

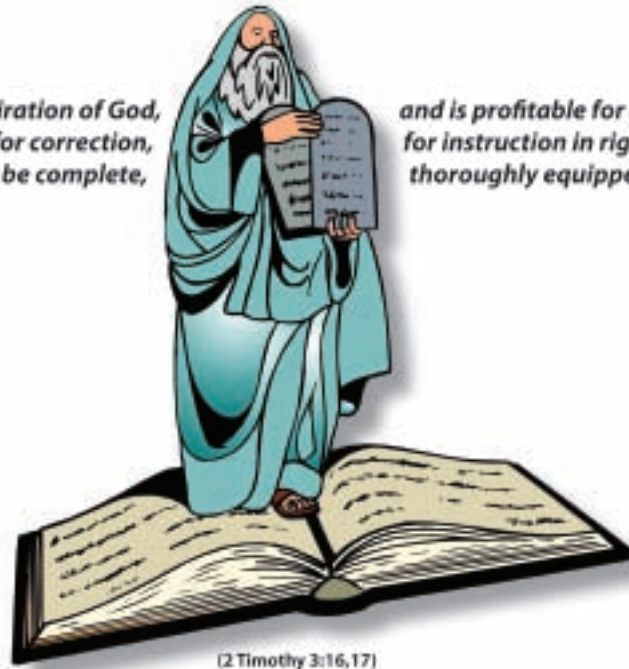
Teaching E-mails

Prophetic Warnings From A Righteous God

43. Are You A Revolutionary Parent? (August 15, 2008)

*All Scripture is given by inspiration of God,
for reproof, for correction,
that the man of God may be complete,*

*and is profitable for doctrine,
for instruction in righteousness,
thoroughly equipped for every good work.*



(2 Timothy 3:16,17)



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Introduction

We recently went through George Barna's book, *Revolutionary Parenting*. It is a must read for parents and grandparents who desire to see their offspring become spiritual champions! Barna describes a *spiritual champion* as this:

- **A person who embraces Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord of their life and loves God with all their heart, soul, mind and strength;**
- **One who accepts the Bible as truth from God and as the guide for their life;**
- **Someone who earnestly endeavors through the indwelling Spirit to live according to biblical principles and seeks to continually deepen their relationship with their Lord;**
- **A person with a biblical worldview that shapes their decision-making because they accept scriptural principles as a true and significant way of life. They realize that they have been created to serve God and fulfill His purposes for their life;**
- **One who recognizes that there is continual spiritual warfare against those who love and serve God and that Satan is unrelenting in his schemes to bring down those who are in Christ.**

Revolutionary Parenting came about through The Barna Group's survey of thousands of parents and their adult offspring. The results revealed a particular type of parent whom they termed "revolutionary" whose goals and methods of childrearing succeeded in raising spiritual champions.

We were excited when we discovered that the book highlighted what these Revolutionary Parents had in common in raising their children: The Holy Spirit had been guiding these fathers and mothers to apply various facets of the Hebraic foundations to their family life even though they were unaware of this approach!

Barna's research also helped us understand more clearly the *diverse types* of parents to whom we minister. Among these varieties of Christian parents:

1. **Revolutionaries.** These are parents for whom God is their first and foremost priority in life. Everything they do stems from their deep conviction that they live only to *love, obey and serve God*.

These parents have *strong intimate relationships* with each of their children and *readily integrate their faith* into their family life. That integration enables them to make spur-of-the-moment decisions that are consistent with who they are as Jesus-followers. It also keeps clear as their focus the *Christ-like character* they're trying to develop in their children.

Since their Christian faith permeates every dimension of their life, transferring their biblical principles and personal world view has become an innate process for them with their children. Revolutionary parents center their lives around the Person and principles of God. They readily and naturally talk about Him, genuinely intermingling their relationship with Him and their daily life experiences and choices.

This kind of parenting doesn't "just happen"! As Barna found, parents who raise spiritual champions:

- **Genuinely love God;**
- **Pray daily;**
- **Worship regularly;**
- **Read the Bible habitually for personal development;**
- **Actively participate in a faith community;**
- **Apply their resources, spiritual gifts, and natural abilities to influence lives.**

2. **Evangelical Christians.** Their primary focus is spreading the Gospel. The *task of evangelism* rather than concen-

trating first on an intimate relationship with God is the overriding goal for many evangelical parents. Yet all too often the perception of sharing the Good News as a *calculated assignment* rather than a wondrous reconciliation that produces union in Spirit often hinders their effectiveness in parenting.

Intimacy with each child requires *intentional interactive time and interest*. That's the only way you can get to know each one personally and identify their particular bent. Sadly, so often evangelical parents are so wrapped up in congregational obligations and activities that their children learn to equate God with *doing things* because that's the model they've seen in their parents. But as research has noted particularly in the Bible Belt, the divorce rate in this group is higher than among non-believers—a tragic observation indeed.

