

(T) Welcome to **Discipleship training On The Air**. In this meditation and memorisation series you may learn how to build up the Christian Church. Two teachers will meditate on the meaning of a Bible verse about one characteristic of a believer in Jesus Christ and then memorise it together. As you listen to this programme, make notes in a notebook or record the programme.

In this eighth series, the Bible teaches five responsibilities of Christian parents with respect to raising their children. The topic of today's meditation and memorisation is: TO BRING UP IN THE LORD.

(S) **POINT 1. MEDITATION OF THE NEW BIBLE VERSE**

The new Bible verse that we will meditate and memorise is Ephesians 6:4. We will meditate the truths in the Bible together. Let me read Ephesians 6:1-4. "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.

The memorisation verse is: To bring up in the Lord: Ephesians 6:4: Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord. Ephesians 6:4.

(T) **First. Parents should train their children to obey them.**
Ephesians 6:1 says, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right."

Someone thought that this meant that Christian children should only obey their parents when their parents are "in the Lord", that is, *when their parents are Christians*. But that is not correct. It means that Christian children should obey their parents, because *the children are Christians!* While many non-Christians children disobey their parents, Christian children should obey their parents, because that is what Christ commands Christian children to do. Christian children should obey their parents even when their parents are not Christians, not considerate and not fair.

In some cultures in the world, children are taught to obey their parents throughout their life and under all circumstances. Until their parents die, the parents have absolute authority over their children! No matter how old the children are, as long as their parents live, the children must obey their parents. However, according to the Bible, these cultures are wrong. These cultures make the parents tyrants over their *adult* children and force the children to obey their parents, even when their parents are wrong or evil!

(S) Let us consider the example of Jesus himself. 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 3:22,31-34 we read that when Jesus had become an adult and was occupied with the task of his life, he no more obeyed his parents and he no longer complied with their wishes. He was an adult with an independent task in life. Moreover, in Matthew 10:37 the Bible teaches clearly that we should obey God more than our parents. 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 as long as they are still children, underage, immature and dependent on their parents. Adulthood starts when Christians leave the home of their parents, or when they are no longer dependent on their parents or when they get married. Thus, obedience to parents has a time limit. Children should obey their parents only until they are adults. But children should always honour their parents.

(T) **Second. Parents should train their children to honour them.**
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, whether they are still children, teenagers or adults, in their relationship to their own parents, parents-in-law and to the heavenly Father. There are five ways to dishonour or honour your parents and your heavenly Father.

One. Honour your parents by not arguing with them.

Do not argue with them about things that have no real spiritual significance. For example, do not argue 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 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.

Two. 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 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.

Three. 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 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 and the world. Talk to them about your Christian convictions. Talk to them about what you think, feel and plan to do. And 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) Four. 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 them, where they need your help and if you can do something for them, which nobody else is willing or able to do. Take the initiative to serve and to help and don't wait until your parents ask you.

Five. Honour your parents by loving them.

When you only show love to your parents 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 whomever they regard as 'god'. Explain your Christian faith to them carefully and prove to them that you have become a more responsible and loving person through what Christ has done for you.

(T) **Third. To bring up children is the responsibility of the father.**

This might surprise some people, because in their own experience or culture, the mother might have had the greatest part in bringing up children. Nevertheless, God's Word is the highest authority, and God's Word teaches that raising the children is the responsibility of the father. The father will of course involve the mother, and they will raise the children together, but the father must remain *responsible*. The father with the help of the mother should bring up his children by instructing them and by training them.

One. Instruction means to teach and imprint God's Word into the mind. Instruction should not merely be imparting knowledge, but should be imparting knowledge of the Lord in such a way that it becomes the child's convictions and beliefs, values and moral standard. God's Words that are written in the Bible should be engraved into the minds of the children, so that they will never forget it. Instruction includes warning them of the dangers and consequences of their actions.

Two. Training means to exercise the children to put the truth into practise and to encourage them throughout this process. Training includes discipline, correction and even punishment.

Three. Train your children to be good citizens in this world. First, train them to intellectual, physical, spiritual and social maturity. Then train them to be wise. And finally train them to love. Healthy families are the building blocks of a healthy nation!

