

## MESSAGES FOR YOUNG PARENTS' SEMINAR

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“Goal of Parenting” – Psalm 127:1-5

### INTRODUCTION

There are only two kinds of people in this world: Believers and Unbelievers. One will go to heaven, the other to Hell. The two destinations are final and will last forever. There is no doctrine of annihilation.

There are only two kinds of people in the church: Believers and Unbelievers. One will enter heaven the other thinks he will enter heaven. The two realities are final and will be revealed in God's sovereign time. There is no mistake.

There are only two kinds of sinners in the world: The Jews and the Gentiles. The Jews are those who have the Word of God. They were made the guardians of God's perfect Word. The way of life and grace was given to the Jews. But if they reject the Word of God they are sinners of the Word of God, God's special revelation. The Gentiles are those who do not have the Word of God. They reject God and worship idols of their own making. They are judged by God based upon Creation, God's general revelation. They are found guilty and are without excuse.

There are only two kinds of children in the world: Believers' and Unbelievers'. One will be brought up in the church and given the truth of God's holy Word the other will go through life as a child without the privilege of the Word of God to live by growing up. The two upbringings are not final and can be turned around by the grace and mercies of God when God's Truth is taught to them.

The choices we make today can make the difference for eternity. An unbeliever can be saved when he accepts Christ as His Lord and Saviour. He becomes a believer and bound for heaven instead of Hell. Like the unbeliever in the world the unbeliever in the church can be saved and become a believer when he also accepts Christ as his Lord and Saviour. Jews and Gentiles matter not to God for both need Christ as their Lord and Saviour.

But the children of believers are privileged in that they can experience the covenantal blessings promised by God only to them (cf. 1 Cor. 7: 14). They can grow up in a Christian environment that reduces the number of sins they commit, only if the Christian parents were to teach them. They can know the difference between right and wrong according to the Scriptures. They can learn to pray and praise God before they could walk. They can be immersed in a Christian environment where Christ is taught and experienced. The joy and comfort from an obedient Christian life and the singing of hymns and observing the Lord's Sacraments educate them to the way of godly living. But the children of unbelievers do not have such privileges.

But when the believing parent lives a hypocritical life the backlash of the Christian faith upon the child can be devastating and at times even irreparable. Countless number of testimonies attests to this mental and spiritual damage done to children who grew up in these homes. In some cases they even reject Christ for life. Few are the second and third generation Christians today.

The blessings can be great but so can the cursings.

How parents bring up their children begin with an understanding of their goal of parenting.

### A. THE WORLDLY GOALS

**i. The Way of Death** – There appears to be many ways to bring up a child. But the reality is that there is the way of the world and the way of God. There are only two ways not many.

The way of the world has the appearance of rightness. Teachers, professors and child psychologists with strings of degrees and years of study from ivy-league universities have promoted their theories on how to bring up a child that he will be successful in life. The question is what is success? The following is a list of “successful” upbringing.

**ii. The Bookworm** – Drive our children to excel in their study. Distinctions in exams equal success  
Goal is to obtain a university education which leads to a high paying job. A good education or rather a higher education results in a more cultured and higher living.

**iii. The Rich Worm** – Money makes the world go round. Money is everything. Above all else get money. Money solves all the problems of life. More money equals lesser problems. All of the heart's desire is fulfilled by money. If a young man becomes a millionaire at the young age of 20 he will immediately be put on a pedestal for all to emulate. There is a list of the richest men in the world. This list interests the public tremendously.

**iv. The Popular/Famous Worm** – Popularity is success. Win the Nobel peace prize or do works of philanthropy and the world will remember and build a monument or name library in remembrance of you. Start a Foundation in your own name and after you are gone your works still remain. Success is measured by how well the world thinks of you after you die.

**v. The Busy Worm** – Work, and more work and work till you drop is the measure of success. Service equals spirituality is the motto to live by. No time to be quiet before the LORD. Life is like a busy bee flying from one project to another till death knocks.

**vi. The Power Worm** – Pride of life is the driving force behind this worm. There is no appetite stronger than this to drive motivation to a higher level. The ego trip is surrounded by a life of opulence. Money is only a means to an end. With money comes power. Once there is more than enough money and the rich life is secured, power steps in and easily replaces the appetite for wealth. The appetite for power is a bottomless pit. The more one has the more one wants. It is a disease and it has destroyed many lives which tread this highway to Hell.

