

A PARENT'S MANUAL FOR REARING CHILDREN

Biblical Principles for Raising Godly Sons and Daughters

By Phillip Hudson

Dedication

To my children, who taught me more than I taught them.

Preface

The raising of children is too sacred a task to be learned from social theories, psychology manuals, or the shifting winds of modern opinion. God gave us children, and God gave us a Book. If the home fails, society fails. If the parents fail, the children suffer. And if the children suffer, their children will suffer after them. The Bible lays the responsibility for child rearing squarely at the feet of the parents, and it gives plain instruction on how to do it. This book is written to help Christian parents rear godly children in an ungodly world, using the timeless, unchanging principles of God's Word.

I make no apology for speaking plainly. The Bible speaks plainly about the home. It does not flatter us. It does not soothe our pride. It confronts us with our responsibilities and warns us of the consequences when we neglect them. Every generation is responsible to raise the next. God has entrusted to you the eternal soul of a child. You cannot redo childhood. You cannot relive the early years. You have one chance, one window, one opportunity to shape a life for the glory of God.

These chapters come from years of pastoral counseling, preaching, teaching, observing families, raising my own children, and most importantly, studying the Word of God. Much of what you will read here flies in the face of modern thinking, because the Bible contradicts modern thinking. The family is not a laboratory for experiments. It is the first God-ordained institution, established before government, before Israel, before the church. What God said about child rearing is not up for review, revision, or renegotiation.

I am not writing as a perfect father. No honest parent would dare claim such a thing. I write as a father who learned by doing, sometimes by success, sometimes by failure, but always with the desire to honor the Lord. My children have taught me more about patience, humility, consistency, and love than I ever could have learned from a book. They are the reason this book exists, and the reason I know that the Bible way is the only way that works.

It is my prayer that these pages will strengthen parents, rescue homes, awaken fathers, encourage mothers, and—by God's grace—shape generations for Christ. May the Lord use this book to turn the hearts of parents to their children, and the hearts of children

to their parents, lest God come and smite the earth with a curse, as the prophet warned in Malachi.

With that burden and that hope, I present to you:

Rearing Children the Bible Way.

The Foundation of the Home

Children are not accidents. They are not interruptions. They are not inconveniences. The Bible says in Psalm 127 that children are “an heritage of the Lord,” which means they do not belong to you. They are entrusted to you. God places into your hands a living soul, and He expects you to raise that child for Him. The world says children are burdens, but God says they are blessings. The world says children hinder career ambitions, but God says children are arrows in a warrior’s hand. The world says children do not need authority; God says foolishness is bound in their hearts and must be driven out by consistent, loving, biblical discipline.

The home is the first institution God ever created. It predates government. It predates the local church. It predates the nation of Israel. Before there was a pastor, a priest, or a prophet, there was a father. Before there was a deacon, a king, or a judge, there was a mother. The home is the cradle of civilization. Every blessing in society begins in the home, and every curse in society also begins in the home. A government cannot repair what a father neglects. A school cannot replace what a mother does not teach. A church cannot override what is lived out in the living room.

To raise children the Bible way, the parents must begin by parenting themselves. Most failures in child rearing come from parental inconsistency, parental hypocrisy, parental neglect, or parental pride. Before you can shape your children, God must shape you. Before you tell your children to follow the Lord, you must follow Him yourself. You cannot reproduce what you wish you were; you will reproduce what you are. If the parent is selfish, the child will learn selfishness. If the parent is spiritual only at church, the child will learn hypocrisy. If the parent is lazy, the child will learn laziness. If the parent fears God, the child will learn to fear God.

The father carries a sacred responsibility in the home. The father represents God to the child. The way a child sees his earthly father is often how he will perceive his heavenly Father. If the father is harsh, the child will imagine God as harsh. If the father is passive and indifferent, the child will imagine God is unconcerned. If the father is faithful, loving, strong, truthful, and consistent, the child will grow up believing that God is faithful, loving, strong, truthful, and consistent. Satan knows this, which is why he attacks fatherhood. A weak generation exists because we have weak fathers. A confused generation exists because we have silent fathers. A rebellious generation exists because we have absent fathers.

The mother, likewise, carries a tremendous influence on the heart of the child. While the father represents God's authority, the mother represents God's comfort. When a child thinks of compassion, gentleness, tenderness, and security, the image that arises in his heart is largely shaped by the mother. And though the world scoffs at the biblical role of a godly woman, God honors it. The hand that rocks the cradle still rules the world.

