

CHURCH.

LESSON 27

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)	[QUIET TIMES] LUKE 8:1 – 11:28
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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 8:1 – 11:28).

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

3	MEMORISATION (5 minutes)	[CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE] (3) TITUS 2:4-5
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Review two by two.

(3) Love and submit. Titus 2:4-5. Then they can train the younger women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled and pure, to be busy at home, to be kind, and to be subject to their husbands, so that no one will malign the word of God.

4	TEACHING (85 minutes)	[CHURCH BUILDING MINISTRY] TRAINING CHILDREN IN THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY
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Introduce. This teaching is about training children. We will learn what the Bible teaches about the Christian parent's responsibility to train his children. "To train" means to give your child intellectual, physical, moral and spiritual teaching and exercise. See also "A parent's responsibility to discipline his child" in manual 7, supplement 9.

Parents might lose heart when they read all these principles in the Bible. They might feel that they are not good parents or that they will never be able to put all these biblical principles into practice. The intention of this training is not to discourage parents, but to give parents a guideline about how to teach and train their children. Not a single parent in the world is perfect. Most parents begin to think about raising and training their children only after they get their first child. Most parents are very inexperienced when they begin the teaching and training of their children.

Do not wait with teaching and training your children until you think that you are a perfect parent. God gives children to parents also to develop (train) the parents and give them experience. God also gives the parents grace to raise those children, train, encourage and discipline them. Therefore, choose one aspect in which you would like to train your child and concentrate on this aspect until you think that your child has learned this before you move on to the next aspect. Continue to depend on God's grace in bringing up your children!

Proverbs 22:6 says, "Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it." The word "training" means to dedicate or give a child up to the way God wants him to go. It means to teach the child and then train him to put that teaching into practise. For a parent "teaching" is not the same as "training". For a child "listening" is not the same as "learning"!

The vinedresser does not train the vine by telling it how to grow. Nature is too strong for mere theory! The vinedresser must *prune* and *curb* the vine, *direct* and *lead* it in the way it should go. He builds poles and pulls wires between them in order to direct the vines in the way they ought to grow. Every year he prunes the dead and wild branches away, in order that the healthy branches may bear the best fruit. Likewise, parents draw up plans how to teach and train their children and set boundaries in order to direct them in the way they ought to grow. Sometimes they need to prune and curb them, punish or stimulate them to grow by means of healthy assignments, practising and especially encouragement.

A. THE METHODS OF TRAINING

Read 1 Corinthians 11:1; Ephesians 3:20; Ephesians 6:4; Colossians 3:21 (note the words: exasperate, instruction and training). Galatians 6:4-5; Proverbs 10:17.

Teach. Four very practical methods of training a child are the following:

1. Set an example and pray for the child.

It is useless to try to teach a child some truth that the parents are not practising themselves! Such hypocrisy only exasperates a child! The best habits are not simply “taught” by the parents, but are “caught” by the child by observation of a good example and by doing it together! Therefore, parents need to train themselves in order to train their children. And because parents realise that they need God’s help in this very much, they show their dependence on God by praying. God promised to do much more than what the parents pray for or even can imagine (Ephesians 3:20)!

2. Instruct the child in the Bible.

Training begins with good teaching of truths. A child must gain knowledge of the truth as it is revealed in the Bible. The truth in the Bible consists of the most important beliefs, convictions, values and norms. Parents must use the Bible to teach and to find answers to the questions the child asks. Show the children that the Bible gives answers to all the important questions in life.

A child must *understand* what the truth (this knowledge) is. He must have *insight* in what is important and why it is important. He must learn *wisdom* how to do the right thing: when to do it, to whom to do it and what the best means to do it are. Therefore, parents should use the Bible in teaching the truth, in motivating to obey and in training practical habits.

3. Train the child (by practising) to acquire good habits.

Training is needed to acquire good habits. A child must learn to *obey* or *apply* the truth to his own life. Application is learned in three stages:

- First, the child learns from the example of his parents and by doing it together with his parents.
- Then he learns to do the truth all by himself, but still under the supervision of his parents.
- Finally, he learns to do the truth as his own habit, without any human supervision.

A child needs his parents as coaches or mentors and he needs a lot of urging and encouragement. His parents should urge him to persevere until he has accomplished his goal. In the area of practising habits, the parents and children must realise that real “freedom” has boundaries. Therefore, parents should protect their child from having to deal with too many choices at one time. In training habits, parents should never compare one child with another child, because God has made all children very different from each other. Comparing is very demoralising. Parents should rather motivate by complimenting the child’s own progress and by giving rewards that they had not promised beforehand.

