

(T) Welcome to **Discipleship training On The Air**. In this teaching series, you will have an opportunity to learn about the practical life of the Christian community. Two teachers will teach from the Bible about Church building ministries. As you listen to this programme, make notes in a notebook or record the programme. Today's teaching is: BRINGING UP CHILDREN IN THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY. We will learn what the Bible teaches about the responsibility of Christian parents to raise their children. Today 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, our children *belong to God*. God entrusts children to parents to raise them up on his behalf! In 1 Samuel 1:11,28 Hannah prayed for a child and when God gave her a child, she dedicated him to God for all the days of his life. God asks parents everywhere to bring their children up on his behalf and also according to his requirements that are taught in the Bible.

God has given parents three important responsibilities: to set an example, to love and to train their children.

(S) **POINT I. A PARENT'S RESPONSIBILITY TO SET AN EXAMPLE FOR HIS CHILD**

First. Set an example in your personal life.

The Bible warns against the bad example of parents. In 1 Kings 22:52 we read that king Ahaziah of Israel did evil in the eyes of the Lord, because he walked in the ways of his wicked father and mother.

The Bible also shows the influence of the good example of parents. In Proverbs 31:10-31 we read about the great influence of the good example of a mother. It says that her children and her husband stand up and praise her, because she is such a great blessing to them! It is very important that parents set an example in the following five areas: obedience, truthfulness, respect, wisdom and love. Proverbs 3:33 teaches, "The Lord's curse is on the house of the wicked, but he blesses the home of the righteous!"

(T) **Second. Set an example in your marriage relationship.**

In Ephesians 5:22-33 we read about the responsibilities parents have toward one another. The best way children learn about love, leadership, respect and submission is by observing their parents day in and day out.

The God-given responsibilities of the mother is that she should serve her husband by loving him, respecting him and submitting to him. 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. Especially when the children are young, they need a mother at home. They need someone to love them, train them and encourage them to grow up.

The God-given responsibilities of the father is that he should serve his wife by loving her and leading her. He should love her in the way 1 Corinthians 13 teaches. He should lead her as Jesus Christ leads the Christian Church. Jesus Christ is present and active in the midst of the Church. Likewise, children need a father who is often present at home and does activities together with his wife and children. The children will observe how their father serves by love and leadership and how the mother serves by love and being a helper. And then according to Ezekiel 16:44, "the daughter will be like the mother" and "the son will be like the father!"

(S) **Third. Set an example in your response to your circumstances.**

It is very important that children see how their parents respond to other people and to their circumstances. For the parents this is an opportunity to set an example in *love* towards people, *faith* in challenging situations and *hope* in difficult situations. 1 Thessalonians 5:14 teaches, "Warn those who are idle, encourage the timid, help the weak, be patient with everyone". When our children see how we serve and encourage needy people, they will learn from our example! When they see how we trust God in challenging or difficult situations, they will also learn to trust. But parents must also realise that their children will also follow their bad example. Parents must therefore not be revengeful and unforgiving (1 Pet 2:23). They must also not criticise, judge or gossip about other people.

(T) **Fourth. Set an example in your relationship to God.**

Parents should set an example to their children in how they relate to God. Parents should read the Bible and pray together with their children every day. In Deuteronomy 6:5-6, God commands the parents that they should first love God with all their heart and with all their soul and with all their strength. Parents should let God's commandments rule in their hearts and guide them how they live and behave. Children should see that the God of the Bible, who revealed himself through Jesus Christ, is the first and most important in the lives of their parents.

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 will 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 the television or computer or even around a Christian ministry*. It should only revolve around the Lord Jesus Christ!

(S) **POINT 2. A PARENT'S RESPONSIBILITY TO LOVE HIS CHILD**

First. Parents should love their children according to the principles in 1 Corinthians 13. Some parents think that they love their child when they give the child everything it asks or when they allow the child to do what it likes. The culture of some people teaches that boys are more important than girls and that those boys may show disrespect to their mothers and sisters, because they are women! All this is a very wrong kind of love and will eventually destroy the child. Love never spoils a child, but brings it up according to the principles in 1 Corinthians 13. *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 helps and that does not let a chance go by to do the child good. *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 own merits and accomplishments and does not try to impress the child. *Not proud* is the love that is humble about own strengths and weaknesses in the relationship to the child. *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 his own. *Not easily angered* is the love that meekly submits to the injury and hurts the child sometimes causes.

