baby-sits, washes their own clothes, edge lawn with edger.

When Becca turned seven, and Sam turned five, they took over the responsibility for the dishes. Eleanor cooked, but the kids set, cleared, did the dishwasher dishes, did the hand dishes and returned everything to their rightful places. Thirteen years later, the children still have these chores. This duty has been effectively lifted from Eleanor and will continue to be so, until Liz leaves for college seven years from now.

When Becca turned eleven, she became responsible for her own washing. Each child did this as well. When Liz turned eleven, Becca was a senior in high school. This was when Eleanor gave up all her washing duties save her own. Each child has a clothes basket in their room. They have clean clothes if they wash. If they do not, they do not. Mom is never nagged or harassed about this. It is their responsibility. As each child has left for college, one thing we don't worry about is whether they know how to wash and iron their clothes.

When Sam turned nine, he began to mow the lawn. That was nine years ago. I have not mowed the lawn since, except in his absence. The children also are responsible for sweeping, edging, and bagging the clippings.

In addition, the children have assumed the responsibility for vacuuming, dusting and cleaning their rooms, the bathrooms, and the house in general, except for our room and bathroom. The children are also expected to get jobs as soon as they are able, and begin a college savings account. This has been going on for years and will continue to be so, while the children are in the home. You can imagine the difference this has made in Eleanor's stamina and in the character and level of responsibility shown in our children when they leave home.

Best Evaluation Time: When something comes up where you need the help and cooperation of your children— unexpected guests, one of the children is sick and cannot do their chores, Mom or Dad need help with a special project around the house.

7. KINDNESS: (ESSENTIAL FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT)

Kindness is one of the wisdom and life skills that there is no question as to the importance to God. The Word of God specifically speaks of kindness as one of the fruits of the spirit when it says in Gal 5:22 *“But the fruit of the Spirit is...kindness...”* and again, in 2 Pt 1:7, when listing character traits to be put on, adding one on top of the other, we find wedged between godliness and love-brotherly kindness. It plainly states, *“and in your godliness, brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, love.”* Being cruel or unkind is never acceptable in the family, not to family members, not to outsiders, not to the weak or infirm, not to the elderly. It is simply not acceptable. There are several ways kindness should manifest itself in the home.

A. SHARING TOYS, TREATS ETC., WITH BROTHERS AND SISTERS, WITH PARENTS AND WITH FRIENDS

There is a time in the life of a child when this comes naturally. As the child attempts to grow out of this, help the child to retain this trait with praise and guidance and discipline. A child should never be allowed to shout, hit, or pout because he is unwilling to share something. When playing with other children, a child may be too young to engage in group play, but that does not mean that he is too young to share, or to allow other children to play in peace.

B. THE CHILDREN SHOULD BE ESPECIALLY KIND TO ONE ANOTHER.

Eleanor and I both came from homes where the closeness of brother-sister relationships was not emphasized. Early in our ministry, while involved in the college ministry, we came across sibling relationships that we coveted for our own children and lost no time in learning from the parents of these students what their secrets were in insuring the children were close to one another. We employed these disciplines and training in the wisdom and life skill of kindness in our children as well, and found them to be of great benefit. Our children are best of friends. This summer, Becca is at a summer training program with Campus Crusade for Christ in California and Sam is working for a Christian camp in Colorado. Each week, Megan and Liz, with their own money have put together “care packages” to send to their brother and sister. Each day, they pray for their safety. Each week, Becca calls and talks specifically with Megan and Liz, seeking to encourage them in their faith. Sam chose his camp schedule specifically so that he would be on duty when Megan and Liz were there, so he could keep an eye on his little sisters. What a joy it is to see the devotion that my children have to one another.

Becca was upstairs in the play room reading a book, Sam was on the couch working on an assignment, and Megan and Liz were playing with Barbies on the floor.

From downstairs, I could hear them arguing and a fight was brewing. “Do I hear a fight?” I called out. I got up, picked up the wooden spoon and started up stairs.

When I opened the door to the play room, they were all on the floor playing. Now, I know this was staged, Becca maybe, but Sam, a second grader and all boy? Never! They looked up and said with cherubic faces, “Yessss?” This is what we want, brothers and sisters working out disputes between each other.

“Friends are people with the same enemy.”

General Douglas McArthur

In Gal 6:10 we are exhorted, “So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all men, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith.” Just as for Christians, their first duty is to their “household of faith,” so to children, their first duty is to their own household. There are a few simple things we have learned that parents can do to promote this type of devotion.

We compiled a list of ten action steps from the parents we interviewed...

First: **We did not allow our children to fight with each other.** If they were fighting, everybody in the room that was involved was disciplined. This was any type of argument or fight. The ones fighting were spanked for fighting; the ones watching, for watching their brothers and sisters fight; the ones ignoring it, for ignoring their brothers and sisters while fighting. Everyone in the room gets spanked.

Second: **We never allowed our children to hit each other.** The child who hit was always wrong, *no matter what the situation was.* The response to difficult or frustrating situations is not to hit. From the earliest age, a child who threw a toy, hit, bit, kicked, pushed, or anything near to violence, was immediately disciplined.

Often when I share illustrations such as these, I am surprised at the response I get. Young couples, with no children or very young children will reject a method such as spanking all the kids in the room when there is fighting. In addition, they will instruct us earnestly as to why this is wrong. I have a phrase that I often use when this happens. “Be careful not to let your convictions get too far ahead of your experience,” (as applies to methods, not to biblical principles). Eleanor and I were only too happy to find an older couple who had developed a method that worked. It never occurred to us to tell them that they were wrong, given their age and the fact that it had obviously worked with their children.

Fast forward ten years. Becca with all her heart wanted to go to a block party after the big game. My neighbor, a policeman, had warned me that the police were planning to make a visit and bust the thing up as it was known that drinking normally took place. Becca insisted that she would make an appearance, greet a few friends and the she and her girlfriend from church would go on to a movie. We usually allow our children a great deal of leeway their senior year, but I just didn't think Becca realized what was at stake. Not only did I not want my car towed in some sweep, but there is guilt by association when the police and press are involved, irrespective of good intentions and behavior.

We said No...she insisted.

We said, “Not with our car.”

She countered, “It is a family car.”

We said, “No, it is not, and it is not going anywhere.”

