

Explanatory Notes:

**PASS YOUR FAITH ON
TO YOUR CHILDREN**

Series title: Pass Your Faith On To Your Children

Topic: Family Worship and Religious Instruction

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Producers: These messages are meant to be practical. Parents need as much helpful advice as they can get about raising children.

Use Psalm 78 for each message, but concentrate on point 1 for the first message, point two for the second message, etc. Write fitting introductions and conclusions to each message. We have included an introduction and a sample conclusion for you.

Think of young people and children you know in your culture, perhaps children from your own family or your own church, or yourself when you were younger. Ask yourself the following questions:

- What aspects of Christian faith and life are the hardest for young people in my culture to accept? Why?
- In what ways do children and youth rebel against their parents? Why? Over what issues? How do they rebel?
- What skills, habits or attitudes do children in your culture need to learn in order to be faithful Christians when they grow up? Do your listeners know this? Do they know how to raise their children in ways that will help their children develop those skills, habits and attitudes? What helpful advice can you give them?

INTRODUCTION

(This introduction can be adapted and used with each of the five messages)

Young people often reject their religious upbringing. Their parents are Christian believers, but these young people do not want to follow in their ways. They stop attending church. They begin believing teachings that contradict the

Bible. Their behavior contradicts God's moral standards.

Religious instruction is very important for Christians. The Bible instructs believers to pass on their faith to their children. Listen to what the Bible says in **Psalm 78**:

*My friends, I beg you to listen as I teach.
I will give instruction and explain the mystery of
what happened long ago.
These are things we learned from our ancestors,
and we will tell them to the next generation.
We won't keep secret the glorious deeds and the
mighty miracles of the LORD.
God gave his Law to Jacob's descendants, the
people of Israel.
And **he told our ancestors to teach their children,
so that each new generation would know his Law
and tell it to the next.**
Then they would trust God and obey his teachings,
without forgetting anything God had done.
They would be different from their ancestors, who
were stubborn, rebellious, and unfaithful to God.*
Psalm 78:1-8, CEV

What can we do to help our children so that they will not consider abandoning the Christian faith? How can we inspire our children to love the Lord and follow him? In these messages we will look at **five practical steps** we can take to improve the chances that our children will grow up to love and serve the Lord Jesus Christ.

Body of Message #1: SET HIGH STANDARDS FOR YOUR CHILDREN

The first step is to encourage your children to be faithful to God. You can do this by setting high moral standards for them.

1. Don't be afraid to say no.

Today it is common to hear of parents who neglect their responsibility to say 'no' to their children. Parents want

their children to like them. They don't want to hurt their children's feelings. So many parents are afraid to refuse to set limits for their children. They give them too much freedom. They don't prohibit their children from doing harmful things.

2. Require your children to go to church.

Nor do they push their children to cultivate habits that will be beneficial to their spiritual well-being. For example, if their children complain about attending worship, the parents say, "I won't force you to go today. You can attend church when you want to." They mistakenly tell themselves, "When my children are ready, they will come to church."

3. You must correct your children.

Children are not old enough to make that decision for themselves. We can't let them do whatever they wish. They are not born with self-discipline; we need to build it into their character. That requires us to be firm in training our children. The book of Proverbs says this:

"Don't fail to correct your children. You won't kill them by being firm, and it may even save their lives."

Proverbs 23:13-14, CEV

4. Help your children develop the best habits and attitudes.

Because we love our children, we want them to grow up to be persons of honor and integrity. So we make the effort to insist that they worship God and learn the ways that bring him pleasure. We make the effort to insist that they develop habits and attitudes that will help and bless them all of their lives. They cannot teach themselves! We are responsible to guide them.

5. Set firm boundaries early.

One helpful piece of advice to remember is "Hard first, soft later." If we begin by being lenient, it becomes harder and harder to be strict when necessary. Our children become accustomed to the lack of discipline. If we begin by being firm with our children, we can be flexible later, if

necessary. In this way we teach them how to make wise choices. We help them feel secure when we “fence them in” to God’s good ways.

6. Teach them to work hard and to develop beneficial skills.

We should set high standards for our children and make them work hard to be **virtuous*** and faithful. Someday when they are grown up, they will understand why we did so. But if we allow our children to be lazy and self-indulgent, they will grow up lacking the **skills and habits**** they need to excel in life. They will resent us for it. For this reason we must be diligent to train our children in God’s ways.

***Examples of virtues or attitudes:** cleanliness, hard work, honesty, humility, patience, faithfulness, self-control, courage.