(T) **Second. Parents should love their children by giving undivided attention.** 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! (Gal 6:7-8)

One. Parents should listen to their children. Proverbs 18:13 teaches, "He who answers before listening - that is his folly and his shame". Parents should not listen selectively, making assumptions about what the child wants to say. They should also be patient and keep on listening to the child until the child is completely finished talking.

Parents ought to take serious what the child is saying and help the child to feel accepted (Rom 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 the child!

Two. 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 and telling them stories.

Three. Parents should save up for their children. 2 Corinthians 12:14-15 teaches that parents should save up for their children. Parents should love their children in a self-sacrificial way. They should be glad, not only to spend money for the best training for their children, but also to spend the best times of their life to do things together with their children. Parents should not just spend for them, but expend themselves for them. Parents should give them a good training at home, the best possible spiritual training and a good education.

(S) **Third. Parents should love their children by developing maturity and a healthy inter-dependence.**

One. Parents should not be negligent. They should give their child a yoke to bear. Lamentations 3:27 teaches, "It is good for a man to bear the yoke while he is young". God has given parents the responsibility to raise the child and therefore the parents should not neglect to do their duty to God. Developing or training children takes wisdom, time and lots of effort for the parents. But it also takes a lot of time, effort and self-discipline for the child! God says to parents that they should not be afraid to let their child *carry this yoke of activities, responsibilities and training*. When children have too much free time, they feel bored and get involved in all kinds of mischief and even crime. But when children are kept busy with healthy activities and responsibilities, they develop into mature and responsible adults. The activities and responsibilities that a child learns in the protective circle of his home and family will later enable him to do these same things in society!

Part of bearing the yoke is teaching your child to *be content* with what he has. Real love for your child will not give him everything he wants, because it will spoil him. But when your child learns to be content in situations where he does not have something, he will also learn to be creative and learn to take the initiative.

(T) Two. Parents should not be over-protective. They should support their child in his difficulties. 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. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned!” 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. Parents should protect the child wherever it is still necessary. But they should give the child the opportunity to face his own temptations, problems and dangers. Only in this way, the child gets the opportunity to learn wisdom, to make good choices and decisions and to trust God’s promises. Stand with your child, encourage him, give him wise counsel and pray for him, so that he is not overwhelmed by his difficulties. But do not take his opportunities to learn away from him!

(S) Three. Parents should not be possessive. They should teach their child self-denial, sharing and serving. Psalm 127 already taught us that every child belongs to God. Parents may therefore not become possessive and treat the child as something they own. Children are *entrusted* to parents and parents raise children on behalf of God. Possessive love of a parent is when the parent demands to know the child’s every thought and action. Possessive love does not want to let go of the child when it is necessary to let go of him. Possessive love is when the parent tries to make decisions and choices that the child should make by 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 their child some very important characteristics, like self-denial, sharing and service.

(T) Fourth. Parents should love their children by disciplining them.

One. Discipline is a very important way to love a child. Ephesians 6:4 says, “Fathers, do not exasperate your children. Instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord”. Notice that according to God’s Word, *the fathers* are responsible for the discipline and the training of their children, even though the mothers do it more in practice! The word ‘training’ in this verse means *training especially by means of discipline and correction.*

In Hebrews 12:10-11, God teaches the advantages of discipline: “Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best. But God disciplines us for our good, so that we may share in his holiness. No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it”. Discipline does not primarily mean to punish a child for stepping out of line. It rather means *to train a child in the way he ought to go* (Prov 22:6). Therefore, true love will discipline a child. But love will not discipline a child harshly, because God forbids the father to exasperate his children. To exasperate means to discourage. If parents love their child, they will discipline him, but they will not discourage him. Parents should be encouragers!

