

# Parental Modeling *and* Generational Consequences

Dan Brewster

THE CHILDREN & FAMILIES IN THE BIBLE SERIES  
**Book 4**



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# Parental Modeling *and* Generational Consequences

Dan Brewster

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Design and production by Kok Chik Bu

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

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# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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*,<sup>1</sup> 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.

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





# PARENTAL MODELING AND GENERATIONAL CONSEQUENCES

NONE OF US live lives only unto ourselves. Galatians 6:7-9 reminds us that we will reap what we sow – whether we sow to please our own desires or whether we sow in righteousness. Our actions affect the people around us, and especially those we love the most. Throughout Scripture we see a principle in operation – the obedience to the Lord is always best, both for the adults and for their families. Whatever the Lord tells us clearly to do, we should obey.

In the accounts in the Bible we sometimes find parents disobeying God because of a misplaced concern for their children or indulgence in them. (See Numbers 14, 1 Samuel 2, 1 Samuel 20 – how foolish we can be to think that we can better help our children by disobeying God!). Other times we read of those like Abraham who obeyed God in spite of what it would seem to do to his son, and the result was blessing for the children cascading down the generations – and indeed “all the nations [and children to come!] of the earth will be blessed because you have obeyed my voice” (Genesis 22:18).

This next lessons look more specifically at the importance of parental modeling of right attitudes and behaviour. Then we will look specifically at the generational consequences, and blessings for the children of parental obedience and faithfulness. Finally we will look at the negative – even disastrous consequences on children and even succeeding generations from parental disobedience and unfaithfulness.



# STUDY 1: PROMISES AND BLESSINGS FOR THE GENERATIONS

## ■ Introduction

GOD IS A God of generations! His intent is that we will pass the torch of faith to the next generation. Psalms 78:2-7 reads:

*"I will open my mouth in parables, I will utter hidden things, things from of old—what we have heard and known, what our fathers have told us. We will not hide them from their children; We will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the LORD, his power, and the wonders he has done. He decreed statutes...which he commanded our forefathers to teach their children, so the next generation would know them, even the children yet to be born, and they in turn would tell their children. Then they would put their trust in God and would not forget his deeds..."*

Solomon puts it simply: "The righteous man leads a blameless life; blessed are his children after him." (Proverbs 20:7). There are examples of good parental modeling, and many examples of bad parental modeling in Scripture. Children often followed those examples, repeating the mistakes of their fathers and mothers. As we shall discover, the consequences of bad parenting can affect whole nations and generations for as long as 200 years!

The words "generation(s)" and related ideas occur frequently throughout Scripture.

Here is a partial list:

- "generation" —46 times (OT) ; 28 times (NT)
- "forefathers" —84 times(OT); 15 times (NT)
- "you and your descendants" —10 times (OT)
- "you and your children" —10 times (OT) ; 1 time (NT)
- "Abraham, Isaac and Jacob" —13 times (OT); 4 times (NT)

This study will explore God's concern for, and the promises He has made for the "next generation" and the impact of parental modeling to the generational blessings.

"May the footprints that we leave cause them to believe, and the lives we lead inspire them to obey!"<sup>1</sup>

### For Further Exploration:

Alemu Beeftu, *God Heard the boy Crying* (Compassion International), pp. 25-16.

Herbert Lockyer, Sr., *Nelson's Illustrated Bible dictionary*, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1986).

Roy B. Zuck, *Precious in His Sight*, pp. 115-121.

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<sup>1</sup> Steve Green, *Find Us Faithful*.

<http://www.stlyrics.com/songs/s/stevegreen21959/findusfaithful567183.html>.

## ■ What Does the Bible Say?

1. Read the covenantal promises of God involving children in these “you and your children” phrases. For accurate interpretation, be careful to read the passages in context by referring to the verses surrounding the references. The first one is done for you.