3. **Nominal Christians.** These people consider themselves “Christian” but have neither a life-changing relationship with Jesus nor a hunger to grow in His ways. They could be described as *passively religious* rather than being actively transformed by the Spirit into Christ's likeness. Therefore both their personal lives and their childrearing reflect the values of the world with perhaps a “churched veneer”.

• **Which of the above variety of “Christian” most clearly describes you?**

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After reading Barna's book, we more readily realize that our Father gave us the Hebraic foundations to share in order to help train and strengthen *Revolutionary Parents*. We've received feedback from parents who have used and discussed our materials, especially the *Discussing How To Restore The Early Church* series

and the *Jesus In Your Home* video series. These mothers and fathers lovingly and purposefully are living out the parameters of “Revolutionary Parents”.

If you're reading this Teaching E-mail and earnestly desire to be a Revolutionary Parent, we strongly recommend that you and your family begin with these two series. Prayerfully discuss with one another how the Spirit of Christ in you is directing you to apply the various facets to your own home.

Much of western Christendom today is aimed at *children*, whether through Sunday school classes, youth groups, vacation Bible school programs, even music that mimics that of the world but with a “Christian” flavor. We believe, however, that our Father has been making known the Hebraic foundations to raise up *parents* who lovingly and righteously fulfill all their biblical responsibilities. HE is raising up an Elijah witness to turn the hearts of *fathers* to children and the hearts of *children* to hear and receive from fathers.

When the hearts of fathers are burdened with loving diligence and sacrificial willingness to parent the next generation, then the children *will* respond with receptive hearts! BUT, if you're a parent who is looking for the easiest way to raise your children just so they'll stay out of trouble, then read no further. Your heart is not prepared to train up godly offspring who will love and serve the Lord Jesus Christ.

As we continue, we're going to refer to Revolutionary Parents as those who *wholly follow Jesus*. The word “revolution” implies a *radical change* that calls for forceful determination to achieve a goal. Our Father is restoring “**The Hebraic Restoration**”— a *radical departure* from

man-pleasing western religion! Around the world He is restoring hearts that are determined to return to the *relational priorities* and *love-grounded obedient trust* that radiate so fully from both Testaments of His Word. And that's what we're about: restoring these Scriptural facets that made the earliest followers of Jesus so relationally intimate and spiritually powerful.

This Teaching E-mail explores the common elements that are *intentionally* being lived out by the Jesus-following parents Barna surveyed. We then highlight the material on our website that will help you be one of these parents. In essence, this Teaching E-mail is a reference tool to help you access information to equip you in parenting (and grandparenting!) spiritual champions.

Before we discuss particular points, we want to emphasize the most important foundation stone in your family's life: the *Lordship of Jesus*. Turn inward through prayer to ask the indwelling Spirit of Jesus for the help you'll need to be a parent who represents His loving interest in and purpose for your children. If you don't, you'll try to implement "parenting techniques" to make you a "better parent". This won't work.

The most important faith practice your children can glean from you is your dependence on Lord Jesus, and equally important, your desire to daily yield to His Spirit and grow more like Him.

Make sure you place a premium on *prayer*. Our Lord answers the prayers of the righteous — those who love, trust and obey Him. Your greatest source of power and hope for parenting is Jesus, and your prayers evidence that you believe this.

[For more on the indwelling Spirit of Jesus see Teaching E-mail 12. *Confirming That You Truly Belong.*]

An Identifying Characteristic of Parents Who Wholly Follow Jesus

1. The Bible Is Their Foundational Resource

Parents who follow in the steps of Jesus genuinely realize that God's Word is their handbook of wisdom for their lives. From its truth they recognize the beauty of trust-filled praise of their Lord and His Sovereign power. His wondrous love and character, particularly as He interacted as a faithful Father and Husband to Israel, offers a powerful example of His precious grace and longsuffering as well as the way of life that pleases Him.

And the promises and prophecies that have been fulfilled through our glorious Lord and Savior Jesus shine forth to establish our faith and that of our children that He will indeed continue to unfold His plan for each of our lives!

Parents who yearn to raise children mighty in spirit interact daily with their family in reading God's Word. They discuss passages with the intent of applying Scriptures to the real-life situations they and their children encounter each day.

These dads and moms realize that using time specifically to implant the principles of God's Word is one of the best ways they can shape their child's character and help them form a biblical worldview. And those serendipitous "teaching moments" in the car or before bedtime or even playing together penetrate a receptive child's heart. That way your children don't confine discussing and applying God's Word to set times in set places. Walking His path is *anytime, any place!*

God's Spirit in you gives you both the desire and the power to live according to ways that please Him and to model for

your children what that way looks like in daily choices, attitudes and actions. In our book *Christian Halakhahs: Loving Jesus Through The Way You Apply His Word*, we note how critical it was as a way of life for the earliest followers of Jesus to *apply* the Word of God.

