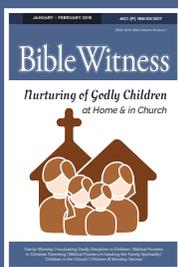


# Bible Witness

## *Nurturing of Godly Children at Home & in Church*



Family Worship | Inculcating Godly Discipline in Children | Biblical Pointers  
in Christian Parenting | Biblical Pointers in Leading the Family Spiritually |  
Children in the Church | Children and Worship Service

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## CONTENTS

### Nurturing of Godly Children at Home and in Church

- 3** Editorial
- 4** Family Worship
- 8** Inculcating Godly Discipline in  
Children
- 12** Biblical Pointers in Christian Parenting
- 18** Biblical Pointers in Leading the Family  
Spiritually
- 22** Children in the Church
- 24** Children and Worship Service

*The above articles are contributed by Rev Dr Prabhudas Koshy,  
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### Children's Page

- 30** Charles Haddon Spurgeon (1834-1892)  
"The Prince of Preachers" - Part 1  
*Jenny Lok*
- 35** Bible Trivia  
Exodus 34 & 35  
*Sarah Yong*

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# EDITORIAL

Though most Christian parents understand that parental guidance and nurture are instrumental in shaping their children's future, many of them fail to give their children's spiritual nurture the predominant place that Scripture demands. Generally, parents are distracted from that primary duty by their overriding anxiety over children's secular education and material success. Hence, children's spiritual education and success have often been set aside. This is a very lamentable situation.

The Holy Scriptures repeatedly insist on the importance of spiritual nurture by believing parents (cf. Genesis 18:19; Deuteronomy 4:9; 6:7; Psalm 78:3-6; Ephesians 6:4; 2 Timothy 3:15). The hopes of the present generation and the next hang upon this most important rule – “Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it” (Proverbs 22:6).

Charles Bridges (1794-1869), a great biblical scholar and churchman, commented thus on the importance of spiritual nurture of children: “... the religious training must not be the border of the garment, which might easily be cut off. It must be the pervading substance throughout. Begin, as Hannah did, with the dedication of the child to God (1 Samuel 1:28). This done – train him as God's child, entrusted to your care. Ask guidance from day to day – ‘How shall we order the child, and how shall we do unto him?’” (Judges 13:12). Train him, as a baptised child, in the principles of his baptismal engagements. Pray for him. Teach him to pray. Instruct him “from a child in the Holy Scriptures’, as the sole rule of faith, and directory of conduct.”

This issue of the Bible Witness is published to call Christian parents to acknowledge children's spiritual training as their greatest duty and to act resolutely to that end. May none of our children become “victim” to our parental ignorance and negligence of duty. Let us train every child to be a well-equipped soldier of Christ to fight sin and worldliness, that they may endure well in the service of the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Lastly, I would like to extend a warm welcome to you to participate in the 14th Bible Witness Retreat (*please refer to the details on the back cover page of this magazine*). The messages will be on the theme “Heavenly-Mindedness”, with the intended exhortation that you who are journeying to heaven may “Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth” (Colossians 3:2). Please sign up quickly!

Heartily in Christ,  
*Prabhudas Koshy*

# FAMILY W

Westminster Confession of Faith – that most sublime historical document of biblical doctrine (which is also our church’s doctrinal creed) – states in section 6 of chapter 21 (concerning “Religious Worship, and the Sabbath Day”) that:

“... God is to be worshipped everywhere, in spirit and truth, as, in private families daily, and in secret, each one by himself; so, more solemnly in the public assemblies, which are not carelessly or wilfully to be neglected, or forsaken, when God, by His Word or providence, calls thereunto.”

Truly, the Reformed churches have always taught that family worship is required by God in His Word. (The Church of Scotland even publishes a directory on family worship.) In fact, the Puritans saw family worship so foundational that they would bar a man from communion if he failed to lead his family in worship. Unfortunately, many in our churches do not seem to appreciate this blessed biblical practice; they reject the exhortations on family worship in Christian homes as legalism. Some modern-day so-called Christian articles even say “Family worship isn’t required by the Bible”!

However, anyone who carefully reads the Scriptures knows that God requires the heads of the families to lead their households in prayers, instruction of His Word and worship of Him. God’s Word also records the perils of families who do not seek the Lord diligently. Dear Christian readers, my prayer to God is that every Christian family in the church will enthusiastically respond to the divine call to maintain family worship in their home.

## **Biblical Religion Has Its Beginning in Families**

The Puritan Thomas Manton had said, “Religion was first hatched in families.” From Adam to Moses, true worship of God was largely a family affair, where the Patriarchs led their households in the worship of God through prayers, instruction of His Word and offering of sacrifices for the families. It was only from the time of Moses onwards (see the book of Exodus) that we begin to see gatherings of organised public worship. This fact is corroborated by Scriptural records of worshipful activities of Noah’s family (cf. Genesis 6:18; 7:1; 8:18-20; Hebrews 11:7), Abraham’s family (cf. Genesis 18:19), Isaac’s family (cf. Genesis 25:21), Jacob’s family (cf. Genesis 35:2-3), Job’s family

# WORSHIP

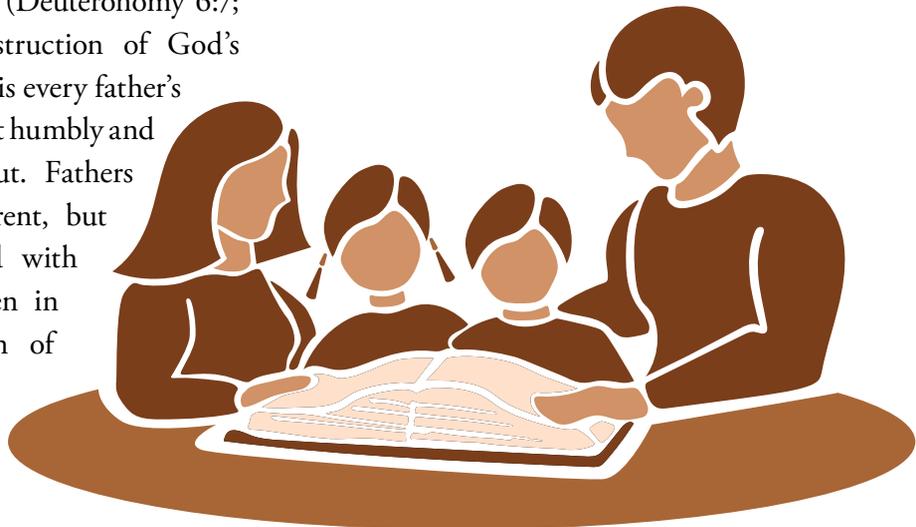
(cf. Job 1:5), among others. Furthermore, the Israelites, while in Egypt, were told to worship the Lord in their houses during the Passover (Exodus 12:21-28). Indeed, as Thomas Manton noted, “The families of the Patriarchs were all the churches God had in the world for the time.”

Notwithstanding the institution of public worship in Moses’ time, God nonetheless instructed the parents, through Moses, that they should be diligent to maintain daily teaching of His written Word in their homes, so that their children may grow up to be worshippers of God and doers of His commandments. “And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up” (Deuteronomy 6:7; cf. 11:19). Daily instruction of God’s Word to the children is every father’s responsibility; he must humbly and faithfully carry it out. Fathers must not be indifferent, but be deeply concerned with guiding their children in the divine revelation of God’s truths. This responsibility ought to be duly impressed

upon them. Daily biblical instruction of the young is God’s express command, and must be carried out with joy and commitment. Truly, God’s Word is the best inheritance that we can give to our children daily. It shall fill their hearts with sanctifying truth, wisdom and promises, that they may live a victorious Christian life in the midst of a wicked generation.

