

## Train Up Your Child

In the Book of Proverbs chapter 22, God tells us that we are to  
<sup>6</sup>Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it. (Proverbs 22:6)

And further on, in the New Testament, we are told in Ephesians 6,  
<sup>4</sup> And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. (Ephesians 6:4)

A question as we begin . . . "When should we as parents first begin to train up our children in the nurture and the admonition of the Lord?"

May I suggest that that special training must begin long even before our child is born. It must begin within our own hearts, first training up our own hearts and minds. Only then can we even begin to know how to train up our children.

For myself, I have a group of bible verses that for many years now I have quoted, almost daily, to myself, reminding myself of my responsibilities to God and to my loved ones, especially my wife and my children.

And that group of bible verses begins with words found in Deuteronomy chapter 6, beginning in verse 5. Listen carefully to those words!

<sup>5</sup>You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. <sup>6</sup>"And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. <sup>7</sup>You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. <sup>8</sup>You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. <sup>9</sup>You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.  
(Deuteronomy 6:5-9)

After Jesus grew to be a man and began to minister among the people, one of the local church leaders asked Him what the greatest of all the commandments of God would be. And immediately, Jesus referred them to these exact words. They asked Him . . .

<sup>36</sup> "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" <sup>37</sup> And he said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. <sup>38</sup> This is the great and first

commandment. <sup>39</sup> And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. <sup>40</sup> On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets." (Matthew 25:36-40)

The commandments of God are timeless and always trustworthy to bring us wisdom, whether they be given in the days of Moses, or given in the days of Jesus, or given in our day.

And as we will read here in today's scripture text, we find that Mary and Joseph were faithful to obey these commands of God to train up their child, the Lord Jesus, even from the first moments of His life.

Listen to these words in Luke chapter 2, beginning in verse 21,

<sup>21</sup>And when eight days were completed for the circumcision of the Child, His name was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before He was conceived in the womb.

<sup>22</sup>Now when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were completed, they brought Him to Jerusalem to present *Him* to the Lord <sup>23</sup>(as it is written in the law of the Lord, "*Every male who opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord*"), <sup>24</sup>and to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the law of the Lord, "*A pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons.*" (Luke 2:21-24)

As we read these words, we see that Mary and Joseph were faithful to obey the commands of God, both for their own lives and especially for the life of their very special Child, the Lord Jesus.

Recall again, those simple instructions I read a few moments ago from Proverbs 22:6,

<sup>6</sup> Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it. (Proverbs 22:6)

These are such simple and direct words, clearly defining the responsibilities that we as fathers and mothers have towards our children. It is our responsibility to learn, to know, and to understand the way God intends for our children to be trained up. And then it is our responsibility to get on about training them, even from the earliest moments of birth.

No excuse is given to parents if they are, at the same time, also caught up in work responsibilities or career building or excessive hobbies. God's command remains clear and plain. We are to

<sup>6</sup> Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it. (Proverbs 22:6)

I once heard a bible teacher explain that this verse could be understood from two perspectives. One of the ways of understanding it is in the usual way, that if we as parents will train up our children in the way that God intends, then when they are old, they will not depart from those ways. The other perspective that this bible teacher said that this verse could read is that if we as parents allow our children to train themselves up in the ways that they themselves want to go, then when they are old, they will also not depart from those ways.

While I believe that the first way of understanding this verse is the intended meaning, the second is probably also true. And we must take warning, because if you and I as parents neglect to train up our children in the way they should go, and we let them train themselves up, then surely when they are old, they will follow those ways. They will have done as some other of the scriptures describe, they will have "become a law unto themselves".

Over the years, I have heard many parents say words like, "well, as far as religion goes, we have decided to wait until our child is grown up and then he can choose which religion he wants to follow".

Folks, that kind of family philosophy and responsibility is in complete opposition to these instructions given to us by the Lord. As parents, we are ourselves, to learn God's ways, and then we are to teach those ways to our children.

Simply put, it is God's desire that you and I be very "intentional" in the manner that we, as parents, train up our children. He wants us to train them up in the "nurture and the admonition of the Lord". No exception, no variation, no waiting for them to train themselves up. It is our duty and our responsibility to ourselves learn the precious truths given within these scriptures and then to teach them diligently to our children. And we are to begin that training from the very earliest moments that our child has life.

