

(T) Welcome to **Discipleship training On The Air**. In this teaching series you may learn to become a disciple of Jesus Christ. Two teachers will teach from the Bible what is a disciple of Jesus Christ. As you listen to this programme, make notes in a notebook or record the programme. Today's teaching is: A DISCIPLE DEVELOPS HEALTHY PARENT-CHILD RELATIONSHIPS. We live in a time when families are breaking up. Children rebel against their parents. And parents get divorced. What does the Bible teach about the relationship between parents and children? Very much! For example, in Ephesians 6:1-4 is written, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honour your father and mother - which is the first commandment with a promise - that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth. Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord."

Why does the Bible say "fathers" and not "parents"? This is because in Ephesians 5:22-33, God appointed the husband to be the head of his wife and in 1 Timothy 3:4-5 he appointed the father to be the head of the family. Thus, the father is responsible to manage his family well. The mother is the father's "helper". A wise father will include her as his best team member in every aspect of family life. God gives two responsibilities to the fathers: to encourage them and to bring them up in the Lord. God also gives two responsibilities to children: to obey and to honour their parents.

(S) **POINT 1. FATHERS, ENCOURAGE YOUR CHILDREN**

How, do you think, can fathers exasperate their children? *To exasperate* means to discourage. There are many ways in which fathers can discourage their children. By observing the reactions of the children to their parents, you can know which things discourage them. For example the children get irritated, angry, depressed, withdraw or give up on their parents. These reactions are indications that the father ought to change his approach in dealing with his children. How can a father transmit respect to his children? By allowing his children to develop responsibility, personal convictions, a healthy personality and mature relationships.

(T) **First goal of fathers. Let your sons and daughters grow in responsibility.**

You should not try to make your children "happy children" all the time. You should rather train them to become "responsible adults". When you try to make your children happy all the time, they become self-indulgent children. They will use your goal "to make them happy" against you and will keep on nagging and complaining that they are "unhappy" until they get what they want. In this way, your children become spoilt, selfish and self-indulgent. They will eventually lose self-control in the areas of eating junk food, drinking alcohol, using drugs, sexual immorality and crime. However, if your goal is to train "responsible adults", then they will learn to take responsibility for every area of their lives. They will not later blame their parents or society for their failures. They will become healthy young people who have a good influence on their friends around them. Therefore, train your children to take increasing responsibility for more and more areas of their life. Then they will grow up to become responsible adults! Divide the training of responsibility in four stages. *The first stage* is when you make all the decisions for them. However, as they grow older, you should give them more and more responsibility. *The second stage* is to make decisions and choices together with your children and execute them together. Set a good example for them and also set the standards of quality and family rules. *The third stage* is to let your children make decisions and choices by themselves, but they still need to receive your approval and supervision. Their greater freedom demands greater responsibility and accountability to you. *The final stage* is to let the children do everything by themselves. Now they have become mature adults and are responsible and accountable not to you, but to God for everything they do. Some important areas to train responsibility are their schoolwork or job, family relationships, self-control, handling money, travelling alone, making friends and developing their own relationship with God.

(S) **Second goal of fathers. Let your sons and daughters develop their own convictions.**

You should not allow your children to drift on *your* personal convictions. You should rather stimulate them to develop their own convictions, beliefs, values and priorities. As long as you demand that your children drift on your personal convictions and opinions, they will never grow in developing their own convictions and opinions. Divide the training of convictions in three steps. *The first step*. Let your child discover the truths from the Bible for himself. *The second step*. Let your child choose his own application of that truth. *The third step*. Discuss the consequences of his application together. For example, concerning the issue of wearing clothes, the Bible has two principles, namely, clothing should be *morally acceptable*, not tempting and clothing should be *culturally appropriate* for the occasion. These two principles form the boundaries for a decision. Within these boundaries, your child should have a free choice. Let your child make his own choice or decision. After that, you should talk

with him about the consequences of his choice as well as the effect or influence his choice has on others as well as on himself.