## Biblical Religion is the Foundation of Godly Families

Scripture reminds us that without God’s help, we cannot build our home – “Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the LORD keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain” (Psalm 127:1). Family worship is invaluable in that it is the foundation of



a family's godliness and unity, as well as that of child-rearing. How family worship thrives or fails to thrive will have a commensurate bearing on how the family will flourish spiritually. As such, family worship is the backbone of a community, even our church (cf. Psalm 128)!

Needless to say, when respective Christian families in the church are worshipping God daily and growing in the knowledge of His sanctifying Word, the church will have enormous moral and spiritual strength in the work of the Lord. On the contrary, if the families in the church are without daily prayer and spiritual nurture, the church will be utterly weak and dying. Oh, how wonderful it is that every Christian home by itself is a church of God, where parents and children worship the Lord!

Indeed, the head of the family leading his household in covenant faithfulness to God is perhaps the most significant way that God uses as a means of saving grace for many of the children in the church. However, if the father is absent (either because he is not a believer or he is dead), then let the mother lead her young children in the singing of hymns, reading of the Scriptures and prayer. Oh, how we need to guide our children to look at our Saviour daily, that their hearts be filled with the joy, peace and assurance of His forgiveness and redemption! Paul's words to young Timothy bear witness to the importance of the practice of family religion – “And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation

through faith which is in Christ Jesus” (2 Timothy 3:15).

## **Biblical Religion Paves the Way for Godly Leadership**

Moreover, the biblical counsel is that believing, worshipping and faithful households are necessary prerequisites for sound church leadership. For sound spiritual leadership, the Bible says we must have men who rule their house well. In 1 Timothy 3:5, Paul asks, “For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?” If the men in the church are not able to lead their own families in the worship of God, how could they lead a bigger family, even the church, to be true worshippers of God?

Therefore, it behoves Christian men to lead their families with a firm, fatherly hand and a gentle, penitent heart in the daily worship of God. Christian husbands and fathers, talk reverentially, authoritatively and lovingly with your family in your guiding of them to worship God.

As a matter of testimony, for more than two decades, I can unequivocally affirm that family worship has been the most important thing I do daily in my family. It is the highlight of my day. God is worthy to receive worship of my family every day, for He is our salvation and the source of all our blessings. Weak and frail as we are, we cannot do anything to please Him without seeking His all-sufficient grace, for He is our daily refuge and strength. Amen.



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# Inculcating Godliness in Children

The book of Proverbs has very relevant and helpful counsels for parents concerning inculcating good discipline in their children. In fact, many passages in Proverbs are written in the form of fatherly or motherly admonition for children. They constitute a vast array of wise counsels for diverse situations that parents would face in the bringing up of their children. All Christian parents do well to take heed of these biblical counsels for the proper upbringing of their children, including inculcating godly discipline in their children.

## Parental Responsibility

The actual responsibility of inculcating good virtues in our children lies with the parents. Sadly, though many parents know this truth, they have been pushing this immense responsibility to others so that they can pursue their own ambitions for luxurious living. The book of Proverbs has this grave warning for parents who forsake their God-given responsibility to provide appropriate instruction and discipline when it matters the most – “but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame” (Proverbs 29:15b). So, it advises every parent to “Correct thy son, and he shall give thee rest; yea, he shall give

delight unto thy soul” (Proverbs 29:17). Moreover, Proverbs 13:24 says “he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes.” In other words, parents must be prompt in instructing and correcting their children. Missing out on administering relevant instruction and correction, whenever the need or situation arises, is a sure recipe for much sorrow and trouble!

## Forms of Discipline

The word “discipline” in Hebrew (*musar*) implies both instruction and chastisement. In other words, discipline has to be administered through teaching, rebuke and correction – even the rod of correction. In Proverbs 29:15, we are unambiguously told that “The rod and reproof give wisdom”. If a child disobeys the parents after being instructed in proper attitude and conduct, steps must be taken to reinforce proper discipline in him through corrective measures, such as rebuke and the use of the rod (cf. Proverbs 4:2, 12; 15:32; 13:24; 22:15). Hence, “Withhold not correction from the child” (Proverbs 23:13).

## Areas of Discipline

The wisdom that God provides in Proverbs calls out to every parent to

# Godly Discipline

“Train up a child in the way he should go” (Proverbs 22:6). Biblical, godly nurturing of our children means not only do we first of all know the right path that our children should go, but also that we be committed to pointing them to the right way and training them to “travel” (i.e. stay on course) in it. Proverbs has much to say about what the right “path” entails. The following counsels cover some pertinent areas of discipline that parents should inculcate in their children.

## 1. Teach children to fear the Lord

First things first, “My son, fear thou the LORD ...” (Proverbs 24:21a). Everything hinges on this – “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; but fools despise wisdom and instruction” (Proverbs 1:7). We must impress on our children the absolute necessity to have reverence for the infinite, eternal and unchangeable thrice-holy God!

## 2. Teach children to honour the Lord in worship

Against the setting of fatherly instruction, Proverbs admonishes us to “Honour the LORD with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase: so shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine” (Proverbs 3:9-10). We must exhort our children to give glory to God for all His blessings, just as He has prescribed in the Bible.

He that spareth his  
rod hateth his son:  
but he that loveth  
him chasteneth  
him betimes.  
(Proverbs 13:24)



### **3. Teach children to obey parents**

“My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother” (Proverbs 1:8). It must always be insisted that parents’ instructions are to be followed. Hence, it is very important that parents make sure their instructions are biblical.

### **4. Teach children to respect authorities**

“My son, fear thou the LORD and the king; and meddle not with them that are given to change” (Proverbs 24:21). Our children should be instructed on how to show respect for rulers of the land, government officials, teachers, etc.

### **5. Teach children to love neighbours**

“Withhold not good from them to whom it is due, when it is in the power of thine hand to do it. Say not unto thy neighbour, Go, and come again, and to morrow I will give; when thou hast it by thee. Devise not evil against thy neighbour, seeing he dwelleth securely by thee” (Proverbs 3:27-29). Clearly, the biblical application to be drawn here is the need to instil in our children love and respect for neighbours, especially for those who are needy.

### **6. Teach children how to select friends**

Proverbs 1:10 gravely warns: “My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not.” Undeniably, the company one keeps will bring with it peer pressure. “He that walketh with wise men shall be wise: but a companion of fools shall be destroyed” (Proverbs 13:20). The friendships that our children develop would either help them in the right way or seduce them into moral and social evils. So, it is important that we guide them with much diligence regarding who they should choose as their friends.

### **7. Teach children to guard their minds**

“My son, attend to my words; incline thine ear unto my sayings ... Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life” (Proverbs 4:20-23). Teach them not to say or do anything without proper evaluation as to whether a particular thing or activity or experience pleases God. Exhort them to regard divine counsels above their own ideas, imaginations and likes. To do that, their minds should regularly think on things that are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, of good report; of virtue, and of praise (cf. Philippians 4:8).

### **8. Teach children to control lust of the flesh**

“And why wilt thou, my son, be ravished with a strange woman, and embrace the bosom of a stranger? For the ways of man are before the

eyes of the LORD, and he pondereth all his goings. His own iniquities shall take the wicked himself, and he shall be holden with the cords of his sins. He shall die without instruction; and in the greatness of his folly he shall go astray” (Proverbs 5:20-23; cf. 5:1-11; 6:20-28). Teenagers and youths must be warned against the allurements of sexual sins and immoral persons. Say “No” to watching movies which are sensual in content or reading salacious novels with sexually explicit content. Such entertainment will fan the flame of lust in our children!

