

TEACHING CHILDREN TO BEHAVE IN WORSHIP

Connie W. Adams

Children are to be brought up *“in the nurture and admonition of the Lord”* (Eph. 6:4). *“Nurture”* means training and *“admonition”* means to put in mind, to gently reprove, or give counsel and warning. It is clearly, then, the duty of fathers (and mothers) to see to the whole process of training children for all aspects of life, and this must be done consistent with the will of the Lord. Surely that would include training them to be quiet, respectful and reverential during periods of public worship.

A SENSITIVE SUBJECT. It is natural for young parents (and for grandparents, as well) to assume that their little children are the brightest, cutest and most amusing creatures in all human existence. It is difficult for some to come to terms with the fact that untrained little ones can disrupt the worship of the Lord on the part of parents, grandparents and those seated near them, and sometimes, of a whole congregation so that a prayer, reading, Bible class or sermon cannot be heard.

We all understand that infants will cry at times, no matter where they are. If they

are hungry, the only way they can let us know is by crying. If their clothes need changing, they will cry. If they are hungry, or cutting teeth, or hurt, their only means of communication is to cry. But it does not take long for their personalities to begin developing. They soon learn to respond to a warning, or to react to a word or gesture of caution, or disapproval. By the time they are old enough to speak, they are certainly old enough to understand words of instruction and warning, and to get the message from stronger actions which register disapproval.

Young mothers have entered an unknown and uncertain area when they start dealing with babies any place, including a public worship gathering. Some are intimidated by the prospect of trying to control a small child. But they are not exempted from the responsibilities and the needs of public worship. The children need to learn what it is all about. And they begin learning early. We all need to be patient and understanding with young mothers and fathers who are doing the best they can.

Sometimes the task of young parents becomes complicated by admiring friends seated nearby who make faces, or play with the child. Children like an audience and soon realize when they have one.

Sometimes the process of training is destroyed by doting grandparents. I have seen babies and small children passed up and down the row during a service. I have seen grandparents actually take a child from its mother’s arms and just take over. This tug of war helps nobody and actually hinders the training of the child in public worship.

BEGIN AT HOME. Children who get out of control in department stores, shopping malls, restaurants, doctors offices and in public worship, are not properly controlled and trained at home. Titus was to teach the older women to *“teach the young women to be sober; to love their husbands, to love their children”* (Titus 2:3-4). There is a dire need for this all over the country. Mothers and grandmothers need to be helping their daughters and granddaughters to learn how to manage their small children in services. There are two sides to this matter. It is the duty of the older women to teach the younger women, but it is also the duty of the younger to LISTEN and LEARN. Some young women think they already know it all and are not about to take any advice from older women, and especially a mother or grandmother.

A daily period of Bible reading and prayer with the

family at home, is a good training ground for proper conduct in public worship. Teach them to be quiet, to sit still, to listen. Help them understand that this is not the time to talk, or play on the floor. When they are old enough to talk and to understand what you say to them, explain why mother or father cannot talk to them during the Lord's supper. Explain why they need to sit quietly and listen when one is preaching the word of God. Show by your own interest and attention that this is sacred and very important to you.

TEACHING THEM NOT TO LISTEN. When you take a large bag full of books, cars, dolls, stuffed animals and cookies, you are giving out the wrong signal. I have seen children soon discard all of these and still act like brats and disrupt the whole service. When you put them on the floor to play under the benches, or allow them to run up and down the pew, or you run in and out with them to pacify them and then give them a cookie when you take them out, or even worse, allow them to make a garbage dump out of the pew and floor for several yards around you, you are not training your children to reverence God. You are teaching the child to hold both God and man in contempt. And by the way, if you could get a cookie for creating such a disturbance as to be taken out, would you not soon learn how to go about getting a cookie? I have seen children old enough to go to school sit in services with comic books, or other secular books, and I have seen some do school work while the gospel is being preached. I have seen children who are old enough to hold a song book and learn to sing, allowed to sit while the whole congregation is asked to stand, or worse yet, to make a bed and go to sleep rather than sitting up and being respectful. When parents allow this, they are teaching their

children, all right; they are teaching them to dishonor God and show contempt for others. When they get older, they will move to the back rows, if you allow it, and there they will sleep, laugh with other unruly young people, pass pictures, write notes, flirt, and they will wander in and out to the water fountain and rest room.