(T) Third goal of fathers. Let your sons and daughters develop a healthy personality.

You should not continually suppress their emotional outbursts. You should rather give them room to express their emotions and develop a healthy personality. Personality is developed when both parents and children express themselves honestly and sincerely. Teenagers have strong emotions and they also express them! Fathers often don't like expressions of strong emotions, like anger, irritation, shouting, fighting, crying, etc. and try to suppress these emotions in their children. Fathers command their children to *shut up, to stop crying or not to talk like that to their parents!* These commands are also accompanied with strong emotions! However, the teenager is really trying to say, "This is I! This is what I really think! This is how I really feel! Accept me as I really am!" The teenager really wants a *sincere relationship*, but the father usually wants a *smooth relationship!* If the emotions of your child are continually suppressed, they will later surface in all kinds of asocial behaviour, like telling lies, committing crime, getting involved with drugs and sex, or they will surface in depression, like withdrawal, hidden anger, bitterness, bad attitudes, etc. Therefore, allow your children to express their emotions. This is the only way you can get to know how they really feel and this is also the only way they can get to know themselves as they really are! When they express their feelings or emotions, then help them to take responsibility for how they express their emotions. Help them to recognise the causes of emotions, to develop better ways to express their emotions in a sincere and loving way and to exercise self-control in expressing emotions.

(S) Fourth goal of fathers. Let your sons and daughters build mature relationships.

You should not develop *independence*, but rather a *healthy inter-dependence* in their relationships. The Bible places every believer in a specific family, a specific church, and in a specific society. The world-view of the Bible does not consist of individuals without any context, each one going his own way. The world-view of the Bible consists of individuals within families, churches and societies. The world-view of the Bible is that we all *need one another and have a unique contribution to make to one another.* Therefore, help your children to relate to older and younger people, to relate to people from different kinds of societies and social backgrounds, to make good friends and to develop healthy relationships with the opposite sex.

(T) POINT 2. FATHERS, BRING UP YOUR CHILDREN IN THE LORD

How should Christian parents bring up their children? Loving the child's mother and bringing up the child are the two main responsibilities of every father! To bring up a child in *the instruction of the Lord* means *to teach your child the truths of the Bible.* To bring up a child in *the training of the Lord* means *to exercise your child in obeying the truths of the Bible.*

First. Train your children to be good citizens in this world. *Training* above all means *to exercise them in putting truth into practise and to encourage them again and again.* Training sometimes includes *to discipline or to punish them.* Train your children especially in three areas. One. Train them to be mature intellectually, physically, spiritually and socially. Two. Train them to be wise. Three. Train them to love. Healthy families are the building blocks of a healthy nation!

Second. Train your children to be good citizens of God's kingdom. Train them to trust God in all circumstances and to obey God unconditionally. Train them to live a holy and righteous life. Above all, train them to love God, to love their neighbour and to accept themselves.

(S) POINT 3. CHILDREN, OBEY YOUR PARENTS

In some cultures in the world, children are taught to obey their parents throughout their life and under all circumstances. In those cultures, the parents have absolute authority over their children until they die. However, the Bible teaches that *the culture of the kingdom of God* is different. Until what age should children still obey their parents?

First. The example of Jesus. In Luke 2:51 we read that when Jesus was still a child of 12 years old, he was obedient to his parents on earth. However, in Mark 3 we read that when Jesus had become an adult and busy with the task of his life, he no more obeyed his parents or complied with their wishes. He had become an adult with his own God-given task in life and he could no longer remain dependent on his parents.

