

Nurture *and* Training *of* Children

Dan Brewster

THE CHILDREN & FAMILIES IN THE BIBLE SERIES

BOOK 3



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Dan Brewster

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Scriptures quoted, unless otherwise noted, are from the New International Version

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THE IDEA FOR these studies came from a reading of the excellent book *Precious in His Sight* by Roy B. Zuck (Baker Books, Grand Rapids, Mi., 1996). Much of the material in the early versions then was based on gleanings from *Precious in His Sight*, and I am grateful to Dr. Zuck for permission and encouragement to explore in his book for those insights and principles. The book called *Children and Childhood in the Bible Revised Edition* was a result of that exploration.

This series of booklets uses much of the material in *Children and Childhood in the Bible*, but in this shorter “booklet” format. The material in each one can be covered in a day or so of group or individual study. I am grateful to Dr. Rosalind Tan, the Director of the Holistic Child Development Institute (HCDI) in Penang for the idea and the inspiration to rework the material in this smaller, booklet format. The booklets are in response to her passion to create materials very suitable for “grassroots” pastors, “lay” leaders, children’s workers and care givers. Thanks Rosalind!

Dan Brewster

I am very grateful once again for the expert assistance to my friend Ms. Lim Siew Ling. She contributed substantially to the creation of this Series. Her comprehensive familiarity with Scripture and wealth of pastoral and ministry experience gives her a marvelous ability to both explore and interpret Scripture and also to craft appropriate and provocative reflection questions. Thank you very much, Siew Ling!

And once again, I have been helped by my friend Mr. Kok Chik Bu in the overall design, look and feel of the books in this series. As has been the case with his work on other Holistic Child Development (HCD) resources, his creative touch has fashioned the attractive and readable style and format of the book. Thanks Chik Bu!

Finally, and not least, I am grateful to Compassion International, the organization in which I have served for nearly 30 years now, for the opportunity to spend time exploring the Word of God as part of my work to develop resources like these.

INTRODUCTION TO THE SERIES

THE PURPOSE OF this booklet and the others which follow is to help learners dig deep into the Word to see what it says about children and childhood. But more importantly, they are to create understanding of the worth and significance of children, and their role in pointing to and illustrating Christ's "upside down" Kingdom..

Some people have said that the Bible has little to say about children and childhood. But in fact the Scriptures are *full* of references to children. These booklets include hundreds of verses relating to the child. Moreover, these studies show that children play a significant role in the unfolding of the message of the Bible – that God loves and protects them; that they are extremely perceptive in understanding the things of God; and that God often deploys them as His messengers and models – often it seems when adults may have been too corrupt and deaf to His calling.

The Booklets in this Series are:

Book One: The Worth of a Child

Book Two: Family Life in Bible Times

Book Three: Nurture and Training of Children

Book Four: Parental Modeling and Generational Consequences

Book Five: Child Protection

Book Six: Theological Significance of Children

Note: A bibliography for the Series can be found at the end of Book Six.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOKLET

EACH OF THESE booklets contains four studies on a specific theme with a variety of Bible verses or reflections about children. The studies are structured as follows:

Topic Overview: A brief introduction to the topic which presents real life case studies or scenarios as a backdrop to the Scriptures and reflections of the study.

What Does the Bible Say? Here you will be asked to go to specific Bible passages to explore what the Bible says about children and understand more of God's heart for them.

Key Insights or Principles: For those Bible passages, you may find new insights or key learning related to the theme. It may be that the number and breadth of Scriptures on a topic surprises or impresses you. Or you may be convicted anew with the biblical perspective on some topics which contrast sharply with the perspectives we see today and hear about in the news. Write down the main biblical principle, as well as your personal observations and gleaned knowledge about the Scriptures on the topic.

Reflection Questions: This section asks you to apply the key biblical principles to your **personal life**, the **culture** in which you live, and the **context** of your society and circumstances in your own country. They may require more inquiry, research and personal reflection. There are no right or wrong answers to the reflection questions, but they will provide the basis for interesting and lively discussions about how children are viewed and treated in your own personal life, context, and culture/country. Ideally these questions should be discussed in groups. The discussions will draw you deeper into the biblical material, and point to the contemporary significance of the topic.

