

(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: TRAINING CHILDREN. We will continue last week's teaching and learn what the Bible teaches about the Christian parent's responsibility to raise his children. This week we will concentrate on discipline and training.

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

Four continued. Discipline means to promptly administer punishment. Why is a beating with a rod necessary at certain times? Proverbs 22:15 teaches, "Folly is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of discipline will drive it far from him". And Proverbs 29:15-17 teaches, "The rod of correction imparts wisdom, but a child left to himself disgraces his mother. Discipline your son, and he will give you peace; he will bring delight to your soul". Children sometimes do foolish things, or show disgraceful conduct to their parents, or they do evil or commit a crime in society. The various passages in Proverbs teach that at certain times punishment with a rod is necessary, in order to give the child a clean conscience and to bring peace in the home. It is necessary in order to turn him away from evil and foolishness, and to save his soul from death! When a parent promptly administers punishment, the child will grow wise and peace will return to the house and in the hearts of the children and the parents!

(T) Five. Discipline means expecting obedience consistently. Ecclesiastes 5:5 teaches, "It is better not to vow than to make a vow and not fulfil your vow". It is better never to make empty threats, like: "If you don't do this, then I will punish you!" Threats cause a child to live in fear or to tell lies and to plot secretly how to escape punishment. However, if a parent does make threats, then he must carry them out! If the parent does not carry out his threats, then the child becomes convinced that the parent cannot be trusted. The parent should expect obedience. He should not give in to the child's whims. He should not nag or plead with the child. If the parent gives in to the child's whims or nags the child to obey, then the child will always follow this pattern of scheming to escape punishment! The parent should not give the child a choice, but should expect what is reasonable of the child! Discipline means consistently expecting obedience from the child!

(S) Six. Discipline means encouraging the child to go the way he ought to go. The parent should not provoke the child to anger either by too much or too little discipline. Colossians 3:21 says, "Fathers, do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged". To embitter means to provoke to anger or to irritate. Parents should discipline their child firmly, but not in a hot temper. They should not make criticisms or judgements about the child's character, like for example saying to the child, "You are stupid!" "You never share!" "You are always lazy!" This is called character assassination and can later cause serious psychological problems in the child's personality. There are many ways in which fathers can discourage their children. One very frequent way to discourage children is to shout at them in anger and to say very nasty things about their character especially in front of other people! Proverbs 15:1 teaches, "A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger". By observing the reactions of the children to their parents, parents 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. Discipline should bend the child in the right direction, but should not break his spirit!

(T) Seven. Discipline means comforting the child after repentance or punishment. After the child has repented of his sin or the parent has punished the child for his transgression, the parent should *forgive* the child, *comfort* it and *reassure* it of his love! If the parent does not do this, he gives Satan a foothold in the child's life and the child might become bitter and revengeful. 2 Corinthians 2:5-8 teaches that after the punishment, the parent ought to forgive and comfort the child, so that it will not be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow. The parent should reaffirm his love for the child. This is best done by *praying together* with the child, by *giving the child a hug* and by *telling* the child that his father and mother love him.

(S) **POINT 3. A PARENT'S RESPONSIBILITY TO TRAIN HIS CHILD**

**First. What is the meaning of training?**

Proverbs 22:6 teaches, "Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it". The word *to train* means to commit the child to the way God wants him to go. It means *to educate* and *to train him up* in that way. Therefore, *teaching* is not the same as *training* and *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.

(T) **Second. What are the methods of training?**

Proverbs 22:6 and Ephesians 6:4 teach that training consists of four important aspects:

One. Training consists of setting an example and praying. It is hopeless to try to teach a child a truth which the parents are not practising themselves! The best habits are *not taught, but caught* by observing the example of the parents. Parents need to depend on God for their responsibility to train their children. Therefore, they need to pray. God promised to do much more than what the parents pray or even can imagine (Eph 3:20).

Two. Training consists of teaching the truth. The child must *know* the truth, the most important beliefs, values, convictions and standards of a life that pleases God. He must *understand* what the truth is, have *insight* in what is important and why it is important and gain *wisdom* how, when and to whom to do the right thing. Therefore, parents should use the Bible in teaching the truth, in motivating to obey and in training practical habits. They should also use the Bible to answer the questions of their children.

Three. Training consists of practising habits. The child must *learn to obey or apply the truth* to his own life. He learns by the example of his parents and by doing it together with his parents. Then he needs to learn to do the truth alone, but still under supervision, and finally to do the truth as a habit, without supervision. He needs coaching and encouragement, and 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 too many choices*.

In training habits, parents should *never compare one child with another* child, because God has made all children very different from one another. Comparing kills the child's motivation. Parents should rather motivate the child by *paying the child compliments for its own progress* and by *giving the child a reward* that has not been promised beforehand.

Four. Training consists of discipline and correction. This helps the child to go the way he ought to go. This part has already been discussed under "love by discipline". In the area of discipline, the parent should try to distinguish between the child's need for reassurance of their love on the one hand and the child's rebellion against their authority on the other hand. Proverbs 10:17 says, "He who heeds discipline shows the way to life, but whoever ignores correction leads others astray".

