

# LESSON 9 Duties of Parents

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Well disciplined and obedient children do not “just happen” any more than a beautiful flower garden “just happens.” Both require effort. A gardener is held responsible for cultivating a garden. Parents are held responsible for teaching, disciplining, and loving their children.

When parents have the proper relationship with God and set a good example, they will find it far easier to establish and maintain authority over their children. A six-year-old who complained, “Our family is the only one that *has* to have goodness,” may have chafed at the discipline but he knew that obedience was not optional; it was required. And he felt secure even when disciplined because he knew his parents loved him.

In this lesson we will discuss further the areas in which parents are responsible for the training of their children. We will also consider instances of families who suffered unnecessary heartbreak because parents failed in their responsibility to their children.

## ***The Plan***

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- A. To Love Their Children
- B. To Provide for Their Physical Needs
- C. To Educate Their Children
- D. To Provide for Their Spiritual Needs

## ***The Goals***

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- 1. Describe how the love of parents affects their children and the parents themselves.
- 2. State reasons why parents must provide for the physical needs of their children as long as they are under their care.
- 3. Identify the three areas in which parents are to provide training and education for their children.
- 4. State what Christian parents must do to mold their children as the Bible commands.

## **A. TO LOVE THEIR CHILDREN**

**Goal 1.** Describe how the love of parents affects their children and the parents themselves.

God gives children to a husband and wife as a sacred trust not to be treated lightly. As God loves and cares for His children, He expects parents to follow His pattern and example.

The love of parents should first be seen in their attitude toward an unborn child. They should look forward with joy to the birth of their child and, whether it be a boy or a girl, accept it as a blessing from the Lord. Psalm 127:3 notes, “Children [are] a reward from him [God].”

Babies need love if they are to develop properly, and parents give them a good start in life by cuddling them, playing with them, and caring for them. Parents who love their children will gladly accept the responsibility of caring for them. They must provide food, clothing, shelter, social training, education, and spiritual leadership for their children. It is not uncommon for parents to sacrifice their own comfort and desires in order to meet the needs of their children. Love helps parents develop patience and


understanding for their children and to greatly appreciate the love and patience of the heavenly Father. The apostle Paul writes,

Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. (Ephesians 5:1–2)

When parents are thoughtless and show more love for one child than another, this leads to jealousy and other problems. A new baby in a home should be a delight to everyone. And wise parents will make every effort to let their other children know that they are not loved any less simply because they have a new brother or sister. Even in Scripture is there evidence of jealousy as Joseph’s brothers wanted to get rid of him because their father treated him better than he did them. Read Genesis 37 for this account.

***Application***

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- 1   Memorize Psalm 127:3 and Ephesians 5:1–2.
  - 2   Name several ways in which parents express their love for their children.  
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  - 3   What valuable lesson can parents learn from Genesis 37:3–4?  
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## B. TO PROVIDE FOR THEIR PHYSICAL NEEDS

**Goal 2.** State reasons why parents must provide for the physical needs of their children as long as they are under their care.

### A Home

Some parents have the custom of sending their children to live with their grandparents or other relatives. But providing a good home for their children is the responsibility of the parents, and with God's help parents can usually find a way to do this. The house may be humble, but it can be clean, pleasant, and filled with love. Although, in some instances, relatives may be better able to provide for the material needs of a child, such can never take the place of the love and teaching which Christian parents provide.

It is sometimes necessary for children to go away from home to attend boarding school, but it is better that they not be separated from their parents for long periods of time. Children need their parents and should be at home with them to enjoy their love and care.

### *Application*

**4** Why is it not best for children to be separated from their parents for long periods of time?

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### Clothing and Food

Good parents try to clothe their children comfortably and see that they are well fed. Preparing the right kind of food for her children is an important part of a mother's work. Children need milk, fresh fruit, vegetables, and such nourishing foods as beans, meat, fish, and eggs. An abundance of starchy food without fresh fruit and vegetables is not best for their health. Nevertheless, God's provision for the home should be the guide for the mother, as she prepares the greatest balance for her family.

### ***Application***

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**5** What kind of food do children need?

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## **C. TO EDUCATE THEIR CHILDREN**

### **Schooling**

**Goal 3.** Identify the three areas in which parents are to provide training and education for their children.

It is the responsibility of parents to provide the proper training and education for their children so that they will one day be able to earn a living for themselves. It has become increasingly difficult for those who are untrained and have little education to obtain good jobs.

### ***Application***

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**6** Why is it important that parents send their children to school?