Where I have quoted Scriptures, I have used the New International Version. However, as you are doing your studies, you may profit from using a variety of versions if available. Also, while often single verses are given; good Biblical scholarship requires you to read the Scriptures around the verses, to have a fuller understanding of the historical settings, and contexts of the Scriptures.

Note: There are frequent references especially to Dr. Roy Zuck's outstanding book *Precious in His Sight*,¹ which inspired this Workbook. In some places we have sought to include more of Dr. Zuck's fine analysis and development of the many themes he addresses in his book. However, the references to his book can surely not do it justice. I highly recommend that learners using these booklets get a copy of *Precious in His Sight* which will add immeasurably to the depth and breadth of the topics explored here.

Whether you are a front-line childcare worker, a church or organization leader, I trust that these booklets will encourage, inspire, and provide you broad new insights about children and childhood in the Bible—and about your ministry and mission priorities.

¹ Roy B. Zuck, *Precious in His Sight-Children & Childhood in the Bible* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 1996).

NURTURE AND TRAINING OF CHILDREN

THE BOOK OF PROVERBS gives many guidelines for those of us working with and for children. It is challenging in the ever-changing panorama of parenting norms from culture to culture to be steadfast and committed to the positive training and nurture of children. In every generation of parents and children, there are new challenges in the cultural contexts which are not addressed by Scripture.

The family structure is the structure God has created in which to protect and nurture children. God's design for a family includes a healthy, God-honouring marriage, a husband/father who models spiritual leadership in the home and fathers and mothers working together toward godly parenting who are passionate about building strong families.

Families are under pressure today. Even within the church, many families are struggling or dysfunctional. We are told that in most places the divorce rate among Christian families is essentially the same as for non-Christians. Many of the issues facing families, and children today are vastly different than those from any other age. At the same time, many of the challenges are the same – helping children to grow in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man (as Jesus did, in Luke 2:52). Our studies in this section won't have specific response to all issues, but we will get examples—both good and bad—of the family issues in the Bible. The insights and biblical principles you will find are timeless—serving well the families in any culture and every generation.

STUDY 1: THE NURTURE AND TRAINING OF JESUS

■ Introduction

I HAVE A problem with some of the pictures we see of Jesus. Sometimes the “shampooed” hair look, often strangely backlit, is a bit too feminine for my liking. I believe Jesus was very “manly.” He was probably muscular from wielding a saw and a hammer. He had a whip, and apparently knew how to use it. He was a “real man,” but still had time to be loving and even playful with children. We know too that obviously Jesus could read and write (Luke 4:16-20; John 8:6, 8). “Undoubtedly, He knew and could read and converse in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek.”¹

Who were Jesus’ teachers? Certainly He would have learned much from his parents. He probably also learned from the rabbis and synagogue leaders every year as a youth when His parents took Him to Jerusalem for the Passover celebrations. Where did He learn? From the wisdom of His teaching, we see that His was not a sheltered life, but that He learned much about the ways of the world from watching, listening, and being instructed. He learned and was able to apply “real world” lessons from the everyday things He saw and experienced around Him. What lessons can we learn about the training of children from what we see in the education of Jesus?

For Further Exploration:

Roy B. Zuck, *Precious in His Sight*, pp. 195-200.

¹ Zuck, *Precious in His Sight*, p.196.

■ What Does the Bible Say?

- From the following verses in Matthew, we discover that Jesus' education and life experiences were from ordinary daily contexts. Compare these with the life experiences of today's children and give your comments from one or two of these verses. A few has been done for you.

References in Matthew:	Jesus' Life Experience and Learning	Comments on Life Experiences of Today's Children
6:3	He was a carpenter's son.	<i>Jesus grew up in a simple home with little resources in contrast with some of today's children. Yet, He "grew in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man" (Luke 2:52). Hence, raising godly kids is not dependent on abundance of material possessions but a godly upbringing.</i>
6: 19-20	He knew of the corroding effects of moths and rust.	
7: 3-5	He knew about carpentry – the problem of getting a speck of sawdust in one's eye.	<i>Unlike children of earlier generation, children today do not make their own toys anymore such as paper dolls or wooden guns. They are deprived of precious life experiences in such do-it-yourself learning environment.</i>
7: 24-27	He had the wisdom of building a house on the rock instead of sand.	
9: 16-17	He understood the problems with sewing new cloth on old wineskins.	<i>In a culture where we throw rather than repair broken things, how would today's children understand what Jesus understood in this area? Perhaps adults need to create an environmentally-friendly culture at home for our children to learn precious lessons from?</i>
13: 52	He knew the use of storerooms in a house.	
5:15	He was aware of the need of oil in oil lamps.	
20:2, 9-10, 13	He was familiar with the value of coins.	

