

CHURCH.

LESSON 25

1	PRAYER
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Group leader. Pray and commit your group and this course on building Christ's Church to the Lord.

2	SHARING (20 minutes) <i>[QUIET TIMES]</i> LUKE 1:1 – 4:30
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Take turns and **share** (or **read** from your notes) in short what you have learned from one of your quiet times with God out of the assigned Bible passages (Luke 1:1 – 4:30).

Listen to the person sharing, take him serious and accept him. Do not discuss what he shares. Take notes.

3	MEMORISATION (5 minutes) <i>[CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE]</i> (1) GENESIS 2:24
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The seventh series of memory verses (series G) is about "Christian marriage". The titles of the five memory verses are:

- (1) Leave and cleave. Genesis 2:24.
- (2) Love and lead.
- (3) Love and submit. Titus 2:4-5.
- (4) Resolve conflicts. Matthew 5:23-24.
- (5) Remain faithful. Proverbs 3:3-4.

Meditate, memorise and review two by two.

- (1) Leave and cleave. Genesis 2:24. For this reason a man will leave his father and his mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.

4	TEACHING (85 minutes) <i>[CHURCH BUILDING MINISTRY]</i> BRINGING UP CHILDREN IN THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY
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Introduce. This teaching is about bringing up children in the Christian family. We will learn what the Bible teaches about the responsibility of Christian parents to raise their children. We will especially concentrate on example and love. According to Isaiah 43:7, children are *created by God for his own glory*. Therefore, according to Psalm 127:3, children *belong to God*. God *entrusts* children to parents to raise them up on his behalf!

In 1 Samuel 1:11,28, we read about how Hannah dedicated her child to God. She had prayed for a child and God had given her a child. Then Hannah gave the child back to God for all the days of his life to serve God. God requires Christians to raise their children up in the fear of the Lord, but he does not ask of Christians to dedicate their children to the Church or to an institution or to full-time service of God. Those are things the child must decide by himself when he is mature. God calls most Christian children to serve him through their ordinary daily life in society. Nevertheless, God asks parents everywhere to raise their children up on his behalf and also according to his requirements taught in the Bible.

God has given parents three important responsibilities:

- setting an example to their children
- loving them
- educating and training them (also see lesson 27)

A. THE RESPONSIBILITY TO SET AN EXAMPLE FOR HIS CHILD

1. The two kinds of examples of parents.

Discover and discuss. Which good or bad example could a parent set for his child?

- (1) The Bible warns against the bad example of parents.

Read 1 Kings 22:51-53; 2 Chronicles 25:2,14-20; 2 Chronicles 26:4,16-19.

Notes. King Ahaziah of Israel did evil in the eyes of the Lord, because he walked in the ways of his wicked father and mother, Ahab and Jezebel, who caused Israel to sin. They were idolaters and he became an idolater too.

King Amaziah did not serve the Lord wholeheartedly. He became arrogant and proud. His son, king Uzziah followed his example and also became proud and arrogant.

(2) The Bible also shows the influence of the good example of parents.

Read Proverbs 31:10-31.

Notes. The mother in Proverbs 31 had such good influence, that her children and her husband stood up and praised her, because she was such a great blessing to them! It is very important that parents set an example in the following five areas: obedience, truthfulness (honesty), respect, wisdom and love.

(3) Although Christian parents are saved (justified), they nevertheless sin sometimes (1 John 1:8 - 2:2).

Read Matthew 5:23-24; Proverbs 3:33.

Notes. Parents are not perfect, make mistakes and in certain areas sometimes have a bad influence on their child (for example how they express their anger). However, those are the times a parent can ask his child to forgive his conduct and reconcile himself to his child. The Lord's curse is on the house of the wicked, but he blesses the home of the righteous (1 Peter 3:12)!

2. The example of a parent's God-given responsibilities.

Discover and discuss. Like whom does a daughter usually become in the future? Like whom does a son usually become in the future? Like their parents! The best way children learn about love, leadership, respect and submission is by observing their parents day in and day out!

(1) The God-given responsibilities of the mother.

Read Genesis 3:16; Titus 2:4-5.

Notes. The God-given responsibilities of the mother are that she should love, respect and submit to the children's father. Titus 2:4 teaches that young mothers should love their husbands and children, be self-controlled and pure, be busy at home, be kind, and be subject to their husbands, so that no one will malign the word of God.

Although women are as precious in God's eyes as men, God has assigned a different set of functions to women:

- physically in bearing children
- socially in marriage and the family
- spiritually in their tasks in the congregation.