The root of *halakhah* is *halak*, meaning “to walk.” Thus, *halakhah* refers to walking out your life in a way that coincides with God’s Word. You develop *halakhahs* according to how you apply biblical truths to all realms of your life, whether to education, finances, ethical decisions, or religious practices.

When you teach your children by role modeling and discussing with them how to apply the Bible to their daily lives, *you’re affirming the Bible as the best place for them to seek Godly answers*. And, you’re also affirming that God’s Word contains truth principles that **MUST** be integrated into each of their life’s decisions.

Through your discussion together you’re also modeling the importance of *confirmation* through prayerful group discussion. Autocratic conclusions made by one individual was foreign to the earliest followers of Jesus, whose decision making process was apperceived from the Hebrew Bible and confirmed by both Jesus and Paul: “*A matter must be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses*” (Deuteronomy 19:15; Matthew 18:16; 2 Corinthians 13:1).

God Himself had established this pattern by calling upon *heaven* and *earth* as His witnesses with the Israelites (for example, Deuteronomy 30:19, 31:28).

Determining together the will of the Father and agreeing upon how to prayerfully apply it underlay a key principle taught by our Lord Jesus: “*Again I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be*

done for them by My Father in heaven” (Matthew 18:19).

[For more on group discussion and confirmation as a lifestyle, see our book, *Christian Halakhahs*; also *Discussing How To Restore The Early Church, Section 6, Lesson 48—Topic 9. Seek Rhema, Establish Halakhahs, Ensure They’re Followed*; also *Teaching E-mail 11. Discussion For Application. All are a free download.*]

One last point on impressing on your children a need and a love for applying the Scriptures to their daily lives. Our Lord came to establish a *Kingdom* filled with those who love and serve Him as their Lord and King. As you routinely expose your children through group discussion to God’s principles, you’re instilling in them a *biblical worldview*. By this we mean that your children come to understand that their life on earth is set apart by Him to lovingly serve the interests of their King.

[For more on the importance of Kingdom responsibilities and privileges, see *Lifebytes 51 thru 57 on the Kingdom of God.*]

An Identifying Characteristic of Parents Who Wholly Follow Jesus

2. They Make God First In All Matters

If you talk with many Christian parents, you’ll no doubt discover that few have clearly thought through their role as father or mother. Most simply live by a survival-based philosophy. Just to get through another day-week-month-year without their children falling into a pit of disaster seems challenge enough!

However, our Father desires and equips parents who sincerely follow Jesus as Lord of their lives to press on to a high calling and goal: for they and their children to love their Lord and grow increasingly to be more like Him in their life and character and purpose.

Parents who wholeheartedly follow Jesus can be readily recognized. They have *with determination* placed their trust in Christ and have purposed that loving obedience to His Word through His Spirit is their chief priority.

Barna's research disclosed that many of these parents did *not* have an upbringing that prepared them to be spiritual champions themselves. However, they evaluated their options based on their own life experiences and recognized that the ways of God were far superior to man's best efforts. Therefore they'd concluded that the greatest gift they could give their offspring is a sound and loving upbringing based on biblical principles.

That mindset reflects a purposeful endeavor to integrate their faith in Christ into *every dimension* of their lives. One of the non-negotiable factors embedded within parents who earnestly follow Jesus is their insistence that their trust in God and obedience to biblical principles be the driving force behind their home life. That's how their homes become a refuge and sanctuary of peace and harmony for the whole family.

As we discussed earlier, the decisions made by parents who wholly follow Jesus as their way of life can be traced to how they form and apply biblical principles — *halakhahs*. They base their choices on God's Word according to the wisdom they've gleaned as His Spirit gives them insight and interpretation. Some of these decisions involves how to discipline their youngsters; how they read and study the Bible together as a family; how to balance academics and social life with character-building opportunities of service to others.

One of the highest priorities of parents who wholly follow Jesus is to instill *Christ-like character* in their children.

These parents realize that while a child may learn information and skills, character doesn't just naturally emerge.

Character qualities must be *deliberately instilled* in a child even as they are being purposefully modeled by the parents themselves.

Christ-like character is molded by parents who believe that this calls for intentional effort, and that who you are matters a lot more than what you accomplish. Character qualities that display the nature of Jesus will be evident to others.

Parents who gratefully follow Jesus provide their children repeated guidance of God's principles as well as consistent enforcement of them. Daily opportunity to develop character comes from such simple yet helpful ways as assigning tasks and household chores to everyone in the family. These duties help clarify each child's responsibility to serve others.