### **9. Teach children to hate gluttony, drunkenness and debauchery**

“Hear thou, my son, and be wise, and guide thine heart in the way. Be not among winebibbers; among riotous eaters of flesh: for the drunkard and the glutton shall come to poverty: and drowsiness shall clothe a man with rags” (Proverbs 23:19-21; cf. 31:1-6). Parents must warn their children against such pleasure-seeking habits and lifestyles, which are not only destructive to their bodies but also to their relationships and testimony for Christ.

### **10. Teach children to watch their words**

“Put away from thee a froward mouth, and perverse lips put far from thee” (Proverbs 4:24). Parents must demand pure language from their children. Honourable and gracious speech is a grand peculiarity of godly children.

### **11. Teach children to work diligently**

“Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise: which having no guide, overseer, or ruler, provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest” (Proverbs 6:6-8; cf. 10:5). We must not allow laziness and procrastination in our children. Insist on diligence and instil an industrious spirit in them.

### **12. Teach children to choose a good spouse**

“Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies. The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her, so that he shall have no need of spoil” (Proverbs 31:10-11). These words are from a mother to her son. Parents’ mutual love and commitment, together with their instruction, must aid children to choose godly life-partners with whom they can raise a godly generation.

Though the above is not an exhaustive list, it nevertheless demonstrates that the book of Proverbs is indeed a treasury of wisdom on child-rearing instructions. May Christian parents, with all their getting, get wisdom and understanding (cf. Proverbs 4:7) from the timeless Proverbs in guiding their children in the path of righteousness and godly discipline.



# Biblical Parenting in Christ

Parenting is one of the greatest responsibilities in life. Having godly children is a tremendously blessed experience that fills our hearts with great joy and praise to God. The apostle John's words in 3 John 1:4 capture the sheer delight of parents with godly children – "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth."

God has blessed my wife and me with three children, for which we are grateful. Much as I enjoy their presence in our life, I am also overwhelmed by a sense of inadequacy and fear of failure. But thanks and praise be to God for the infallible counsels of His Word, which have been our source of wisdom, help and strength in parenting our children. Through my co-labouring with my wife in our home in nurturing our children, I have by the grace of God distilled the following biblical pointers which I believe form the bedrock of Christian parenting.

## 1. Love Not Your Children More than the Lord

Worthy Christian parenthood can be possible only when we live with a total commitment to the glory of our God. We

must guard against our predisposition to love our children and their future more than our Lord. Our great Saviour cautions us, "he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me" (Matthew 10:37b). If we love our children more than the Lord, we will be miserable examples and guides for our children in genuinely and passionately loving God. Christian parents who live without a wholehearted love for God will surely mislead their children into being lovers of themselves and this world more than God.

It is significant that we do not let them be the ultimate focus of our love. By loving God more than everyone, our hearts shall be sanctified by His glory, and our children will have the greatest pleasure of growing up in the shadow of His glory which fills our hearts. They, being sinful like us, will display their streak of unhappy rebellion against our insistence to live for the Lord. But we, as parents, cannot follow our children; instead, we are to love the Lord and command our children in the way of the Lord. The shepherding of our children's souls requires the highest and noblest of motives of heart, namely the love for the Lord. This is best highlighted by the

# Winters

## Christian Parenting

incident whereby Christ commanded Peter to feed “my lambs” when Peter affirmed that he loved Christ more than all else. This tells us that by first loving our Lord unswervingly, we shall be enabled to truly love our children (who are His “lambs” in our households) with pure, sanctifying love.

### 2. Labour to See that Your Children are Saved by Faith in Christ

Our chief concern ought to be the salvation of the souls of our children. We must not settle for mere external religiosity that is nothing more than a general discipline of life. We must not be fooled to think of their mere participation in the children’s activities of the church

as a sure mark of their salvation. We should not exchange the Christian faith for mere moralism in our children either. Our children’s good manners and social etiquette do not definitely mean that they have genuinely trusted God. Hence, we must pray purposefully and labour to see that their lives reflect a heart renewed by the love of Christ.

Be earnest in telling our children plainly of the need to repent from their sins and believe in Christ. Moreover, warn them of God’s wrath against unrepentant sinners. As the apostle Paul says in 2 Corinthians 5:11, “Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men”. From time to time, we must probe them for some token of assurance of salvation that comes by faith in the atoning death of Christ. Let us articulate to our children that without

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*Christian parents who live without a wholehearted love for God will surely mislead their children into being lovers of themselves and this world more than God.*

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*Providing biblical knowledge is more important than preparing breakfast, lunch or dinner. We cannot afford not to teach our children God's Word daily.*

Christ they shall perish, and that if they put their trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, they shall be saved to the uttermost. What an invitation Scripture gives us to declare to our children – “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house” (Acts 16:31)!

### **3. Know that You and Your Children are Not Perfect**

We and our children are sinners who are in need of grace. Even though everyone in the family has trusted the Lord, there is a need for us to correct ourselves and grow each day in faith, wisdom and service of the Lord. Thus, we must examine ourselves regularly in the light of God's Word and with the help of the Holy Spirit. We must be quick to repent from all sins, and be diligent to grow in faith and obedience. We must not assume we are perfect. Neither should we be complacent about our need to grow in the Lord. We should, like Job who prayed for the sanctification of his children, also be concerned about our children's salvation and sanctification (cf. Job 1:5).

### **4. Nourish Your Children with God's Word**

The Scriptures make it plain that parents are to raise their children in the discipline and instruction of God's Word. We cannot take this responsibility lightly. Christian

parenting is impossible without the teaching of God's Word. “I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food” (Job 23:12b). Providing biblical knowledge is more important than preparing breakfast, lunch or dinner. We cannot afford not to teach our children God's Word daily. Instruction of God's Word should not be just left to the Sunday school, but should be a daily affair of our homes. If we would not feed our children with God's Word daily, they will be spiritually impoverished. So, let us neither ignore nor despise the importance of the daily teaching of God's truth to our children.

### **5. Lead Your Children in the Service of God**

For all those who love God, nothing is more enjoyable on earth than serving their God. Joshua said it best – “as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD” (Joshua 24:15). Our homes itself must be a place of service to God and His people. Hospitality is one of the best ways we can serve God. Together with our children, we can serve others in Christ's name. We can welcome unbelieving friends (even our teenage children's friends) and tell them of the Gospel. We can entertain, comfort, counsel and strengthen believers and servants of God. We can be loving hosts of the fellowship meetings of our

church and visiting missionaries. We can be compassionate and zealous in praying together as a family for fellow brethren, leaders of the church, missionaries, missions and the church ministries.

As a family, our major family activities can be participating in church activities, serving in various ministries and cheerfully giving for the work of the Lord. Whenever possible, use the family car to fetch those who have difficulty in getting to church or fellowship meetings. When Christian parents make serving the Lord their main preoccupation, their children will have a compelling pattern to emulate.

## 6. Be Patient with Your Children

Impatient parents will drive children to be bitter, disillusioned and uncooperative. We must show them the same longsuffering and patience that the Lord graciously extends to us. Parents must pay attention to not being easily irritated or quick-tempered. Colossians 3:21 gives this advice: “Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged.” Likewise, Ephesians 6:4 counsels, “Ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.”

We cannot be in a hurry to get our children to cultivate godly thinking and attitudes in their lives. We need to have the patience to guide them and help them to overcome their sins, and nurture in them godly virtues. In the process, we also find ourselves being shaped for His glory.

## 7. Be Firm with Your Children

Patience is needed to firm up our children in the way of the Lord. Being patient does not mean we allow our children to

misbehave or live foolishly without fear of the Lord. Proverbs 27:5 reminds us that “Open rebuke is better than secret love” (cf. Proverbs 28:23). By the same token, Proverbs 19:18 puts parents in mind of the need to rebuke and chastise their children when they stubbornly err – “Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying.” Indeed, Proverbs 13:24 warns, “He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes” (cf. Proverbs 22:15).