Even when these different God-given functions are rejected in the world, Christian women may not abolish them in the kingdom of God! Especially when the children are young, they need a mother at home, who is there to love them, educate them and encourage them to grow up. The issue of the working mother must be evaluated in the light of the wife's desires to possess more material possessions, to live a more luxurious life and to express more individual independence on the one hand and the emotional, social, material and spiritual interests of the child on the other hand.

(2) The God-given responsibilities of the father.

Read Genesis 3:17-19; Ephesians 5:22-25; 6:4; 1 Corinthians 13:4-8.

Notes. The God-given responsibility of the father is that he should serve his wife by loving and leading the mother of the children. God has assigned a different set of functions to fathers:

- to love their children's mother as Christ loves Christians
- to lead their children's mother as Christ leads the Church
- to work and earn the family's income for food
- to bring up his children in the training and instruction of the Lord.

Even when these different God-given functions are rejected in the world, Christian fathers may not abolish them in the kingdom of God. Especially when the children are teenagers, they need a father who gives them attention and friendship, advice and encouragement.¹

(3) Also in a family, the father and mother reap what they sow.

Read Galatians 6:7-8; Ezekiel 16:44.

Notes. When a father loves like Christ and leads like Christ, it will not be difficult for the mother to love him and to submit to his leadership in the family! The children will observe this and will learn how they should love, lead, respect and submit to authority in a practical way. When the father and mother devote themselves to their God-given responsibilities, the children will observe this and will learn what it means to be a father or a mother in the kingdom of God. And then, according to Ezekiel 16:44, "the daughter will be like the mother" and "the son will be like the father!"

(4) The above reasons show why every child needs a father and a mother.

Read Malachi 2:13-16; Luke 14:12-14; James 1:27.

Notes. One reason why God hates a divorce is that a divorce causes incalculable damage to the children! God uses the Christian marriage and the Christian family to raise godly offspring (children)! In the case where the father or mother has died or has been divorced, the Christian brothers and sisters should give extra attention to the children of the widow, widower or divorced person. They ought to invite these children or orphans often into their families so that they may also learn these important spiritual truths.

¹ The God given responsibilities for husband and wife remain regardless who is the breadwinner.

3. The example of a parent's reaction to people and circumstances.

Discover and discuss. In which circumstances *could* a parent have influence on his child?

It is very important that children see how their parents respond to other people and their circumstances, especially difficult people and difficult circumstances.

(1) Following the good example of the parents.

Read 1 Thessalonians 1:3; 5:14; Romans 8:28.

Notes. Facing difficult people and difficult circumstances are opportunities for the parents to set an example in *love* towards difficult people, *faith* in challenging situations and *hope* in difficult situations. Children admire their parents when they warn those who are idle, encourage the timid, help the weak, and are patient with everyone. In this way children learn to follow the example of their parents and do the same things! When children see how their parents trust in God and submit to God's purposes in their difficult circumstances, they will tend to follow their good example later when they are adults.

(2) Following the bad example of the parents.

Read Galatians 6:7-8; 1 Peter 2:23.

Notes. But children not only tend to follow the good example of their parents. They also follow the bad example of their parents. If their parents criticise, judge or gossip about other people, spread hatred against a particular group of people (racism, religious hatred), retaliate when people insult them, take revenge (honour killing), and threaten when people cause them suffering, then their children will tend to follow their bad example later when they are adults.

4. The example of a parent's relationship to God.

(1) The place of Christ in the Christian family.

Discover and discuss. What place *should* God or Christ have in the Christian family's home?

Read Deuteronomy 6:5-6.

Notes. Parents should set an example to their children in how they relate to God. For example, by reading the Bible in the home every day and by praying. In Deuteronomy 6:5-6, God commands the parents that they should first "love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength". Parents should let God's commandments rule in their hearts and guide them in how they live and behave. God should be the first in the father or the mother's life and also first in the Christian home!

(2) The place of children and ministry in the Christian family.

Discover and discuss. What place *should* children or ministry *not* have in the Christian family's home?

Read Matthew 10:37; 1 Timothy 3:4-5.

Notes. In Matthew 10:37 Jesus teaches, "Anyone who loves his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me". Therefore, parents should *resist the temptation to let their home and family revolve around the children*, because it would make the children selfish and it would spoil the children! Instead, parents should help the children to develop maturity, responsibility and character.

Likewise, the Christian *home and family should not revolve around a Christian ministry*, because it would make the child feel neglected and it would cause the child to give up on his parents. The Christian home and family should instead revolve only around the Lord Jesus Christ and his teachings! In this way there will be the best possible balance between the various responsibilities and priorities of both the parents and the children.

B. A PARENT'S RESPONSIBILITY TO LOVE HIS CHILD

1. Love according to the principles in 1 Corinthians 13.

Discover and discuss. How *should* Christian parents love their children in a practical way?