**vii. The Filial Worm** – Teach our children to “honour” parents that when parents are old the children will look after us. This self serving filial propaganda is sinful to its core. Push the child to attain wealth to serve the parent when he is old is a foolish dream. This breeds a cycle of death and disappointment. The facade of nobility that this worm possesses makes this a most sought after goal. But what of the end?

### **viii. The End is Hell**

**NOTE – God's summary of these manmade goals -- Proverbs 14:12, “There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.”** – It has the appearance of success and rightness because it produces a “good” life. A life of peace and comfort is the result cannot be denied. But is this what Christian parents ought to aim for as citizens of heaven who have tasted the goodness, grace and mercies of God?

God's prognosis of these ways is that the end thereof are the ways of death! All will go to Hell as their final abode without Christ. They might go as doctors or lawyers or bankers or IT professionals or serial killers or rapists or murders the destination is the same. The soft life on earth is not worth an eternity of Hell!

## **B. THE GODLY GOAL**

### **i. The Way of Life –**

**Children are from God -- Psalms 127:3, “Lo, children are an heritage of the LORD: and the fruit of the womb is his rewa**

rd.” Our children are not ours. Parents are custodians or trustees of the precious gifts from the LORD. Parents are therefore not given the liberty to bring them up anyway they like according to their own whims and fancies. The word “heritage” means that parents do not work for them. The word refers “to something inherited.” It has nothing to do with how many wives or concubines the husband has as was the case of King Solomon (700 wives and 300 concubines). It is not through IVF or any other means or medical intervention. Children are gifts from the LORD. It is not a reward of debt but a reward of grace. This is an example of a synonymous parallelism where the first line is restated by the second line using different words but having the same meaning. Since children are given to us by God then the goal of parenting has to be according to Gods desire and not the parents’.

God’s desire is that they love Him and worship Him for the chief end of man is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever. How is this achieved?  
What is the first step?

## ii. The End is Heaven –

**Children’s Salvation -- Mark 10:14**, *“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.”* The salvation of children is captured by these words of Christ when He was on earth as the Son of Man.

The goal of every Christian parent is to bring their children up that they will come to receive Christ as their personal Lord and Saviour. Child like faith is the key. The best time for children is when they see Christ in their parents and with their child like faith they would want to believe. Everything that the parent does has to be toward this goal from the time of birth. There must be no deviation. Peer pressures and worldly goals will try their utmost to intrude into this goal. The hardest thing is to persevere and maintain this goal at all costs.

The Lord made it very clear that the kingdom of heaven is made up believers possessing child like faith. What better time to lead our own children to Christ than when they are still endowed with childlikeness? The early years are crucial. These years come by only once in a lifetime. Maximum time and witness must be inculcated with much prayer for our children’s spiritual wellbeing.

Their studies and playtime are geared toward this goal.

## CONCLUSION

**Proverbs 17:6**, *“Children’s children are the crown of old men; and the glory of children are their fathers.”* Successful parenting is to bring up children who know the LORD Christ Jesus and their personal Saviour and Lord. They would learn to trust God as their heavenly Father all their lives. They will fulfil their purpose on this earth by doing God’s will and serving Him.

Bringing up Children is both a joy and a burden. But the joy ought to outweigh the burden because the goal is to bring up a child into a child of God. Our Heavenly Father would not have entrusted them to us if He had not intended them to be brought up with the fear and love of God in their hearts.

Right goal in parenting will result in right method of teaching. The goal is salvation in Christ and to do God’s will in this life. This is a simple and biblical goal. Complicate it not by worldly desires and foolish notions that mar and detract the Christian goal from being achieved in our children’s lives.

## “Provoking or Parenting”

### INTRODUCTION

**Ephesians 6:4**, *“And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of*

*the Lord.*” With the goal of parenting established the next step is the actualization of the goal. Once a parent, always a parent!