****Examples of skills and habits:**

- Work skills (how to do common tasks and jobs, how to find employment)
- Financial skills (how to save money, how to live within your income, etc)
- Interpersonal skills (how to handle conflict, how to be courteous, etc)
- Religious skills (how to pray, how to interpret the Bible, how to memorize Scripture, etc)

Body of Message #2: BE GENTLE WITH YOUR CHILDREN

In our last message we saw that it is important to set high standards for our children. Here is another important step we can take to improve the chances that our children will grow up to love and serve the Lord: **We can be gentle with our children.**

1. Harsh treatment drives children away from God.

In our last message we emphasized the importance of firm discipline. But we must be careful about the way we carry out that discipline. Many young people turn away from the religion of their parents because of the harsh treatment they received from their parents.

2. Insults and insensitive treatment separate them from God and from their parents.

Some parents are overly strict with their children. They set unreasonably high standards for their children. They are rigid and inflexible about the rules they set in their homes and they are not sensitive to the natural human weaknesses of their children. Or they abuse their children by beating them harshly, by threatening them or by insulting them. They may shout and frighten them.

The book of Proverbs was written as a practical guide for young people and young parents. It begins with a parent instructing his son in wisdom. Other verses in Proverbs about disciplining children are: 13:24, 19:18, 22:6, 22:15, 29:15, 29:17.

The Bible says, “*Fathers, do not exasperate your children**; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.*” (Ephesians 6:4, NIV). Another translation uses the words, “*Don’t make your children angry by the way you treat them.*” (NLT)

3. Always be loving when you correct; Never correct while you are angry.

The Lord calls us to discipline our children out of love for them. We must never discipline them out of anger. And we must never hurt our children as a way of expressing our frustrations and anger because of other problems we face.

One helpful rule to remember is that we should never discipline our children while we are still angry. If we punish our children when we are angry, we run the risk of responding too severely, with harmful words or actions. When our children do what is wrong, we should wait until we calm down before deciding what their punishment should be. We should speak with them:

- a. about what they did
- b. about what we desire from them
- c. about why we are punishing them

We should do this gently, quietly and reasonably.

4. Select correction that is appropriate to your child’s age.

Another thing to remember is that discipline should be appropriate for the age of the child and the nature of the act of disobedience.

5. Make positive memories your goal.

We want our children to grow up with positive memories of the Christian faith. If we shout at our children and beat them in order to live for God, they will end up hating us and hating God, too. But if we instruct and correct them with gentleness, reason and caution, they will one day praise God for the religious training we gave them.

****Do not exasperate your children:** that is, do not weary them by excessive punishment. Don’t discourage them with constant over-correction.

How do parents discipline children in your culture? Are some parents too severe? What kinds of things do they do that are harmful to their children’s faith? Do they spend enough time with their children? Do they give them their full attention? Is family loyalty more important than following the Bible? Do parents understand how sensitive and intelligent their children are? What pressures draw parents away from their children? What biblical, practical advice can you give them?

Body of Message #3: MODEL INTEGRITY FOR YOUR CHILDREN

So far we have seen that it is important to set high standards for our children and be gentle with our children. Here is another important step we can take to improve the chances that our children will grow up to love and serve the Lord: **We can model integrity for our children.**

1. Your child's growth depends on your own!

We can't give someone something if we don't have it ourselves. We can't expect our children to grow up with enthusiasm and love for God if they see that we, their parents, are half-hearted or hypocritical about their faith. I know many young people who complain about their parents' inconsistency in religious matters. Some of them say, "My parents go to church and talk about Jesus. They make me behave in public, but I see how they live at home. The teachings of Jesus makes no difference in their lives."

2. Be sure your behavior matches your words.

Too many parents are really saying to their children, "Do as I say, not as I do." They do not practice the virtues they want to instill in their children. This makes their children resentful. Religious instruction for our children should arise out of parents who genuinely love God and make every effort to please him. If your children are not following God the way you would like, take a look at your own faith.

3. Be enthusiastic about your faith.

Are you genuinely excited about your faith in Jesus? Do you gladly live for him? Do you share that joy and excitement with your children? Are there visible areas of disobedience or hypocrisy in your life that have the potential to turn your children away from Christianity in contempt or disgust? Or are you modeling the Christian life for your kids?

Body of Message #4: WORSHIP TOGETHER AS A FAMILY

So far we have seen that it is important to set high standards for our children, be gentle with our children and model integrity for our children. Here is another important step we can take to improve the chances that our children will grow up to love and serve the Lord: **We can worship God together as a family.**

A. Children need plenty of time with their parents.

An important way to model the Christian faith to children is to make sure we are spending valuable time with them. There are many pressures pulling families apart. Faced with a shortage of time, some parents do not give their children the personal attention they need. The parents are too busy working, watching TV, or spending time with friends. They neglect their children's need for attention, interaction and conversation. These families grow apart rather than grow together.