She said we could not stop her. She was 18 and could go if she wanted. She picked up her purse and stormed out of the house, slamming the door behind her. Eleanor looked numb. This caught her totally by surprise.

“What will you do?” she asked.

“Well, honey, I am not going to get in a shouting match with my 18 year old daughter in front of the neighbors in our front lawn. If she takes off, I will just get up in the morning and take the car and have the locks changed.”

As I was talking I heard thump, thump, thump, as in the corner of my eye, I saw her brother Sam come charging down the stairs, Bible in hand and out the front door. The front door opens into the living room, where we were having this little exchange and on either side of the door are long narrow windows the length of the door. Through them, we could see Sam earnestly talking to his sister. Now he has his Bible out and is sharing a verse. Now, she is sitting on the hood as he continues to earnestly share with her. Now they are praying, now crying and hugging each other. They both come in hand-in-hand. Sam returns to his room upstairs. Becca shares that she was wrong to dishonor us. No, she did not think it was wrong to go to the party, and she did not think we had the authority to keep her. She was 18, and no longer a minor. But, as Sam pointed out, she did need to honor us. So, on this basis alone, she would stay home. She gave us both a sincere kiss for being rude and for not showing us honor, and went upstairs with her brother.

You don't get this type of brother-sister involvement by letting your children grow up fighting and hurting one another with selfish actions and words. It starts by spanking everyone in the room, by them working it out before Dad gets up the stairs, and culminates with them saving one another from sin at times when you are helpless to do so.

Third: **Sharing was never an option.** The best way to surrender a toy or prized possession was to be unwilling to share it with a brother or sister. Just as grabbing from a brother or sister was not tolerated, neither was refusing to share. Many children throw a fit when they have to share. They are sitting playing with a toy, around them are scattered many more toys than they could begin to keep track of, yet when a sibling or visiting child picks one up, they immediately begin to cry and grab for it. This is disciplined immediately.

Fourth: We were not preoccupied with things being equal. **We taught our children to rejoice in their brother 's and sisters' good fortune,** and not keep track of money and opportunities. Just because one child gets something, the other children do not necessarily get the same things. Birthdays, rewards for accomplishments, or treats on a date should be met with gladness in the other children for their sibling's good fortune, not covetousness and bitterness.

Fifth: At the earliest age, **they were expected to earn money to buy gifts for their siblings** for birthday, Christmas and Valentine's day. When they were little, we gave them contrived jobs. Later on, they were real. Our children knew that the shortest way to the rod of discipline was to neglect their brother or sister on a special day. But to tell you the truth, this was never really needed. Praise, coupled with modeling, does the trick. When a family is generous and loving to one another, the children will usually pick this up as a family norm.

Sixth: **Eleanor and I modeled this type of unity, kindness and generosity** in our relationship with each other and with the children. One of the reasons, I believe, that Megan and Liz wanted to send care packages to Sam and Becca was that they received those same care packages from us while they were away at camp. Then, they watched us do it on a weekly basis to Becca her first year in college.

Seventh: We were never worried about each child having their “own things.” **All our children had to learn to share** a room and, later, a car. They shared clothes, opportunities, friends, adventures and life experiences. They could share, or go without, but if sharing would do, I never felt the pressure to buy or do more.

Eighth: **Name calling was never allowed.** We modeled this by only using pet names that were edifying and that the children liked. I did not cruelly, or otherwise, call El or the kids names, and neither were they allowed to do so. Public sarcasm or criticism was never used or allowed. We are all in this together, we are all on the same side pulling for one another's success.

“Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will scar me for life.”

Sam and Carrie Clark, career missionaries to Latin America

Ninth: **They were not allowed to tattle on each other,** and we tried never to put them in charge of policing each other. There were many times we hired a baby-sitter, when Becca could have done the job. We wanted her to grow up to be Liz and Megan’s friend, not their boss. The only time they were to come to us is when the moral, or physical, safety of their sibling was in jeopardy. In all other cases, the tattler and the offender received the same discipline.

Tenth: **We encouraged the children to be a part of each other's success.** Whether it was potty training, making a bed, learning to read, or passing a test. Whenever a child had a gift or strength that the other child could benefit from, they were teamed together. Sam taught his sisters to hit and catch a baseball. Liz helped Megan with math. Megan

included Liz in her busy social calendar so she could make friends and be a part. Becca taught Liz to play the piano and led her younger brother and his friends in a Bible study. The ones who could drive would take their younger brother and sisters to places they normally could not go. Becca recruited Sam to the Evangelism Explosion training at our church. Becca was the president of the Christian Student Union at our school, and she passed the baton to Sam, who passed it to Megan, who is now preparing Liz for the same office. Each recruited and made the next feel welcome in the church youth program. From that first morning we brought Sam home, until Liz finally left for college, we praised and excitedly helped the children think creatively about how they could help each other be successful.

Who will be there for your children in times of need, if not their own brothers and sisters? We will probably die before them all. Who will stand with them at our funerals, if not their own brothers and sisters? Who will be there for them at their spouse's funeral, or God forbid, if one of their spouses leaves them? Who will care for them and take them in? A brother and sister who truly love and care for one another as only a brother or sister can is a gift beyond estimation, and only you can give this gift to your children.

On another note, I find parents who blindly and rashly make the decision to have only one or two children to be totally oblivious to the needs and cares a larger family can meet and lift. They are oblivious to the spiritual and character growth a larger family can provide. Generally, they are only thinking of money and luxury items.

C. RESPECT: AN ASPECT OF KINDNESS

Our children were taught that an aspect of kindness was to respect the elderly, the young, the disabled and the disfigured. They were taught to take the time to show kindness rather than to just push on by in life. Harsh discipline awaited the child if word got back to us that he had been unkind to someone weaker than him.

When Sam was just old enough to mow the lawn, he and I would go over to Mrs. Rogers' each Saturday, after doing our lawn, and do hers. Mrs. Rogers was an elderly and infirmed widow in our church, obviously in financial straits. We would mow and edge her lawn, and then visit with her for awhile. She would always have lemonade and an ice cream bar for Sam. She loved to sit and talk with him during breaks. No doubt, this put a little crimp in Sam's weekend, but he learned to love and care for this dear, kind, elderly widow.