4. Correct and discipline (punish) the child when it goes the wrong way.

Training also includes correction and discipline (punishment). This helps a child to go the way he ought to go. See supplement 9. Concerning punishment, the parent must distinguish between:

- the child’s need for the reassurance of the love of his parents
- the child’s rebellion against their authority.

Proverbs 10:17 says, “He who heeds discipline shows the way to life, but whoever ignores correction leads others astray”.

B. THE MOST IMPORTANT AREAS OF TRAINING

Introduce. In Luke 2:52 we read, “Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and men”.

This verse states that God regards the following areas as important:

- “Wisdom” is the area of knowledge and the application of knowledge in various situations of life.
- “Stature” is the area of physical development.
- “Favour with God” is the spiritual area.
- “Favour with man” is the social area.

The emotional area is not specifically mentioned, but is indissolubly bound to all the other areas. The areas mentioned in Luke 2:52 are very large areas and cannot all be discussed in this study. We will study a few very important specific areas, like obedience, respect, walking with God, self-control and a sense of responsibility. These areas are indispensable for a child’s development.

1. Train the child to obey.

Read Ephesians 6:1.

Discover and discuss. Why is it so important to train a child to obey what is right?

Notes. One important area of training is to train a child to obey his parents. Ephesians 6:1 commands, “Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right”. This is the first and most important truth that parents should teach their child! It is the key of training the child to obey others (especially: God/Christ, his teachers, the government, his employer, and the elders in the church)! Obedience is the key to raising children. In this Bible passage, Christian children are commanded to obey their parents, not because their parents are Christians (“in the Lord”), but because the children are

Christians (“in the Lord”). It is pleasing to God if children obey their parents, whether they are Christians or not. That is why training children to obey their parents is “right in the eyes of the Lord”.

When a child has learned to obey his parents in whatever is right and good, he is able to learn all the other important areas of his training. He will most probably also later obey God and obey all the governing authorities that are placed over him. However, if a child fails to learn obedience, he cannot be trained in anything except evil and foolish things. Obedience is the key to train good habits and a life-style, which will please God, honour parents and contribute to build up the country!

If parents have failed to train a child in obedience, then it is always better to begin late than never. The parents should tell their child that they have failed to train him in obedience and they should pray and confess their failure to God. God will forgive the parents and give them new wisdom how to train their child. After that, the parents should begin at once to train their child in obedience. If parents tolerate the disobedience and rebellion of their child, they are actually training him in disobedience, rebellion and eventually criminality!

Parents should help their child to be engaged in pleasant and profitable activities, or else he is sure to get into mischief and later into crime. Train him by requesting him to do certain responsibilities at home and in the family business and by expecting obedience. Praise him and encourage his prompt obedience. If he does not obey immediately, give the child a choice between two alternatives, but act or else you encourage him to be disobedient. However, if their child hesitates to do what he must, because of insecurity or fear, then the parents need to encourage him and help him to do it until he has enough confidence to do it by himself.

2. Train the child to honour his parents (and others).

Read Ephesians 6:2-3.

Discover and discuss. How could a child honour his parents in a practical way?

Notes. A second important area of training is to train a child to honour his parents (and others) and treat them with respect. To “honour” means to regard highly, to show consideration and to love parents without reluctance, selfish motives or fear. There are three ways in which children should learn to honour their parents:

(1) A child honours his parents by not arguing or fighting with them.

Instead of quarrelling, a child should learn to state his point of view in a gentle way and then allow God to work it out in the way that will please him most. In this way the child shows that he believes in the sovereignty of God. Children should also not gossip about their parents or anybody else. Gossip only dishonours people! (Proverbs 17:9)

(2) A child honours his parents by taking their suggestions and advice seriously.

The Bible says that a child should acquire truth, wisdom, discipline and understanding from his parents (Proverbs 23:23). Whenever his parents make suggestions or give advice, a child should consider seriously what they say. While a child has the opportunity, he should learn from the many years of experience and accumulated wisdom of his parents.

(3) A child honours his parents by including them in his real life.

2 Corinthians 6:11-13 teaches Christians “to open wide their hearts” to one another. A child should learn to take the initiative to talk with his parents and learn to ask them questions. He should learn to talk to them about his various activities. He should learn to tell them what he does at school or at work, what he does together with his friends and what he does at Church. He should learn to talk to them about his relationships: who his friends are and how they relate to one another. He should also learn to talk to them about his faith and his thoughts, feelings and plans. Again, Christian parents should set an example in this area as well. If the Christian parents do not open up their hearts to their children, then how can they expect their children to open up their hearts to them?