Parenting is a task that has no recourse for second chances. Mistakes made are not often easily remedied. They reside in the memories of parents for years to come and some of these mistakes hide in the inner most recesses of the soul for life. The “if only” card is played over and over again in the parent’s mind as if by so doing the regret might one day go away and the sense of guilt fades into the back ground forever. But they continue to remain and remind the parent that parenting is the most difficult duty in this life!

There is no university to teach parents to be good parents that he graduates with a BPt— Bachelor of Parenting. He learns as he goes along. There are no second chances to try again if he fails. A life has been ruined. The guilt of culpability as a failed parent will haunt the parent all his earthly life. There is no amount of money to buy off the pain. No holiday to run and hide the numbing pain in the souls that his own flesh and blood has ruined his life living a profligate existence waiting for the wrath of God to fall on him. Prayer eases the pain a little as he learns to commit the child to God. Praying for God’s mercy and grace to deliver the lost soul of his child seems to be the parent’s prayer diet and burden. Yet all this could have been very different IF ONLY he had prayed BEFORE the child was lost to the world. IF ONLY the family had gone to church, the father had studied God’s Word, have consistent family worship at home, earn less money and spend more time serving God, pray without ceasing, trust in the LORD rather than self, etc. and the list goes on and on . . . . .

Whatever mistakes made and learned may help in bringing up the second or third child but then the parent soon discovers that no two children are exactly the same. What works in one does not work in another. Every child is unique and has to be carefully taught and guided and yet all the time the parent must not only appear to be just and fair but be actually just and fair in bringing up all his children. To not do anything as a parent, he is called a derelict parent. To give in to every whining and complaining he is an indulgent parent. To punish all the time at the drop of a hat over trivial matters he is a tyrannical parent. What is the biblical way to bring up a child?

Two outcomes seem to be the result in the evaluation of bringing up children—either provoking or parenting. Parents are not perfect. They make mistakes like all human beings given a task to perform. Avoid the picture of a perfect parent for he does not exist on this earth. Be a biblical parent for this is what is required of all Christians endowed with children to care and to nurture. Remember the goal is that the child becomes a child of God!

### **C. Make-up of All Children**

**i. All are born Sinners -- The notion “that man is born neutral or without sin” is a lie of Satan. Romans 5:12, “Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.”** The moment a human begins to exist, even before he comes out of his mother’s womb, he is already a sinner. He is totally depraved from the get go!

**Psychological mumbo jumbo that teaches otherwise, builds their case on sinking sand. Any advice based upon a false premise cannot stand. It crumples and falls to the ground. Parents who listen to them make the biggest mistake of their lives. The method they use to bring up their children will result in worldly and carnal children.**

**This means that children are not made sinners by the environment. Put them in a perfect environment and they will be just as deprave. They know how to lie and show signs of greed, jealousies and selfishness before they learn to walk and talk. Therefore the parents have to show them the difference between right and wrong. The perfect Word of God will be that determining factor not the word of fallen man.**

**ii. All are Foolish -- Proverbs 22:15, “Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him.”** The word for bound means “to be knitted together.” Silliness is knitted together in the heart of the child from the time they are born. Education will not drive it away. Education results in an educated fool. Luxurious lifestyle will not drive it away, it only covers up the fool like a white washed sepulchre. Love of family and friends will not drive it away, it merely smoothers it with layers of sugary coating. Nothing on this earth can drive it away other than the rod of correction.

**The rod of correction is the disciplinary rod.** The Christian parent must use the rod. The rod means it is a stick applied to the seat of the child’s behind and he will have to feel the pain when he has sinned or done wrong. This is

part and parcel of the treatment instituted by the LORD in this sin-sick world as long as man possesses the sinful nature passed down from the first Adam. Psychologists say that this will leave a scar for life. This is another psycho babble to be rejected. Another similar error is that children cannot do wrong because there is no such thing as right and wrong. Everything is relative. The Bible is the absolute truth that determines right from wrong. Parents are to be good students of God's Word and teach the child the difference between right from wrong. Those who argue that we let the children decide and make up their own mind are derelict parents. Children depend on parents to guide them because foolishness is tie up tightly to their hearts. What they do foolish things they need their parents to tell that that they have done foolishly. Of course the rod is not to be used every time a mistake is made. Gentle and firm rebuke are just as good. But there will be sins committed such as lying and fighting and stealing that require the rod of correction. These are serious sins that must be nipped in the bud.

