The Mentoring Mother

Selected Scriptures
5/12/01



**** How to Develop <u>Character</u> in your Children***

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<u>HOW TO PRAY FOR YOUR CHILDREN'S NEEDS</u> <u>NOW AND IN THE FUTURE</u>
By Mrs. John Marshall

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11. That they, as well as those they marry, will be kept pure until marriage. 1 Cor. 6:18-20
12. That they will learn to totally submit to God and actively resist Satan in all circumstances. James 4:7
13. That they will be single-hearted to be sold out to Christ. Rom. 12:1-2

14. That they will be hedged in so that they cannot find their way to wrong people or wrong places and that the wrong people cannot find their way to them. Hos. 2:6

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How to Develop Character in your Children

What concerns you the most. . .

--Your daughter's physical beauty and attractiveness, or her personal Godliness?
--Your son's athletic ability, or his dependability (you can count on him to do right)?
--Your child's academic achievement or his/her knowledge and submissiveness to God's Word?
--Your child's wit and charm or his/her love and thoughtfulness toward others?
--Your child's giftedness or his/her servant's heart?
--Your child's artistic ability or his/her availability to be used by God?
--Your child's popularity or his/her trustworthiness and integrity?
--Your child's financial future or his/her love for God?

As parents, our primary goal for our children should be that they have a character like that of Jesus Christ.

A child with good character has good character because he/she has internalized some of the moral "characteristics" (or attributes) of God. Therefore, someone with "character" has the essential inner qualities of integrity, honesty, strength, "backbone" or fortitude, uprightness, goodness, truthfulness, sincerity, conscientiousness, graciousness, holiness, patience, etc.

What is character?

The word "character" describes the over-all, premiere "characteristic," attribute, feature, or trait of a person's inner being.

A person may have bad character or good character. That inner, motivational, driving force of a person determines what type of character he has.

Character is a life governed not by self-interest or popular opinion, but by principle.
Character is what you are; reputation is what others think you are.
"Character is what you are in the dark." (Moody)
"Character is what you are when you are all alone."
"Character is destiny." (Elliot)
"Character is much better kept than recovered." (Thomas Paine)

The formation of good character is achieved by a heart that is soft and yielded to the molding work of the Holy Spirit, uses the hammer of the Word of God."

Many animals mature to adulthood in two years or less, but a child requires 18 years! Why the difference? Children, unlike animals, have a spiritual nature which requires the inculcation of moral truth. God intends for Christian parents not to just "raise" their children by feeding, clothing, and protecting them, but to "train the soul" of the child so as to produce an inner character that agrees with God's standards.

Prov. 22:6 - ***"Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it."*** This is an axiomatic, eternal principle and promise from God (NOTE: context describing causes and resultant effects)

"Train" = to begin, or initiate a young child in the right direction. To start out right.

Same word as when Solomon initiated/dedicated the newly-constructed Temple (I Ki. 8:63; II Chron. 7:5)
The word originally meant to *"rub the palate"* of a child with chewed dates to get it to acquire a taste for food; EX: midwives would rub palate with oil before child began to suck. The word means to make experienced or accustomed to what you want (as a horse gets accustomed to being directed by a rope in its mouth) (BDB, p. 335)

If we get our children accustomed to what is right, they won't depart!

"The way" = the proper road
"Old" = mature
"It" = the way (road) we trained them on

"Parents are commanded by God to initiate or start their child in a certain direction. He is not to be allowed to follow the path his nature would take him, but he is to be set on a new path. Dedication is not just a one-time initiation, but incorporates the entire training process. The result of the training is for this new way to become the child's own way of life. When this training transpires, the child will not leave the path even as he grows older and becomes an adult. . . Parents are not to wait for a child to choose his own way of life, but are to place him on the right path in early childhood. . . Parents must act as the external control over a child while he is developing his own internal controls. The parents' role is not to remain as the child's control for the rest of his life, but gradually to work themselves out of this job as early as possible." (Fugate, p. 65-66)

Through the proper parental example, training, and discipline of our children, mothers should desire that God develop their character by building in them the following traits:

1) Spiritual desire
2) A sensitive conscience
3) Sincere motives
4) Self-discipline or self-control
5) Personal initiative
6) Personal responsibility

