
COVENANT KEEPERS

"Dedicated To Strengthening Marriages Through Biblical Principles"

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Teaching Your Children.

In Ephesians 6:4, Paul gives the most clear and direct instruction for parenting. We are to bring up our children *"in the training and admonition of the Lord."* The word *training* means to instruct and nurture through discipline. The word *admonition* means to exhort, warn, and counsel. This second word *admonition* is also used by Paul to explain why God gave the Scriptures in the first place. God gave us His Word to warn us, and give direction and counsel for our life (1 Cor. 10:11).

If you want to work *with* God to train your children, use His Word, and the principles found in it, as your primary training tool. God's Word is like a sword that cuts to the heart of your child (Eph. 6:17). It is like a hammer that can break in pieces the hardest heart (Jer. 23:29). His Words have the ability to bring life to the one who believes and obeys (John 6:63). These are God's promises to you individually and to you as a parent.

What are the best methods for teaching your children, and what are some to the common errors committed by parents? How do you accomplish this monumental task of training your children?

Teaching Children Ages 2-5

Younger children are very teachable, trusting, and dependent upon you as their parent. It is essential that you begin your teaching as early as possible. Establish the habit of teaching them as soon as they are

able to sit and talk with you. A child this age can learn to pray and thank God, and can understand in simple ways what is right and wrong.

How can you begin your teaching times with your children? I suggest you begin with a Bible picture book. Very young children love to look at pictures and listen to a story. As they grow, begin to read Bible stories to them from children's books appropriate for their age. Be flexible. Stop and answer any of their questions as you read, and try to keep all explanations as simple as possible.



Take time with your child!

Another avenue of instruction will be the spontaneous questions that occur when you are driving in the car, walking together, or putting them to bed. Spur-of-the-moment questions provide excellent opportunities to teach because these are issues your children are thinking about. Don't neglect these teaching moments because you are too tired or in a hurry.

Also, always remember that the ultimate teacher is the example of your life. Your attitudes, actions, and reactions are teaching your personal values and priorities every day. This is how your children realize what a godly character looks like as it is demonstrated by your life on a daily basis.

Common Errors in Teaching

What are some of the errors you should avoid in teaching young children? The greatest error is making the teaching time too long. Remember, small children have a short attention span (5 to 10 minutes). Many times parents give long answers that children cannot follow with concepts they are not able to comprehend. This will only frustrate them. So, keep it short and keep it simple.

Another error parents make is simply not taking the time to teach their children. Many parents have told me they are too busy or too tired to teach their children. Yet, if you have time to watch your favorite TV program, or the energy to send an email to a friend, then you have the time and energy to teach your children about God. Having children requires a change in priorities. You must remember, teaching your child is your God-given duty as a parent. Dads, you are specifically given this responsibility in Scripture. You are to *"make known"* God's truth to your children (Is. 38:19; Prov. 1:8).

Teaching Children Ages 6-12

As children mature they become more teachable. You have laid a foundation for discipleship by establishing the habit of teaching and training them from a young age. As

"She is your companion and your wife by covenant" Mal. 2:14

their reasoning abilities mature their questions will become more profound. A child in this age range can clearly discern right from wrong, have an ability to grasp deeper spiritual concepts, and can pray with insight and understanding.

Your children are also able to see their own need to receive Christ as Savior. The greatest privilege of a parent is to lead your child in the prayer of repentance for salvation. Don't miss the honor and joy of seeing your child make a decision to follow Christ, and then see them baptized into the Body of Christ. If you are teaching them about sin, righteousness, and the Savior, then this conversation will naturally come up. One of the most creative ways to stir up these conversations is to share your own experience of how and why you decided to follow Christ. Moses told the Children of Israel to "teach their children" and their "grandchildren" about the day that they heard the voice of God speak to them out of the fire of Mt. Horeb (Deut. 4:9-13). This instruction was also for the parents that they might never forget what God had done in their own lives.

Now, let's look at ways to teach this age group? First, get a children's Bible that is easy for them to read and understand in modern English. Challenge them to begin to read the Bible aloud to you as you spend time with them. In addition, encourage them to read the Bible by themselves to help them develop their own devotional time. Read through specific sections of the Bible that you know will help your children to understand God's plan for their lives. I would suggest reading straight through the Gospels so they can clearly see the life Jesus lived. The Gospels are written in a story form that is easy for them to grasp. When you are finished reading ask them questions about the story and talk through the lessons that they can learn from these passages. A *Life Application Bible* is very helpful in determining these life lessons. Also,

a great devotional book that can help is *With the Word* by Warren Wiersbe which catalogues a chapter-by-chapter explanation of the entire Bible. You may also want to pick a subject from the topical index in your Bible to study with your child. This is very helpful when you see issues in their lives where they are struggling and need instruction, such as choice of friends or having a right attitude. Plant the truth of God's Word in their hearts and trust God to bring the results.