Four. Train your children to be good citizens of God's kingdom. First, train them to trust God in all circumstances and to obey God unconditionally. Then 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) **Fourth. To encourage the children is the responsibility of the father.**

While children have the duty to obey their parents, parents have the duty to *encourage* their children. This passage is also written in Colossians 3:21, "Fathers, do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged." To encourage is especially the responsibility of the father. Although children are not perfect, fathers may not deliberately upset them or break their spirit. Fathers must decide to become encouragers!

There are many ways in which fathers can discourage or exasperate their children. By observing the reactions of your children to you, you can know which things discourage them. When you notice that your children get irritated, angry and depressed, or they withdraw or give up on their parents, they are probably discouraged! Such reactions with the children should stimulate the father to change his approach in dealing with his children.

Sometimes fathers exasperate or embitter their children by neglect. Fathers do not spend enough time with their children. Parents exasperate their children by overprotection, that is, by escorting the child everywhere and trying to control all its actions.

Parents exasperate or embitter their child by making unreasonable demands, or by discouraging their ideals. They do this when they deride their child when his ideal is to take up an occupation which his parents disapprove of.

Parents exasperate or embitter their child by not listening to their point of view, by not allowing them to express their convictions and emotions, especially anger, and by not giving them a choice or an input into the decisions that are made in the family.

(T) Fifth. Fathers should teach and train their children to grow in responsibility.

If your goal were to please your children, then your children would probably grow up to become spoilt, selfish and self-indulgent. However, if you train them to take increasing responsibility for more and more areas of their life, then they will grow up to become responsible adults! Teach responsibility through four stages. The first stage is when you make all the decisions for them. As children 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) Sixth. Fathers should teach and train their children to develop their own convictions.

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. Therefore don't demand that your children absolutely obey your convictions, beliefs, values and priorities, but rather encourage them and help them to develop their own convictions, beliefs, values and healthy opinions and help them to base it on the Bible! In this way they will become responsible adults. Teach convictions through 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 has a free choice. Your child makes his own choice or decision. And you discuss the consequences of his choice as well as the effect or influence his choice has on others as well as on himself.

(T) Seventh. Fathers should teach and train their children to build mature relationships.

Your goal should not be to develop independence, but healthy inter-dependence. 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, each one going his own way, but 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 make good friends, to relate to people from different kinds of societies and social backgrounds and to develop healthy relationships with the opposite sex.

(S) POINT 2. MEMORISATION OF THE NEW BIBLE VERSE

Write the Bible verse on a card or in a notebook. The topic today is "To bring up in the Lord" and the reference is Ephesians 6:4. Let us memorise the Bible verse together. Then let us take turns to say that part of the verse alone without looking at the Bible or notebook.

(T+S) To bring up in the Lord: Ephesians 6:4: Fathers, do not exasperate your children.

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(T) **POINT 3. REVIEW OF THE LAST BIBLE VERSES YOU HAVE MEMORISED**

Let us review the last 5 Bible verses that we have memorised without looking at our notebooks.
Series “Christian marriage”, verses 4-5 and series “Christian parents”, verses 1-3.

(S) To resolve conflicts: Matthew 5:23-24. Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift. Matthew 5:23-24.

(T) To remain faithful: Proverbs 3:3-4. Let love and faithfulness never leave you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart. Then you will win favour and a good name in the sight of God and man. Proverbs 3:3-4.

(S) To love by spending: 2 Corinthians 12:14-15. I will not be a burden to you, because what I want is not your possessions, but you. After all, children should not have to save up for their parents, but parents for their children. So I will very gladly spend for your souls everything I have and expend myself as well. If I love you more, will you love me less? 2 Corinthians 12:14-15.

(T) To develop all areas of life: Proverbs 22:6. Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it. Proverbs 22:6.

(S) To teach God’s Word: Deuteronomy 6:6-7. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Deuteronomy 6:6-7.

(T) **POINT 4. ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT WEEK**

First. Daily review the last five memorised Bible verses once every day for 5 weeks.

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”.