Serving others doesn't come naturally! The sin nature would much rather shirk or grumble or work half-heartedly. However, you *train* your children to serve others by helping them get their eyes off themselves to see the needs of others. That's part of crucifying the natural tendency so that the heart of God can take root. Providing various frequent ways to learn to joyfully serve others helps establish a lifelong practice of looking beyond self to reflect the love of Jesus in very tangible ways (see Matthew 25:31-46).

As you can see, developing character in the heart of a child is intertwined with parents consistently modeling and pursuing *obedience* in their children. Responding with obedience calls for patient and repetitive training. Transformation into Christ-like character is the bedrock of our pilgrimage in Lord Jesus, and His charac-

ter leads to appropriate life choices that show we truly love Him and belong to Him.

As we consistently choose to yield to His Spirit at work in us and in our children, His character becomes more deeply ingrained. And those character changes coincide with our love, our reverent fear, and our worship of Him. His sheer holiness and love for us is a marvelous motivator for us as well as our children to live obedient lives!

[For more on our Lord's way of developing character, see Lifebyte 50. *Marriage As A Covenant Lifestyle (Part 4)*; also Lifebyte 55. *Kingdom Living (Part 5)*; also we recommend for family discussion *Character Sketches by the Institute in Basic Life Principles (www.iblp.org)*.]

An Identifying Characteristic of Parents Who Wholly Follow Jesus

3. They Measure Their Parenting Success By God's Standards

Many Christian parents today are so influenced by the world's values and goals that they adopt the *world's parameters* to evaluate their parental success. These seem good but are very incomplete:

- provision of basic needs—food, clothing, shelter—as well as extras to meet the child's wants;
- trying to enforce habits to help keep the children physically healthy;
- maintaining a secure and comfortable home;
- connecting children to decent friends through “good” school systems and recreational activities;
- keeping them away from drugs, alcohol, sex.

Sadly, focusing on these standards as chief concerns undermines their children ever becoming spiritual champions. Repeatedly the Bible affirms that our God examines and measures our hearts. In

particular He is intent that we and our children truly seek to love, serve and obey Him. To be successful in His sight as a parent who wholeheartedly follows Jesus, your focus must mirror HIS perspective: to teach and role model in such a way that your children learn to love their King and want to serve His Kingdom purposes for their lives.

He has called you and your children to a glorious destiny that will bring Him praise—and it's HIS power at work in you to bring it about! “For we are **His workmanship**, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them” (Ephesians 2:10).

Two warnings:

1. Don't be deceived into believing that you're successful in God's sight just because your children are well-received by other Christian parents and their children. That's “horizontal” comparison.

2. Don't outsource your children for others to spiritually train by relying on youth groups and Sunday schools. It's *your* privilege and biblical responsibility!

Early Hebraic followers of Jesus understood clearly that God ordained the *home* to be the basic building block for spiritual development. A father/husband was the primary influence in the spiritual development of his family. All other relationships supported him in this role, and nothing competed with his responsibility nor compensated for his irresponsibility.

Much of western Christendom “**outsources**” wives and children for others to teach. This was never God's intent, and violates much of His Word that pertains to the relational intimacy of the home and parental influence in spiritual growth.

The Bible commands *parents* to be the primary source for spiritual development

of their children. Make sure that all other relationships and activities *support you* in instilling Christ-like character and training spiritual champions. Then your children can have the right heart motive and attitude as they reach out to and interact with those who have yet to encounter Jesus.

[For more on this, see our [Hebraic Article: Hebraic Home Fellowships Must Produce Godly Generations](#); also [Discussing How To Restore The Early Church, Section 5, Lesson 30.](#)]

Nestle into your heart this important point:

Parents who follow Jesus wholly must love their Lord and be obedient to His calling and principles. Through His Spirit and His Word you willingly allow Him to produce outcomes that accord with His perfect will. As much as you love your children, God loves them more. Foster conditions and opportunities that increase the probability of your children becoming all that God intends.

Identifying Characteristic of Parents Who Wholly Follow Jesus

4. They Disciple Their Children As Would a Drill Instructor or Coach

If you want your children to become spiritual champions, you must purpose that parenting is your primary job in life. Nothing must compete with this goal! God's primary purpose for your covenant of marriage is clearly spelled out:

*Has not He made them one? In flesh and spirit they are His. And why one? **Because He seeks godly offspring.** Therefore take heed to **your spirit** (Malachi 2:15).*

Parents who wholly follow Jesus actively and consistently pursue training

their children. They're intimately involved in every aspect of each child's life. These parents tend to set aside their own wants so they can more fully participate in their children's spiritual development.