You may also want to try reading devotional books that are appropriate for their age level at the breakfast or dinner table, or just before bed. These are very helpful tools for parents, especially if you are new believer. A good book that gives practical ways to systematically teach biblical values is entitled *Teaching Your Children Values* by Linda and Richard Eyre, (Simon and Schuster). This book will help you to teach values such as self-discipline, honesty, dependability, respect, love, and unselfishness.

Your attitudes, actions, and reactions are teaching your personal values and priorities every day.

Another great teaching tool is to tell personal stories about how God has worked in your life by providing for you, protecting you, and guiding you (Ps. 78:4). These stories reveal that God is alive and real, and that He has worked in you in a very practical way. Then, assure them that God is willing to help them and work in their lives in just the same way.

It is important to stress with your children that they must be faithful to their responsibilities. When your children ask for greater privileges and freedoms, explain the biblical principle of earning these privileges by showing faithfulness and

responsibility (Matt. 25:21; 23; Mark 4:24-25).

Remember, always answer their spontaneous questions. These questions will develop as they grow older. Don't miss these teaching moments!

Teaching Teenagers Ages 13-18

Teaching children in the teenage years has its own challenges and blessings. The challenge is to deal with the independence and the corresponding attitude that teens develop. The blessing is that you can reason with them on a more adult level and discuss the difficulties they will experience in adulthood.

If you want to teach and disciple your children through their teenage years, then it is advisable to begin teaching them when they are young. Why do I say this? When you begin teaching your children when they are young, it's natural for them as you continue to teach them into their teenage years. You have already established the intimacy required to discuss spiritual things, difficult issues in life, and decision-making.

One of the most important rules in teaching teenagers is that the subject matter that you use must be relevant, at their level, and deal with issues that they confront every day at school and in their relationships with others. One way to do this is to look for devotional books that are specifically directed at teenagers. These materials will deal with the difficult and awkward issues of the teenage years such as; how to fit-in with their peers, moral decision-making, and thinking for themselves versus peer pressure. These are the real struggles they deal with every day.

Another very helpful resource is the book of Proverbs. The Proverbs were written by Solomon to give his son practical wisdom, life skills, and decision-making principles. I would suggest finding a Bible translation that uses modern English to read and discuss these practical truisms of

wisdom. I personally went through Proverbs with my three teenagers several times.

What is the best time to have devotions with your teenagers? I have found that breakfast or dinner time is the most effective. Why? It is simply because your teens must stop what they are doing to eat. This keeps you from inconveniencing them by making them stop what they are doing to sit down with you. Simply, give thanks for your meal and allow them to begin eating as you share from the Bible or your devotional book.

Plant the truth of God's Word in their hearts and trust God to bring the results.

One very helpful way to connect and communicate with your teenagers is again to use stories from your own time as a teenager, or as a young adult. Explain to them that you had to make the same decisions that they make every day. I stumbled on this method of teaching my teenagers just by chance. One day I was telling my wife about something that happened to me when I was a teenager. My son immediately began to question me more about what had happened to me and why I made the decisions I did. It just so happened that he had encountered the very same struggle at school that week. When he began to ask me these questions, I realized that he was very interested in how I handled my struggle. My other son then asked me, "Do you have other stories like that Dad?" I said, "Sure." All of a sudden, I realized that my experiences and trials as a teenager would be very helpful to them if I could share those personal difficulties. They immediately sensed my ability to relate to them and that I did understand what they were going through. This is such a powerful way to bridge the gap between you and your teenage children. Don't you

want to be able to connect with them, and enable them to relate with you? Don't forget this teaching tool with your teenagers!

Errors in teaching teenagers.

1. You can't force them to hear. One of the first things that you realize about your children is that when they reach the teenage years they are not as teachable as they were in earlier years. Why? The maturing process naturally instills the desire for independence, and a desire to think for themselves. This reality adds further struggle to the relationship between parent and teen. They want to think and reason through issues independent from you as their parent. This is a normal and natural part of the maturation process. Your teens are questioning what they believe. They are not content to believe simply because they are told they should believe. Your teens must decide for themselves. Remember, God doesn't force anyone to believe. He reasons with mankind and gives to all the choice. God said, "*Come now, and let us reason together, Says the LORD, 'Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They shall be as wool. If you are willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land; But if you refuse and rebel, you shall be devoured by the sword; for the mouth of the LORD has spoken*" (Is. 1:18-20). This is why Jesus proclaimed, "*If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear*" (Matt. 4:23). So, pray that your teens have ears to hear God's voice. Jesus also said, "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me" (John 10:27).