If a parent refuses to take responsibility for their own spiritual life, emotional control, and personal character, they will produce children who magnify those flaws. The child always takes the parent's weaknesses further than the parent did. The child is the magnified version of the parent. This is why a father who cannot control his own appetite produces children who cannot control theirs. A mother who complains produces children who rebel. A parent who cuts corners produces children who cheat. A parent who offends easily produces children who forgive slowly. And a parent who treats God lightly produces children who treat God casually.

The home is not a democracy. It is not a friendship club. It is not a negotiation center. It is a God-given authority structure where parents lead and children follow. The Bible says a child left to himself brings his mother to shame. The worst thing you can do is let the child raise himself. Children do not grow into righteousness. They grow into foolishness unless righteousness is taught and enforced. They do not learn discipline by accident. They do not learn obedience by osmosis. You cannot assume that your child will naturally choose right. God does not assume it. That is why He gave you the rod. That is why He told you to train up a child. That is why He commands you to teach them diligently when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up.

Responsibility begins early. The longer you wait to train a child, the harder the training will be. Early correction is easier because the will is softer. Early teaching is better because the mind is more open. Early discipline is more effective because the habits are not yet formed. A child learns faster at five than at fifteen, and faster at three than at seven. God designed the young years for training, imprinting, instruction, and discipline. To waste those years is to surrender the future.

A successful home is built upon three pillars: authority, love, and example. Authority without love becomes tyranny. Love without authority becomes indulgence. And example without consistency becomes hypocrisy. Children thrive where the parent is firm, loving, sincere, prayerful, and consistent. They flourish where the Bible is obeyed, the parents are united, the standards are clear, and the discipline is fair. They grow strong where the father leads, the mother nurtures, and both point the child to Jesus Christ.

The devil is after your children. He always has been. He fears godly offspring. He fears another generation of Christian young people who love God, fear God, obey God, and serve God. He fears boys who will grow up to be soul-winners, preachers, deacons,

missionaries, and godly fathers. He fears girls who will grow up to be pure, strong, wise, modest, godly mothers, and faithful servants of Christ.

This is why God commands you to rear your children the Bible way. Not the world's way. Not psychology's way. Not your parents' way unless they followed the Lord. Not society's way. Not the school's way. The Bible way.

And the Bible way works—every time, for every parent, in every culture, in every generation—when it is obeyed with humility, consistency, and prayer.

The Nature of a Child

Before a parent can train a child, he must understand what a child is. Modern educators, social theorists, and secular psychologists begin with the assumption that children are basically good. The Bible says just the opposite: children are sinners by nature, born with a will turned toward self. Scripture does not flatter childhood. It defines it. And if a parent rejects God's definition, he will destroy his child through ignorance, indulgence, or pride.

The Bible says in Proverbs 22 that foolishness is bound in the heart of a child. That means it is tied up, knotted, woven into his very nature. Children are not blank slates. They are not morally neutral. They do not enter life innocent. They enter life fallen. A child must be taught to tell the truth, because it is not his nature to tell the truth. He must be taught to share, because it is not in his nature to share. He must be taught to obey, because it is not in his nature to obey. He must be taught to respect authority. He must be taught to think of others. The humanist says a child becomes bad because the environment is bad. The Bible says the environment becomes bad because the child is bad. The problem is the heart, not the neighborhood.

Because of this sin nature, a child is not just foolish—he is clever in his foolishness. Children are manipulative. They are observant. They read their parents better than their parents read them. They know which parent will give in. They know how far they can push. They know how to twist their words, tilt their tears, and time their expressions for maximum effect. They study their parents' moods. They learn which reactions work. They figure out which excuses soften the moment. A child, left to himself, will deceive his parents, divide his parents, and destroy his parents' authority. And the parents will not notice until the damage is already done.

You cannot assume your child is telling the truth. You cannot assume your child is innocent. You cannot assume your child is spiritual. You cannot assume your child is wise. You cannot assume your child is mature. A wise parent operates on principle, not on emotion. And the principle is this: your child is a sinner who must be trained, corrected, guided, governed, and lovingly restrained.

A child also has a limited ability to foresee consequences. He sees the moment, not the outcome. He sees the pleasure, not the penalty. He sees the opportunity, not the danger. God calls him “simple.” The simple are not wicked, they are inexperienced. They are not fools yet, but they will become fools if they are not guided. They are not wise yet, but they will become wise if they are trained. A child’s simplicity is dangerous because it makes him vulnerable to the scorner, the fool, the rebel, and the tempter. A child left to himself is like a lamb wandering among wolves. The wolves will not spare him.

That is why God gave parents. Parents are the prudent guides who see further down the road than the child can see. Parents foresee the traps, the influences, the dangers, the friendships, the habits, and the temptations the child cannot perceive. Parents anticipate the consequences. They know what certain behaviors lead to, because they have lived longer, sinned more, repented more, observed more, and felt the bruises of life. God intended parents to stand guard over the simple child until the child becomes wise enough to stand guard over himself.