#### **D. Treatment of All Children**

**e. Give Discipline -- Proverbs 23:13,** *"Withhold not correction from the child: for if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die."* The purpose of the use of the rod of correction is to teach not to injure or kill. There was a case in the Straits Times where the mother passed the cane to the father who caned the child 100 strokes because he told a lie. The poor boy has to be hospitalised for three days to recover from the beating. This verse clearly warns against such usage which is an abuse.

**The holding back of the rod on our children will bring death to them.** If we truly love our children then we must use the rod. The example is our Hevaenly Father Himself as taught in Hebrews 12:5-13.

**f. Give Wisdom -- Proverbs 29:15,** *"The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame."* The rod will give wisdom to our children. They learn that sin will be justly punished. Right from wrong will be taught them. When wrong is committed and they received no punishment and at times even rewarded that is the conduct of a derelict parent.

A child who is left alone without discipline will bring shame to the person who loved him the most and very often "unconditionally", his mother. Having carried him in the womb for 9 long months and then suffer the pain of child birthing and the child turns out to be a bad apple, the hurt to the mother is unimaginable. The rod and reproof (means pain and purpose) will result in wisdom as a gift given to the child.

**God's method is constant care and teaching. Children are not to left to their own devices. That would be the surest way to bring up a wayward and carnal child. Deuteronomy 6:4-8,** *"Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD: And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. 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. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes."*

**They are to be surrounded by the Word of God in every facet of their daily lives. There is not to be any distinction between secular and spiritual. Everything is spiritual in the bringing up of a child for the Christian parent.**

#### **G. Importance of All Children**

**i. Their Future -- Psalms 127:4-5,** *"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."* Children who are godly are the future of God's work and hence the future of the church. They begin to be a blessing to the family in which they grow up as youths.

**They help defend the truth. They keep at bay the enemies. They strengthen the fabric of the Christian home when they are godly. The parents will be glad to have such children where godliness characterised their lives and conduct. The parents are not ashamed of them.**

**Soon they will take over the role of the head of the family when the parents are old and are not able to do so**

any longer. They will maintain the godliness in the home. Enemies which try to invade the home such as sin and evil and every false teaching and way will be kept at bay. They will speak on behalf of the family in time to come.

**ii. Their Impact -- Ephesians 6:1-3, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right.**

*Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise;) That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth."* Godly children will honour their parents by their obedience. Their homes will be godly for the biblical model of a godly home is experienced. God would be pleased.

**It is not perfection in obedience as no child is perfect. But by and large they will obey and honour parents. The promise is that of long days on earth. Nations would be blessed and morally strong.** The family unit is the basic building block of every nation. Godly family builds a nation into a morally strong nation. Conversely broken families destroy nations. The nation becomes corrupt because the family is fragmented. Children will not be guided rightly in the ways of Holy Scripture.

This is also true of the local church. The future of the church and the nation lie in the character of our children. Parents who bring them well according to Holy Scriptures have much to accomplish for eternity.

It is therefore important that the parents bring up their own children instead of farming them out to child care or maids to look after them.

## **CONCLUSION**

Parents will always be novices in parenting. There are no expert parents or parenting. Every child is unique and different. Every method in parenting cannot fit all. The method has to be adjusted and adapted according to the make up of the child. Mistakes will be made in parenting and therefore children must learn to forgive their parents.

Parents must learn to forgive themselves and not repeat the same mistakes in the bringing up of other children. Parents must aim to be godly parents rather than a perfect parent. Godly parents learn to say sorry to their children when they had wronged their children. They do not hide behind their pride and culture. They pray for and with their children.

**Psalms 127:1, "A Song of degrees for Solomon. 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."** Ultimately it is the LORD who must build our family or homes. This refers to the precious perfect Word of God. It is not by sheer human will power or determination that the goal of parenting and the steps of achieving that goal is accomplished in the lives of our children.

Prayer and the study of God's Word are the keys to success. Prayer means we depend entirely upon God to help us. Studying the Word of God provides the right ways to carry out what we pray for.

**Proverbs 22:6, "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it."**