3. Train the child to walk with God.

Discover and discuss. How could parents train their child to walk with God in a practical way?

(1) *Read* Deuteronomy 6:6-9; 32:46.

God teaches parents to “impress” God’s commands on the minds and lives of their children. He says, “Talk about God’s commands when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up”. Parents and children should allow the Word of God to control the actions of their hands, the thoughts in their minds and the atmosphere and activities in their home! God teaches parents, “Take to heart all the words I have solemnly declared to you this day, so that you may command your children to obey carefully all the words of this law”.

(2) *Read* Romans 13:1-5; Acts 5:29; 1 Peter 2:19.

God has given parents the responsibility to train their children to know God and to obey God and no governing authority in the world has the right to forbid parents to do this! The reason for this is that God himself has established the governing authorities together with their specific responsibilities and the limitations of their authority. If a government assumes totalitarian authority and tries to force Christians to do what God forbids, or forbids Christians to do what God commands, then Christians ought to gently resist the government in that issue. All governments are ultimately responsible and accountable to the God, who revealed himself in the Bible!

(3) Read 2 Timothy 1:5; 3:15-17.

The Bible is the most important book children should study throughout their lives. The Bible gives people knowledge of salvation. The Bible teaches them truth and trains them how to live righteously. The Bible makes immature Christians and children mature and equips them for their task in life. Therefore, parents should train their children to read and study the Bible and especially to obey the Bible.

Parents may make use of all kinds of means. They could have a family Bible time, for example, the father reads a passage from the Bible aloud. Then they discuss it together. They could memorise Bible verses together. At different stages of a child's development, the parents ought to explain the gospel to their child and give him an opportunity to receive Jesus Christ into his life, if he has not done this before!

When children are old enough, their parents could teach them to have their own quiet time every day. A family could also serve Jesus Christ together in their neighbourhood (James 2:15-17). In ways like these, a child could acquire the same kind of sincere faith as his parents have. Parents should train their child to grow in faith and not deny him various experiences in which he must learn to trust God. Parents must also tell their experiences with God to their children.

4. Train the child to have self-control.

Read 2 Peter 1:5-6; Proverbs 10:19; 15:1; Ephesians 4:26.

Discover and discuss. How could parents train their child to have self-control?

Notes. "Self-control" is the ability to restrain one's desires, words and actions. Parents should train their child to restrain his desires, words and actions. For example, parents should never allow the child to nag until he gets what he wants. If they do, the child will always use this method to get what he wants!

Proverbs 15:1 says, "A gentle answer (of the parent) turns away wrath (of the child), but a harsh word (of the parent) stirs up anger (of the child)." And Proverbs 10:19 says, "When words (of the parent) are many, sin (of the parent) is not absent, but he who holds his tongue is wise". The parent should set an example of dealing with his children in a calm and quiet way. And he should train his children to have the same calm and quiet ways when the children talk to one another, especially when they are angry or upset.

Some children express their anger in an uncontrolled way, like in violent anger, which destroys property or in insulting anger, which hurts feelings, offends modesty and damage reputation. Wise parents will allow their child to express his anger, but they should also help him to develop self-control with respect to expressing his anger. "The anger ladder" illustrates expressions of anger from the worst at the bottom to the best at the top (See manual 4, supplement 17, Christian character: anger). The parents should train their child in self-control. Every time he gets angry, he should practise to express his anger in a more positive way. For example, if he used to express his anger in violent actions, he should learn to express his anger without using violence. And the parent should encourage or reward him when he learns to make progress in the way he expresses his anger.

Children should be trained to express self-control in five possible ways:

- To get angry slowly, that is, not to get upset about every wrong or to take every offence as a personal attack (James 1:19).
- Not to stay angry for longer than the same day (Ephesians 4:26).
- To stay away from another child who gets easily angered and might influence him (Proverbs 22:24-25).
- Without suppressing, denying or ignoring his own anger, to concentrate on the positive qualities of the person with whom he is angry (Romans 12:10).
- Not to keep a record of the wrongs done against him (1 Corinthians 13:5).

5. Train the child to develop responsibility.

Read Lamentations 3:27.

Discover and discuss. How could parents train their child to develop responsibility in a practical way?