I. *Mothers: Mentor your children's* SPIRITUAL DESIRE

1. Spiritual desire - the highest of virtues, since it seeks to love God supremely and to love others as oneself. (Mk. 12:30-31)

2. Spiritual desire has great benefits because it is the secret to attaining spiritual knowledge and blessing from God. (Mt. 5:6)

3. Spiritual desire cannot be "methodically," "mechanically," or "manipulatively" imparted to the children by the parents. it must come from God. He alone imparts a craving for spiritual life in a person.

   a. No person (independently) seeks after God (Rom. 3:11).

   b. God must implant a spiritual hunger into your children.
      How does God do it?
      1) Through His Word (Rom. 10:17)
      2) Through your prayers (Mt. 19:13; Mt. 9:38)
      3) Through your example (II Tim. 1:5)

II. *Mothers: Mentor your children's* CONSCIENCE

A "conscience" simply refers to someone's "consciousness" of ethical or moral laws.

The conscience is man's power to judge or make a moral decision about whether something is right or wrong.

All men (Rom. 2:14) have a conscience which basically gives a yes or no answer as to whether something is permissible (Rom. 2:15).

Like a judge, the conscience either approves or disapproves based upon the moral knowledge (law or standard) it has available.

1. A conscience is both untrained and trained.

   An "untrained conscience" = God has written basic truth (basic law) upon all men's hearts via creation (Rom. 1:19-20; 2:14-15).

   A "trained conscience" = Is developed by what one has learned to be true or fact based on a standard.

   The believer's standard is the Bible.
2. Parents must teach their children God's moral absolutes so that their conscience will have the right "rules for life" to live by (II Tim. 3:15-16; Rom. 12:2).

3. Parents must not behave in a manner that is inconsistent with the absolutes they teach their children.

   *Such inconsistency will cause the child to stumble (Rom. 14) and may defile the child's conscience (Titus 1:15).

4. Children should be taught never to do something that bothers their conscience (Rom. 14:23).

   "If you have doubts -- don't!"
   "If it is doubtful, it is perhaps dirty."

WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS ABOUT QUESTIONABLE THINGS:

Don't ask yourself what's wrong with a certain practice; ask yourself what is right about it?

1) Is it acceptable with God? (Eph. 5:10)

2) Is it good and wholesome? (Phil. 4:8; Eph. 2:10)

3) Will it glorify God? (I Cor. 10:31)

4) Would Jesus do it? (I Pet. 2:21)

5) Would it cause other to stumble? (Ro. 14)

6) Will it edify me? (I Cor. 10:23) Or others? (Ro. 15:2)

III. *Mothers: Mentor your children's* PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY

This principle is based on the following facts:

1) Each of us is a steward of our time, talents, and treasure, etc. (I Cor. 4:2)

2) We are responsible for our own actions (Deut. 24:16).

3) Each of us will give an account to God for our actions (Luke 16:2; II Cor. 5:10).

4) Much is expected from those to whom much is entrusted (Lk. 12:48).

5) Whatever we plant we can expect to harvest (Gal. 6:7).

Children need to learn to:

1. Maintain what God has given in nature
(EX: not to litter, waste, or ruin God's creation or creatures - Ps. 19:1; Prov. 12:10).

2. Maintain what God has given him
(to be good stewards of toys and other goods).

3. Maintain what God has given to others

Teaching respect for other's property shows a child the principle of ownership (Ex. 22:1ff).

Teaching respect for other's rights shows the child the principle of human dignity (Ja. 2:5; 3: 9-10).