References:	“You and Your Children” Phrases	God’s Covenantal Promise Involving Children
Deuteronomy 4:40	“so that it may go well with you and your children after you and that you may live long in the land the Lord your God gives you for all time.”	<i>Long life and inheritance of the Promised Land.</i>
Deuteronomy 12:28	“so that it may always go well with you and your children after you, because you will be doing what is good and right in the eyes of the Lord your God.”	
Deuteronomy 30: 2-10	“and when you and your children return to the Lord your God ...., then the Lord your God will restore your fortunes and have compassion on you and gather you again from all the nations.....”	
Psalms 115:14	“May the Lord make you increase, both you and your children.”	
Isaiah 49:25	“I will contend with those who contend with you, and your children I will save.”	
Acts 2:38-39	“Repent and be baptized... for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. This promise is for you and your children...”	

2. Read the following passages concerning the promises God made about children and/or future generations. Then, write your “lessons to be learned” from these promises:

<b>References:</b>	<b>God’s Promises About Children and/or the future generations</b>	<b>Lessons from the Promises</b>
Genesis 6:18	“I will establish my covenant with you, and you will enter the ark – you and your sons and your wife and your sons’ wives with you.”	<i>Obedience to God leads to blessings and covenantal relationships between God and us, our families and their generations.</i>
Deuteronomy 11:21	“so that your days and the days of your children may be many in the land the Lord swore to give your forefathers...”	
Psalms 25:12-13	“He will spend his days in prosperity, and his descendants will inherit the land.”	
Psalms 112: 1-2	“His children will be mighty in the land; the generation of the upright will be blessed.”	
Proverbs 20:7	“blessed are his children after him.”	

3. Read the following Scriptures to discover how the bad behaviour of parents affect the behaviour of their children.

<b>Reference</b>	<b>Mother’s/Father’s Example</b>	<b>Reference</b>	<b>Son’s Response</b>
Genesis 20:1-17	Abraham lied twice, saying that Sarah was her sister when in fact she was his wife.	Genesis 26: 1-11	<i>Isaac told the same lie. He also lied that Rebekah was his sister when she was his wife.</i>
Genesis 25:28	Rebekah loved Jacob more than Esau.	Genesis 37:3-4	
Genesis 30: 3-12	Rachel gave her servant to her husband Jacob to bear children.	Genesis 35:22	
2 Samuel 5:13-16	David took “more” concubines and wives in Jerusalem.	2 Samuel 16:21-22	

4. Read these positive examples in Scripture. What characteristics of good parental modeling do you see in the following examples:

Reference	Characteristic of Good Parental Modeling
Deuteronomy 6:7-9	<i>Impress the Lord's commandments upon the children. Talk about them when at home, when going out, lying down or getting up. Use visual means to impress these Scriptures on the children e.g. write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.</i>
Proverbs 14:26	
Proverbs 20:7	

5. Eli is one example of an apparently very poor parental model. What were the resulting characteristics in his sons, Hophni and Phinehas? List the characteristics of Eli's sons:

Reference	Characteristics of Eli's sons
I Samuel 2:12-17,22	

6. In I Samuel 2:25, 29, identify 2 reasons why Eli as a father failed to impact his sons positively despite rebuking them of their sins?

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7. I Kings 12:28-33 reveals King Jeroboam as an example of one man's sins which affected the entire nation for many generations. What are some of the wicked actions that Jeroboam did which resulted in "amazing" and "alarming consequences" amongst every one of the 19 kings of the Northern Kingdom?

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8. Exodus 20:5b "I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me." To what extent are parents responsible for the divine judgment upon their future generations?

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9. Judges 2:10 states the following: "After that whole generation [of Joshua] had been gathered to their fathers, another generation grew up, who knew neither the LORD nor what he had done for Israel."

Why did the generation after Joshua turn away from God in spite of God's pronouncements of generational blessings over them?