Read 1 Corinthians 13:4-8.

Notes. The parents should love their child not in a sentimental way or by spoiling the child, but according to the principles in the Bible. "Patience" is the love that can wait. It is the love that does not enforce kindness on the child, but can wait to show kindness. "Kindness" is the love that is friendly, that helps and that does not let a chance go by to do the child good. What is really good for the child is not determined by the wishes or nagging of the child, but by God's Word and the experience of the parents. "Not being jealous" is the love that generously gives the child appreciation, credit and honour where he deserves it. "Not boasting" is the love that is modest about its own merits and accomplishments and does not try to impress the child. "Not proud" is the love that is humble about its own strengths and weaknesses in the relationship to the child. A child quickly sees through the pretensions and double standards of their parents. "Not behave rudely" is the love that shows good manners and tact towards the child. "Not self-seeking" is the love that unselfishly seeks the interests of the child above its own. "Not easily angered" is the love that meekly submits to the injury and hurts the child sometimes causes. Etc.

2. Love by giving undivided attention.

Discover and discuss. How *should* Christian parents give attention to their children in a practical way?

(1) Give undivided attention.

Read Galatians 6:7-8.

Notes. Parents need to give undivided attention to their children, otherwise, when the children become teenagers, they will no more want to give any attention to their parents! Parents reap in their children's teenager years what they have sown during their childhood!

(2) Listen attentively.

Read Proverbs 18:13.

Notes. Parents should learn to listen attentively to their children when they ask questions and talk. Parents should not listen selectively, making assumptions about what the child is saying. They should also be patient and keep on listening to the child until the child is completely finished speaking. They ought to take serious what the child is saying and help the child to feel accepted (Romans 15:7). When children feel that their parents are critical about what they are saying, or make fun of them, then they feel that their parents are not only rejecting what they are saying, but are also rejecting them! If a child is not listening to his parent, maybe it is because the parent is not listening to his child!

(3) Spend uninterrupted time.

Read Mark 3:13-14.

Notes. Jesus wanted his disciples to be "with him". By being "with them", was the only way he could influence them and train them. Parents should plan to spend uninterrupted time with their children on a regular basis. Do creative things together, like playing with them, going on an outing with them, making music with them, telling them stories, etc. Do everything that is really important "with them"! Do not allow other things to interrupt your time with the child! ²

(4) Spend money and yourself.

Read 2 Corinthians 12:14-15.

Notes. Paul says that parents should *save up* for their children. He says that he would very gladly spend for his spiritual children everything he has. Parents should be glad to *spend* any available money on *the real needs* of their children. They should give them a good training at home, at school, at a sport school, by means of courses, and the best possible spiritual training at a youth club. They should be willing to do this even if it means that the parents need to cut back on some other expenditures or both work to earn money when the children are out of the home. And later, the parents should try not to become a financial burden to their children.

Paul also says that he would be willing to *be utterly expended for the sake of their souls*. Even if the child loves his parent less, the parent should love the child more. Do not bind the child to yourself, but to Christ! Also Christ did not come to be served, but to serve and give his life as a ransom for many (Mark 10:45). Of course, the parents need to distinguish between making sacrifices for the real (emotional, intellectual, physical, social and spiritual) needs of their children and simply spoiling them by giving them everything they desire to have!

3. Love by developing maturity and a healthy interdependence.

Introduce. Some children become completely independent from all authority and control. Such children could become criminals or rebels. Other children become completely dependent on their parents or another person. Such children could remain immature and develop co-dependent relationships. Complete independence from people as well as complete dependence on people are unhealthy relationships.

On the one hand, the Bible teaches that mature Christians need one another and ought to serve one another (1 Corinthians 12:21; 1 Peter 4:10). Therefore children *need to learn a certain amount of healthy interdependence in their relationships*. On the other hand, the Bible prohibits that Christians become slaves of other people in any way (Jeremiah 17:5-8; Galatians 1:10). Therefore, children *need to develop a certain amount of healthy independence in their relationships with other people*.

Discover and discuss. What does the Bible say about Christian parents helping their children to develop maturity and a healthy interdependence?

(1) Give children a yoke to bear that consists of assigned tasks and responsibilities.

Read Lamentations 3:27.

Notes. Parents help their children to develop maturity and a healthy interdependence by giving their children a yoke² to bear that consists of assigned tasks and responsibilities. Lamentations 3:27 teaches, "It is good for a man to bear the yoke while he is young". When children have too much free time, they feel bored and get involved in all kinds of mischief, unsocial behaviour and even crime. But when children are kept busy with healthy activities and responsibilities, they develop into mature and responsible adults. The tasks and responsibilities they learn in the protective circle of his home and family will later enable them to do these same things in the unprotected circle of society!