Consider the testimony of this parent surveyed in *Revolutionary Parenting*:

“Our job as parents is to be there, right next to them, to help them learn how to identify the issues and how to make proper choices. We have to be involved enough to help them know how to follow through on their choices and to reinforce the good choices they have embraced.”

A good way to accomplish this yourself is by *praying daily* for creative insights to help develop the spiritual dimension of your children. Also be sure to take time to pray and read and discuss the Bible *together*.

Again, parents who follow Jesus with wholehearted loving determination view their parenting as their highest calling. As a result they invest substantial time and energy into their relationship with their child—and they purposely create pleasurable family activities that will build memories with their children.

These parents earnestly accept their role as the primary spiritual mentor of their children. Parents who wholly follow Jesus live according to biblical patterns and readily role model for their children that God is foremost in their life.

Be constantly aware of an unseen battle around you. The Kingdom of God is at war with the dominion of Satan. And, your children need to be trained as warriors. They'll be competing with Satan for the souls of mankind.

[For more on the unseen forces arrayed against you and your family, see [Lifebytes 11 thru 21](#), or watch our video series, [Certain Of What We Do Not See.](#)]

Our Lord has recruited His own to fight for the souls of mankind. In both the physical as well as the spiritual sense, to be a *soldier* is a way of life. A soldier who serves for a purpose greater than his own well-being needs the character quality of *endurance*—and that isn't taught in a classroom. It's acquired through both careful training and role modeling.

Hebraic teaching is analogous to military training. Both are intended to *impart life purpose* to the disciple. And, the discipler serves as a **drill instructor** rather than as a clergy person who is removed from the trenches of personal and individual contact with each soldier.

A military drill instructor is selected to train others because of his experience on the battlefield. The best soldiers are sent to train the rookies. This is how every recruit in boot camp is trained—by the best qualified people of experience.

Because many Christian parents have outsourced their families for others to train, they aren't prepared to serve their children as hands-on “drill instructors”. Often they need to learn some of the same biblical character traits as do their children. That “untrained” parent is trying to learn even as they train their children.

In the athletic arena, a coach takes raw material, defines the goal for the team, and works to shape the individuals to meet the goal. A parent/coach must accept their God-given responsibility to raise champions in the *spiritual* realm. To accomplish this, the common goal for *all the family members* must be to willingly and increasingly become more like Jesus.

A child's sin nature stirs him or her to pursue goals that appeal to their own will and desire: to be rich, a hero, a celebrity. A parent/coach who wholly follows Jesus needs to develop and pursue goals for

their children that coincide with the character of Jesus and the particular bent of each child. Wise parents include their children in setting these goals so that each child will take ownership of them and be more responsible in fulfilling them. Typical goals may be their grades, household chores, behavioral standards, and Bible reading for application.

Along with setting goals, parents need to be able to assess each child's progress along the way. One way to do this is to debrief at the end of each day, especially around your dinner table. Be sure that your mealtimes are safe for each person — no accusations or arguments here!

Openly evaluate each day concerning what went right, what went wrong, and how you can improve your “coaching” efforts the next day. Learn from each day's experience and adjust your efforts according to which goals you're trying to meet and the input you've received and observed by the end of each day.

Godly parent/coaching is a never-ending process of learning more about God, yourself, and how you can enhance the quality of the lives He's entrusted to you. An important part of your coaching as a parent who follows Jesus is that you don't hesitate to explain why and how you're seeking your own spiritual growth in Christ's likeness each day.

This means you're *purposely aimed* toward serving your Father's interests as well as *finding joy* in the Christ-like transformation our Lord is making in you. (No long face or grumbling!) Your own attitude makes a noticeable difference in your children. A child who sees a commitment to Christ-like growth in your life is much more likely to do the same.

If this is your earnest desire, you as a parent need a clear handle on how to get there. Align your heart with that which

Jesus desires—to be *Him in the flesh* to all you meet. Becoming a spiritual champion is a grueling process in which you thirst for God’s work in you to continue to maturity. Each one in your family needs to die to the influence of their sin nature if they’re to become more like Jesus through the working of His indwelling Spirit. And keep this in mind: any pet sins you might be entertaining only hinders the spiritual development of your children.

[For more on the battle with your sin nature see Lifebyte 35. *Thy Kingdom Come In My Life*; also *Certain Of What We Do Not See, Segment 8—The Influence Of Your Sin Nature.*]

The Hebraic model of discipleship is based on an *intimate relationship between discipler and disciple* (see John 15:15). Our Hebraic forefathers in the faith held that that ministry is *relational* in nature. Their ability to mold and guide their children in the ways of God would be minimized unless their love for their children was manifested in authentic relationship.

Most diligent parents realize that they’re responsible to meet the basic emotional needs of their children, such as security, safety, dignity, affirmation, acceptance, and love. But there’s a big difference between *knowing* what children need and consistently *providing it* through a relationship that’s been built on trust and steady interaction.