## 8. Be Joyful Parents

Though parenting is full of toil and, at times, even agony, Scripture calls us to be joyful parents. Jesus spoke about the joy of motherhood in John 16:21, “A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come: but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world.” Not only the birth, but also the upbringing of the child is to be a joyful experience. Psalm 113:9 assures every mother that with the Lord’s help, she can “be a joyful mother of children”.

Chastening our children is no easy or enjoyable process for either the parent or child. Hebrews 12:11 says, “Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.” A father or mother who corrects the child is advised to say, “My son, if thine heart be wise, my heart shall rejoice, even mine. Yea, my reins shall rejoice, when thy lips speak right things” (Proverbs 23:15-16). Truly, parents who patiently and firmly follow the biblical counsel on nurturing their children are promised greater joy concerning their children – “The father of the righteous

shall greatly rejoice: and he that begetteth a wise child shall have joy of him. Thy father and thy mother shall be glad, and she that bare thee shall rejoice” (Proverbs 23:24-25)!

## 9. Be a Mutually Loving and Respectful Couple

Nothing makes children sadder and more disgusted in a home than their quarrelling and quarrelsome parents. Where the husband and wife remain faithful and love one another sincerely and tenderly, children will find much joy, encouragement and comfort as they grow up. Do not let our marriage fail or lack vitality. “Live joyfully with the wife whom thou lovest all the days of the life of thy vanity, which he hath given thee under the sun” (Ecclesiastes 9:9a). The health of our marriage is paramount to good and effective parenting. Our mutual commitment and fidelity will be an example for our children as they grow up to love their own spouses and children. Children should learn from us how to love, forgive, forbear, strengthen, protect, respect, nurture and care for one another. In fact, Scripture pronounces a blessing on a loving couple’s offspring – “Let thy fountain be blessed: and rejoice with the wife of thy youth” (Proverbs 5:18).

## 10. Be Prayerful and Dependent on God to Build Up Your Children

Parents should guard against depending on their own wisdom and strength. Apart from the Lord, we cannot nurture our children for His glory. “Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the LORD keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain. It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up

late, to eat the bread of sorrows: for so he giveth his beloved sleep. Lo, children are an heritage of the LORD: and the fruit of the womb is his reward. As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man; so are children of the youth. Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them: they shall not be ashamed, but they shall speak with the enemies in the gate” (Psalm 127:1-5). Ultimately, we must wholly entrust our children to our heavenly Father’s care. True, we love our children and desire their good, but we have not the power to secure it. Let us trust Him who knows how to give good gifts to His children (cf. Matthew 7:11).

These ten biblical lessons are foundational to Christian parenting, which is all about the biblical nurturing of our children. May we examine our habits and attitudes in the light of what has been discussed in this article and, if found wanting, be willing to correct ourselves and make changes to them. Only then can we have the blessed experience of effective Christian parenting, and thus be able to spiritually nurture our children for God’s glory. Amen.



**Except the LORD  
build the house,  
they labour in vain  
that build it: except  
the LORD keep the  
city, the watchman  
waketh but in vain.**

**(Psalm 127:1)**

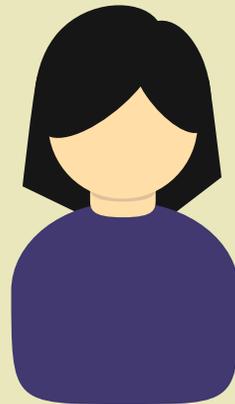
# Faithful Men

*Faithful Men is a weekly programme on Bible Witness Web Radio which hopes to teach and build up faithful men in families, churches, workplaces, and every area of their calling, for the glory of God.*



# Women of Virtue

*This programme caters specially to the needs of the sisters in our churches. We pray that through our weekly segments, the ladies who are tuning in will grow to become "women of virtue", a valuable blessing more precious than rubies.*



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# *Biblical Pointers* in Leading the Family *Spiritually*

Fathers are increasingly preoccupied with and consumed by their jobs and businesses to the extent that they become unduly distracted from their God-given fatherhood responsibility. Their lack of time and affectionate attention in the nurturing of their children is detrimental to family life, with many fathers seemingly unaware of the spiritual damage that can be inflicted upon their families, especially their children. Some have altogether forgotten that they have a fatherly role to fulfil.

Even apparently spiritual men are not exempted from this fault. It is not uncommon to hear of spiritual leaders, like pastors and elders, neglecting their own children's nurture in their enthusiasm to care for the church. Yet the Bible unequivocally demands that their children be faithful and be properly nurtured. Concerning the households of church leaders, 1 Timothy 3:4-5 says that an elder must be "one that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; (For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of

God?)" Likewise, "Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well" (1 Timothy 3:12).

## **Fathers Must Assume Responsibility for Their Families' Conduct**

God holds the head of the household responsible for the conduct of his family. Despite the fact that it was Eve who first was deceived and sinned, the Bible says that "For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners" (Romans 5:19; cf. 1 Corinthians 15:22a). Adam, being the head of Eve, was held accountable by God for the entrance of sin through Eve.

Further scriptural accounts make this very clear. When God sent Moses to Egypt to demand of Pharaoh that he let the Israelites go and serve Him, Moses' own son had not been circumcised. So "the LORD met (Moses), and sought to kill him." God held Moses responsible for this spiritual negligence. Thankfully for him, he must have taught his Midianite wife, Zipporah, about the covenant, for

we read that she saw the danger to Moses and circumcised their son to avert God's wrath (Exodus 4:24-26). Similarly, the high priest Eli was held accountable for the immorality of his sons. It was not sufficient for him merely to warn them. As the LORD said, "For I have told him that I will judge his house for ever for the iniquity which he knoweth; because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not" (1 Samuel 3:13).

Dear Christian fathers, may none of us take this grave matter of our children's conduct and spiritual nurturing lightly. Otherwise, we will receive a rebuke from the Lord, like what Eli the high priest had received!

## Fathers Must Live in Obedience to God

Living in obedience to God brings with it God's mercy and help. Without God's help, we will build our house in vain (cf. Psalm 127:1); we will not be able to build up a strong home nor lead our family well. "But the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children; to such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them" (Psalm 103:17-18). Scripture says God offers His special promise of mercy to the children of those who fear Him and keep His covenant. So, live in obedience to God's Word, and be not self-willed; otherwise, you cannot be certain of God's blessings upon the upbringing of your children.

## Fathers Must Teach the Word

Moreover, Scripture makes it clear that it is the father's chief responsibility to instruct his children with God's Word.

"Only take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen, and lest they depart from thy heart all the days of thy life: but teach them thy sons, and thy sons' sons" (Deuteronomy 4:9). "And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up" (Deuteronomy 6:6-7; cf. 11:19-20).

Fathers, you should not think that the teaching of the Bible to your children is the duty of the pastor or Sunday school teacher. It is, first of all, the father's duty to teach his children God's Word. Have you been striving to fulfil this fatherly duty? Abraham of old is a fine example of a father who was dedicated in teaching his children God's Word. The Lord said about him, "For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment" (Genesis 18:19; cf. Psalm 34:11-16).

Now, it is important to remember that the purpose of teaching is not just to raise up "well-behaved kids", but rather that they may be regenerated by the Word (1 Peter 1:23), and then they may be enabled to live holy lives. The Bible is sufficient to make them "perfect" (2 Timothy 3:16-17). Hence, our prayer concerning the nurturing of our children ought to be "that the generation to come might know them, even the children which should be born; who should arise and declare them to their children: that they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments: and might not be as their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation; a generation

that set not their heart aright, and whose spirit was not steadfast with God” (Psalm 78:6-8). This means we must endeavour to teach that “which we have heard and known (from God’s Word), and ... not hide them from their children, shewing to the generation to come the praises of the LORD, and his strength, and his wonderful works that he hath done. For he established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their children” (Psalm 78:3-5).