21: 42,44	He knew the value of a capstone.	
22: 15-21	He knew the payment of taxes.	
5:13, 13:33, 15: 26, 16:6,11: 23:25-26	He referred to domestic life including stocked kitchen items such as spices, flour, yeast, salt, bread, and the washing of dishes.	
6:26; 13: 4; 24:28	He was acquainted with outdoor life: birds, vultures.	
7:6,10,15; 13: 47-50; 23: 24,33,37	He knew about farming and farmers, animals, fishing etc.	
9:36, 12: 12,34; 15:24,26; 17: 27;18: 12-13	He knew what are sackcloth ashes, yokes, pearls, millstones, watchtower; tombs.	

2. A further study of Matthew will reveal that Jesus was familiar with horticulture and agriculture. How did Jesus apply this knowledge and use it to teach His disciples?

References in Matthew:	Jesus' Familiarity with Horticulture and Agriculture	Wisdom that Jesus Taught (parables, object lessons, etc.)
6:28-30	Lilies, grass	<i>We are exhorted not to worry about clothes because the lilies and grass reminds us that God "clothes" them in splendour despite they being worthless in comparison with us.</i>
7: 16-20	Trees with good and bad fruits	
13: 3-9, 18-23	Seeds	
9: 37-38	Harvesting	

3. Jesus' disciples asked: "How did this man [Jesus] get such learning without having studied?" (John 7:15)? What does the phrase "not having studied" suggest about Jesus' schooling? Where do you suppose Jesus was educated?

4. Jesus was certainly wise (Luke 2:52) as well as educated. He knew the OT Scriptures well. The Gospel of Luke records at least 39 times when Jesus quoted from the OT. Discuss what the education of Jesus suggests to us in comparison with the education of children today.

■ *Key Insights or Principles:*

■ *Reflection Questions:*

1. From reading the Matthew passages, what can you discover about Jesus' methodology of teaching? Why was He so effective? In what ways can you model His abilities to communicate to your context and culture?

2. Children everywhere should have the opportunity to grow the way Jesus did—in “wisdom and stature and in favour with God and man” (Luke 2:52). What is your definition of “wisdom” and how is it different from knowledge?

3. As church leaders and child development workers, how might you, your churches or schools teach wisdom today? List some ideas here.

4. At what age do you think children should start their formal education in public institutions today (if at all?) What is your opinion of parents who send their children, as young as 2 years old, to preschool centres for half-day or full day early childhood programs? What are the benefits or harmful effects on such children?

■ *Case Study: Reflections about Schools/Education*

The major part of the education of children today is left up to the schools. Some have argued that this is one of the most damaging of decisions ever made for the welfare of our children. Some suggest that the highly competitive school environment found in many school systems around the world, with such enormous consequences resting on the results of just one or a very few exams, that school itself can be a form of child abuse. Moreover, very suspect subject matter and a toxic school environment can be contrary to biblical worldviews and devastating to Christian values.

- Do you think this may be at least partly true in your country or society?

- What is the learning focus children are experiencing in schools today? In what ways, positively or negatively, does public school education affect children today? How might parents “take back” some of the responsibilities for teaching and training their children?

- In your culture, which is most emphasized or valued? Why?
 - Formal or informal education?
 - Academics or character-building training?
 - Skills or knowledge?

STUDY 2: PARENTS' AND CHILDREN'S RESPONSIBILITIES TO ONE ANOTHER

■ Introduction

MILLIONS OF CHILDREN suffer today in our “childless parents and parentless children”¹ cultures. THIS IS A TIME in history when family units have been broken and many children are estranged from their parents, even while living together under the same roof

The biblical portrait of a family which consists of father, mother and children are no longer commonplace globally. Single parent families, not to mention the many other combinations and “blending” of families, along with varying parental roles amongst cultures, create a climate for emotionally scarred and socially disadvantaged families.

It is easy to blame parents for most family-related problems. However, consistent with their age and understanding, God does expect children to respond appropriately to the training and discipline from their parents, and to the moral teachings of the Bible. A godly home consists of both the parents *and* the children fulfilling their God-given roles and responsibilities regardless of their circumstances.