WHAT TO DO WITH AN UNRULY CHILD. What do you do with a child, past the infant stage, who is cranky and unresponsive to warnings? I first heard this formula from Gary Ogden of Plant City, Florida. He is exactly right and I pass it on to you for what it is worth. After trying briefly to get things under control (and I emphasize BRIEFLY—don't sit there so long you destroy the effect of the whole service), then here is what you do: (1) Take them out; (2) WEAR them out; (3) Bring them right back in. Well, you say, suppose that does not work? Then the next thing you do is: (1) Take them out; (2) WEAR them out; (3) Bring them back in. If that still does not work, then you: (1) Take them out; (2) WEAR them out; (3) Bring them back in. You think that won't work? Of course it works. It has been working for years. My own children soon learned that it was not much fun to have to go out and that it was much more pleasant to stay inside and be quiet. I learned the same lesson as a small child. My parents before me learned the same lesson in the same way.

The trouble is that we have too many who are relying too heavily on the instruction of permissive psychologists as to how to train children. There are principles in the word of God that will help with this problem. Consider the following:

"Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying" (Prov. 19:18).

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

"Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him" (Prov. 22:15).

"Withhold not correction from the child: for if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die" (Prov. 23:13).

"The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame" (Prov. 29:15).

"Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby" (Heb. 12:11).

To His children at Laodicea, the Lord said *"As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten"* (Rev. 3:19).

Let no one suppose that this writer has advocated brutal treatment of children. We are all sensitive to the subject of child abuse these days, and well we should be. But measured, reasonable correction which emphatically makes the point that some behavior is not acceptable and will not be tolerated is much needed these days. The Lord placed the responsibility for training in the hands of parents. One day He shall call us to account for how we managed the task. If you want your children to grow up to reverence God and obey His will, then you must start TODAY to teach them respect for the worship of God. It will take time, effort and great patience, but it is worth all of that, and more.

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THE PLACE OF THE WOMAN IN THE HOME

John Edwards

The place of the woman in the home is one of vital importance. If woman did not exist, neither would the home. We live in times when the woman's place in the home is looked upon too lightly. Thus, we need to be aware of God's place for the woman in the home.

TO LOVE HER HUSBAND AND HER CHILDREN. The apostle Paul told the young man Titus that the aged women need to *“teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children”* (Titus 2:3-4). The happy home is the home that is undergirded with love. Paul wrote, *“Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.*

Charity never faileth” (1 Cor. 13:4-8). When the woman has this kind of love for her husband and her children, her other roles in the home will come easier.

TO BE IN SUBJECTION TO HER HUSBAND. It is written, *“Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord”* (Eph. 5:22). Further, *“Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing”* (Eph. 5:24). The woman's place of subjection is based upon two things: (1) The creation; and (2) The transgression (1 Tim. 2:12-15; Gen. 3:16). The apostle Peter revealed, *“Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands: that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives”* (1 Pet. 3:1).

TO REVERENCE HER HUSBAND. Paul announced, *“Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband”* (Eph. 5:33). Many women today do not respect their husbands as they should!

The Old Testament character Sarah is an excellent example of a woman who revered her husband. *“Even as Sara obeyed Abraham calling him lord”* (1 Pet. 3:6).

TO ADORN HERSELF MODESTLY. Paul said, *“In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; But (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works”* (1 Tim. 2:9-10). Many a home has been broken because of women adorning themselves in immodest apparel!

TO BE A TEACHER OF GOOD THINGS. Paul declared, *“The aged women likewise, that they be in behaviour as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things; That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, To be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed”* (Titus 2:3-5).

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