Practical areas in which children must learn to be personally responsible:

1. If a child sins against another person, he must:
--confess the sin to God and admit it to those he sinned against
--restore any loss of damaged or stolen goods
--ask forgiveness
Mt. 18:15ff

2. If a child breaks, steals, or ruins the property of others, he must be responsible to replace it
(from his own allowance or savings)

3. If a child has a pet, he/she needs to be given responsibility to care for it

4. If a child is given responsibility, he/she must be expected to fulfill it faithfully

EX: cleaning room
making bed
other delegated chores

5. **If a child is given an allowance, he/she must learn how to manage the money**
EX: A small child given four quarters per week could learn to be a good steward of it by:
1) Giving the first quarter to God (Prov. 3:9-10; II Cor. 9:7)

2) Putting the second quarter into a long-term savings account (for a future goal) (Prov. 6:8; 30:25)

3) Putting the third quarter into a short-term savings account (for something desired to purchase in the near future)

4) Spending the fourth quarter in a way that would please God (I Cor. 10:31)

Ways in which parents fail in teaching their children responsibility:

1. When their child is accused of wrong, they immediately take their child's side (Prov. 18:13).
2. When their child makes a mess, the parent always cleans it up.

3. So as to prevent their child from failing in a responsibility (Ex: school homework), the parent does it for them.

4. When their child gets in trouble, the parent always immediately bails them out without holding them accountable.

5. Many parents simply fail to oversee their child's behavior and actions, so they run wild!

IV. *Mothers: Mentor your children's* SELF-DISCIPLINE or SELF-CONTROL

I Cor. 9:24-27 - Discipline is temperance
"temperate" (v. 25) = self-control; strength or power over self.
(a rigid discipline for an athlete)

Gal. 5:23 - Self-Control is a fruit of Spirit

II Pet. 1:6 - Self-Control is built upon faith

II Tim. 3:3 - Self-control will be scarce in the "last days"
"incontinent" - no ability to contain your lusts, without self-control

We are living in an undisciplined age. Where we constantly hear messages saying: "Do your own thing," "if it feels good, do it," "have it your way," "You deserve a break today," etc.

Technology has given us more luxury, more time to be idle, and hence more time to sin. "Idle hands are the devil's workshop."

The Bible says: In the last days, *"men shall be lovers of pleasure, more than lovers of God"* (II Tim. 3:4)

How can I train my children to be disciplined?

TRAIN YOUR CHILDREN TO:

1. **DO RIGHT, EVEN WHEN IT HURTS!** (Acts 4:18-21; 5:29)
   (The Principle of Duty)
   It is telling the truth, even when it will cost you.
   It is doing right, when you don't feel like it.
   It is refusing to do wrong, even though "everybody's" doing it.

2. **DENY THEMSELVES, WHEN THEIR WILL CONFLICTS WITH GOD'S!**
   (Mk. 8:30-38)
   (The Principle of self (Spirit) control)
   "Deny himself" = the basic idea is to say "No." It is to disown oneself, to turn away from the idolatry of self-centeredness.

3. **WORK HARD AT WHAT REALLY COUNTS IN LIFE!** (I Tim. 4:7)
   (The Principle of priorities)

4. **WAKE UP, WHEN THEY WANT TO SLEEP IN LATE!**
   (Prov. 6:6-11)l

5. **NOT PROCRASTINATE, WHEN "LATER" SOUNDS APPEALING!**
   (Prov. 3:27, 28)
   (The principle of promptness [punctuality])

6. **NOT COMPROMISE, WHEN "GIVING IN" IS THE EASIER CHOICE!** (Daniel chapters 1, 3, 6)
   (The principle of convictions)

   a. PERSONAL SEPARATION (Daniel 1:1-21; *v.8)
      (We need conviction not to defile ourselves)
   b. PERSONAL OBEDIENCE (Daniel 3)
      (We need conviction not to bow down to anything other than God)
      The test of a man's convictions is what he will compromise.
   c. PERSONAL DEVOTIONS (Daniel 6)
      (We need conviction not to stop communing with God)

7. **NOT QUIT, WHEN THE GOING GETS TOUGH!**
   (Acts 13:13; 5:36-41; II Tim.4:9-11)
   (The principle of patience [endurance])

EX: running from difficulties
avoiding certain people/problems/challenges
seeking the easy way out, rather than the right way
spiritual and physical lethargy

Practical Areas in which children need self-control:

1. Restricting eating to meal times
(gluttony starts when children's eating behavior goes unrestrained when they are young - Prov. 23:2)

2. Waiting for the family to pray and thank God for the food before eating (I Tim. 4:4)

3. Allowing visitors or guests to be served first
(this teaches respect and honor for company - Heb. 13:2)

4. Not fooling around or playing at the dinner table
(they need to know there is a time and place for playing)

5. Picking up their toys and putting them away after playing with them

6. Submitting to the parent's discretion as to what the children watch on TV or listen to on the radio, and when (Ps. 119:37)

7. Not interrupting someone else's conversation
(either while communicating with someone in person or on the telephone)

8. Learning to put others (EX: siblings and peers) ahead of themselves (Phil. 2:4)

V. *Mothers: Mentor your children's* **MOTIVES**

In a world of facades, fake appearances, false impressions, deceitful images, mirages, masks, and artificiality, we need to be people who are REAL or genuine.