And then hopefully, as that training takes place, our children will grow up and pass it along to the next generation. And from our efforts, Godly families will be

born, and flourish and will fill the earth. That was God's intention from the beginning of mankind.

And it is clear, as we read these words of scripture about the first days of life for the Lord Jesus, His parents, Mary and Joseph wanted to do exactly as God intended, to begin from the very first moments to honor God in the "training up" of their child.

Mary and Joseph's diligence stands as a testimony to you and me, showing us God's plan for our own families.

Note here also an obvious inference in these words. From the responses that we find by Mary and Joseph, it is evident that their earthly parents had been diligent in training them up rightly.

These scriptures tell us that both Mary and Joseph had clean and pure hearts and were both devoted to the Lord. And a testimony to their godliness is evident here as they honor the Lord by bringing their newborn Son to be circumcised.

It was a requirement of the law of God that every male child be circumcised on the eighth day of their life. And as the parents of a newborn son would bring him to the priest for the sacrament of circumcision, it would do two things. It would openly declare the devotion of those parents to the teachings of the Lord, and the circumcision would also stand as a lifelong sign to the male child that he was forever a child of God who must not waver from his own commitment to God and to His ways.

Our sacrament of baptism today is very similar to the rite of circumcision. And while, "infant baptism" is often objected to by some believers, it simply is of the same essence and meaning as circumcision, parents bringing their babies to the house of the Lord and dedicating them forever to Him.

We know that circumcision cannot, in any way, save a child, and neither can baptism. Neither of those ceremonies is intended to be a means of salvation. Salvation will always remain an intimate and personal transaction between each person and the Lord Jesus.

Circumcision and baptism are simply signs and statements, first from the parents as they bring their child and dedicate him to God. And then to the child, that they would know, now and forever, that they are dedicated to the Lord.

A question might be asked, "But why would Jesus, the very one who wrote the Law, be bound by it Himself?" The answer is found in Galatians 4, verse 4

<sup>4</sup>But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law. (Galatians 4:4)

Later, as Jesus grew up and entered into His own ministry, He would go to John the Baptist to be baptized by him. And John would protest, saying that he needed to be baptized by Jesus.

<sup>15</sup> But Jesus answered him, "Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." (Matthew 3:15)

And yes, Jesus would later fulfill all the requirements of the law and would redeem all of us who accept His salvation; but because He was born "under the law", for that moment in time, Jesus would need to follow the requirements of the law.

Other questions have been raised about the necessity for the baptism of Jesus. In particular, some have asked, "John baptized people for the remission of their sins. But Jesus had no sin! So why then was His baptism necessary?"

One commentator gave this answer. He said,

Jesus's baptism was an act of humility. He consented to be counted as if he were a sinner, along with everyone else. This act foreshadowed the time on the cross when he would die for the sins of the people of Israel and indeed for the sins of all those who are his. As 2 Corinthians 5:21 puts it, "For our sake he made him *to be sin* who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."

The commentator goes on to say,

"Fulfilling all righteousness" includes not only Jesus being righteously obedient to his Father's will, but providing by his perfect righteousness a righteousness *for us*, "that we might become the righteousness of God."

I confess that I don't know all the reasons why Jesus insisted on being baptized by John, but these words by this commentator are sufficient for me.

Jesus wrote the law, and He gave the “law” to Moses. The law was good then in the days of Moses, it was still good in the days of Jesus, and it is still good now. And yes, you and I are also required to fulfill God's law. But our fulfillment of the law is now very different from the manner that it was fulfilled in Jesus' day.

Today, you and I need only to surrender our hearts to Christ, to love Him with all our heart, soul, mind and strength, and then to love other people as God loves them. If we do that, then we will have fulfilled all of the requirements of the law.

As for Mary and Joseph, we see here in these words of scripture that they fully understood their need to know and to follow the provisions of the law in all their training up of their new baby. And here, they were very careful to do that, on the eighth day, bringing Jesus to the temple to be circumcised. And praise the Lord for such obedient parents for our Lord.

Note here also, that Mary and Joseph were faithful to give their Son the name that God had chosen for Him, the name Jesus. The Name of Jesus had been told to Mary by the angel Gabriel when he said in Matthew 1:21, “you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins”.