Dr. Grant was pastor emeritus in a church where I served. Well into his eighties, he was only seen during the Sunday morning service. I would be up front behind the pulpit and Eleanor was in the choir. The children chose to sit with Dr. Grant to keep him company. He was elderly and infirmed and his own children did not choose to attend his church. It brought him great joy to see our children each Sunday, and to sit with them. No doubt, they could have sat with a friend's family, but they chose to keep Dr. Grant company. Many is the invitation that I would see Dr. Grant feebly move his shaking hand to gently, ever so gently, rest on top of one of the children's heads and then, the other, as he earnestly prayed for them.

There was a mildly retarded boy at our church. Sam, when he was older, made sure that he was included in the Church's youth activities. Sam, an athlete and handsome young man, had great influence in the church, yet he used this to include the fringe kids, the minorities, and the weak rather than to promote his own popularity. The boy's mother once shared, with tears, how grateful she was for Sam's kindness to her son.

D. PETS

The children were taught to be gentle with animals and to care for their pets with kindness. We never allowed them to play catch the kitty, to mercilessly tease or torment a puppy, or to mutilate insects.

Cliff was a fellow minister, who liked to buy his preschoolers cats. I say "cats," because they went through them quite regularly. He was loathe to correct the children as they played and carried the kittens around. Periodically, one would die from neglect or benign abuse by one of the toddlers or young children. Cliff was doing his children a great disservice by not teaching them to care for their pets with kindness.

E. IN WORD

The children were taught to control the eye and the tongue. They were never allowed to say, "What happened to you?" or "Why do you look like that?" or to stare, giggle or whisper about others who were disabled, deformed or different. They were taught to never ask about something, unless the person brought it up. They were to treat all people as equals and, in kindness, to make room for them in their sphere of influence.

Donna had hamsters. She insisted on hamsters, but she was always forgetting to water and feed them. Her parents nagged and disciplined, but Donna just did not seem to grasp what was at stake. One day, her parents checked and one was so weak it could barely eat and the other was dead. Donna was brought in to see the results of her negligence. She was horrified and burst in to tears. Nevertheless, her father made her clean the cage, feed and water the remaining hamster and then take the dead hamster out to the field in the back yard and bury it. It was almost more than Donna could endure, but she never again forgot to care for her animals, and she never again treated lightly the fact that their lives were in her hands. When her father brought home a new baby hamster to replace the dead one, they never had to remind Donna to care for it.

F. PREJUDICE

The children were taught to respect all races and not to view one race as superior to another, to be kind to the alien and the foreigner and to see all people as created by God. All of our children had friends of diverse ethnic backgrounds, and we sought to model this for them. As a campus minister, we had a steady stream of International Students through our home. Some parents would not let their children play with ours because we had "black people" or "foreigners" in our home, and that was just fine with me.

When you reap the harvest of your land, moreover, you shall not reap to the very corners of your field, nor gather the gleaning of your harvest; you are to leave them for the needy and the alien. I am the Lord your God.

Lv 23:22

He executes justice for the orphan and the widow, and shows His love for the alien by giving him food and clothing.

Dt 10:18

So show your love for the alien, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt.

Dt 10:18

G. CRUELTY

We taught our children to be saddened and repulsed by violence, cruelty and bigotry. We did not encourage them to watch such things for entertainment on TV or at the movies. No “R” rated movie was ever acceptable, nor were PG

As for the deeds of men, by the word of Thy lips I have kept from the paths of the violent.

Ps 17:4

“But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it is better for him that a heavy millstone be hung around his neck, and that he be drowned in the depth of the sea.”

Jesus Christ (Mt 18:6)

or PG-13 movies allowed before they were well into their teens. Gratuitous violence was not something we wanted our children to grow up enjoying as a source of pleasure. It is always amazing to me what parents allow their children to watch on TV, on the VCR and at the movies. “R” means restricted to persons over the age of 16. PG-13 means not suggested for children under the age of 13. PG means, parental guidance suggested. If the most heathen, most pagan, most utterly corrupt and decadent segment of our society, one seemingly devoid of moral or social ethics of any type, one which totally rejects any biblical standard of purity, truth and righteousness, believes something they produce may not be suitable for children, how, in any stretch of the imagination, can a Christian parent even consider the remotest possibility of letting his son or daughter expose their heart of mind to such evil?

Training: Modeling , praise and rewards are best. Rarely did we use the rod except where cruelty or fighting with brothers and sisters came in to play. This was something that was part of the family from the beginning. It is the fabric and character of the family and should be stressed in that way. If you find your children struggling in any of these areas, do not first rage against society, the schools, the media, their friends or your relatives. Instead take a long, hard look in the mirror. Children pick up deficiencies in these areas first and foremost in the home. In addition, no one has more influence on their positive development than their parents. Some personal soul-searching may be necessary on the part of the parents if your children are not developing in these areas.

Presupposes "No— don't treat others in that way", "Obey, treat others in a kind way," "Hush, control your tongue when around those who are different." and "Give, share what you have freely with others."

The best evaluation time: This will usually be in public places, the church, the park, the school...wherever a child's natural social tendencies can be observed. It also means you must spend enough time with your child in his social setting to see if he is growing up to be kind person. It also means you have to stop making excuses for your child whenever he says or does an unkind thing. Many people excuse actions by a two-year-old as almost cute, that they would be horrified to see in a teen. Being small does not free a child from the moral implications of his actions. Hitting is hitting, biting is biting, being selfish is being selfish and being cruel is being cruel, no matter the age. The size of the child may mute the results of the actions, the child's moral infancy may mitigate the response but it is still wrong. It is still sin.

8. NEATNESS (ESSENTIAL FOR SCHOOL, WORK, AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT)

The child should conform willingly to standards of neatness, order and cleanliness. The child should be responsible in the area of personal hygiene and should be willing to

cooperate with bathing until old enough to handle this himself. He should come to the dinner table with hands washed, hair combed and neatly dressed. In terms of his clothes, he should be able to distinguish between play, school and church clothes; should be able to lay out school clothes the night before; and pick up and put away his dirty laundry.

Starting in the 6th grade all the children did their own laundry. He should be able to clean his room. At the early stages, this may mean breaking it down into increments and having him report to you after each stage is done. First the Legos, then under the bed, next the bed and so on until the whole room is done. If the children have a play area they should keep this clean as well. Children should always have chores for which they are responsible.