(S) **Third. What are the most important areas of training?**

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 four areas as important: the intellectual, physical, spiritual and social areas. The emotional area is included in the physical and the area of service in the spiritual. More specific, the following five areas of training are indispensable for the child's development:

One. Train the 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 to teach your child! It is the key to all the training of the child. If the child has learned to obey his parents in whatever is right and good, then he is able to learn all the other important areas of his training. He will 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 at all in anything except what is evil and foolish. Obedience is the key to train good habits and a life-style that will please God, honour parents and contribute to build up the country!

If the child is already much older and the parents have failed to train the child in obedience, it is still better to begin late than never do it. The parents should tell the child that they have failed to train him in obedience and they should pray and confess their failure to God. God will forgive and give the parents new wisdom how to train their child. After that, the parents should begin at once to train the child in obedience. If parents neglect to discipline disobedience and rebellion, they actually train the child to disobey and be rebellious!

Parents should help the child to be engaged in pleasant and profitable activities, or else the child is sure to get into mischief and later into crime. Train the child by requesting it to do small responsibilities and by expecting obedience. *Encourage prompt obedience* by expressing gratefulness immediately after their willing response. And if the child does not obey immediately, then the parent must persist with the request and discipline, or else he will encourage disobedience. The parent *must conquer the first battle* or else he might lose the whole war. However, if the child hesitates, then the parent needs to help him do it until he can do it by himself.

(T) Two. Train the child to honour his parents. Please review the programme of two weeks ago: Parents and ancestors.

(S) Three. Train the child to walk with God. In Deuteronomy 6:6-9, God teaches parents to *impress* God's commands on the minds and lives of their children. He says, "Talk about them 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 the home! In Deuteronomy 32:46, God teaches, "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". God has given parents the responsibility to train their children to know God and to obey God. No governing authority in the world has the right to forbid parents to do this! The most important book that children should study throughout their lives is the Bible! The Bible gives young people knowledge of salvation (2 Tim 3:15). The Bible teaches them truth and trains them how to live righteously (2 Tim 3:16). The Bible makes them a mature and complete human being and equips them completely for their calling or task in life (2 Tim 3:17). 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*. The father or mother reads a passage from the Bible and they discuss the passage together with the children. They could have a *family prayer time* (Eph 6:18). They could memorise Bible verses together. At different stages of the child's development, the parents ought to explain the gospel to their children and give them an opportunity to receive Jesus Christ into their lives! When the children are old enough, the parents could teach their children to have their own quiet time every day. A family could also serve Jesus Christ together in their neighbourhood. Parents should train the child to grow in faith. Parents should not deny children experiences in which they must trust the Lord. Also let the child share in the situations where the parents need to trust the Lord.

(T) Four. Train the child to have self-control. 2 Peter 1:5-6 teaches, "Make every effort to add to your faith ...self-control". *Self-control* is the ability to restrain one's desires, speaking and actions. Parents should train their child to restrain his desires, speaking and actions. 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! The parent should set an example of dealing with the child in a calm and quiet way. Proverbs 10:19 teaches, "When words are many, sin is not absent, but he who holds his tongue is wise". Likewise, parents should train their children to have the same calm and quiet ways when they talk to one another, especially when they are angry or upset.

(S) Five. Train the child to have responsibility. A part of bearing the yoke when he is young (Lam 3:27) is to train a child to have responsibility. Give the 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 the child to be responsible with money and possessions. Train him to travel, to relate to the opposite sex in the appropriate way and to take up a responsibility in the church.

(T) Fourth. What are the stages of training?

There are various stages of training: The most formative years of a child's life is between zero and five years of age and secondly between six and eleven years of age. Here follows a short possible overview of four stages up to a child's eleventh year.

The first stage of training is up to two years. This is the important period to train *obedience*. In the physically area, the child ought to be trained in eating habits, motory skills and talking.

The second stage of training is between 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. This is the important period to train *discipline*. The Parents need to give the child security by setting well-defined limits and by consistently punishing the child when it transgresses these limits. In the emotional area, the child ought to be trained in his reactions, especially in self-control. During this period, the child needs much security and love and often prefers to be with the mother.

The third stage of training is between three and five years of age. This is the important period to train the 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.

Continue to train him in self-control in expressing his emotions, especially to express his anger in the correct way.

This is also an important period to begin training the child in social skills, like meeting people and making friends with his own age-group.

Begin to train the child in responsibility. For example, train the child to pick up its toys and to help in the house.

In the intellectual area, the child constantly asks "why?" The parents should take time to answer their questions. Develop a learning attitude by pointing out things about life, plants and animals. Read good books to the child and teach him to sing songs.

In the physical area, the child needs to learn to keep his own body clean.

(S) The fourth stage of training is between six and eleven years of age. In the physical and social area, this is the best period to train a child in household skills, musical training and playing games and sports. Teach the child healthy sexual knowledge and train him to use money. This is the best period to involve the child when you help others. It is also the best period to develop traditional family activities that tie the family together.

A good idea is to regularly have a family meeting to make decisions and plans. These meetings will help the child to understand how decisions are made and it is good to let the child help to make the decisions and plans. Also have regular family meetings where the family plays together, have fun together or go to visit people together.

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 the child.

In the emotional area, the child's expression of feelings grow 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.

In the spiritual area, this is an important period to develop the child's relationship with Jesus Christ and fellowship with other Christian children. The family should read and discuss the Bible together and pray together. The parents should begin to prepare the child for contact with non-Christian children. And finally, parents need to train their children in the Christian values and standards for behaviour.

(T) **ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT WEEK**

First. Teach people what the Bible teaches about training 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](http://www.dota.net)

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