## Fathers Must Pray for Their Children

Every father, who is responsible to God in raising up his children, must pray specially for his children. We see such a biblical example in Job, who would rise in the morning to pray for his children. “Job sent and sanctified them, and rose up early in the morning, and offered burnt offerings according to the number of them all: for Job said, It may be that my sons have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts. Thus did Job continually” (Job 1:5). A lifelong habit and commitment of praying for his children was the hallmark of Job’s fatherhood. How often do you take time to pray for your children’s salvation and sanctification?

## Fathers Must Bring Their Children to Worship, Fellowships, etc.

Interspersed throughout the text of the Bible are historical accounts of parents who brought their children to gatherings of God’s people for public worship, Bible-learning, fellowship, etc. Consider the following:

- “There was not a word of all that Moses commanded, which Joshua read not before all the congregation of Israel, with the women, and the little ones, and the strangers that were conversant among them” (Joshua 8:35).
- “And all Judah stood before the LORD, with their little ones, their wives, and their children” (2 Chronicles 20:13).
- “Also that day they offered great sacrifices, and rejoiced: for God had made them rejoice with great joy: the wives also and the children rejoiced: so that the joy of Jerusalem was heard even afar off” (Nehemiah 12:43).

Further evidence of children’s active involvement in public worship gatherings is seen in Jesus’ time. Remember Jesus’ words to His disciples and the parents of the children who came to Him? “But Jesus said, Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 19:14). During Jesus’ triumphant entry into Jerusalem, we read of children enthusiastically joining the crowd that sang “Hosanna” to the Lord. “And when the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, and the children crying in the temple, and saying, Hosanna to the Son of David; they were sore displeased, and said unto him, Hearest thou what these say? And Jesus saith unto them, Yea; have ye never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise?” (Matthew 21:15-16).

Fathers, hesitate no more! Encourage your children to attend and participate in the church activities so that they may be nurtured in spiritual matters.



# Gethsemane B-P Church Building Project



*“Every man according as he  
purposeth in his heart, so  
let him give; not grudgingly,  
or of necessity: for God  
loveth a cheerful giver.”*

**(2 Corinthians 9:7)**

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#02-06, Singapore 389466.**)

# Children in the Church

As a pastor, I am very thankful to God whenever I notice the presence of children in the church. To see them sitting on the front rows of chairs on the Lord's Day at our worship services, or on Tuesday nights for our Bible study-cum-prayer meeting, always brings a surge of joy to my heart. How pleasing is their singing of hymns! They are ever eager to sing their choices of songs with the congregation. Their close proximity to the pulpit further gives me the pleasure of hearing their enthusiastic singing. I rejoice when they hurriedly come to join me to pray. I also thank the Lord that they listen to the preaching of the Word attentively. Whether it be on the Lord's Day or other days, it is wonderful to see many parents making every effort to bring their children along to the Lord's house.

## **“Forbid Not Little Children to Come!”**

Nonetheless, I am also concerned that some other children are afforded very few opportunities to come to church by their parents. Fathers and mothers, it is

your God-given duty to provide as many opportunities as possible for your children to be involved in the church activities. Do not let your undue concern for their secular education and other activities deprive these young precious souls of their great need for spiritual nurture.

Parents, have mercy on the souls of your children! They may be little ones, but they are precious immortal souls. The care for their souls must far exceed the care for their mortal bodies! Have compassion on the poor souls of your “heritage of the LORD” (Psalm 127:3a)! Your vulnerable kids are day by day being sucked into the “miry pit” of anxiety for worldly success. Beware, for the world is relentlessly seeking to ensnare their souls! No God-honouring Christian parent can afford to be slack in ensuring that his or her children are nurtured in the most excellent Christian environment. Christian children's participation in the church activities is far more important than their involvement in their school or other extra-curricular activities. If you only care for their earthly success, you



are being downright irresponsible in your God-given task to nurture their souls!

## Make Provision for Little Children to Come!

By way of testimony, from my experience of bringing up three children together with my beloved wife, and having given over twenty years of my efforts to the pastoral supervision of the children in our church, I can sincerely and candidly vouch that nothing is more helpful and profitable for the nurture of Christian children than providing them with maximum (not minimum or occasional) opportunity to participate in the soul-nurturing activities of the church. Whether they be worship services, prayer meetings, children's programmes, evangelism sessions, camps or retreats, let us not undervalue their great profitability in the nurture and protection of our children's souls.

Regular participation in church events with children would mean concerted discipline and commitment on the parents' part. Notwithstanding all the troubles of taking them to church activities, you would have done the most vital duty of guarding and guiding your children's souls. Please do not fear or give in to weariness. The troubles that you bear to ensure the spiritual nurture and fortification of your children's souls will not be in vain. With much prayer and thanksgiving, make every effort to bring

your children to the church activities. Just as Jesus admonishes us, "Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 19:14).

As a parting shot, Christian parents and all those who labour in the children's ministry ought also to pray earnestly for the children's repentance, salvation, spiritual growth, fruitfulness, etc., for they are dealing with precious immortal souls. Children are priceless in the sight of our Saviour. Their salvation and sanctification are His concern; so should they be the concern of everyone who ministers to them on Christ's behalf. After all, Jesus specifically says, "Feed my lambs" (John 21:15b)! ■



# CHILDREN & WORSHIP SERVICE



Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come  
unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven.

(Matthew 19:14)

This topic has been a great concern in my pastoral heart for a long time. It is my strong biblical conviction that we must let our children join the main worship service with the adults as early as possible. There is no biblical warrant for separating children from the main worship, especially those who have grown beyond their toddler stage. Verily, there is immense godly wisdom in integrating our children into the main worship, especially those who are 8 years old and above. In fact, most children can be trained to sit through the main worship service from the age of 6, and some even earlier.

## **Biblical Evidence of Children in the Main Congregation**

In the Scriptures, when God's people were required to come together to worship the LORD in the hearing and exposition of the Law, the children came together with them. Children were neither excluded nor segregated from the adults who came for worship. The following are some examples of adults and children coming together to hear the Word of God.

### *In the Old Testament*

At the renewal of the covenant in Deuteronomy 29, Scripture specifically tells us that the "little ones" were present together with all the adults and even dignitaries. "Ye stand this day all of you before the LORD your God; your captains of your tribes, your elders, and your officers, with all the men of Israel, your little ones, your wives, and thy stranger that is in thy camp, from the hewer of thy wood unto the drawer of thy water: that thou shouldest enter into covenant with the LORD thy God, and into his oath, which the LORD thy God maketh with thee this day" (vv. 10-12). Note that the

word translated as "little ones" refers to little children.

Similarly, we read from Scripture that at the sabbatical year convocation, men, women, strangers and children were instructed to gather together. "When all Israel is come to appear before the LORD thy God in the place which he shall choose, thou shalt read this law before all Israel in their hearing. Gather the people together, men, and women, and children, and thy stranger that is within thy gates, that they may hear, and that they may learn, and fear the LORD your God, and observe to do all the words of this law: and that their children, which have not known any thing, may hear, and learn to fear the LORD your God, as long as ye live in the land whither ye go over Jordan to possess it" (Deuteronomy 31:11-13).

Then again, in Joshua 8:35, we are told that "There was not a word of all that Moses commanded, which Joshua read not before all the congregation of Israel, with the women, and the little ones, and the strangers that were conversant among them." And again we read of similar gatherings during the time of Jehoshaphat – "And all Judah stood before the LORD, with their little ones, their wives, and their children" (2 Chronicles 20:13).