A neat child will always do better in school. Be it picking up after himself in the lower elementary grades or keeping an organized notebook in the high grades, neatness will aid the child in scholastic success. Akin to this is personal appearance. A well-groomed child will attract the attention and praise of teachers, especially when it is accompanied by good manners and hard work. This will also assure the child that he is not the butt of jokes in terms of his appearance and personal hygiene.

One of the biggest mistakes parents make in the social development of their children is in this last area. It is especially important for mothers to be sensitive to their young adults wishes to be conservative in the areas of feminine hygiene. Stay up with your child's development and be sure to prepare her for this. Do not equate the need to shave legs and underarms with the desire to wear makeup. We are conservative in the latter but liberal in the former.

Training: One spank for training and "with him" time is essential. The growing independence of the child should be stressed. These are his things and he is responsible for them.

Presupposes "No, don't be messy, don't leave things lying around etc.," and "Obey, do pick up your things and care for your personal appearance."

Best evaluation time: When preparing to go somewhere, church, out to eat, on a trip etc. How does your child look? How does your child respond to taking responsibility for his or her appearance?

9. ISSUES OF GENDER, PRUDENCE AND DISCRETION

We sought to stress a positive awareness of the difference in gender in our children. At an early age we began to stress the positive aspects of their gender and sought to polarize them in this area. This is done through an emphasis of dress, styles, hair and mannerisms.

Prudence is neither archaic or naïve...

To give prudence to the naïve, To the youth knowledge and discretion,

Prv 1:4

O naïve ones, discern prudence; And, O fools, discern wisdom.

Prv 8:5

I, wisdom, dwell with prudence, And I find knowledge and discretion.

Prv 8:12

It is here that children learn modesty. We sought to instill modesty in our children from an early age, without a fear of sex or their sexuality. Purity is not gained through teachings of fear or the erroneous teaching that the opposite sex is bad or that sex is bad. Neither of these are taught in Scripture. Purity is taught through modeling, through strong parent-child communication (especially, father-child relationships), and through allowing

the child to grow into their own convictions after the groundwork of wisdom and discipline has been laid.

For our son it was conservative hair style, (no bangs, no hair in the face, rather hair combed back), no facial hair, no earrings and no cutting-edge clothing styles while at home. Good conservative dress and appearance was where it started and finished from his first trip to the barber, on. I always cringe to see mommies with their little darling boys in their cute pageboy haircuts. Men, don't let the girls take your son to the Salon, where women coo and pet him and give him cutesy little haircuts where he learns to be vain about his hair. They want him to look at pictures of gay models and worry about his part and the latest styles. Take a cue from Absalom. Take him to the barbershop, where a bunch of men sit around reading *Field and Stream* and watching the ball game on TV and get businessmen and sports haircuts.

Sam loved to watch me shave and I would always sit him up next to me on the sink. Eleanor got him a plastic shaving kit with no razor and I would let him shave my face as well as his own. Just as soon as he felt like he needed to shave on his own I encouraged him to do so. I wanted to encourage his sense of masculinity and saw nothing to be gained by telling him he was too young or making light of his new facial growth.

For young men, hair speaks. You look at them and you know if they are athletes, normal young men or angry young men. Hair opens or closes certain social circles within their peer group. Do not be naïve about hair and its power to influence your child in the wrong direction. The more your child wants and needs an alternative hairstyle, the more important it is for him not to have it. Look around at the children

Now in all Israel was no one as handsome as Absalom, so highly praised; from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head there was no defect in him. And when he cut the hair of his head (and it was at the end of every year that he cut it, for it was heavy on him so he cut it), he weighed the hair of his head at 200 shekels by the king's weight.

2 Sm 14:25–26

Does not even nature itself teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a dishonor to him, but if a woman has long hair, it is a glory to her? For her hair is given to her for a covering.

1 Cor 11:14–15

who have hairstyles that make you wish they were your child's friend... now, dress and cut your son's or daughter's hair so that their parents will think the same way about your children.

I used to like to go to the “Salon.” I was a little vain about my hair. It was fun having some young female hairstylist wash my hair and worry over my style. The atmosphere was kind of pleasing and very contemporary. Then one day, as she was talking, she began asking me where I worked, what I did for lunch and then said, “You know if you ever want to have lunch at my place, I could do your hair for free there.” I realized, “Hey, this girl is hitting on me.” I got up, hair half cut, neatly folded the cloth and walked to the counter, laid down a twenty and without waiting for the change, walked out and got in my car and drove off. Now I only go to men's barbershops, with a bunch of fat guys cutting hair, and debating sports and politics. The latest sports show, CNN or some event is on the TV. No male models, or girlie magazines... News, sports and recreation magazines abound. No one wants to change my part. “Just the usual, Joe—the businessman's special.” I praise God that this happened early enough for Sam to grow up knowing nothing of the “Salon.” I never went back to a “Salon,” and a woman will never cut my hair again.

I never went in for the cutesy “pageboy” hair styles that so many fathers allow to be foisted on their sons. Sam never, even as a child, had long hair or had his hair left to women. Sam went to the barber shop with me. It was a man's place, news or sports on

the TV, men cutting men's hair, *Sports Illustrated* and *Field And Stream* in the magazine racks. I know that many mothers take their children to the hair salon or parlor to get their hair cut. Or more recently, they take them to the styling shop which caters to both genders, but I discourage this. Even as a teen, Sam went to the barber. He was expected to have a young man's haircut. He did not go to a stylist where he would look over pictures of male models and then be flirted with by the stylist as he learned to primp and care for his locks. He went to a barber, was not allowed to primp and was not allowed to be on the cutting edge of hairstyle. This is important for two reasons. The first is that a strong masculine bent in a young man's life is very important, it is important to move him away from vanity and the preoccupation with hair and hair styles. Secondly, hairstyle in our age, is one of the keys which opens the door to the wrong crowd and a conservative cut often closes this door.

Remember: first impressions make a big impact on a child's social life, both at school and at church. Make sure you give your child the inside track on success by insuring that he dresses in such a way as to cause teachers, Sunday school teachers and parents to think well of him. There is too much at stake. Too much can be lost quickly and is hard to win back when it comes to first impressions. That is why your child has a father, to protect him from a foolish decision.