Notes. Part of bearing the yoke when he is young, is to give a child specific responsibilities and to make him accountable for those responsibilities. Parents should give their child increasing responsibilities in the home and outside the home. For example, train him to keep the place where he sleeps and lives tidy and clean. Let him share in the family responsibilities in the home, on the field, in the shop or in the factory. Train a child to be responsible with money and possessions. Train him to travel. Train him to relate to all kinds of people and cultures. Teach him how to relate appropriately to the opposite sex. And train him to take up a responsibility in the congregation.

C. THE STAGES OF TRAINING

Teach. The teachings of the Bible concerning training a child need to be applied in a practical setting. There are various stages of training a child: Experience has taught that the most formative years of a child's life are between zero and five years of age and secondly between six and eleven years of age. Here follows a very short overview of four possible stages of training up to a child's eleventh year. Remember, there may be differences due to the circumstances, the culture, the sex and the personality of the child.

1. The first stage of training is up to about two years.

This is the important period to train a child to *obey*. In the physical area, a child ought to be trained in eating habits, motor skills, talking, etc.

2. The second stage of training is between about two and three years of age.

In this period most children test their parents to see how far they can go and how much they can get by with. In this period of *developing the will*, training discipline is important. The Parents need to give their child security by setting well-defined limits and by consistently punishing him when he transgresses these limits or by consistently commending him when he keeps these limits. In the emotional area, a child ought to be trained in his reactions, especially in *self-control*. During this period, he needs much *security and love* and often prefers to be with his mother.

3. The third stage of training is between about three and five years of age.

(1) In the physical area. Begin to train a child to keep his own body clean, etc.

(2) In the intellectual area. A child constantly asks “why?” The parents should take time to *answer the child’s questions*. Develop a child’s learning attitude by pointing out things about life, plants, animals, etc. to him. Read good books to him and teach him to sing nice songs. Do things together!

(3) In the social area. This is also an important period to begin training a child in *social skills*, like meeting people and making friends with his own age group.

(4) In the personality area. Begin to train him in *responsibility*. For example, train him to pick up its toys, to help in the house, etc. Continue to train him in *self-control* in expressing his emotions, especially to express his anger in the correct way.

(5) In the spiritual area. This is the important period to train a child to *walk with God*. Teach him the gospel, read him many Bible stories, teach him to memorise Bible verses, to pray and to sing.

4. The fourth stage of training is between about six and eleven years of age.

(1) In the physical area. This is the best period to train a child in household skills, musical training and playing games and sports. Teach a child healthy knowledge about the sexual area and train him to use money in a responsible way.

(2) In the intellectual area. This is the period a child loves to read, to collect and to travel. Therefore, stimulate him to read good books. Encourage him to collect interesting things. And make time to go to places together with your child.

(3) In the social area. This is the best period to develop traditional family activities that tie the family together. Have regular family meetings where the family plays together, has fun together or goes to visit people together. A good idea is to regularly have family meetings to make decisions and plans together. These meetings will help a child to understand how decisions are made and it is good to involve him in the decision-making and planning, especially in those decisions and plans that also affect the child. This is also the best period to involve your child when you help others.

(4) In the personality area. A child’s expression of feelings and emotions grows stronger and also more complex. The parents need to show *acceptance*. It is important that the parents build a strong bond of understanding and love with their children.

(5) In the spiritual area. This is an important period to help the child develop his relationship with Christ and to fellowship with other Christian children (in a Christian youth club and in Christian camps or conferences). The family should read and discuss the Bible together and pray together. The parents should begin to prepare their child for contact with non-Christian children. And finally, parents need to train their children in the Christian values and standards for behaviour. Parents need to pray regularly for their children that God will give them grace to make the Christian beliefs, commands, values and standards of life their own personal convictions.

5

PRAYER (8 minutes)

[REACTIONS]

PRAYER IN RESPONSE TO GOD’S WORD

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.

(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 "Training children in the Christian family" together with another person or group of people. If you have a child, begin to train him in accordance with the principles of God's kingdom, as recorded in the Bible.
3. **Personal time with God.** Have a quiet time with God from half a chapter of **Luke 11:29 – 14:35** each day. Make use of the favourite truth method. Make notes.
4. **Memorisation.** Meditate and memorise the new Bible verse. (4) Resolve conflicts. **Matthew 5:23-24.** Daily review the last 5 memorised Bible verses.
5. **Bible study.** Prepare the next Bible study at home. **John 12.** 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.