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■ *Key Insights or Principles:*

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■ *Reflection Questions:*

1. Based upon your experience as a child advocate, church leader, or child development worker working directly with children, which of the promises found in this study are the most comforting to you? Why?

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2. What are some warnings for both adults and children that are repeatedly mentioned in the above passages as conditions for enjoying God's promises?

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3. Read and reflect upon Luke 1:50 which states: "His mercy extends to those who fear him, from generation to generation." In what ways can we impact the next generation, with its challenges, opportunities, and issues today?

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4. In your group, share specifically how your parents have been POSITIVE role models to you during your childhood and how their positive actions have influenced you as an adult.

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5. If you are comfortable with it, reflect on how your parents were NEGATIVE role models to you. How has this impacted you?

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6. As parents, child workers and leaders, what is one thing that is most difficult for you to model to your children? What might be the easiest to model to your children? Give examples from your experience and life.

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## STUDY 2: HONOUR AND OBEDIENCE

### ■ Introduction

HONOUR, RESPECT, AND obedience of children towards parents are commanded in the Bible. Indeed, honouring our parents is one of the Ten Commandments: “Honour your father and your mother” (Exodus 20:12; Deuteronomy 5:16). The fifth commandment is the only one of the ten addressed specifically to children and it comes with a promise—God promised that they “may live long in the land.” Likewise, Paul echoed this command and also the reason for the command—“that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth” (Ephesians 6:2-3).

Honour and obedience go hand in hand. A child who obeys his parents also honours them and vice-versa. The consequences of dishonouring and disobedience are serious and grave in the Bible. On the other hand, the rewards of honouring and obeying one’s parents are bountiful. Here we will look at some of these consequences and rewards of honouring and obeying parents, and also compare and contrast these actions/attitudes with some others which are similar, but perhaps importantly different.

#### **For Further Exploration:**

Roy B. Zuck, *Precious in His Sight*, pp. 161-165.

### ■ What Does the Bible Say?

1. Read the following Scriptures and identify how different children of the Bible “honoured” their parents. Keeping in mind the context of these verses, discuss how these actions/practices are similar or different in your community or family traditions.

References	Children	Actions that Honour Parents
Genesis 50:1-5	Joseph	“Joseph threw himself upon his father and wept over him and kissed him... directed the physicians in his service to embalm his father ... now let me go up and bury my father...”
Joshua 2: 12-13	Rahab	“... please swear to me by the Lord that you will show kindness to my family... that you will spare the lives of my father and mother, my brothers and sisters, and all who belong to them, and that you will save us from death.”

I Samuel 22:3-4	David	"Would you let my father and mother come and stay with you until I learn what God will do for me?"
John 19:26-27	Jesus	"He said to his mother, 'Dear woman, here is your son,' and to the disciple, 'Here is your mother.' From that time on, this disciple took her into his home."

2. Read the biblical passages below. You will discover the consequences of dishonouring actions. List and make note of these unfortunate consequences.

References	Actions that Dishonour Parents	Consequences
Exodus 21:17	"Anyone who curses his father or mother must be put to death."	<i>Death</i>
Proverbs 19:26	"He who robs his father and drives out his mother is a son who brings shame and disgrace."	
Proverbs 30: 17	"The eye that mocks a father, that scorns obedience to a mother, will be pecked out by ravens of the valley, will be eaten by the vultures."	

3. Read the following words from Jesus affirming the Old Testament teachings on honouring one's parents. What were the contexts and objective of Jesus' teachings on this matter?

References	Context/Objective	Jesus' Words
Matthew 15:4-5		"For God said, 'Honor your father and mother' and 'Anyone who curses his father or mother must be put to death.'"
Mark 10: 19; Luke 18:20		"You know the commandments: 'Do not murder ... honor your father and mother.'"

4. Read the following passages to learn how Proverbs gives many examples of blessings to children who are obedient to their parents' teaching. Observe and list the specific blessings that children will experience as a result of their obedience to their parents.