Obedience of children to their parents is taught throughout the Bible, but beyond obedience, there are at least **nine** specific responsibilities children are expected to fulfil in relation to their parents.

For Further Exploration:

Roy B. Zuck, *Precious in His Sight*, pp. 43-44; 105-121; 159-168.

¹ Zuck, *Precious in His Sight*, p.105.

■ What Does the Bible Say?

1. Read these verses to determine specific things parents should do for their children. Identify ONE word to summarise the specific responsibilities of fathers and mothers. The first one is done for you.

References:	Responsibilities of Father/Mother	One-Word Summary
Ephesians 5:23; Genesis 18:19; I Timothy 5:14	The father is the head of wife and children, responsible for their physical and spiritual welfare ; lead and direct their families; mothers are to manage the homes.	<i>Lead</i>
I Samuel 1:11,27; Ezra 8:21	Prays and fasts for their children	
I Samuel 1:11; 27-,28; Luke 2:22	Dedicates the child to serve the Lord.	
John 4:46-49; I Thessalonians 2:7	Compassionate and caring even when the children have gone the wrong way.	
Isaiah 66:13 I Thessalonians 2:11-12	"As a mother comforts her child.. "..as a father deals with his own children, encouraging, comforting and urging you to live lives worthy of God..."	
Ephesians 6:4	"Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord."	
1 Timothy 5:8	"If anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for his immediate family, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever."	

2. Read the following Scriptures to discover the responsibilities of children to their parents. The first two are done for you.

Reference	Nine Specific Responsibilities of Children
Ephesians 6:1; Colossians 3:20; I Peter 1:14	<i>Obey their parents*</i>
Exodus 20:12; Deuteronomy 5:16; Malachi 1:6; I Timothy 3:4	<i>Honour and respect their parents*</i>
Hebrews 12:7-9	

Proverbs 7:1-3	
Deuteronomy 32:7	
I Timothy 5:4-5	

* These 2 responsibilities are further discussed in "Honour and Obedience".

3. Proverbs 13:1b describes an undisciplined child as a "mocker" who "does not listen to rebuke". Give some other examples of undisciplined children in the Bible and discuss how they are mockers.

4. Proverbs also provides us with a list of verbs and commands concerning actions expected of children to their parents' (especially the father's) instructions. In the following sets of verses, list specific verbs or actions expected of children. The first two are done for you.

Proverbs References:	Words Related to Father's Instructions	Verbs or Actions Expected of Children
1:8; 4:1, 4:10 4:20	Your father's instructions What I say My words	<i>Listen to the father</i>
7:24 5:1	What I say My wisdom	<i>Pay attention to the father's advice</i>
5:7	From what I say	

3:1	My teaching	
1:8b	Your mother's teaching	
2:1	My words; my commands	
4:13	Instruction	

5. Read the following passages about the responsibilities of children with regard to their own faith and spiritual life. What do these verses mention about a child's own faith development? The first one is done for you:

Reference	Children's Responsibilities Concerning their Own Spiritual/Faith Development
Psalms 148:12	<i>Join others in praising the Lord</i>
Ecclesiastes 12:1	
Psalms 119:9	
I Timothy 4:12	
2 Timothy 2:22	
Titus 2:6	
Exodus 12:26-27	

■ *Key Insights or Principles:*

■ *Reflection Questions:*

1. What are some responsibilities modern parents (Christians included) are finding hard to practice today? Why?

2. While encouraging and affirming our children is important, do you think some children today are getting *too much* affirmation? Discuss by giving examples.

3. What pro-active measures would you take as a spiritual leader to prepare young parents for effective biblical parenting?

4. Roy Zuck says, "To be effective, training (discipline) is two-sided; it must be given by parents, and it must be received by children."² In your culture, which side (parents or children) tends to fail in their responsibilities in discipline and what are the causes?

5. Do children in your culture work with and for their parents? What kinds of work enable children and parents to work together? Discuss the disadvantages and advantages of this practice.

6. How are children in your culture encouraged to nurture their own spiritual growth and faith at home? What programs/activities/guidance does the church in your community provide for families to help children nurture their spiritual life at home?

² Zuck, *Precious in His Sight*, p.165.