Second. The teaching of Jesus. When a person stops to be a child and becomes an adult, his relationship with his parents change. In Matthew 19:5 Jesus teaches that when a man marries, he *must* leave his father and mother and begin a new family with his wife. He must leave his parents emotionally and financially. He must also leave his parent's authority and, if possible, his parent's home. In Matthew 10:37 Jesus says, "Anyone who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me." If the choice is between your parents and Jesus Christ, then your parent's wish, no matter how ardent, should be rejected. Your supreme loyalty is to Christ and no other

relationship may replace it. Therefore, the Bible does not teach that Christians should obey their parents throughout their lifetime or under all circumstances. Instead, the Bible teaches that Christians should obey their parents only as long as they are still children, underage, immature and dependent on their parents. Christians are under no obligation to obey their parents when they are adults. Adulthood starts when Christians start their task in life or when they get married. Thus, obedience to parents has a time limit. Children should only obey their parents until they reach adulthood.

(T) POINT 4. CHILDREN, HONOUR YOUR PARENTS

To *honour* means to regard highly, to show consideration and to love without reluctance, selfish motives or fear. The following examples are intended for all people in their relationship to their own parents, their parents-in-law and to their heavenly Father. There are five ways to dishonour or honour your parents and your heavenly Father:

(S) First. Honour your parents by not arguing with them. Do not argue with them about things that have no real spiritual significance. For example, about which clothes are appropriate to wear, about which TV programme to watch or about who should do certain family chores. Arguing is a way to let your parents know that their point of view is ridiculous. How can you then honour your parents? State your 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 you show that you believe that God is in control of every situation and that God has the ability to accomplish what is best for you.

(S) Second. Honour your parents by taking their suggestions and advice serious. You dishonour your parents when you reject their advice without even considering it. How can you then honour your parents? Whenever your parents make suggestions or give advice, learn from them. While you have the opportunity, learn from their years of experience and accumulated wisdom. Learn especially things in the areas of their strengths, from their talents, skills, knowledge and know-how.

(T) Third. Honour your parents by including them in your real life. When you don't let your parents know what you are thinking and feeling or planning and actually doing or when you don't give them any chance to influence your plans, then you dishonour your parents. When you exclude your parents from sharing in your fun or in your pain, in your joys and in your hurts, then you dishonour them. Cutting your parents out of your real life and decisions is a way to let them know that they are not worth relating to! How can you then honour your parents? Communicate with your parents. This is difficult, but is still one of the best ways to honour your parents. Take the initiative to talk to them. Talk to them about your *activities*: what you do at school and at work, what you do together with your friends and what you do at church. Talk to them about what you *believe*: about God, people, the world and your Christian convictions. Talk to them about what you *think, feel and plan* to do. You also honour your parents by involving them in your plans and decisions. Respect your parents' experience and wisdom and seek their counsel. Even if your final decision goes against their desires, you give them a feeling that you have listened to them and have taken their views serious.

(S) Fourth. Honour your parents by serving them. When you only serve your parents when they ask you to do something, you dishonour them. Train yourself to *see* where you can serve, where anybody needs your help and if you can do something nobody else is willing or able to do. *Take initiative* to serve and help and don't wait till your parents ask you.

(T) Fifth. Honour your parents by loving them. When you only show love to them in the culturally required ways, like visiting them and giving them gifts, then you dishonour your parents. Genuine love goes far beyond the culturally required *filial piety*. Genuine Christian love is *patient* with their shortcomings and *forgives* the wrongs they have done to you. When you become a Christian, parents generally fear that your conversion will affect you negatively. They fear that you will do worse in your studies, you will not be able to get a good job, you will not be successful in life, and you will earn less money and thus will not be able to support your parents financially. They fear that you will lose your culture and that you will anger the god they are worshipping. *Explain* your Christian faith to them carefully and *prove* to them that you have become a more responsible and loving person through what Jesus Christ has done for you.

(S) POINT 5. ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT WEEK

First. Choose one aspect of training your children or honouring your parents and put it into practice.

Second. See the workbooks "Go and make disciples" and Internet on www. Etc.

Third. Listen on short wave radio every SATURDAY to WEDNESDAY to "Discipleship training on the air".