References from Proverbs	Blessings Experienced by Obedient Children
Proverbs 2:1-5	<i>Understand the fear of the Lord.</i>
Proverbs 3:1-2	
Proverbs 4:20-22	
Proverbs 6:23-24	
Proverbs 16: 20	
Proverbs 19:20	

5. Children in the Bible demonstrated obedience to their parents. Read the following Scriptures to learn about their stories of obedience:

References	Children	Acts of Obedience
Genesis 22:7-8	Isaac	<i>Despite knowing there was no lamb for the burnt offering, Isaac obeyed his father Abraham and "went on together" with him to Mount Moriah to do what God had instructed him to do.</i>
Genesis 28:6-7	Jacob	
I Samuel 9:3-5	Saul	
I Samuel 17:17-20	David	
Luke 2:51	Jesus	

6. In the Old Testament, the Mosaic Law instructed parents on how to handle children who were persistently rebellious. **READ Deuteronomy 21:18-21** to discover the consequences for disobedient children. What are the spiritual implications for obedience/ disobedience towards parents?

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7. In the New Testament, Paul's teachings included the subject of children's disobedience to their parents. Read **Romans 1: 28-31** and **2 Timothy 3:1-5** to discuss the root cause and consequence of disobedience.

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■ *Key Insights or Principles:*

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■ *Reflection Questions:*

1. How do children honour and respect their parents or elderly in your community? Name some specific actions or activities. How can honour and respect toward parents and the elderly be restored and encouraged, particularly in the church and in your community today?

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2. What is the “best” age for teaching a child to honour, respect and obey his parents? Give some practical illustrations in the home environment.

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3. What are some differences in meaning between the words: Obey, Esteem, Honour, Revere, Respect, Cherish? (Check a dictionary to uncover some of the variations of these meanings.) Which of these are appropriate attitudes/actions toward parents and ancestors? Which are not? Why?

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4. How does the biblical “honour and respect” for parents relate to the respecting or veneration of ancestors (ancestor worship) in some customs and traditions, e.g. Asia? In what ways are these practices a counterfeit and distortion of biblical truths?

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5. Why is managing the family well and having obedient children a criteria to qualify as an elder in the church? (2 Timothy 3:4)? Discuss how having obedient/disobedient children may benefit/hinder an elder's ministry.

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# STUDY 3: THE IMPACT OF PARENTAL OBEDIENCE (AND DISOBEDIENCE) ON CHILDREN

## ■ Introduction

WE HAVE SEEN in the previous study that children in the Bible tended to follow in their father's footsteps, whether the father was walking in faithfulness or in sin. Modeling really does matter. But there is more. In this and the next study, we will see how parental obedience or disobedience resulted in either blessings or curses for the children, and sometimes throughout many generations to follow. God *longs* to bless not only those who obey him, but also their children and their children's children. God delights in obedience, and showers blessings of long life, protection, salvation, honour, and prosperity on the obedient and their descendants.

Unfortunately, the opposite is also true – sin, disobedience or faithlessness by parents can ruin not only one's own life, but the lives of children and their children – even to the third and fourth generation (Exodus 20:5). We have seen elsewhere how sons tended to follow their fathers'

example whether good or bad. Abraham lied twice about his wife and got into trouble. His son Isaac followed his example (Genesis 12, 20, 26). Isaac showed partiality, his son Jacob followed that example, and Joseph suffered the consequences (Genesis 25:28, 37, 3-4). Pharaoh's son died because of his father's stubbornness and unbelief (Exodus 12:29).

This does not mean that our children are absolved of responsibility for their own actions, nor does it mean that they will always be punished for their parents' failures – but there does seem to be a general principle that parents need to take seriously. Someone has said, "Every father should remember that one day his son will follow his example instead of his advice." Modeling is extremely important for both the mother/father and primary caregiver.

Let's start with the positive.

## ■ What Does the Bible Say?

1. Read the following verses. What specific act of obedience was asked of the father or partriach? What was the promised blessing to the children or descendants?