² Switch your mobile phone off!

³ A yoke is put on the necks of two oxen that must pull a plough together

(2) Teach children to be content and grateful.

Read Philippians 4:11-12; 1 Timothy 6:6-10.

Notes. Parents help their children to develop maturity and a healthy interdependence by teaching them contentment and gratitude. When parents really love their child, they will not give their child everything the child desires to have. Giving a child whatever he wants will result in spoiling the child. But when he learns to be content in situations where he does not have something he wants he will learn to be creative and to take the initiative to worthwhile action, for example, to get a part-time job, to study an extra course or to help out in a community centre.

(3) Do not be over-protective.

Read Isaiah 43:2.

Notes. Parents help their children to develop maturity and a healthy interdependence by not being over-protective. Children must learn to live and work in this world with all its dangers, temptations, setbacks and disappointments. In Isaiah 43:2, God promises his children, “When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you (think of crossing the Red Sea). When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned (think of Daniel’s friends in the fiery oven)!” When parents try to protect their children from every kind of danger or evil, the child will never learn how to face danger or how to resist evil! He will also never learn to trust God to help him when he has to go through deep problems or face difficult temptations.

Of course, parents should protect the child whenever they think that it is still necessary. However, they should also give their children opportunities to face their own temptations, problems and dangers. Only in this way, children gain insight and wisdom, learn how to make good choices and decisions and to put their trust in God’s promises in the Bible. Stand with the children, discuss the problems in the world and its consequences with them, encourage them to get up again when they fall, give them wise counsel and pray for them, so that the children do not get overwhelmed by the difficulties. But do not take away these problems and opportunities to learn away from children!

(4) Do not be possessive (demanding).

Read Psalm 127:3.

Notes. Parents help their children to develop maturity and a healthy interdependence by not being possessive (demanding). Children must know that they are not the possession of their parents, but of God! Their parents are not “the boss”, but Christ is the Lord! Children are *entrusted* to parents for a period of time in order to raise them on behalf of God. “The possessive love” of especially a mother is when she demands to know the child’s every thought and action; or when she tries to manipulate the child’s actions; or when she emotionally tries to hold on to the child by making the child dependent on her care and help. “The possessive love” of especially the father is when he tries to make decisions and choices that the child should make himself. If parents have possessive-love towards their children, the children will also become possessive! They will become self-centred and selfish, greedy or stingy, secretive or arrogant. Instead, parents should make it their aim to teach the child some very important characteristics, like self-denial, sharing and service.

Summarise. Parents have the responsibility to help their children develop maturity and a healthy interdependence. However, children are also greatly influenced by their friends, their teachers at school, sport instructors and courses, the mass media, their (smart) mobile phones, electronic games, television and the books they read. Therefore, if parents have a good conscience that they have done their best in bringing up their children, and yet their children do not turn out to be mature and responsible adults, then the parents should not blame themselves.

Ultimately every child is himself responsible for what he becomes and what he does! Ecclesiastes 11:9; 12:1,13-14 say, “Be happy, young man, while you are young, and let your heart give you joy in the days of your youth. Follow the ways of your heart and whatever your eyes see, but know that for all these things God will bring you to judgement. ... Remember your Creator in the days of your youth, before the days of trouble come and the years approach when you will say, ‘I find no pleasure in them’ - ... Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. For God will bring every deed into judgement, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil.”

5	PRAYER (8 minutes)	<i>[REACTIONS]</i> PRAYER IN RESPONSE TO GOD’S WORD
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Take turns in the group to pray short to God in response to what you have learned today.
Or divide the group into two’s or three’s and pray to God in response to what you have learned today.

6	PREPARATION (2 minutes)	<i>[ASSIGNMENT]</i> FOR NEXT LESSON
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(Group leader. Give the group members this preparation for at home in writing or let them copy it down).

1. **Commitment.** Be committed to make disciples and build Christ’s Church.

2. Preach, teach or study the teaching of “Bringing up children in the Christian family” together with another person or group of people. Make sure that you use biblical principles as the basis for bringing up children.
3. Personal time with God. Have a quiet time with God from half a chapter of Luke 4:31 – 7:50 each day. Make use of the favourite truth method. Make notes.
4. Memorisation. Meditate and memorise the new Bible verse. (2) Love and lead. Ephesians 5:23,25. Daily review the last 5 memorised Bible verses.
5. Bible study. Prepare the next Bible study at home. John 11. Make use of the five steps method.
6. Prayer. Pray for someone or something specific this week and see what God is doing (Psalm 5:3).
7. Update your notebook on building Christ’s Church. Include your notes on personal time with God, your memorisation notes, your teaching notes and this preparation.