The Christian life is not theatrics, it's not an act, it's not a game of pretending. It is to be a real, genuine relationship with God that results in real, genuine works for God.

We as parents must concern ourselves with the hearts of our children.

We should desire that our children be properly motivated to do right. What is a "motive"? It is simply a reason for which one does or does not do something. What is it that should motivate our children to do right?

The answer is simple: LOVE (I Cor. 13)

First, a love for God (Mk. 12:30).

Our love for God is conditioned on our realization of His love for us (I Jn. 4:19; cp. Rom. 5:8). Love is an outgrowth of our faith in God's gracious promise of eternal life (--faith is trusting God's Word--Love is the response and result of our faith).

Faith in God produces a love for God which results in properly motivated works for God. *"Faith. . . worketh by love"* (Gal. 5:6).

Second, a love for others (Mk. 12:31).

Our love for others is an unselfish, unconditional, sacrificial giving for their well-being. It is the result of experiencing God's love (I Jn. 4:7-8, 11)

Christian parents need to teach their children that God is to be the reason for their behavior. He is to be the One they aim to please. Since God is always good and never changes, He is a consistent reason to motivate good behavior.

What should not be our children's motivation:

1. Recognition (Matthew 6:1-6, 16-18)
   --To be seen of people (for example, peers) so as to give them an impression that we are something we really are not.

2. Rewards (John 12:43)
   "Reward dependency. . . occurs when a child is conditioned to respond in obedience only when he sees something in it for himself. His obedience is based upon 'external' stimulus (i.e. 'the carrot on the stick') rather than anything 'internal'." (Ezzo, p. 84).

   Often, "parents use bribes, threats, and scare-tactics in order to gain temporary control of their children's behavior" (Ezzo, p. 84).

   Parents must never barter for obedience, but should recognize it and express appreciation for it.

   "A child should be rewarded for obedience but should not be obedient for a reward" (Ezzo, p. 82).

   A child should be rewarded, since this shows that the parents appreciated the child's effort or accomplishment, but children should not be manipulated to do right for a reward.

   How to Reward your Child:
   Rewards may be tangible or intangible.

   If tangible, the reward need not be something big or expensive; what a child finds value in is the appreciation the reward represents.

Tangible rewards are especially beneficial for smaller children, but as the child matures, the parent may reward him/her with intangible forms of appreciation.

A child's reward most often will simply be a pat on the head, a hug or the encouraging words "Well done" (Mt. 25:21).

VI. *Mothers: Mentor your children's* PERSONAL INITIATIVE

Personal initiative describes a person who does something good for someone else without being asked (without prior instruction).

When a Christian child sincerely and unpretentiously does a good deed of his own volition, he/she shows that:

1) God has done a work in his/her heart
   (Parents must pray for God to move the hearts of their children).
2) The child has the capability of being self-motivated (motivated without external stimuli).
3) The child evidences a true mark of inner character.

Personal initiative should be rewarded (see section on "Sincere Motives").

"How to Raise a Brat"

When an infant, always feed on demand.

When crying, always pick up.

When having trouble sleeping, always rock to sleep.

When throwing a fit, say, "Isn't that cute?"

When the child disobeys, overlook it.

When he/she has a conflict with a little friend,
always defend your Child.

When the child wants something,
always give it right away.
(NOTE: A good parent always gives the child what he/she needs!
--But what he/she sometimes needs is a NO!)

When the child sins, never spank or teach.
If you do spank, do it inconsistently.

When you want obedience, barter for it
(EX: "If you're good, I'll give you this")

The child learns to be a manipulator.

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