■ *Case Study:*

Two year old Rumi is in the market place with her parents. She spies a small bouncy ball at the vendor and picks it up to play with. However, her parents cannot afford to and do not wish to spend their money on such a toy so they ask Rumi to put it back in the basket. Rumi is very distraught and doesn't want to give the toy back to the vendor. She throws herself on the ground in a tantrum making the dust fly everywhere, wailing loudly.

What should her parents do at this point? How do you think they should deal with a young child's misbehaviour?

STUDY 3: HOW AND WHAT ARE PARENTS TO TEACH THEIR CHILDREN?

■ Introduction

Proverbs 22:6 famously instructs and encourages parents with a command and a promise: “Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it.” Note that nothing is said about encouraging our children to try to be physically attractive, financially independent, or to have a high intelligence or worldly knowledge. The goals for our children relate exclusively to producing people of quality and godly character.

Many parents have a sense of inadequacy when it applies to teaching their children. *WHAT* do we teach our children? Most parents employ institutions to help them with this task. The good news is that excellent childhood development programs do not need to be expensive. They are within reach by everyone around the world, young or old, rich or poor. Again, the key is to unlock the treasures in God’s timeless Truth.

HOW then do we communicate with our children when we are hoping they will

listen and do as we ask? How should parents impart a God-centered education to their children? Does this sound familiar? “JUST DO IT! And don’t ask questions!” Or “Do it because I SAID SO!” These phrases and other authoritative approaches used by teachers and parents sometimes do more harm than good in motivating a child. This is a teaching methodology which might not be motivating in a positive manner! In recent years, more and more child educators (both Christian and secular) have recognized the timeless wisdom found in Scripture and incorporated some of these truths into their early childhood development programs and parental training opportunities.

This study discusses *how* parents are to teach their children and what, *specifically*, is to be the *content* of that teaching or training.

For Further Exploration:

Roy B. Zuck, *Precious in His Sight*, pp. 129-147.

■ What Does the Bible Say?

1. Read the following verses and summarize WHAT parents are to do when instructing their children in the faith.

References	What Parents are to Do in Training Children in the Faith
Exodus 12:26-27; 13:8,14	<i>Allow children to participate in spiritual ceremonies and explain the meanings to them to affirm their spiritual heritage and faith.</i>
Deuteronomy 4:9,10	
Joshua 4:4-7	
Psalms 44:1	
Isaiah 38:19	<i>Fathers are to tell their children about the faithfulness of God.</i>

2. Read Deuteronomy 6:4-8; 11:20. Moses told the Israelites to do these things when instructing their children at home. What are they and why?

3. Discover who was doing the teaching of children and the place of learning from the following Scriptures. What do you learn from these?

References	Who was teaching?	Where was the teaching?
Proverbs 1:8		
Proverbs 4:3,4		

4. From the passages below, imagine yourself and the children in similar contexts where Jesus taught and make implications for teaching children today.

New Testament Scriptures	What and How Did Jesus Teach?	Where Did Jesus Teach?
Matthew 4:23	The Good News of the Kingdom; PREACHING	Throughout Galilee in the synagogues
Mark 1:21	Kingdom Truth; TEACHING	A synagogue in Capernaum
Luke 8:1-15	Good News; STORY TELLING (Parable of the Sower)	"From one town and village to another"
John 6:8-14	Gospel and Its Power; MIRACLE (feeding 5,000 with 5 loaves and 2 fish)	The shore of Sea of Galilee in the midst of multitudes.
John 13:12-15	Lesson on servanthood and humility; DEMONSTRATION (washing of disciples' feet)	Upper Room on Mt Zion in Jerusalem

5. Read the following verses to identify WHO and WHAT is taught to children. What does this suggest about different parental roles in teaching/training responsibilities?

	References	WHO is to Teach	WHAT was Specifically Taught
IN PROVERBS	1: 8,10,15	<i>Father & Mother</i>	<i>Godly moral values, wisdom</i>
	3: 1,11,21	<i>Father</i>	<i>Discipline, sound judgement and discernment</i>
	6:20	<i>Father & Mother</i>	<i>Warnings against adultery</i>
	23: 15-16		
	23:20-21		
	23:22-23		
	31: 1, 26		
IN PAUL'S TEACHINGS	Ephesians 6:4	<i>Fathers</i>	<i>Training and instruction of the Lord</i>
	I Thessalonians 2:11-12		
	2 Timothy 1:5; 3:14-15		

■ *Key Insights or Principles:*

■ *Reflection Questions:*

1. Illiteracy and dropping out of school is a problem in most cultures today, including the western society. Why do you think this is happening? In your opinion, to what extent is this problem related to the home environment, family unit, church engagement, and community support?