And Jesus would dedicate His entire life to doing exactly that, saving His people from their sins. In Mark 10:45, Jesus said

“For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many”. (Mark 10:45)

Jesus would freely give Himself on the cross to save His people from their sins.

But in those first days of Jesus' life, as Mary and Joseph brought their little One to be circumcised and to be dedicated, they knew very little about all that would take place later on in the life of their precious Little One, or even of the true meaning of the special name that God had given to Him, Jesus. They had no idea that His Name would prove to be a source of both great joy and of great suffering for them in the coming years.

In those first days, Mary and Joseph had only a dim glimmer of understanding of what the angel had prophesied about this Baby someday bringing eternal salvation to everyone who would believe on Him, even them. Jesus truly is a “Name Above all Names”.

And here also, in verse 22, we see again, Mary's devotion to the Lord and her obedience to the "law" in being careful to wait until her time of cleansing was complete before she and Joseph came to the temple to further dedicate Jesus to the Lord. Listen!

<sup>22</sup>Now when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were completed, they brought Him to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord <sup>23</sup>(as it is written in the law of the Lord, "Every male who opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord"), <sup>24</sup>and to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the law of the Lord, "A pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons." (Luke 2:22-24)

The provisions of the law demanded that no unclean person or unclean thing be brought into the presence of the Lord. It was not as though it could actually defile the Lord, it was simply that God is Holy, and He desires that each of us esteem Him as Holy, in every way, in every minute of our day, with every behavior that we have towards Him.

In the free and easy forms of worship that we enjoy in today's religious culture, we are not so guarded in our behavior towards the Lord. We freely do as the song tells us to do, we come to Jesus, "just as I am". And while that is an excellent truth to follow, I do fear that sometimes we might take that truth beyond the intended context.

It is true that you and I must come to Jesus, "just as we are" because we cannot do anything to first remove even one stain, one blemish, one sin from our soul. Only the blood of Jesus can do that. But it is also true that we should not go to the other extreme and present ourselves and our loved ones to the Lord in a corrupt or disrespectful way.

We are to hold our God in the highest of esteem and regard Him as holy, never dishonoring Him with careless conduct or ungodly behavior.

Mary waited the prescribed number of days for her purification to be complete before coming to the temple to dedicate Jesus. Listen to these words again and note the purpose for bringing Jesus to the temple, verse 22!

<sup>22</sup>Now when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were completed, they brought Him to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord <sup>23</sup>(as it is written in the law of the Lord, "Every male who opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord"), <sup>24</sup>and to offer a sacrifice

according to what is said in the law of the Lord, "A pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons." (Luke 2:22-24)

These words tell us that, "Every male who opens the womb shall be called Holy to the Lord".

Bringing Jesus to the temple to present Him to the Lord was meant to intentionally "set Him apart for the purposes of God". That is the meaning of this word "Holy", to be "set apart for the purposes of God".

And surely Jesus was already completely holy, "set apart for the purposes of God". But Mary and Joseph needed to fulfill their part of that responsibility. Again, as parents, we must take every step necessary to carry out the purposes that God has called us to fulfill. We are to "train up our child, set him or her apart for the Holiness of God, and then, when he or she is old, they will not depart from it." Mary and Joseph did that and so must we.

Folks, as we well know, the job of parenting our children is far more demanding than most anything else in our lives. In this divorce ridden culture that prevails in our society today, the training up of our children very often gets set aside or even forgotten in favor of just "surviving" through the day.

But that must not be allowed to take place. We must love our children dearly and train them up in Godly ways so that when they are older, they will not depart from those ways. And further, they will be equipped to train up their own children and their children's children. That is the way of true Godliness!

Let me close with the words from Deuteronomy chapter 6 that I began with today, and also again remind us fathers that there is no age restrictions on our responsibilities within these commands. Whether our children be 4 or 40 or 80, as long as we have breath, we should always be giving these precious truths to our beloved children. Listen!

<sup>5</sup>You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. <sup>6</sup>"And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. <sup>7</sup>You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. <sup>8</sup>You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. <sup>9</sup>You



shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.  
(Deuteronomy 6:5-9)

May we pray.