Furthermore, in Nehemiah 8:2-3, we read that "Ezra the priest brought the law before the congregation both of men and women, and all that could hear with understanding, upon the first day of the seventh month. And he read therein before the street that was before the water gate from the morning until midday, before the men and the women, and those that could understand; and the ears of all the people were attentive unto the book of the law." Here, the phrases "all that could hear with understanding" and "those that

could understand” are not referring to adult men and women, since the latter two have already been mentioned earlier in the same sentences. Rather, these would refer to children who were able to perceive what was being read from the Law and also their exposition. So, this provides further evidence of children being involved in the biblical proceedings of the main congregation.

One more example from the Old Testament will suffice. In Nehemiah 12:43, we are told of a thanksgiving service held in the house of God. Children are mentioned along with the adults as rejoicing before the Lord – “Also that day they offered great sacrifices, and rejoiced: for God had made them rejoice with great joy: the wives also and the children rejoiced: so that the joy of Jerusalem was heard even afar off.” Compared to the modern church scene, all these worship gatherings of adults and children together were rather remarkable, not least for the fact that all these happened long before the day of cushioned pews and air-conditioned sanctuaries!

### ***In the New Testament***

What’s more, in the New Testament, during the ministry of Jesus and the apostles, we see no segregation whatsoever of children from the adults when people gathered to hear them preach or for worship. The entire family would worship the Lord together. When the people gathered to hear our Lord, the young children were usually present too (cf. Matthew 14:21; 15:38). On one occasion, we are told that the people began bringing their young children to the Lord to be touched by Him (Mark 10:13). For some reason, the disciples tried to stop them; they even rebuked the parents. “But when Jesus saw it, he was much displeased, and

said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God” (Mark 10:14).

There is little doubt that the practice of having children in the worship service was the norm in the early church. This is corroborated by the fact that the apostolic epistles, which were read during congregational worship in the early church, addressed the children directly (cf. Ephesians 6:1; Colossians 3:20; 1 John 2:12; etc.). In general, the biblical pattern is that the Christian family ought to worship together.

### **Modern-Day Misguided Exclusion of Children from the Main Congregation**

However, in many churches today, bringing children into the full session of the main worship seems to be postponed as long as possible. After “Junior Worship”, children are provided with “Teen” and “Youth” worship services, which are conducted separately from the main worship service. As they grow up, they are rather unwilling to participate in the Scriptural form of worship. They look for fun and entertainment, such as what they have been given in their “Children” and “Teen” worship services. They dislike the solemnity of biblical worship, rather preferring a light-hearted and entertaining worship service.

In this modern age, one may be considered impractical or even radical for advocating the integration of children into the main worship service. This is hardly surprising as over the past 50 years, parents were used to being segregated from their children during worship time, which the church has short-sightedly and misguidedly been encouraging. If that is

not bad enough, in not a few churches, children are left at home alone while parents go for prayer meetings!

By the grace of God, as a pastor, I have undoubtedly seen the blessings upon parents in the church when they encourage their children to join in the main worship, and even prayer meetings. Though there are difficulties, it is possible to overcome them if we (parents and the congregation as a whole) are willing to train the children to worship our sovereign God, with patience and forbearance. Can we teach our children to worship God in the same way that we teach them to walk, talk and tie their shoes-laces? Certainly! But first, we must see it as a biblical pattern to which we must be committed.

In adherence to the biblical model, a good working guideline would be that children who are in primary 4 and above be present in the public meetings of the church, especially on the Lord's Day (though there need be no arbitrary distinction as some younger children might well be able to be present at an earlier age). In conjunction with that, parents should also consider bringing children to midweek prayer meetings, as much as possible. The children should sit quietly and attentively, endeavouring – to the best of their ability – to participate reverently and intelligently in the various exercises of worship. To attain such a goal requires that parents be diligent and thorough in preparing their children for attendance at and participation in the public meetings, certainly not excluding them indefinitely from the main congregation!

## Practical Guidelines for Children's Involvement in the Main Congregation

In order to help parents and the church accomplish their biblical responsibility, do consider the following guidelines, which can act as an aid to such preparation. (The ideas reflected in the following sections have been adapted from various books and articles, with selected changes to suit this writer's congregation.)

### For All Children in General

- Conduct family worship daily. This can be just a 15-minute spiritual discipline for the family, where everyone sits together to sing a song, read the Scriptures and pray. This spiritual exercise is a good avenue to teach your children the behaviour expected of them during the Sunday Worship.
- Seek to order things in your home so that children have adequate rest on Saturday night. We ought to be at least as concerned that children get enough sleep as on a school night, and have adequate time on Sunday morning to prepare to leave the house, so that they are in every respect "ready for church".
- Aim to arrive in good time (perhaps 10-15 minutes before the service begins), and be in the appropriate place for worship as soon as reasonably possible. Remind your children in advance of the behaviour that is expected of them in Sunday

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***In the Scriptures... children were neither excluded nor segregated from the adults who came for worship.***

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school, the worship service, the prayer meeting, etc.

- Accomplish necessary tasks (such as getting a drink or using the toilet) before the start of the service. Advise your child not to run in and out of the worship hall, because leaving the worship (even for legitimate reasons) is a distraction, at least to those nearby. Such a departure will also disrupt your child's and your worship of God. It will impair your ability to follow, understand, and therefore fully benefit from the preaching of God's Word. The logic and continuity of biblical preaching is lost when there are interruptions in the hearing of it. Seriously consider the possibility of refusing your child's desire to leave the meeting place.
- Train your children to be good listeners. Instruct them to sit with good posture and focus their eyes on the one leading the service or preaching. When the Scriptures are read, have them turn to the text and follow in their own or your Bible. Likewise, help them turn to each hymn and follow from the hymnbook, helping them as required. With older children, consider such means of helping them to concentrate as taking notes.
- Encourage children to continue behaving well (e.g. not making excessive noise and shouting), even immediately after a public meeting. Help children to behave politely to one another and to adults (holding open doors, helping with tasks, etc.), and to behave in a friendly fashion to visitors, particularly children who are visiting.
- As much as possible, follow up on the preaching and teaching with your children (during the drive home, lunchtime, or family worship), by asking them appropriate questions.
- Remember also the power of our parental example (good or bad) in preparing for and participating in the public meetings of the church. If we have not been the best of example, we need to humbly correct ourselves. If necessary, explain to our children why correction is needed and how to make the correction. This is the only way you and I can guide our families to a better worship of God.

### For Nursery to Primary 3 Children

- In this category, most of the older ones (Primary 1-3), if properly guided, will be able to sit through the worship without causing disruptions. Right now, we have a special Junior Worship lesson conducted for this group during the sermon time, so that they may be taught the Word in a way they can comprehend.
- While they are present during the first part of the worship service, they must be instructed to have the proper attitude and behaviour. If the parents are unable to attend to them, let the Junior Worship teacher or another adult sit with the children to guide them.
- It is important that we insist on good attitude during worship. If your child becomes restless or behaves inappropriately, remember to deal with him in a way that will not disrupt the focus of the other worshippers. There is no need to

leave the worship at the first sign of disturbance from your child; the congregation should appreciate that a very young child does not always behave perfectly. If there is no alternative, take your child out of the service. Ensure that this is not seen as a ‘reward’ for disobedience. If possible, deal with the particular issue appropriately and immediately, and then return to the meeting room to continue participating in the public worship of God.