I am often asked what I think about school uniforms and dress codes. I am not against them, I understand their need, but they create in me a sense of melancholy. They represent the abrogation, by fathers, of the responsible training and care of their children. It means, en masse, fathers have abrogated the role of stopping their child on the way out of the door with, "You're not going outside this house dressed like that young man." Or "Where do you think you're going dressed like that young lady? Get back upstairs and put on something decent. Your mother has to show her face in this town." It means a father is not with them in the mall, steering them to shops where Christian young gentlemen and ladies should shop. It means that fathers are relinquishing to the state a great gift and opportunity. It may be necessary for others, but I feel sorry for all the dads who are seemingly impotent and unable to act decisively in this area.

Patty was so excited for her daughter, Emily. Patty had been shy as a youth and coming from a small town had few opportunities for excitement or fulfillment. Emily was much more like her father, brash, adventurous and socially popular. Patty got to live through Emily all the things she missed out on. She pushed Emily and encouraged her in her social pursuits. Patty let Emily choose the styles and the pace of advancement. It made Patty so happy to see Emily moving with the popular kids. She looked so cute, so grown up. Who knows what glories the future would hold—cheerleader, prom queen? One thing that Patty did not count on were the pressures that young girls who move on the cutting edge of popularity face in the area of alcohol, substance abuse and sexual promiscuity... until it was too late.

My closet was always open to Sam. The only requirement was that he ask. I viewed it as a great complement that he would want to wear my shirts or pick out one of my ties. Sure, the things wore out sooner and were sometimes lost or torn or not put back right away, but Sam was learning discretion in clothing and any time a teenager wants to identify with his parents, Dad had better take advantage of it.

"Hey Dad, let's buy matching jackets!" It was fall and Sam and I were window shopping in the mall as we waited for his mom and sisters to meet us. As we strolled through a men's store, a line of fall jackets caught Sam's eye. Now technically, neither Sam nor I needed a jacket and it wasn't really in the budget. To tell the truth, it was not quite my style, but, men, anytime a son wants to identify himself with you in this manner, do not think. Just act. This is answered prayer, a divine event. Get out the check book and

work out the details later. For the next three years, Sam and I wore our matching jackets. It was a source of pride and bonding for both of us.

With the girls, no cleavage, no thighs and no navel. That was the basic rule, be it swim suit, casual wear, party dress or formal. From the first swim suit to the senior prom, the Mahon ladies had high standards of modesty. They weren't the first in their class to wear makeup, but they weren't the last either. Hair and makeup was lady like and geared to be attractive but not to gain entrance into the wrong crowd.

Whenever El and one of the girls went out dress shopping and especially at prom or formal time, the last thing they would hear from me is, "Have fun. I love you. Remember, no cleavage and no thigh."

Diane was a quiet and shy child of a very conservative family. She remembers all too well the humiliation of going to school with hairy legs and no hose long after the other girls were shaving their legs and wearing hose. Diane's mother felt she was too young and did not want her to look cheap. Just the opposite of the desired result occurred, though. By forcing Diane to experience this humiliation, her mother forced Diane began to reevaluate all the moral standards of her family and make a conscious decision not to entrust her self-image to her mother in this area again. She would look elsewhere for help and direction in this area.

I have always made it clear to those who have influence over my children as to where I stand in the area of gender, morals, and dress, and that I alone have authority in this area. Do not be paranoid, but be aware that homosexuals are drawn to children and that some institutions are particularly vulnerable, e.g. public schools, day care, parks and recreation areas, day camps etc. An involved parent is the best protection a child can have.

Sexual abuse is rampant in the US. One in ten males and five in ten females will either be abused or have had to fend off sexual abuse by the time they reach adulthood. Discuss this problem openly with your child and talk about the limits of adults and big people authority. We no longer encourage overt friendliness with strangers— respect and honor, yes, but not friendliness. Be aware that most occurrences are at the hands of relatives, friends and/or neighbors. Talk

But she answered him, "No, my brother, do not violate me, for such a thing is not done in Israel; do not do this disgraceful thing! However, he would not listen to her; since he was stronger than she, he violated her and lay with her.
2 Sm 13:12,14

If there is a man who lies with a male as those who lie with a woman, both of them have committed a detestable act; they shall surely be put to death. Their blood is upon their own heads.

Lv 20:13

If there is a man who takes his sister, his father's daughter or his mother's daughter, so that he sees her nakedness and she sees his nakedness, it is a disgrace; and they shall be cut off in the sight of the sons of their people. He has uncovered his sister's nakedness; he bears his guilt.

Lv 20:17

to your children about this and use the "bathing suit rule." If anyone wants to touch you where your bathing suit covers you, run and tell Mommy or Daddy.

Inoculate your child against the intimidation that abusers resort to, "If you tell your parents, they will put you away," "If you tell your parents, I will kill them," etc.. Talk to them about the term, "secret game," and tell them that if an adult ever wants to say or do something that is just their secret, they are to tell you immediately. Make sure the children know and understand the limits of the authority of "Big People." Strangers have no authority. You do not have to come, obey or hush. You can run screaming for help. Even "Uncle ____" does not have carte blanche authority as a parent would. Talk to them about types of people and the relative authority these people have over their lives. Discuss candidly the limits of your own authority with the child. "Children, obey your

parents in the Lord...” What does “in the Lord” mean? Talk about situations where your child would not have to obey you. Help the child to see that it is rough-and-tumble world out there, and they need to be alert. Respect a child’s sudden dislike for a particular baby sitter, relative or adult, and do not push the child into relationships of which he is fearful. Again, respect, yes, but friendship, no.

The key is good communication. A history of being approachable in this area is very important. Don't be or look shocked when asked questions. Don't say “I'll find you a good book.” Do not communicate that certain parts of the human anatomy are dirty or bad. Communicate modesty as a spiritual trait, and not because sex is bad or to be feared. Do not laugh and avoid the issue with jokes and sarcasm. Express love and concern and take the initiative. All of this fosters a sense of respect and openness that will allow your child to come to you. This access is important, both for the child to be able to keep you up on his or her development, and to share with you any troubling events that have taken place in their lives.