Therefore, as a parent you must adjust your teaching methods accordingly. You cannot force your teens to believe or listen to you. You must strongly persuade them by reasoning through all issues concerning morality, decision-making, and faith. You are responsible to help them to see the

practical consequences of their beliefs and behaviors. Remember, they must decide who they will listen to. You must communicate with persuasive reasoning why you believe what you do. Then, pray for God's Spirit to speak and influence them to follow Him.

2. You can't control them. I remember when I was just entering into the teenage years of my first child. A friend warned me, "You can't control your teens. They are going to do what they please when they are out of your sight." That was a rude awakening for me. I realized this was the reality of raising a young adult. This is also one of the primary sources of struggle between parents and teens. Therefore, are you still trying to control everything as though they were still a young child? Many times parents use anger, yelling, ultimatums, or some other means of control to get their teens to do what they want them to do. You must remember that using such carnal means will not produce the effect you want. The Apostle James taught, "*For the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God*" (James 1:20).

The greatest privilege of a parent is to lead your child in the prayer of repentance for salvation.

Instead, what you need to do is seek to persuade them through reason and their own conscience. These are your two best weapons in the battle for their heart. Your teenagers must learn how to make decisions on their own. This is called maturity. You have to ask yourself, do you want them to mature? Do you want them to grow up and be able to reason and think for themselves? If you do, then help them to start reasoning and listening to their own conscience. If God uses reasoning and the voice of your conscience to help you make decisions, then you must depend on

these same means. This is a great struggle for most parents especially with their first teenager.

3. You must be an example. Being an example is a powerful and silent influence in teaching your teens. When they observe you reading your Bible and waiting upon the Lord, it will have a powerful effect upon them. When they see you going to church or serving others even when you are tired and have many other things to do, you are silently revealing and teaching your priorities. Remember they are watching to see what you do in relation to what you say. Are these two issues in harmony in your life? This is why the Apostle Paul warned Timothy to, “*be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity*” (1 Tim. 4:12). Therefore, be an example to your children in each of these ways.

You have such an important position and responsibility as a parent. God has placed your children in your care, and He desires that you love and teach them in His ways. As I watch my children now teaching their own children, I am so blessed with the privilege He has given me as a parent.

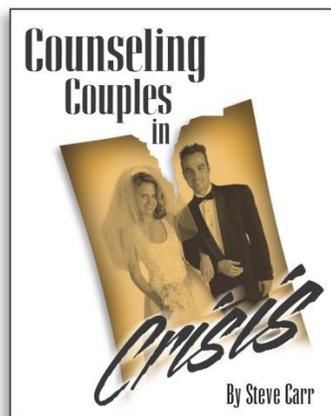
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Additional resources by Pastor Steve Carr:

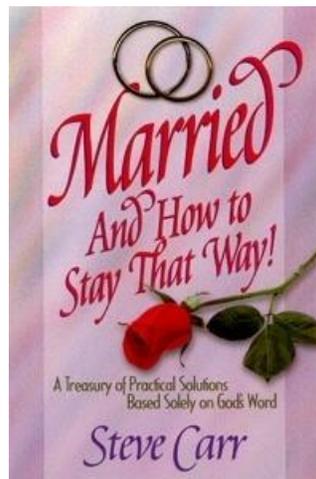
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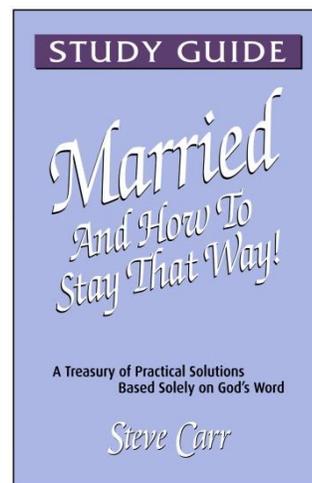
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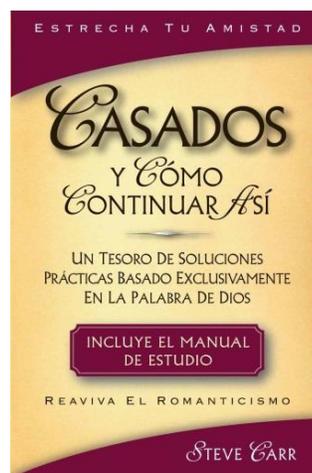
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