

Train Up a Child in Way He Should Go

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God commands fathers to train up their children in the way they should go according to the Word of God. Years ago, this principle was so wonderfully illustrated to me when I planted cucumber plants in the flowerbed that ran horizontal to my driveway. The flowerbed was on top of an 8 ft. retaining wall. After a while, the cucumber plants began to run out of control and onto my driveway. I thought I could solve the problem by just picking up the running plants and hanging them over the retaining wall. After my first attempt to change the hardy plants, I realized it would be impossible to force them to go over the wall in any direction other than the way they had been set without breaking them. That year, I had to live with the unruly plants cluttering up my drive. The next year, I had an idea to prop little sticks beside each of the tender runners of the flexible little plants to aim them in the direction I wanted them to go. Needless to say, they were trained to go over the wall.

Through this experience, I received a vivid picture of what it means to train up a child in the way he should go. When he is young and tender, he can be shaped and formed in a good way or in a bad way; but, when he is old, he has already been set in the direction he was trained to go. This is why God's Word says in Proverbs 22:6,

*“Train up a child in the way he should go,
and even when he is old he will not depart from it.”*

The opposite is also true. Train up a child in the way he should not go and when he is old he will not depart from it. It is impossible to change our direction from bad to good without a personal relationship with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. After we have been “born again” and given a new heart, then God the Father sets out to discipline us to correct those areas that were not corrected in childhood by our parents. Discipline means to cultivate the soul especially by correcting mistakes. God disciplines every son whom He loves. If we refuse His correction and discipline, Hebrews 12 says we are illegitimate and not true sons.

Ephesians 6:4 says,

*“And, fathers, do not provoke your children to anger;
but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.”*

When the Bible instructs fathers to provoke not their children to anger, it usually means the father figure, but can also mean mothers. When fathers do not bring their children up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord, they provoke them to anger. These same children grow up to be angry adults. In every area where their parents have violated the law of God in raising them, it becomes an automatic issue of the heart.

The source of many problems originate when a child believes a lie that God is like his or her parents. In their frustration or pain they lack the knowledge that they can go to God, instead they let the sun go down on their anger, and consciously or unconsciously turn to a false god. This becomes a promise the individual makes that when he grows up life will be different. This sets up a negative reaping pattern until the issues are forgiven and dealt with at the Cross.

Would you agree that if we do not turn to God in our pain, we are turning to another god, a false defense mechanism that we set up to protect our heart? Deuteronomy 32:15-37 says that our depression and woundedness, anger, jealousy, terror, bitterness and many other negative emotions are the fruit of idolatry.

The majority of our problems are rooted in the lack of proper discipline and training according to the Word of God. Many people view discipline as a spanking or a beating. I asked a little girl once if her mother disciplined her. Her reply was, "Oh boy, was I! My mother slapped me up against the bathroom wall!" This is not God's kind of discipline; it is child abuse. Discipline has many positive sides: unconditional love, nurture, fellowship, affirmation, protection, provision, appropriate hugs, appropriate kisses, affection, leadership, faithfulness, time, acceptance, correction, guidance, conversation, forgiveness, proper example, etc. There is only one negative side of discipline: the rod, if a child does not listen.

God has a perfect personality in mind for you. The negative things that have happened to us in our childhood and in our lives have had a negative effect on our personality when not brought to His "Throne of Grace" and dealt with God's way. The positive things we go through as children have a positive effect upon our lives. The way we are trained as children either sets a "good default" or a "demonic default".

Demonic defaults can be broken when we submit to God's discipline, forgive our parents for their poor stewardship of us, break the judgments we have made on them, repent of dishonoring our parents, repent of letting the sun go down on our anger, repent of turning to false gods (promises we have made ourselves) instead of turning to God, and when we break demonic soul ties with our parents then God resets the default in our lives from negative to positive. The fruit of our lives is then changed from bitter to sweet as we receive God's correcting discipline. Hallelujah!

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