As each of our daughters began to grow near to their entrance into womanhood they had a special date with Mom. Most feminine hygiene companies have special kits you can order for education. Armed with this and sample products, they would go out together for the evening. They would have dinner, cover the subject, linger over all the questions and then do something fun together. When her time came, this too would be celebrated in a special way, uniquely designed for each child. The beauty and dignity of womanhood was stressed, along with the joys of bearing children and being a woman. As each girl passed into womanhood, her sisters would rejoice, encourage and empathize with her. This was no deep secret in the Mahon family and the women all rejoiced in their womanhood.

Sam looked across the table at me. I looked back pensively. “What!” his older sister demanded. Sam worked to hold back a smile, “Uh, Dad, want to go shoot baskets?” Sam knew the facts of life and with three sisters and a mother, he also knew that cycles of women living together for some strange reason grow more and more synchronized. During this time of the month, Sam spent a lot of time in his room, and outside shooting baskets. I could not help but laugh as we got up from the table to the icy stares and protestations of the ladies. Sam and I had talked long and freely about the facts of life. He was well-prepared for what the future would hold, and had that male semi-sensitivity about such things. It is good for a son to have a father to laugh and share with, rather than some guy on the ball team.

10. LETTING GO/DEVELOPING A PERSONAL IDENTITY

It is important to realize that all of the training we are giving to our children concerning wisdom and life skills looks to the ultimate goal of their leading fruitful and fullfilled lives outside the home. The training we give must be with a view to enabling our child to have greater and greater freedom. If the parent does not keep this goal ever before him in prayer and discussion with the child, the exact opposite will occur as the parent micromanages the child’s life.

A child goes through several stages of separation, as God prepares him for independence in life that he might serve the Lord and fulfill God's calling. First, there is the separation from the womb as the child becomes his own person. Next, as an infant, the child begins to develop his own self-awareness and begins to see the world as independent from self and self as independent from the mother. This reaches its height between 19 and 24 months. The next big step in their understanding of themselves comes at puberty, and again as they prepare to leave home after high school.

“Mothers and fathers must allow the child to grow and separate during their development, and especially in and around age two. Only, without the sin of rebellion.”

Professor Harry Shields, Moody Graduate School., Moody Bible Institute.

During these stages of separation many parents experience anxiety about their roles and authority. A child can read this and become clinging, as parents seek to punish separating behavior. Clinging, dependent children, who are not helped to separate, become clinging, dependent adults.

On the other extreme, the child may decide that the parent will never let go and he will have to fight his way out. Again, poor character traits and coping skills are developed through this process. How much better for the parent to view their job, from the beginning, as aiding and preparing the child to be an individual, separate from them, living on his own, and making his way fruitfully and successfully in the world! The growth of separation is then something the parent works for and views as sequential levels of success in parenting.

The key to both of these problems is to help the child see that the wisdom and life skills which you are developing in the child, once mastered, result in more freedom, not less. There are benefits to these wisdom and life skills in terms of the maturity which you reward and others reward. With maturity comes freedom. Help the child, and see that at each level of maturity, will come new independence. Your goal is to insure that the child will be successful and have the greatest amount of freedom at each stage, rather than to slow or delay that independence.

The main interference in helping the child succeed in this area is the two-career family. It is our responsibility to raise our own children. Barring a financial state that would jeopardize our ability to clothe, feed and house our child, the mother should stay home and care and raise the children in conjunction with the father as the head of the home.

Another interference with this process is the mother who takes off to find herself. Now in non-Christian families this will take the form of actually leaving or of going off to school or other pursuits which make her a nonresident mother for all intents and purposes. In Christian families, it takes the form of the whirlwind mother who teaches Bible study, runs the nursery, counsels, perhaps goes to Bible college on the side, secludes herself with her computer to write her book or newsletter, and so immerses herself in the ministry that she neglects her children and her responsibilities. In either case, the result is the same. The mother is not there to help the children grow up and leave home.

The non-resident father is another impediment to this problem. The father who is not at home is a phenomenon of the twentieth century. Barring war or disasters, fathers throughout recorded history have regarded their role with a sense of great pride and ownership. Only in the latter half of the twentieth century have fathers willingly turned their responsibilities over to their wives, church and society.

In our family we lived much below the average couple in our peer group and Sunday school class because of this decision. With the birth of Becca, El refrained from her teaching career and devoted her life to the children until Liz was in the third grade. By this time, the children were gone all day and El found that she was less and less called upon to be available to the children at school. Even then, as she considered career options, the decision was made that as long as the children were at home (through twelve grade), El's career would not take her away from the home when the kids were home or during their holidays.

This decision did not come without a cost. El makes far less as an elementary school teacher than she could in other careers. Also, when she went back to teaching, she started at first-year-teacher's pay scale. That meant that instead of being at a 17-year pay scale, she was just starting out. The maturity and security of our children attests to the wisdom of this decision.

It is my observation, as a college minister for some 17 years, that the children of non-resident fathers have the same character deficiencies, whether they are Christians or not. That is not to say they are on equal footing. The fact that the Holy Spirit lives within them and that God is their father, is of immense value, nevertheless, they share the same character damage as does the non-Christian. Whether the father is an executive with Exxon or a missionary in the field, a manager of a store or a pastor, I have noticed no difference in the suffering of the children and the character flaws which result from a non-resident father. In the same vein, it is my observation that the non-Christian who has a loving benevolent father, who is involved in his life, will have character strengths that the son of the non-resident Christian father lacks. Even though that father is a pastor of a large church, or executive of a large Christian organization, the children of non-resident fathers suffer whether or not they are Christian.

As a campus minister for some seventeen years I had the opportunity to minister to many, many children of missionaries, pastors and executives within Christian organizations. Many of these children had parents who loved them and fathers who faithfully fulfilled their roles as the spiritual head of the home and as the guiding force in their children's lives.

It is sad to say, though, that many had parents who used their ministries as an excuse to neglect their responsibilities at home. These children came to me with all the hang-ups and bitterness that I see in secular children of non-resident fathers. Many drifted from the Lord during their college years. Now that they were on their own, these deficiencies came glaringly to light.

It always amazed me that it was not the 18 years of parenting that these parents saw reflected in their children's behavior at college, but rather the 6 months to a year in the university or ministry or church which they blamed.