When youngsters feel assured that their basic needs will be met by parents who have proven their loving reliability, then they’re much more willing to participate in conversations about moral and spiritual matters and respond accordingly.

Despite the cultural trend for parents to be popular with their kids, that’s not God’s way. While every mom and dad

yearns for their children to love and appreciate them (and express it!), they need you to be their *parent*, not their buddy. In other words, never do anything just to gain your children’s approval.

Our Father chastised the Israelites for their grumbling, whining and complaining, so don’t tolerate it in your children nor do it yourself (see 1 Corinthians 10:10; James 5:9). Giving in to manipulative demands reinforces rebellion and inhibits your effectiveness to guide them in godly authority.

Keep in mind your daily parenting goal: to help your children bring glory to God and to become prepared to love and serve and please Him. Part of your loving relationship with them is to hold your ground when the ways of the world tempt your children away from the path of Jesus. They need to see *in you* the godly contrast.

But remember, you were a child once too! Your children have the same childish inclinations and immaturity that have taken years for *you* to overcome. Guide them at a pace that doesn’t frustrate or exasperate them (Ephesians 6:4). And don’t ever let yourself worry about what others think about how you’re training your children.

If you’re determined to raise children who are mighty in spirit, then they need to see in you patience, understanding, clear purpose, and gentleness. Obviously that means you’ll be calling out to our Lord often, and humbling yourself to ask your children’s forgiveness when you’ve stumbled in those areas.

God intended your children to be a *blessing* to you! Allow them to share alongside you the joy of developing the character of Jesus.

This quote from *Revolutionary Parenting* should encourage you to use the

time you have left with them wisely, especially if they're still under your roof.

“Your impact on your children’s lives is proportional to the depth of the relationship you have fostered with them. Your ability to influence your children is dependent upon them respecting and trusting you.

You build such trust by showing them unconditional love, complete integrity, and total commitment to the ways of God and their best interests. This implies devoting substantial amounts of time to building your relationship with each child. Further, you gain their respect by exhibiting clarity about what you believe and by consistently and unapologetically modeling those principles.”

Guiding and raising children whose hearts are dedicated to loving and serving their Lord isn't a speedy process. This isn't a half-hour sit-com or even a year-long curriculum. Don't get overcome with frustration if you don't see immediate responsiveness from your kids as you implement change. Being transformed in the character of Jesus is a *lifelong endeavor* with an ongoing goal: to love and serve the King of the Kingdom and to persevere in the obedient trust in Him that leads to a heavenly welcome through the narrow gate.

Pause here to review Deuteronomy 6:1-9. God commands a *purposeful intensity* in training your children that will impact their children as well. That means seizing every opportunity He orchestrates for you.

Are you flexible enough to recognize a “teachable moment” that happens outside any discussion time you may have planned? A great deal of training takes place *as an event occurs*. People both old and young learn best from their experi-

ences, whether successful or failure. In this light, when you're readily available to your children as situations take place, you can add biblical insight and understanding to what they're going through.

Using time together to seek our Lord's perspective and will is key to Him becoming a reality to your children. Their “spiritual ears” will be much more attuned to His call when it comes if they've seen in you a responsiveness to turn with trust to the Lord Jesus in your midst.

Again I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them (Matthew 18:19,20).

Parents who follow Jesus can't just lecture at their children and expect them to change. You get to truly know your children by alertly observing their behavior and attitudes and by listening carefully as you talk with them. Consider the pattern set by Jesus with His disciples as well as with others around Him. He didn't just *talk at* them; He *engaged them* with questions and answers.

Children need this kind of dialogue as well. That's how you can help them discover their life goals, whether immediate or long term, and influence them to walk according to a biblical pathway. Through *discussion* together you can help them discern how to reach those goals and what it will take for them to improve what they're now doing.

Both you and your child will benefit from those conversations as you both share what's going on in your hearts and minds. But that won't happen with one-sided monologues; even the most diligent child will tune you out eventually

and try to avoid “those talks”!

As we’ve noted, if you want your children to grow strong in spirit, then you need to be *intentional* and *directly involved* in their spiritual development. Only you can instill in them that God’s unchanging Word is the only standard for life that they can fully trust. And holding both them and yourself to biblical standards in a way that is grounded in your love for them is crucial.

Barna sums up the testimony of most parents whose children have matured into vibrant spiritual champions:

“It was the extensive time spent studying the Bible as a family that made the greatest difference in their emergence as dedicated followers of Christ and advocates of Scripture.”