2. In some cultures, students are pushed to spend long hours in school and experience extra “tuitions”, remedial, and other academic supplements to fill up their days, often at the expense of other holistic activities such as sports, free time, or family time. Is this a concern? If so, how can it be addressed in these situations and cultures?

3. Does your community influence the role of mothers and fathers in the teaching/training of their children? In what ways do mothers and mothers have differing responsibilities in teaching/training their children?

4. Why do some Christian children stray from their faith and live ungodly lives as adults in spite of having received godly training and teaching from their parents?

5. In the well-known passage from Proverbs 22:6, "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it.," the Hebrew word which is translated *train*, has a meaning of "narrowing" or restricting. Discuss how "training" of a child has the aspects of narrowing and restricting attitudes and behaviours.

■ Case Study: Home-schooling:

“Home Schooling” is an important alternative to public and private formal schooling today. Share and discuss what positive or negative impacts home-schooling might have on children’s learning. Discuss home-schooling from the following holistic child development perspectives:

- a) Spiritual perspective:
- b) Academic , cognitive, mental perspective:
- c) Character-building, social –emotional perspective:
- d) Physical perspective: logistics, child’s activity levels, health, nutrition, etc.

In your opinion, how might John 17:18 concerning “being in the world but not of the world” relate to a child who is home-schooled apart from secular society/culture?

Are you acquainted with any home-schooled children? If yes, what are your impressions? What, in your opinion, are the “upsides” and the “downsides” of home-schooling or of other alternate (non-public) schooling options?

STUDY 4: THE CAPACITY OF CHILDREN TO UNDERSTAND THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

■ Introduction

IT IS NOT only God's love and care for children that are striking in the Bible. We also see that God has a very high regard for their ability to understand the faith and to participate in His redemptive activities. Throughout the Bible, young people are encouraged to influence their communities by maintaining personal purity, by obeying God's word (Psalm 119:9), by being exemplary in their speech, love, and faith (1 Timothy 4:12), and by pursuing godly virtues (2 Timothy 2:22). Indeed, the conduct and moral standards for children differ very little for children and for adults.

Contrary to what adults think, children can grasp spiritual truths easily, they can "sense the guilt of sin"¹ and understand what Jesus has done for them and what it takes to receive Jesus as their Lord and Saviour. Zuck states: "A child of five, if properly instructed, can as truly believe and be regenerated as any adult."²

For Further Exploration:

Roy B. Zuck, *Precious in His Sight*, pp.17-22.

Wess Stafford, *Too Small to Ignore*, p. 212.

Vinay Samuel, "Some Theological Perspectives on Children at Risk" in *Transformation* (Vol. 14, No. 2: April/June 1997), p. 27.

■ What Does the Bible Say?

6. Read and review the following verses. What events throughout the Bible included the participation of children? What do these events imply on the ability of children to understand the Christian faith?

Reference	Event/Activity	What are the implications?
Deuteronomy 31:12-13	Moses' Instructions to the Israelites before crossing entering the Promised Land (on reading the Law to children)	Children can listen and learn to fear the Lord and obey God's command.

¹ Zuck, *Precious in His Sight*, p.18.

² Zuck, p.18 quoting Frank G. Coleman, *The Romance of Winning children* (Cleveland, Ohio: Union Gospel Press, 1967). pp.9-10.

Joshua 8:34-35	Joshua reading the Law during Covenant Renewal at Mt Ebal	
Nehemiah 12:43	Dedication of the Wall of Jerusalem	
2 Timothy 3:15	Paul's charge to Timothy	

2. Based upon your knowledge of Scripture, in addition to the events described above, discuss and identify at least 3 additional events in which children participated in these spiritual activities along with adults. If possible, cite the biblical passages.

3. Read the following Scriptures. What do they imply about a child's sensitivity and openness (or inherent transcendence) to the spiritual truths of God?

References	Implications
Psalms 22:9-10	
Psalms 71:5-6,17	
Matthew 11:25	

Matthew 21:15-16	
Luke 1:15	
Acts 26:4	

4. Explore the Scriptures which speak of developing a child-like faith. Search and describe how these verses further support a child's faith development.