Divorce, the desire to escape from responsibilities, the desire to move on to the next stage of life before finishing the parenting— all of these retard the child's ability to smoothly transition to adulthood. There are several applications that a parent can make through the various stages of life.

First, parents, **you should make a commitment to involve yourselves in the life or your child**, but with the ultimate aim of the child growing up and leaving home, successful and independent from his parents.

In terms of this separation process, titles are a good place to start to aid the child in seeing the difference in ages and stages of life. Mr., Mrs., Pastor, and Dr., are all important titles to be used by children. They give the child a sense of separation between children and adults, and a sense of the stages of growth from an early age. A child who grows up calling adults by their first names grows up thinking in terms of an equality which is not emotionally true or healthy, and which is not spiritually true or conducive to honor and respect. Many times he is confused as to who he is and what the appropriate roles are for him in both family and society.

Many children live in a peer-group culture where generational change has lost its meaning. They grow up in an amoral world of group consensus. The day care where they roam in the pre-school years is understaffed and caters to their happiness and not their development. Unhappy children ask Mom to take them somewhere else. Without individualized guidance by a loving parent, behavior is what your peer group will allow. This is later reinforced by the educational system all the way through college, breeding a relativist mindset and a morality based on peer group consensus. You will want to protect your child from this phenomenon of our culture.

Second, I would encourage the parents to **go on weekly dates and a get away each year without the children.** This is important for communication between the parents but it is also important to the children. They learn that Mom and Dad go away and then come back, that they

“Isn’t it unhealthy for a baby or young child to go through the trauma of separation when you and Eleanor go out on your date?” The young mother asked. She was voicing a common concern and my answer is always the same.

“No, it is not unhealthy. The child learns that Mommy and Daddy go away and then we come back. That is how life is. What is unhealthy is to teach a child that Mommy and Daddy will never go away and that he deserves, needs, and can demand our total attention. That is neither true nor healthy.”

have lives of their own and that, though they as children are totally loved, there is a special relationship between Mom and Dad in which they do not share. They grow to appreciate this and not resent it, and ultimately to look forward to this on their own.

A note to Mom’s and Dad’s about these dates and getaways: First, we found our life so harried in the early years that our dates were spent catching up on the business of life. Thus, I started having a “working lunch” with Eleanor on Thursdays where we both brought our calendars and notebooks and just dealt with life. That allowed the Friday evening date to be romantic and centered around us. Next, we found that on a weekend getaway, we needed at least three nights away to really unwind and get to know each other again. In the early stages we even made a pact not to discuss the children for the first two days.

Third, teaching the child to play on his own is very important for the mother. **A child should not grow up thinking that he is the center of the universe.** It is a very rude and unfair awakening for the child when he enters public school and discovers that he is not the center of the universe, and that there is not a one to one teacher/student ratio.

Fourth, **allow the child to develop creative expressions outside the parent.** These should grow with the child. Beginning with dates with Dad and a “mother’s day out” program. Later on, tumbling or swimming classes. As the child grows, church day camp and overnight camp and youth activities. Baby sitting, school trips, and trips to relatives will all help. A continued growth and transition to ultimate independence on the college campus is the goal. This, then, will be a natural and gentle transition, rather than an abrupt and culturally forced one against which the parent has fought continually with the child, forcing the child to align with the culture and against the parents in order to gain his freedom.

Remember: the ultimate goal is the child’s independence. During our children’s high school years, I tried to keep always before them that in just a few short years that they would be on their own. It was such a short time, they shouldn’t blow it with rebellion. Rebellion was not necessary. Everything they wanted and more was coming to them. They did not have to fight for it or strive to reach it— it was rapidly coming to them. It is hard for a teen to see this clearly, but discussions such as this reassure the teen that you are not only aware of their coming independence, but you are embracing it as a good thing.

III. Summary

I. Introduction: Goals to Success

1. Success In School
2. Success In Social Life
3. Success In Church

II. The Ten Areas Of Wisdom And Life Skills (to be mastered by the child before entering the first grade)

1. Concentrate on what is being said: essential for school.
 - a. When given instructions or corrections, the child should look the parent in the face, in a non-rebellious manner and listen to what is being said without looking down, looking away, pouting or glaring.
 - b. Training— Three spanks for rebellion; presupposes "come," "hush," and "obey."
 - c. Best evaluation time— when there are distractions or when it is a subject the child dislikes.
2. Sitting Still: essential for school, church, social trips, dinner table etc..
 - a. When told to do so, the child should be able to sit quietly and wait for whatever is being quietly waited for.
 - b. Training— one spank and hush when needed, then move up as the situation warrants. Presupposes "no," "obey," "hush."
 - c. Best evaluation time— The best time to see how you are doing in this area is the dinner table, especially when you have guests or at church, during a special event such as a wedding, funeral, business meeting or choir presentation.
3. Following Instructions: Essential for school, for home chores and for sports.
 - a. The child, when addressed by an adult, should concentrate on what is being said (at their level) and follow through (again at their level).
 - b. Training— One spank for training, unless the child rebels, then three spanks. Remember the “with him” principle is crucial, the difference between training and punishment is the “with him” principle. Presupposes "come," "obey," "give."
 - c. Best evaluation time— For most kids it is up around the house.
4. Entertaining Themselves: essential for school, church, and family harmony
 - a. When told, the child should be able to go to his room or play area and entertain himself quietly and without distracting others.
 - b. Training— Use one training spank and "hush" when needed. Do not fail to discipline for rebellion if the child decides that he will not be willing to allow Mom to do this. Discipline all areas. Presupposes "no," "hush," "obey."
 - c. Best Evaluation Time— The best time is determined by Mom as she decides what times during the day she needs to herself in order to be a better wife and mother and then she evaluates her children’s response to this.
5. Manners: Essential for social development, success in school and closeness in the extended family.
 - a. The child should be able to conduct himself both in the privacy of the home and in public in such a way as brings honor to the family, reflects the order and control of the father and enhances the reputation of the parents in the community.
 - b. Training— Repetition and praise is the key, one training spank when needed. Presupposes "come," "obey" and "hush."
 - c. Best evaluation time— The best time to know that you have a handle on this is when guests arrive unexpectedly and the children must interact with them without notice.
6. Servanthood: Essential for Ministry, Evangelism, and Marriage)