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### **Home Training**

Although schools and churches contribute a great deal to the training of children, nothing is more important than the training children receive from their parents in the home. This teaching and training begins when a child is born, and by the age of six most children have already formed habits that will affect their entire life.

Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it. (Proverbs 22:6)

Parents are responsible for teaching their children to take care of their bodies. Children can learn at an early age the importance of forming good habits: to be neat and clean, to bathe frequently, to wash their hands before meals, comb their hair, brush their teeth, and keep their clothes clean. In all of these things, of course, parents teach by example and instruction.

## Application

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**7** When should a child's training begin?

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**8** By what age have most children acquired their life habits?

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**9** Memorize Proverbs 22:6.

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## Correction

An essential part of any teaching is correction, and this cannot be left out of training for life and for eternity. All children disobey their parents at times, and must be corrected. Sometimes a parent has to punish a child so that he will realize the seriousness of his wrongdoing. Children, who learn to respect and obey their parents, will find it much easier to respect and obey the laws of their country and the commandments of God.

The rod of correction imparts wisdom, but a child left to himself disgraces his mother. (Proverbs 29:15)

A child must be corrected in a spirit of love, never in a spirit of anger. He needs to know why he is being punished, and that he must learn to obey. But there are correct ways to discipline, and a parent must exercise caution so as not to inflict injury upon a child.

A good practice Christian parents often follow is to pray with their children after they have punished them, and then assure them that they forgive them and still love them. If a child feels he is rejected because he has disobeyed, he may suffer emotionally.

But if he can be made to understand that his parents correct him because they love him—not because they do not—it can be a helpful, growing experience for the child.

He who spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is careful to discipline him. (Proverbs 13:24)

It will also help a child to know that God himself corrects His children:

The Lord disciplines those he loves, as a father the son he delights in. (Proverbs 3:12)

Parents who allow children to grow up without teaching them obedience and respect for authority are, in effect, encouraging rebellion. Children from such homes rebel against all authority, including God's. Such rebellion may lead to crime, imprisonment, and even death.

In the Old Testament, we read of Eli and David, men of God who suffered shame, disgrace, and tragedy in their families because they did not discipline their sons. So it is not only required that parents must live godly lives; they must also teach their children to obey God.

Eli loved God but his sons were evil and brought disgrace on God's house. In 1 Samuel, God addressed Eli's failure to correct his sons:

"I told him that I would judge his family forever because of the sin he knew about; his sons made themselves contemptible, and he failed to restrain them." (1 Samuel 3:13)

King David's son, Adonijah, tried to take the kingdom away from his father. He wanted to have his own way, and this later led him to a tragic death. David was greatly to blame for not having corrected his son when he was growing up.

(His father had never interfered with him by asking, "Why do you behave as you do?" He was also very handsome and was born next after Absalom.) (1 Kings 1:6)

## Application

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**10** Circle the letter in front of each statement made by a parent, which reflects a correct attitude about disciplining children.

- a) "I demand respect for my authority from my children, and let them know that I do not love them when they disobey."
- b) "I do not correct my child for fear that she will feel rejected or unloved."
- c) "If I am angry with my child who has disobeyed and needs to be punished, I do not punish him until I can do so in a spirit of love."
- d) "I can do my child great harm, if I fail in my responsibility as a parent, to discipline and correct her."

**11** For each of the items in question 10, write in your notebook the reason you consider the attitude to be either correct or incorrect.

**12** How did the priest Eli and King David fail in their responsibility as fathers?

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## D. TO PROVIDE FOR THEIR SPIRITUAL NEEDS

**Goal 4.** State what Christian parents must do to mold their children as the Bible commands.

### Dedication of Children

Parents have a solemn responsibility of molding and guiding the children God entrusts to them. When they take a child to God's house to be dedicated to Him, parents acknowledge this responsibility and enter into a special covenant or agreement with God. The pastor prays for the child, dedicating it to God's care and protection throughout life. The parents promise to train the child in God's ways so that, when the time comes, it will be natural for the child to turn from the wrong to the right and accept Jesus as personal Savior.

God answered Hannah's prayer for a son, and Samuel was still just a child when his parents took him to the priest in the

house of the Lord. Hannah's words to Eli, the priest, were praise and an example to parents today, especially mothers.

“I give him to the LORD. For his whole life he will be given over to the LORD.” And he worshiped the LORD there. (1 Samuel 1:28)

Jesus' earthly parents dedicated Him to God also. “Joseph and Mary took him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord” (Luke 2:22).