Again, stay flexible in your plans so that your heart and spirit are open to God-ordained “intrusions” that bring biblical truths into life situations and circumstances. Remember your goal: for your children to love their Lord God and live in a way that brings Him honor. You are their chief role model for what it means to love and serve your King. They need to see *you* meet the unexpected by *first* seeking God’s will for each encounter and circumstance before reacting to it.

Our Father has entrusted you with these precious children to train them to respond to Him with loving trust and obedient devotion. That’s a powerful call for both you and for them!

You can’t hope for your child to grow mighty in spirit unless *you* love God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength. That commitment must be clearly and consistently seen in *your* life before you can hope to have children who embrace the same objective. And they must see *you*

investing in your own spiritual growth before they’ll accept as essential their personal commitment to becoming a genuine disciple of Jesus Christ.

If you’re an authentic follower of Jesus, you want to live according to His commands (see John 14:15). But as you’ve discovered if you’re a parent, your children don’t always eagerly obey the boundaries you establish for them. In fact, they may question in their hearts why these rules are necessary! Often it isn’t until they mature that they recognize the value of those boundaries and how your loving guidance and enforcement enabled their character to develop.

Certainly consistency alone isn’t enough to raise sons and daughters who are mighty in spirit. However, the *absence* of consistency in how you discipline and in your values, beliefs, and role modeling will reap confusion and distrust of you in your children — the opposite of your parenting goals for sure!

Following through on the boundaries and standards you’re establishing from God’s Word is key. Your kids need to know that you’re not just making up arbitrary rules to spoil their fun. Your love for your Lord *and* your love for them is the foundation for them to understand why you’re abiding by God’s ways.

Once you’ve made those boundaries clear to your children, you need to clarify as well the consequences for violating them. Be consistent in holding your children to them even as you’re generous with praise for their obedience and for the changes in character you’re seeing develop in them.

Let’s look again at the results of Barna’s survey, this time examining house rules that were common among Revolutionary Parents:

- always tell the truth;
- always show respect to other people;
- help others whenever the opportunity arises;
- control your tongue;
- do not judge other people’s motives;
- take good care of your body;
- be active in pursuit of your faith;
- work hard and do the most excellent work you can;
- carry out your household responsibilities;
- make sure at least one parent knows where you are at all times;
- accept penalties for inappropriate behavior.

Certain ingredients were upheld as these parents applied these parameters within their homes: each child knew and understood the standards for their family regardless of what other families were doing; these family rules were consistently enforced without anger; *both parents* were consistent and in one accord in applying these standards to each child. **[For more on the Hebraic nature of parental discipleship of children, see Lifebyte 46. Don’t Plant Old Tares With New Wheat; see also the segments in our Jesus In Your Home video series on The Home.]**

Identifying Characteristic of Parents Who Wholly Follow Jesus

5. They Are Confident In Their Authority

The Bible leaves no doubt that our God has established authority on earth as a means for training generation after generation to follow His ways. When authority is used properly, chaos is avoided and people are more able to live peaceably with one another.

The concept of “authority” has a bad connotation in many people’s minds because it’s so often been misused. But our Father intends for authority to be a protective covering for all who live and

work under it — to find freedom within the boundaries that His Word has established. God holds personally responsible the one to whom He gives authority to serve in the best interests of the people under that covering (see Romans 13:1,2).

The intended primary goal of a person who serves in authority is to maintain *shalom*. A Hebrew word full of rich meaning, *shalom* encompasses fullness, peaceful harmony, and well-being. In fact, even the Hebrew letters for *shalom* mean “authority that keeps chaos in check.”

Peace in your home means that each person who lives there experiences wholeness, harmony, and relational safety. There’s a loving warmth in biblical peace that’s conducive for you to nurture your children in the way of our Lord.

When Jesus sent His disciples out to prepare the way for his arrival in each town, He gave them an indicator for locating a home in which they might stay. That sign was peace.

When you enter a house, first say, ‘Peace to this house.’ If a man of peace is there, your peace will rest on him; if not, it will return to you (Luke 10:5,6).

A man who knows how to promote peace in his home is carrying out the responsibilities inherent in authority. Certain responsibilities come with the authority a parent puts into practice:

- to **include** those people or things that contribute to peace and harmony in your home, and **exclude** those people or things that rob your home of peace and harmony;
- to **commend** those actions and attitudes that contribute to the peace and harmony of your home, and to **correct** those actions and attitudes that rob the peace and harmony of your home.

If you ignore ongoing sin in your children, you're probably hiding sin in your own life. Parents who repeatedly offer excuses for their children's stubborn disobedience or blame exhaustion or busyness for their failure to correct their child(ren) are plotting a path of destruction and pain: "*Chasten your son while there is hope; do not be a willing party to his death*" (Proverbs 19:18).