- a. The faithful son, the servant son, is a word picture that the Holy Spirit draws upon constantly to create images He wishes to communicate. Sons are to be responsible, “a faithful Son over His house,” sons are to be servants, “served with me...like a child serving his father.”
 - b. Training— one training spank and then discipline, and rebellion spanks as needed. Presupposes "Obey," "Hush," "Come," and "Give."
 - c. Best Evaluation Time— When something comes up where you need the help and cooperation of your children— unexpected guests, one of the children is sick and cannot do their chores, Mom or Dad need help with a special project around the house.
7. Kindness (Essential for social development)
- a. Kindness is one of the wisdom and life skills that there is no question of its importance to God. The Word of God specifically speaks of kindness as one of the fruits of the spirit when it says in Gal 5:22 “But the fruit of the spirit is... kindness...”
 - b. Training— Modeling, praise and rewards are best. Rarely did we use the rod except where cruelty or fighting with brothers and sisters came in to play. Presupposes "No— don’t treat others in that way," "Obey— do treat others in a kind way," "Hush— control your tongue when around those who are different," and "Give— share what you have freely with others."
 - c. Best Evaluation Time— This will usually be in public places, the church, the park, the school, where a child’s natural social tendencies can be observed.
8. Neatness (Essential for school, work, and social development)
- a. The child should be willing to cooperate with bath until old enough to handle this himself, and should conform willingly to societal standards of neatness, order and cleanliness.
 - b. Training— One spank for training and “with him” is essential. The growing independence of the child should be stressed. As he becomes personally responsible for certain areas, he also becomes more free in terms of supervision in other areas. Presupposes "No," and "Obey."
 - c. Best evaluation time— when preparing to go somewhere, church, out to eat, on a trip etc.. How does your child look? How does your child respond to taking responsibility for his or her appearance?
9. Issues of Gender, Prudence and Discretion
- a. We sought to stress a positive awareness of the difference in gender in our children. At an early age, we began to stress the positive aspects of their gender and sought to polarize them in this area. This is done through an emphasis of dress, styles, hair and mannerisms.
10. Letting go / developing a personal identity
- a. It is important to realize that all of the training we are giving to our children concerning wisdom and life skills looks to the ultimate goal of their living fruitful and fulfilled lives outside the home. The training we give therefore must be with a view to enabling our child to have greater and greater freedom. If the parent does not keep this goal ever before them, in prayer and discussion with the child, the exact opposite will occur as the parent micromanages the child’s life.
 - b. During our children’s high school years, I tried to keep always before them that in just a few short years that they would be on their own. It was such a short time, they shouldn't blow it with rebellion. Rebellion was not necessary. Everything they wanted and more was coming to them. They did not have to fight for it or strive to reach it. It was coming to them, and rapidly. It is hard for a teen to see this clearly, but discussions such as this reassure the teen that you are not only aware of their coming independence but that you are embracing it as a good and positive thing.

CHAPTER FIVE

POST-STUDY PROJECTS

The following projects are a continuation of the process begun in Chapter Four as you set and implement changes in your child's behavior. What follows are a number of projects which you and your wife can complete together. The goal is to come to an agreement upon the discipline needs of your child and then work on them together as a team. Remember, the general rule in decision making in this area is to yield to the more conservative of the couple in arriving at a decision.

Scripture Memory Verse— Prv 29:15

The rod and reproof give wisdom, But a child who gets his own way brings shame to his mother.

Last Week's Verse— Prv 4:11 *“I have directed you in the way of wisdom; I have led you in upright paths.”*

QUIET TIMES ALONE WITH GOD

JEREMIAH 15:16

THEME: WISDOM AND LIFE SKILLS

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: PRV 5:1–2

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week, and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: PRV 3:1–4

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week, and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: PRV 4: 1– 4

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week, and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

QUIET TIMES ALONE WITH GOD

JEREMIAH 15:16

THEME: WISDOM AND LIFE SKILLS

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: PRV 5: 1– 3, 7, 8

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week, and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: 1 Tm 3:4

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week, and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: PRV 22:6

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week, and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

The Ten Areas Of Wisdom And Life Skills

With your spouse, group below the ten areas of wisdom and life skills in the order of greatest need: three areas that need immediate attention; three areas that need attention, but can wait; four areas that are the least pressing at this time.

Needs Immediate Attention:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Needs Attention But Can Wait:

4. _____

5. _____

6. _____

Least Pressing At This Time:

7. _____

8. _____

9. _____

10. _____

Ten Areas of Wisdom and Life Skills (Continued)

Now develop an agreed upon plan of action for each of the first three areas. The plan should include— A. Desired long-term, character goal B. The immediate behavior changes C. The plan of action you as a couple will take.

Area I:

- A. Desired long-term character goal

- B. The immediate behavior changes

- C. The plan of action you as a couple will take

Area II:

- A. Desired long-term character goal

- B. The immediate behavior changes

- C. The plan of action you as a couple will take

Area III:

- A. Desired long-term character goal

- B. The immediate behavior changes

- C. The plan of action you as a couple will take

Learning To Serve Through Responsibilities

List the areas of responsibility that you and your spouse are now fulfilling that your child or children could fulfill, if given the proper training.

A. Child's room

B. Kitchen/Dining area

C. Living room / play area

D. Bathrooms

E. General household chores

F. Garage

G. Yard

H. Duties particular to your lifestyle and home

Learning To Serve Through Responsibilities (Continued)

Reflecting back on this list, decide how your children will begin serving in the home.. You may approach this in a number of ways: 1.) Areas which they can begin to assume now; 2.) Areas which you would like them to grow into (indicate the age); 3.) You can prioritize the acts of service; 4.) You can indicate the character trait you hope to develop in addition to a servant heart, or any other approach you would like to take. The main point is that the children begin to serve.

A. Child's room

B. Kitchen/Dining area

C. Living room / play area

D. Bathrooms

E. General household chores

F. Garage

G. Yard

H. Duties particular to your lifestyle and home

Immediate Goals

In the space below, list the child's name and then the wisdom and life skills which you will seek to develop in the immediate future. Try to limit each child to three. Below these, list the future areas you will develop after implementing the first three. The goal is to touch on all ten. As you progress in this area, more can then be added so that this will be a master list of character training for your child.