References about Developing a child-like Faith	Insights/Themes to support a Child's Faith Development
Matthew 19: 13-15	
Mark 10: 14-16	
2 Timothy 3:15	

■ *Key Insights or Principles:*

■ *Reflection Questions:*

1. READ Exodus 12:26-27 and Joshua 4:6-7. Against the backdrop of child participation in events and spiritual activities in the Old Testament, note that it is not “if” your child asks, but “when” your children ask “what do these.... mean?” To what extent are children expected to participate in the activities of faith in your church or community? How can children today be encouraged to participate and even initiate faith discussions in the home or at church?

2. Author James Montgomery Boice³ states:

“Children’s sermons might distract people from the worship of God. They are meant to involve children in the worship service by offering something appropriate to their age. But the effect may be to focus the attention of the adults on the children rather than upon God... Children’s sermons may also contribute to the “dumbing down” of the Gospel message. The goal for our children should be to bring them up to the level of the adults—that is to enable them to begin to function on an adult level in their relationships to God. But what we have succeeded in doing instead is to bring the adults down to the level of the children.”

Do you have “children’s church” or “children’s sermons at your church? And do you feel that “children’s church” and/or a “children’s sermon” contributes to the participation of the children in worship, or does it tend to “dumb down” the message of the Gospel for children? Discuss.

³ James Montgomery Boice, “I Don’t Do Children’s Sermons” in *Modern Reformation* magazine at <http://articles.christiansunite.com>.

3. On page 21 of *Precious in His Sight*, Zuck gave 3 reasons why children are equipped to respond to spiritual truths:
- a. Their dependency and trust
 - b. Their sensitivity to sin
 - c. Their loving nature

In your experience with children in your community, can you give examples of each of these qualities?

4. Dr. Vinay Samuel has said,

“Children are born with transcendence. While they are born into risk, children recognize transcendence. Yet if they are not immediately invited into the kingdom...if they do not experience and enjoy the realities of kingdom, they will lose that sense of transcendence.”⁴

- What is your understanding of transcendence? Do you believe children inherently have some kind of *transcendence* that most adults may not have? Why?

- Can you think of a time when you sensed the transcendence of a child?

- Read and reflect on the Parable of the Sower in Luke 4: 3-20. How does this parable apply to a child's context in relation to his or her sense of transcendence (child-like faith)?

⁴ Vinay Samuel, "Some theological Perspectives on Children at Risk" in *Transformation* (Vol 14, No. 2. April/June 1997), p.27.

BONUS STUDY 5: BAPTISM AND DEDICATION OF CHILDREN

■ Introduction

MANY CHRISTIANS BAPTIZE only adult believers upon their profession of faith in Jesus Christ. However, for centuries the Roman Catholic Church and many Protestant churches have baptized not only adults who profess faith in Christ, but also the children of believers. Whether it is for the purpose to “mark an individual’s entrance into the church” or to “serve as a sign and seal of the child’s participation in the covenant of grace,” this ancient practice certainly deserves some in-depth discussions.

In *Precious in His Sight*, Zuck presents four major arguments for and twelve reasons against infant baptism. Did the early church practice infant baptism? Did infant baptism take place in the New Testament church? What are the other biblical evidences for or against infant baptism? Although Zuck presents his own biblical perspective, and is in good company with many theologians on this subject, it is recommended that you study this issue thoroughly from several perspectives to determine your belief about the practice of baptism.

For example, R.C. Sproul, a well-known Reformed theologian, makes a case for infant baptism based upon the meaning of the word “sanctify” as used in Scripture and the correlation between the Old Testament Covenant between God and

Abraham and the New Covenant of the Gospel and redemption in Jesus Christ. He proposes that circumcision of the Old Testament was a visible sign of the spoken promise which was fully realized in the redemption in Jesus Christ of the New Testament and was replaced by baptism. This act of faith to believe in Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour was accompanied no longer by the actual sign of circumcision, but by the sign of baptism.

In addition, baptisms which occurred in the Book of Acts were not only for adults, but also in some cases were for the entire household (*oikos*-Greek) which many scholars believe included children. If infant baptism is practiced, it is imperative that children who have been baptized learn about the reason for their baptism as they grow in a nurturing home and church. It is the responsibility of both parents and the church to explain the “sign” of the New Covenant so that those children can come to learn and grow to trust in the Lord Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour.