References	Father/Partriach's Act of Obedience	Promised Blessing to the Children/Descendants
Genesis 22:15-18	<i>Willing to sacrifice his only son to God as an act of obedience</i>	<i>God promised to make Abraham's descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore. Abraham's descendants will take possession of the cities of their enemies and through his offspring, all nations on earth will be blessed.</i>
Exodus 12:11-13		
Psalms 132:11-12		
1 Kings 9:1-5		

2. Throughout the Old Testament, promises are made to those who are obedient, *and to their descendants*. It is not only the children who will enjoy the blessings of parental obedience, but the succeeding generations as well! For each of the passages below, indicate the obedience required, and the promise made to the children and/or descendants.

References	Obedience or Faithfulness Expected	Promise to Children and/or Descendants
Deuteronomy 4:40	<i>Keep God's decrees and commands</i>	<i>"that it may go well with you and your children after you and that you may live long in the land the Lord your God gives you..."</i>
Deuteronomy 30:19-20		
Psalms 37:25-26		
Psalms 78:5-8		
Psalms 103:17-18		
Psalms 112:1-2		

Psalms 128		
Proverbs 14:26		

3. Read the following Scriptures and formulate a principle relating to parental obedience which results in blessings for the children/descendants. The first one is done for you.

References	Principle
Proverbs 20:7	<i>It is a wonderful heritage to have an honest father.</i>
Jeremiah 11:4-5	
Joel 2:28 (and Acts 2:38, 39)	
Acts 16:31	
Isaiah 59:21	

4. In the Old Testament passages, the outcomes for the next generations are sometimes negative as indicated in the following passages. For each passage, note the failure of obedience in the father, and the resulting consequence for the children.

References	Failure or Disobedience	Results for Children and Descendants
1 Kings 11:1-12	<i>King Solomon had 700 wives and 300 concubines who later turned his heart after other gods and did evil in God's sight.</i>	<i>God became angry with Solomon and promised to tear his kingdom away from him and his son.</i>
1 Kings 14:6-16		
II Kings 5:19-27		
I Chronicles 5:1		
II Chronicles 21:12-20		
Nahum 1:14		

■ *Key Insights or Principles:*

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■ *Reflection Questions:*

1. Who is/was a particularly memorable role model for you as a child? What qualities did that person exhibit? How has that person's character qualities impacted the way in which you parent/or train children in your context?

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2. Apparently David *never* disciplined his son Adonijah at all or even scolded him (1 Kings 1:6). This wild son then thought he could have the kingship just because he wanted it. Adonijah was Absalom's younger brother – if they were raised the same way, it is not surprising that Absalom acted as spoiled as he did. Give examples in your family or society of undisciplined children assuming and grabbing inheritance that should rightly have been earned.

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3. Do you think that Solomon's lack of self-discipline with women was in part due to the lack of fatherly discipline? Discuss how that might be the case.

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4. David was described as a man after God's own heart. Even though he was not a good father, and didn't finish well, his love of God and general obedient spirit was rewarded with a promise of eternal dynasty. Many of David's descendants were also disobedient, but their punishment was less than they deserved, "for the sake of your father David." Read 1 Kings 11: 11-13.

What implications can we draw from here on the heart of God?

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5. See Ezekiel 16:20, 21. The parents were sacrificing to idols the very children God had given them to raise. Are we sacrificing our children whom God has entrusted to us to our modern idols of materialism, ease, TV, self-gratification, money-making? Discuss.

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6. How can other “role models” from the church or community provide support to children without positive home environments? Brainstorm ideas of how you can facilitate this as a leader.