Parents who are lax in disciplining consistently are abdicating their authority. Tragically, they're condemning their children to *resist* authority all their lives. [For more on the importance of biblical authority in maintaining peace, see Teaching E-mail 10. *Apprehension: The Silent Destroyer*; and our book *Growing Relationships Through Confrontation*, all a free download.]

Barna identified several areas in which parents who wholeheartedly follow Jesus serve their families in biblical authority:

1. They influence the choice of their children's friends.

Our Hebraic forefathers understood clearly from the Older Testament that people influence each other for either good or bad. Scripture abounds with counsel about the effect your choice of friends has on your own life:

- *He who walks with the wise grows wise, but a companion of fools suffers harm* (Proverbs 13:20).
- *He who listens to a life-giving rebuke will be at home among the wise* (Proverbs 15:31).
- *A violent man entices his neighbor and leads him down a path that is not good* (Proverbs 16:29).
- *Do not make friends with a hot-tempered man, do not associate with one*

easily angered, or you may learn his ways and get yourself ensnared (Proverbs 22:24,25).

Recognizing the impact that your children's friends have on them should prompt you to spend time helping your kids choose their playmates! Strongly encourage relationships with children who will help your child grow in becoming a spiritual champion, and gently discourage continued involvement with less desirable playmates. And be sure you get to know the parents of your children's friends to provide continuity between the families.

Righteous relationships spur believers on to greater love, courage and service for our Lord.

Sin-filled relationships deter His people from the valor and courage they need to fulfill His purposes through them.

2. They establish media limits.

That which you entertain visually and audibly takes root in your mind, will and emotions. The psalmist who wrote "*I will set before my eyes no vile thing...*" (Psalms 101:3) realized this. Parents who follow Jesus watch pre-selected movies with their children and discuss them afterward. They're also diligent to explain to their kids the unrighteous facets of media that isn't tolerated in their home.

Barna found from surveying adult children who were spiritual champions how detrimental it is to children when parents fail to monitor and limit media. Allowing children to determine their own media diet was ranked as one of the most insidious weaknesses of today's parents.

3. Each child embraces their parent's values.

Here's a standard that needs to be affirmed without hesitation:

If your child is to live in your house, he or she not only has to abide by your rules but also needs to embrace your values.

Rules and values that stem from study and application of the Bible (*halakhahs*) provide meaning and purpose to your children's attitudes and behaviors. Some of the values you're trying to instill by modeling and reinforcing are love, obedience, servanthood, compassion, grace, humility, respect. These take time and practice! As your children see you consistently praying and seeking to develop these qualities, they'll be far more likely to follow your example.

4. Each child must be disciplined in a manner that's effective for that child.

"Discipline" is rooted in the word *disciple*. You're training up your children to walk in the steps of Jesus as they see you doing that, and as you respond with whatever is needed to move them along that path.

Parents who follow Jesus recognize that discipline is necessary in training young disciples. Barna found four aspects of appropriate discipline:

1. the child is consistently disciplined;
2. the discipline is appropriate for the situation;
3. the discipline fits within the family's values;
4. the discipline for each child is right for that particular child.

When you walk with the love of Christ in your God-given authority, your children don't doubt that you're in charge. Rather, they find security in knowing that you're in control.

Barna determined that Revolutionary Parents served their families in godly authority by:

- Declaring verbally who was in charge;
- Acting in charge;
- Accepting responsibilities and pressures that came with leadership;
- Earning the appreciation and acknowledgement of their children;
- Anticipating and solving problems;
- Reinforcing spiritual claims to leadership by presenting biblical principles regarding family roles;
- Spending time with other families who embrace the same values and beliefs.

Barna also found that children who have been raised *democratically* generally give way to their sin nature. They've missed the critical lesson of submitting to someone who has the right and responsibility to be in charge.

Don't give way to society's trend to keep children busy all the time. They can get overwhelmed and burned out through too many activities, harming their health and losing the joy of creating their own pursuits. Help them learn to prioritize their time, and teach them to say "no" to things that interfere with their well-being and the *shalom* of your home.

Again, help your children set goals and fulfill them, even if it means personal sacrifice. Giving up personal desires and wants to meet the needs of others helps them learn servanthood.

[For more on the role of authority, see *Discussing How To Restore The Early Church: Section 5, Lesson 36*; also *Lifebyte 40. Do You Confront For Jesus? Or, Placate For Satan?*; also *Lifebyte 9. The Book of Daniel (Chapters 1-3): Personal Responsibility, Deference, God-dependence.*]

Finally, remember this if you desire to be a parent who wholeheartedly follows Jesus and raises children who will do the same:

To develop a devoted follower of Jesus, you must demonstrate your depth of commitment through consistently practicing the ways of God in loving, obedient trust.

If you blunder, repent! Ask both our Lord and your children for forgiveness, and press on in confidence that your Lord is cheering you on.