B. Prayer holds families together.

"The family that prays together, stays together."* One important way that many Christian families around the world have used to grow closer to each other is to worship together. They take time each day, perhaps after a meal when everyone is together. They pray and read the Bible. Each family does it differently at different times. Sometimes they memorize a verse from the Bible together. Sometimes they sing Christian hymns. Sometimes they have discussions about what a Bible verse means.

****"The family that prays together, stays together."** Can you invent a rhyme in your language that conveys the same meaning?

C. Family worship has many advantages:

Think of the advantages of having this time together in your home:

- Children get to see that their parents love and honor God.
- Children become familiar with the songs they will sing in church.
- Parents help their children understand difficult Bible passages and answer their questions about the Christian faith.

- Parents teach their children how to pray by their example.
- Children see that their parents love each other and are united in their faith and love for God.
- Children see that their parents love them enough to take time for them and to teach them the most important lessons they will ever learn.

D. Be faithful about family worship time.

Family worship time doesn't have to be long, but it does need to be done consistently. There will always be the temptation that there isn't enough time available to pray and read the Scriptures together. But we need to ask ourselves what our most important priorities are. What will matter most in the long run? The work we do? The money we earn? The time we spend with friends? Or the faith we pass on to our children? We must choose carefully.

Body of Message #5: RESTRICT AND SUPERVISE YOUR CHILDREN'S ACCESS TO COMMUNICATIONS MEDIA

So far we have seen that it is important to set high standards for our children, be gentle with our children, model integrity for our children and worship together as a family. Here is another important step we can take to improve the chances that our children will grow up to love and serve the Lord: **We can restrict and supervise our children's access to communications media.**

Mass media (means of communication such as TV, radio, newspapers, magazines, movies, videos, video games and the internet) are very effective at reaching most homes in the world. You already know this because you are listening to this message on a radio!

These means of communication are very helpful. They keep us informed and teach us many things. There is much that is entertaining and beneficial to us. But many of the messages being sent out over the radio or on TV are not good for our children. Our children are very impressionable—that is, they

What media do children in your culture have access to? What kinds of messages are being broadcast by those media?

are strongly affected by the messages they see and hear when they are young.

The Bible says that “*bad company corrupts good character*” (1 Corinthians 15:33, NIV). As parents we try to make sure that our children associate with good friends and teachers. We don’t want them to be led astray by harmful ideas. How sad it is that we allow destructive messages *into our very homes* through the television, videos and the radio. When we do not carefully control our children’s use of the media, we allow them to be influenced by people we have never met. Some of them have immoral or even anti-Christian purposes. As parents we need to exercise strict control over what our children watch and hear. Psalm 78 emphasizes this responsibility. We need to help them learn to be wise and self-controlled about their television viewing, radio listening and internet usage.

*The story of Richard Baxter is adapted from *The Marriage Affair* by J. Allan Petersen.

We also need to help our children interpret what they are seeing and hearing. If our children see something on TV that contradicts the Christian faith, parents have an excellent “teaching moment”—an opportunity to speak with them about what we believe. We can take a bad message and use it as an opportunity for good.

But we must never blame the media as a way of ignoring our own responsibilities as parents. **We must not blame the media for corrupting our children if we are weak and careless parents.** Young people often turn away from the church and the Christian faith because their parents neglect them. Controlling our children’s access to the media will be meaningless if we do not give loving attention to our children and model the Christian life for them.

SAMPLE CONCLUSION

In summary, these are **the five steps we can take to pass on our religious faith to the next generation.**

1. We should remember to be firm in setting high moral standards
2. We should strive to be gentle and cautious when

we discipline our children

3. We should make sure our lives model a genuine love and obedience for God

4. We must spend time together as families worshiping God and listening to his word.

5. We should control our children's access to the media

Richard Baxter was a pastor in a church in England. For three years he preached with all the passion of his heart, but he saw little spiritual fruit in his congregation. "Finally one day," he wrote, "I threw myself across the floor in my study and cried out to God, 'God, you must do something with these people, or I'll die of discouragement.' And he said, 'Baxter, you're working in the wrong place. You're expecting revival to come through the church. Try the home.'"

So Richard Baxter went out and called on home after home. He would spend entire evenings in homes, helping people set up a family worship time with their children. He moved from home to home until finally the Spirit of God started to light fires of increased devotion all over that congregation. The fires swept through the church and made it a great church, and made Baxter a man of godly distinction.*

We all desire the church to be healthy and prosperous. But the health and strength of God's people depends on the faithfulness of parents to provide a solid spiritual foundation for their children. It is my prayer that you will experience the Lord's blessing in your family, and that your children and your children's children will know the joy of following the Lord Jesus Christ. God says, "*I lavish my love on those who love me and obey my commands, even for a thousand generations.*" (Exodus 20:6, NLT). May that be true for you and your family.