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# STUDY 4: DISCIPLINE AND THE SPIRITUAL DESTINY OF CHILDREN

## ■ Introduction

THE BIBLE GIVES us a reliable guide to the nurture and training of children in a positive manner. Our goal, as parents/leaders of children should be to see the fruits of a godly character in our children. Throughout the Bible, parents are encouraged to “train up a child in the way he should go and when he is old he will not turn from it.” (Proverbs 22:6). The Hebrew root for the word we translate as “train” (*khaw-nak*) means “to narrow.” Of the wide range of possible attitudes and behaviours, training *narrows* them into the ones which are culturally and biblically acceptable. That is the task of training. How can parents, through Biblical nurture, training and discipline, help children to become all God had created them to be?

Parents have a responsibility to lovingly nurture and train (narrow the range of attitudes and behaviours) in their children. Often this training involves some sort of discipline or consequences

for wrong behaviour. An undisciplined child possibly becomes an undisciplined adult. A nurtured and positively disciplined and behaved child hopefully becomes a responsible, positive adult. Hebrews tells us that we should welcome “discipline” (12:7) and not become discouraged or make light of the discipline in our lives (12:5) as it is at God’s loving heart (12:6) to enable us to be disciplined and “blessed” so that we can not only bring Him glory, but provide a light for others. Hebrews 12:11 states: “No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.”

Let’s examine some of the biblical guidelines and truths about nurture and discipline of children.

### **For Further Exploration:**

Roy B. Zuck, *Precious in His Sight*, pp. 121-126.



## ■ What Does the Bible Say?

1. Read the following passages in Proverbs which describe the natural inclination for children towards sin and fleshly gratifications:

References in Proverbs	Children's Inclinations Toward Sin
1:8, 10	
22:15	

2. Read these verses in Proverbs to determine the consequences of an undisciplined child. and contrast these with that of a lovingly disciplined child. Compare and contrast the consequences you discover.

References in Proverbs	Consequences of an Undisciplined Child	Consequences of a Disciplined Child
Proverbs 5:23 ; 6:23	<i>"He will die for lack of discipline and led astray by his own great folly."</i>	<i>He will acquire life and be kept from immorality and lust.</i>
Proverbs 10: 17		
Proverbs 13: 18		
Proverbs 15: 32		
Proverbs 29:15		

3. Read the following verses to find the loving parental nurture and discipline. Assess what can be learned about biblical discipline from these verses and make your comments below:

References in Proverbs	Lessons about Discipline
Proverbs 3:12	<i>As a father loves his son, God disciplines those He loves.</i>
Proverbs 13:24	

Proverbs 23:13	
Proverbs 23:14	
Proverbs 29:17	

4. How would you characterize the loving discipline and nurture described in the following passages:

References	Characteristics of Discipline
Deuteronomy 8:5	<i>Loving discipline is part of parental nurture. Likewise, as His beloved children, God the Father disciplines us to nurture us to be all that He desires us to be in His divine will and purpose.</i>
Hebrews 12: 6-9	
Hebrews 12:10-11	

5. Read the following Scriptures concerning the “rod” found in Proverbs. What do these verses say about physical discipline?

References in Proverbs about the “rod”	Comments about Physical Discipline
Proverbs 13:24	
Proverbs 14:3	
Proverbs 23: 13-14	
Proverbs 26:3	

■ *Key Insights or Principles:*

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■ *Reflection Questions:*

1. What is your view of the discipline spoken of in the verses in Hebrews as discussed above? How do these verses compare to the wisdom on discipline found in many Proverbs passages?

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2. Roy Zuck asks the following thought-provoking questions:
  - “Is your child unruly or rowdy?
  - Does he intentionally disobey what you tell him to do or not to do?
  - Does he delay following through on what he know needs to be done?
  - Does he get into mischief or even into serious trouble?
  - How should you discipline children so that they obey more willingly and readily? How can you channel them into meaningful, rather than disruptive or mischievous conduct?”<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Zuck, *Precious in His Sight*. p.121.

How would you respond to some of these questions based on the Scriptures you have studied on discipline?