- If it is predictable that you will need to take your child out of a service to train or discipline him, aim to take seats near the doors of the meeting room, where you can get in and out with least distraction to others. When leaving or entering, try to do so with a minimum of fuss and noise. Other members of the church – ushers, for example – might be able to render a helping hand to you. Return to your seats as soon as possible with minimal distraction.
- Remember that the children are to participate intelligently in worship. Diversionary activities (drawing, writing, reading other children’s books, playing, etc.) are not part of the worship of God. Neither is eating nor drinking (except for the Lord’s Supper). All these can be distracting for the child, yourself and others. These things will undermine a child’s active and intelligent involvement in the worship of the infinite and thrice-holy God.

### *For Infants and Toddlers*

- Toddlers are often restless and fidgety. They are also prone to cry aloud. Parents of infants and

toddlers are invited to use the “cry-room” section. If you are in the main worship hall, please be seated near the door, so you can easily exit the worship hall to attend to your child who is crying. If your child is getting unusually restless, please consider using the “cry-room”. Or you may take your child out of the worship hall with as little disturbance as possible. Please seek help from the ushers, if you need assistance. Quietly return to your seat as soon as possible after attending to the child.

- Parents who are in the “cry-room” must remember not to engage in conversation or activities that will distract others from concentrating on the worship. Let us endeavour to keep the solemnity of worship at all times. As much as possible, make sure that your movements and activities are least disturbing to others around you. Let all parents be mutually helpful and forbearing.

The Lord calls out to all our children, saying, “Come, ye children, hearken unto me: I will teach you the fear of the LORD” (Psalm 34:11); “Whom shall he teach knowledge? and whom shall he make to understand doctrine? them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts” (Isaiah 28:9). Certainly, this teaches us that the “target group” close to the Lord’s heart are the vulnerable, mouldable, and therefore most precious children. It goes without saying that upon the shoulders of Christian parents rests this privileged responsibility. Parents, come with your children to worship the Lord, and pray that our children would grow up to be a generation that will worship the Lord in spirit and in truth!



# Charles Haddon Spurgeon (1834 - 1892)

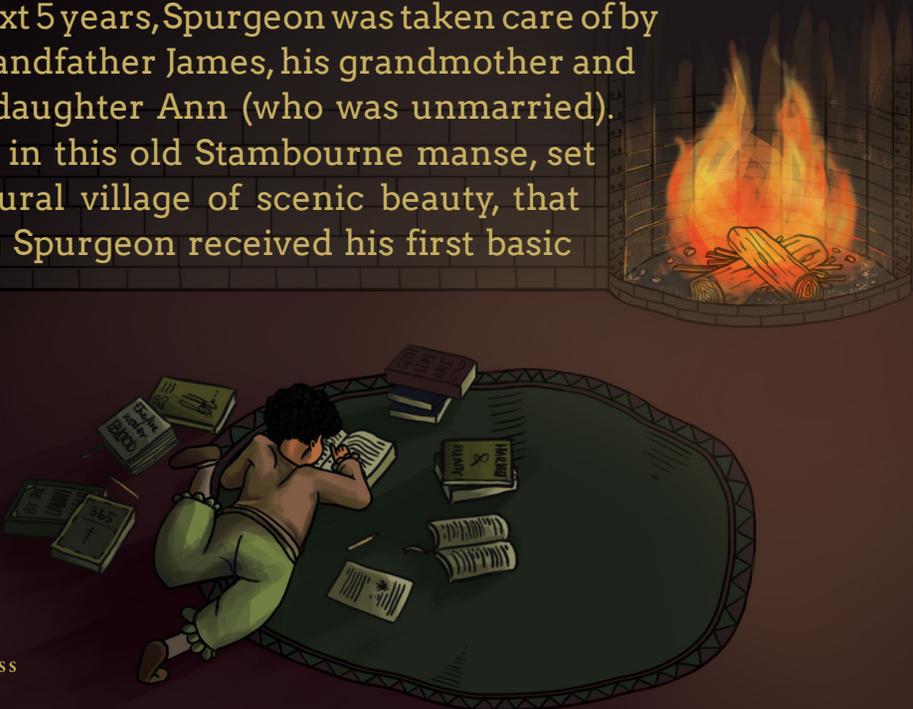
## The "Prince of Preachers" - Part 1

(Retold from "Spurgeon - Prince of Preachers" by Lewis Drummond, published by Kregel Publications;  
"Trial and Triumph: Stories from Church History" by Richard M. Hannula, published by Canon Press;  
"The Suffering Letters of C. H. Spurgeon" by Hannah Wyncall, published by Wakeman Trust, London;  
"The Forgotten Spurgeon" by Iain H. Murray, published by The Banner of Truth Trust.)

Retold by Jenny Lok

Illustrated by Andronicus Koshy

Charles Haddon Spurgeon, a great preacher of the Gospel, lived during the reign of Queen Victoria in England, a period known as the Victorian age. The people were generally religious, and churchgoing was the norm in those days. The early months of Spurgeon's life were spent in "a quaint little cottage" at Kelvedon, Essex. He was less than a year old when his family finally made their home in Colchester in south-east England. At the age of 14 months, his parents, John and Eliza, decided to send him to live with his grandparents at Stambourne, which is "in the heart of the Essex countryside" (possibly because of financial difficulties). Thus, for the next 5 years, Spurgeon was taken care of by his grandfather James, his grandmother and their daughter Ann (who was unmarried). It was in this old Stambourne manse, set in a rural village of scenic beauty, that young Spurgeon received his first basic



education and spiritual instruction, which greatly benefited his future call to the ministry.

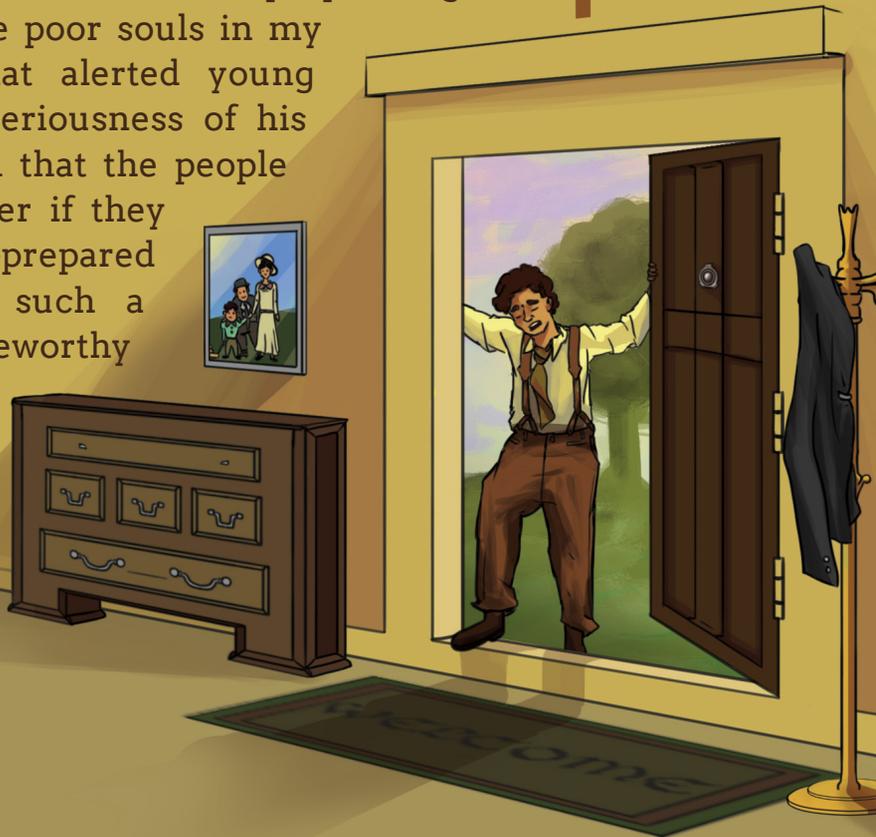
As a lad, nothing gave Spurgeon greater pleasure than to be surrounded by books. Oftentimes, he would lie down in front of the warm and cosy fireplace of the Stambourne manse to indulge in his favourite pastime – reading. Barely six years old, young Spurgeon was already reading well beyond his years. Among his favourite books were theological works of the Puritans (godly people who possessed a sincere faith in God, and were active in preaching the Gospel and doing good works), Foxes' "Book of Martyrs" and Daniel Defoe's "Robinson Crusoe". Interestingly, the book that never failed to fascinate him was "The Pilgrim's Progress" by John Bunyan (himself a Reformed Puritan). Young as he was, Spurgeon could feel the heaviness of the "burden" on the back of Pilgrim (also known as Christian), as he journeyed towards the "Celestial City". Finally, at the foot of a hill, when Christian looked to the Cross, his burden rolled off his back instantly. Upon reading that, the boy Spurgeon would almost jump up with joy and relief, his heart overwhelmed by the thought of Christian's new life in Christ.