(S) Two. Discipline means setting boundaries or limits for important areas of life. If parents love their children, they will *not give them unlimited freedom!* Genuine love draws a circle around the child so that the child can *know the difference* between right and wrong, and between good and bad. Setting clear boundaries around the child helps the child to *feel secure* within these boundaries. The boundaries help the child to realise the bad consequences and the unhappiness it brings if he goes outside that circle! The boundaries function as fences. They *protect* the child and help him to know and feel sure that when he stays within these fences, he does things that please his parents. The boundaries or limits are often summarised in *the house rules* of a family. The parents clearly communicate with the child what these house rules are, and why they are important. Parents should not have unnecessary rules, but they should set clear limits. For example, parents should especially discipline their children in three basic areas: for disobedience, for dishonesty like telling lies, and for disrespect (Eph 6:1-3; Lk 2:48-51). Setting clear boundaries for the child is the only way to provide security for the child, because at all times the child knows what it may or may not do. When a child has learned to respect boundaries or limits in the home, he will also respect boundaries and limits in the society and in God’s kingdom.

(T) Three. Discipline means rebuking and correcting the child. Proverbs 27:5 says, “Better is open rebuke than hidden love”. In 1 Samuel 2:22-43 and 3:12-13 we read about Eli and his two sons. His sons did very evil things. Eli *talked* a lot to his sons, but *failed to rebuke* them and *restrain* them. He asked them, “*Why* do you do these things?” This question is not a proper rebuke, but rather a plea to stop. Instead, Eli should have asked his wicked sons, “*What* have you done?” He should have confronted them with their wickedness and the consequences of their wickedness. He should have rebuked them for their sin! To rebuke consists of several possible aspects of correcting: The parent begins by *exposing* the specific sin the child has committed. The child must know very clearly *what* his transgression was. The parent *convinces* the child *why* it is wrong in God’s eyes or the parent’s eyes. The parent *convicts* the child of the seriousness of his transgression, so that he feels guilty and ashamed of his transgression. Then the parent *rebukes* the child by scolding or disapproving of his conduct. If necessary, the parent *refutes* the arguments of the child when the child tries to justify himself without reason.

The appropriate response of the child is *to repent, to ask forgiveness and to reform* his ways. The appropriate response of the parent is *to forgive, to reaffirm and to encourage* the child. Finally, the parent *corrects* the child by helping it to go in the way it ought to go.

(S) Four. Discipline means promptly administering punishment. If the child persists in disobedience by being foolish, arrogant or rebellious, hardening his heart against his parents or challenging the authority of his parents, then the parent must *punish* the child in the appropriate way. Ecclesiastes 8:11 teaches, “When the sentence for a crime is not quickly carried out, the hearts of the people are filled with schemes to do wrong”. When the governing authorities of a country do not promptly punish criminals, then the criminals will become more arrogant and commit many more crimes! Likewise, when parents do not administer discipline promptly and clearly, then the child will wonder if his parents are serious or not. One child will become more and more arrogant and do wrong things. Another child will become more and more insecure and develop psychological problems.

Sometimes it is necessary to punish a child by making use of a rod. Proverbs 23:13-14 teaches, “Do not withhold discipline from a child; if you punish him with a rod, he will not die. Punish him with the rod and save his soul from death”. And Proverbs 20:30 teaches, “Blows and wounds cleanse away evil, and beatings purge the inmost being”. However, do not beat the child anywhere else than on his backside, in order to prevent damaging the child. Do not beat the child with your hand, because he will then fear your hands at all times. Rather *use ‘a rod’ as a symbol of punishment*. The child will fear the rod if he transgresses, but he will not develop an unhealthy fear for his parents.

(T) **ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT WEEK**

First. Teach people what the Bible teaches about raising children. Make sure that you use biblical principles as the basis for training.

Second. See the workbooks “Go and build Christ’s Church” and Internet on www.dota.net

Third. Listen every SATURDAY to WEDNESDAY on the radio to “Discipleship training on the air”.