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3. In your mind, what are the differences in meaning between the following words? (You may want to check a dictionary for the variations of meaning): "Training," "Correction," "Reprimand," "Discipline," "Punishment."

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4. Some people today think that the "rod" in Scripture is primarily metaphorical – arguing that a rod or stick should never be used to train (discipline) a child. What do you think?

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5. The verses mentioned in Proverbs on the “rod” (see question #5 above) are controversial in some cultures. What is your opinion concerning the spanking of children? How do you (or others in your culture) feel about it?

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6. Some people today argue that children subjected to physical punishment are more likely than others to be aggressive to siblings; to bully other children at school; to be violent to their spouses and children and to commit violent crimes. What are your experiences or observations?

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7. How are children disciplined in your culture/country today? Which of these approaches are effective and which are not? Why?

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8. What are some positive and effective ways you can train and discipline your children? What are some additional verses about positive discipline in the Bible? How do these relate to the Scriptures you have studied?

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### ■ *Case Study: Abuses and Misuse of Physical Punishment*

The matter of physical punishment today is an important and very sensitive topic – so much so that it deserves some further comment. While Scripture suggests that physical discipline is sometimes necessary and appropriate, clearly it is often misused and misunderstood. Obviously some parents do not know how or when to lovingly discipline their children. Elanor Jackson and Marie Wernham, co-authors of the ChildHope child protection materials<sup>2</sup>, discuss in great detail **the various kinds of physical punishments used on children, many horrific and all clearly wrong, harmful and unbiblical!** (See their Appendix 5, Alternative forms of Discipline, pp 127 and following). These include such things as:

- Beating, hitting, slapping or lashing, with or without the use of an instrument such as a cane, stick, shoes, whip or belt;
- Other direct assaults on a child's body, such as pinching, pulling ears or hair, twisting joints, cutting and shaving hair, cutting or piercing skin, carrying or dragging a child against his or her will;
- Forcing a child to perform physically painful or damaging acts, such as holding a weight or weights for an extended period, kneeling on stones, standing or sitting in a contorted position;
- Forcing the child to stay in uncomfortable or undignified positions, or to take excessive physical exercise;
- Use of external substances, such as burning or freezing materials, water, smoke (including from smouldering peppers), excrement or urine, to inflict pain, fear, harm, disgust or loss of dignity;

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<sup>2</sup> Elanor Jackson and Marie Wernham and ChildHope. (Consortium for Street Children, London.) 2005, [www.childhopeuk.org](http://www.childhopeuk.org)

Jackson and Wernham also have helpful guidance on positive discipline. These include:

- Positive discipline requires confidence from parents: confidence that you really are the most important people in your children's lives.
- People learn much more through cooperation and rewards than through coercion and punishment. The rewards don't have to be things like presents or sweets; what children really want is parental attention. They want you to notice them, talk to them, share your life with them, acknowledge and affirm the positives in them.
- Children need your attention and will do anything to get it. The more you give when they are being a pleasure, the less they will try to force from you by being a pain. Do you always answer when they speak or only when they whine? Positive discipline means trying not to be negative:
- 'Do' works better than 'don't';
- Try to say 'yes' and 'well done' at least as often as 'no' and 'stop that'. · Be as ready to praise behaviour you like as to scold for behaviour you don't.
- Explain your real reasons - 'because I say so' teaches nothing for next time.
- Even when you dislike your child's behaviour, never suggest that you dislike your child.

### ■ *Action Plan:*

1. Discuss the aspects of a "discipline policy" in your context of working with children. Does your organization/ church have a written document concerning guidelines for positive nurture and discipline for those who work directly with children? How do you manage difficult children and or teenagers in your context, if applicable?

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2. Analyze the concept of “child protection” in your context. How do you think nurture and discipline supports the child protection policies of your organization or church? What are the challenges?

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# THE CHILDREN & FAMILIES IN THE BIBLE SERIES

## BOOK 4: Parental Modeling & Generational Consequences

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.