Young Spurgeon spent many happy and memorable days with his godly grandparents and doting Aunt Ann at Stambourne manse. Grandfather James, a much-respected pastor of the Independent Church in Stambourne, had a great influence in his life. As a Puritan who believed that the Bible is truly the pure Word



of God, Grandfather James inspired Spurgeon with his gentleness, devotion to God and excellent Christian conduct. Incidentally, both Spurgeon and his grandfather had a great sense of humour, much to Spurgeon's delight. Grandmother Spurgeon was likewise a lovely, pious and charitable woman, and young Spurgeon loved her dearly. As for Aunt Ann, Spurgeon regarded her with much fondness as she was the one who took care of him most of the time and instilled in him a love for books. Besides, Aunt Ann never failed to pamper him with a piece of freshly baked pastry or a glass of cold milk at every opportunity! Basking in the warmth and affection of his loved ones, Spurgeon grew up, very passionate and sensitive in spirit.

Once, Grandfather James sat in his favourite parlour in the old manse to prepare for his Sunday sermon. To avoid being distracted by the little active boy, Grandfather James gave Spurgeon a copy of "The Evangelical Magazine", hoping that it would keep him occupied. That failed to work until Grandfather warned Spurgeon: "If you continue to be restless, I would not be able to prepare a good sermon to feed the poor souls in my congregation!" That alerted young Spurgeon to the seriousness of his action. He realised that the people of God would suffer if they did not hear a well-prepared sermon. Even at such a tender age, it is noteworthy



that Spurgeon could understand and discern spiritual matters. Similarly, another incident which revealed Spurgeon's spiritual discernment was his encounter with Grandfather James's church member by the name of Thomas Roads. "Old Roads", as he was commonly called, was frequently seen smoking and drinking at a local pub. Seeing how sorrowful Grandfather James was over this wretched sinner, Spurgeon told his grandfather: "I'll kill Old Roads, that I will!" Grandfather James was utterly shocked and warned him, "Hush, hush! My dear, you mustn't talk so; it's very wrong, you know, and you'll get taken up by the police if you do anything wrong." To allay Grandpa's fear, young Spurgeon promised, "I shall not do anything bad; but I'll kill him though, that I will."

Following that, on a particular day, young Spurgeon entered the house and announced, "I've killed Old Roads; he'll never grieve my dear Grandpa anymore." Perplexed, Grandpa tried to extract some information from his little grandson, but to no avail. Spurgeon would only say, "I haven't been doing any harm, Grandpa. I've been about the Lord's work, that's all." Not long after, someone knocked on the parsonage door. It was none other than "Old Roads"! He stood at the doorway, looking very sorrowful and miserable. Without delay, he apologised to Grandfather James, saying, "I'm very sorry indeed, my dear pastor, to have caused you such grief and trouble. It was very wrong, I knew; but I always love



you, and wouldn't have done it if I had only thought." Old Roads also related how young Spurgeon went up to him and told him pointedly, "What doest thou here Elijah? (1 Kings 19:9). Sitting with the ungodly, and you a member of the church, and breaking your pastor's heart. I'm ashamed of you! I wouldn't break my pastor's heart, I'm sure." Despite Old Road's anger at Spurgeon's boldness and impudence, he realised that there was much truth in what the young boy had said and he felt guilty. He then went before the Lord to confess his sins and asked for forgiveness. He promised Pastor James that he would not grieve him anymore. Since then, Old Roads turned over a new leaf and started going back to church, and was active in worship and service.

All too quickly, the time came for young Spurgeon to return to his own home in Colchester. He was already 6 years old then. Deeply sorrowful in his heart, Spurgeon could not hold back his tears as he bade farewell to his dearest grandparents and beloved Aunt Ann. Nonetheless, he was much comforted by his equally loving and devoted parents back home. Being the oldest child and a natural leader, Spurgeon soon took charge of his siblings without much difficulty. Shortly after, he settled down to a formal education in Colchester. From an elementary school run by Mrs Cook (whose husband was a sea captain), he proceeded to the Stockwell House School for more advanced learning. Among all the teachers that he had, Spurgeon was most impressed by Mr E. S. Leeding, who was both skilful and diligent. At the school, he improved by leaps and bounds in his reading, writing and spelling, as well as Mathematics. Apart from these subjects, young Spurgeon also learned both Greek and Hebrew, and excelled in Latin...



*Charles Haddon Spurgeon*  
(1834 – 1892)



# Bible Trivia - Exodus 34 & 35

Sarah Yong

**A) Read the Bible passage in Exodus 34, and then complete the statements below. (The first letter of each answer is given to you.)**

1. Moses continued to commune with God and the LORD declared that He is merciful and gracious, l\_\_\_\_\_ and full of goodness and t\_\_\_\_\_. He will also pardon i\_\_\_\_\_ and sin. He made a c\_\_\_\_\_ with the children of Israel to do marvels, and all the people shall see the w\_\_\_\_\_ of the LORD.
2. The LORD reminded His people not to w\_\_\_\_\_ other gods, or make any m\_\_\_\_\_ images, for God is a jealous God.
3. After Moses descended from mount Sinai with the two tables of t\_\_\_\_\_, he called unto Aaron, all the r\_\_\_\_\_ of the congregation and all the children of Israel, and he gave them all the c\_\_\_\_\_ that the LORD had given.

**B) Read Exodus 35 to see how the children of Israel brought the LORD's offering to the work of the tabernacle, as well as for all the LORD's service, and for the holy garments. Then complete the statements below by filling in the blanks.**

1. They gave willingly:
  - "whosoever is of a willing h\_\_\_\_\_, let him bring it, an offering of the LORD".
  - "The children of Israel brought a willing o\_\_\_\_\_ unto the LORD, every man and woman, whose heart made them willing to b\_\_\_\_\_ for all manner of work".
2. They were filled with God's wisdom:
  - "And every w\_\_\_\_\_ hearted among you shall come, and make all that the LORD hath commanded".
  - "And he (the LORD) hath filled him with the spirit of God, in wisdom, in u\_\_\_\_\_, and in k\_\_\_\_\_, and in all manner of workmanship".

## **ANSWERS TO BIBLE TRIVIA - EXODUS 33 (VOLUME 17, ISSUE 6, P. 25)**

Answers (top to bottom): L, R, D, G, M, C, F, S

Special Message: "THE LORD GOD IS MERCIFUL AND GRACIOUS."

# 14th Bible Witness Retreat

## Heavenly-Mindedness

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Date: 14th to 16th March, 2018  
Speaker: Pastor Prabhudas Koshy  
Venue: Pulai Springs Resort, Johor

For enquiries and registration,  
please e-mail to [bwmm.gbpc@gmail.com](mailto:bwmm.gbpc@gmail.com)



Registration now open!  
Please register by  
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