Discover the baptismal events that speak of the glorious redemption in the Lord, Jesus Christ, as found in the Scriptures below:

For Further Exploration:

Roy B. Zuck, *Precious in His Sight*, pp. 226-238.

■ What Does the Bible Say?

1. Read the following amazing Scriptures about the Early Church that provide evidence that “households” were saved and baptized. Do you believe that these “whole households” include the presence of infants and children? Discuss.

References:	Evidence of Households were Saved and/or Baptized
Acts 11:14	<i>Peter explained how he was called to Joppa “to bring a message through which you and all your household will be saved.”</i>
Acts 16: 14-15	
Acts 16: 31-34	
Acts 18: 8	
I Corinthians 1:14-16	

2. Read Acts 2:39 and consider the phrase, “you and your children”. As we compare this verse with Acts 16:31 where Paul said to the jailer, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household,” do these verses suggest infant baptism which require the faith of parents substituting the faith of infants? Discuss from Scripture and your experience in your church community.

3. In the same light, read I Corinthians 7:14. In your opinion, what, really, might this passage mean? Can the faith of the parent/s “sanctify” their children? Do a word study on the word, “sanctify” to discover its various meanings and how these might or might not support infant baptism.

4. Once again, let’s continue our study in the Book of Acts. Read about the people who were baptized in the Early Church. Are they adults or infants? Is Scripture definitive about their age in these passages? Identify one common factor in these passages which “qualifies” them to be water-baptized.

References:	People who were Baptized	Common Factor for Water Baptism
Acts 2:39, 41	3,000 people	<i>“Those who accepted his message” implies faith and conviction of the Gospel.</i>
Acts 8:12		
Acts 9:18		
Acts 10: 44-48		
Acts 16: 11-15		
Acts 16: 31-34		
Acts 18: 8		
Acts 19: 4-5		

5. Read the passages in the Synoptic Gospels which tell of water baptism in Jesus' Great Commission (Matthew 28:19; Mark 16:16). What is the biblical implication on the validity of infant baptism based upon these passages?

■ *Key Insights or Principles:*

■ *Reflection Questions:*

1. Is infant baptism practiced in your culture and church community? What is the history and theological basis behind this practice and why?

2. What is your personal belief about infant baptism/or dedication in light of Scriptural truths studied here? Make a case for your belief using Scriptures.

3. From a biblical point of view, can infant baptism be equated as an act of regeneration? If yes, why? If not, what is your opinion concerning whether or not churches should continue to practice infant baptism? Why or why not? What Scriptures speak to this issue?

4. Do you know of Christians who have been infant-baptized and then found a vital faith later in life? What might that suggest to you about the validity of infant baptism?

5. Do you know of adult-baptized persons (or baptized after reaching the “age of accountability”), who have abandoned their commitment to Christ? What does that suggest to you about the efficacy of adult baptism? Is baptism at any age a **guarantee** of a lifelong faithful personal relationship, discipleship and salvation in Jesus Christ?

6. What is the overall purpose of baptism? Could it be a sign and seal of the covenant between God and His people? What Scriptures might support your viewpoint?

THE CHILDREN & FAMILIES IN THE BIBLE SERIES

BOOK 3: Nurture & Training of Children

This **Study Series** will enable you to explore many aspects of ministry to children, including ways to teach them, parental responsibilities, and theological issues related to children. Each Study introduces you to statements in the Scriptures about children, gives you key insights on the topic of that chapter, and asks you “reflection questions” that encourage you to think of the implications of the issues in that lesson.

May you be blessed as you study about and minister to children, all of whom are “precious in His sight.”

From the Foreword to the Series by Dr Roy B. Zuck

Each of these booklets contains four studies on a specific theme with a variety of Bible verses or reflections about children. The studies are structured as follows:

- **Topic Overview:** A brief introduction to the topic presents real life case studies or scenarios as a backdrop to the Scriptures and reflections of the study.
- **What Does the Bible Say?** Here you will be asked to go to specific Bible passages to explore what the Bible says about children and understand more of God’s heart for them.
- **Key Insights or Principles:** For those Bible passages, you may find new insights or key learning related to the theme.
- **Reflection Questions:** This section asks you to apply the key biblical principles to your **personal life**, the **culture** in which you live, and the **context** of your society and circumstances in your own country.