## ***Application***

**13** Read 1 Samuel 2:26 and Luke 2:52. What do we find in these verses about one of the benefits of dedicating children to God?

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## **Training in God's Word**

When parents teach their children the way to heaven, they are getting them ready for a wonderful life that will never end. As, at a very early age, children can learn what pleases or displeases their parents, they can learn what pleases and displeases God. The words of Christ found in Matthew cause us to know that a child can believe in Christ:

If anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a large millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea. (Matthew 18:6)

(See also Deuteronomy 4:9–10; 31:12.)

## **Church Attendance**

Families need to attend church together. If the way parents live contradicts their teaching, the latter will have little effect. Parents who send their children to church by themselves, or do not insist that their children accompany them, are saying, in effect, that church attendance is not too important.

Jesus' parents took Him to the house of God when He was very small, and they continued to take Him as He grew older. Samuel's parents went regularly to God's house. Joshua gave us

that wonderful motto which should be the watchword for every believer's home: "As for me and my household, we will serve the LORD" (Joshua 24:15). Can anything please God more than entire families serving Him?

## Application

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**14** Circle the letter in front of the best answer. The way children learn the importance of faithfulness in church attendance is by

- a) their parents' example.
  - b) the teaching of their parents.
  - c) both a) and b).
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## To Protect the Home

Although Satan would like to destroy every Christian home, he is powerless to do so when people run to the available protection of God. Unfortunately, the greatest aid in protecting the home from Satan's attacks is the one most often neglected: family worship.

Often, homes which have been torn asunder were homes where parents did many of the right things. They provided for the physical needs of their children; they educated them; and they took them to church. But when parents fail to assume the leadership of the religious education of their children, their home is headed for disaster.

Besides walls of wood, mud, or brick to protect themselves from the natural dangers, a family needs love, faithfulness, forgiveness, and prayer to take them through the difficult times. And these needs are best met in family worship. A husband and wife need to fortify themselves against temptation and sin, as well as provide protection for their children. We have dealt at length with these subjects in previous lessons, particularly in *Duties of a Husband*, *Duties of a Wife*, and *Duties of Children*. You may wish to review each one.

It takes time, effort, and planning to maintain family worship, but parents who do find it well worth any sacrifice. Couples have resolved serious problems, which threatened their marriage, as they prayed and sought God together. Many are the testimonies of young people who rebelled against God for a time, but were

reconciled to Him later, because they could never get away from the influence of the family altar and the prayers and guidance of their parents. I trust that you can now say along with Joshua: “As for me and my household, we will serve the LORD” (Joshua 24:15).

***Application***

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**15** Name the four “walls” necessary to protect and save a family from spiritual disaster.


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You have finished your study of *Marriage and the Home*. I hope these lessons have helped you discover some principles for establishing good family relationships, and developing a happy home.

Now you are ready to fill out the last half of your student report for Lessons 6–9. Review these lessons; then follow the instructions in your student report. When you send your answer sheets to your instructor, ask him or her about another course of study.

## Check Your Answers

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- 8** By the age of six
- 1** After learning the memory verses well, repeat them to another person.
- 9** After memorizing Proverbs 22:6, recite it to another person.
- 2** Through patience and understanding, training, caring and providing for them, and also playing with them.
- 10 c)** “If I am angry with my child . . .”
- d)** “I can do my child great harm . . .”
- 3** Serious problems arise in a home when a parent shows more love for one child than for the others.
- 11** Your answers may be similar to these.
- a)** For a child’s own well-being, he needs to know that his parents love him at all times, even when he has been disobedient.
- b)** A child need not feel rejected or unloved when he or she is corrected by the parents, because they *do* love and forgive the child even as God loves and forgives.
- c)** A parent may injure a child emotionally, and even physically, if he punishes him when angry.
- d)** A child growing up without discipline may become rebellious against all authority, including that of God.
- 4** Because it is so important that children have the direct love and care of their parents
- 12** They failed to correct their sons.
- 5** They need a variety of foods: milk, fruit, vegetables, beans, meat, fish, and eggs.
- 13** Both Jesus and Samuel grew in favor with God and people.
- 6** Those who grow up without having received some type of training will have difficulty earning a living for themselves.

**14c)**

**7** At birth

**15** Love, faithfulness, forgiveness, prayer

**CONGRATULATIONS**

You have finished this course. We hope that it has been a great help to you! Remember to complete the second Unit Evaluation and return the answer sheet to your instructor.