A parent’s authority is the child’s protection. When the parent throws off his authority, the child loses his shield. When the father stops leading, the son stops following. When the mother stops nurturing, the daughter stops blooming. When parents refuse to restrain, the child cannot restrain himself. When parents become permissive, the child becomes rebellious. When parents shrug their responsibilities, the child bears the consequences. A child is not capable of raising himself, deciding for himself, disciplining himself, or guarding himself.

The world tells parents to “set the child free,” “let the child express himself,” “let the child develop naturally,” “let the child discover his own truth,” and “let the child find his own path.” God says that a child left to himself brings his mother to shame. The world says to remove boundaries. God says to establish them early and enforce them consistently. The world says to build self-esteem. God says to build character. The world says to avoid chastening. God says to chasten early, firmly, and lovingly. The world says a child is harmed by discipline. God says a child is saved by discipline.

Children respond to training. They do not respond to neglect. They are shaped by instruction, not by good intentions. They flourish under consistency, not under chaos. They learn respect when parents are respectable. They learn obedience when parents are authoritative. They learn self-control when parents are self-controlled. They learn faith when parents live by faith. Their attitude toward God grows out of how they perceive their parents. If the parents are unfair, God will seem unfair. If the parents are safe, God will seem safe. If the parents are hypocritical, God will seem distant. If the parents are joyful in the Christian life, the children will believe joy is found in Christ.

Children were born to follow. They will follow something—either the wise or the foolish, either the Scripture or the world, either the parent or the crowd. If the parent does not lead, the world will. If the father does not shape the child’s values, the internet will. If

the mother does not shape the child's affection, the peer group will. If the home does not cultivate spiritual hunger, sin will cultivate carnal hunger. Every child becomes a disciple, but not every child becomes a disciple of Christ. The parent determines whose disciple he becomes.

When you understand the nature of a child—his foolishness, his simplicity, his selfishness, his impressionability, his sin nature—you will stop parenting by emotion and begin parenting by Scripture. You will stop assuming the best and start teaching what is right. You will stop hoping things will “work out” and start working to shape them. You will stop letting your child drift and start steering his direction with intentionality and firmness.

A child is not a burden. He is not a toy. He is not a career accessory. He is not a project. He is a God-given stewardship, a soul entrusted to your care, a future adult whose character, heart, and destiny will be shaped by the way you handle him now.

To raise a child properly, you must understand what he is. And to understand what he is, you must believe what God says about him. The Bible never misdiagnoses a child. That is why it alone gives the cure.

The Responsibility of Parents

Parenting is not a side task, a hobby, or a seasonal obligation. It is a calling from God that begins before the child is ever born and lasts until the parent draws his final breath. The responsibility is enormous, because the influence is eternal. You are not merely raising children. You are shaping future homes, future marriages, future churches, and future generations. God does not treat parenting as optional, and neither should we. Scripture repeatedly places the weight of responsibility squarely on the shoulders of the parents, and God holds them accountable for what becomes of their children.

Parents are the first teachers, the first protectors, the first disciplinarians, the first examples, and the first spiritual authorities a child will ever know. Long before a pastor preaches to them, long before a teacher educates them, long before a friend influences them, the parent is shaping the heart, mind, and lifestyle of the child. Parents train far more by who they are than by what they say. The atmosphere of the home, the tone of the marriage, the example of the father, and the spirit of the mother form the foundation of the child's character, worldview, and concept of God.

The father carries the primary responsibility to lead, guide, instruct, and guard the home. This is not because the father is superior to the mother, but because God ordained leadership to rest upon him. The father represents God in the child's eyes. His authority teaches the child how to respond to divine authority. His consistency teaches the child how to trust God. His discipline teaches the child how to fear God. His love teaches the child how to love God. A lazy, passive, or disengaged father

communicates something wrong about God. A harsh, angry, or unpredictable father also communicates something wrong about God. The child will draw his concept of the heavenly Father from the conduct of his earthly father.

The mother carries the responsibility of nurturing, teaching tenderness, cultivating sensitivity, and forming the relational heart of the child. A mother's spirit sets the tone of the home. Her voice is often the first experience of compassion and comfort. Her reactions shape the child's emotional stability. Her walk with God softens the child's spirit toward spiritual things. While the father teaches firmness, the mother teaches warmth. While the father teaches structure, the mother teaches affection. While the father creates security, the mother creates closeness. When these two influences work together, they give the child a balanced foundation for life.

One of the greatest sins in child-rearing is when parents contradict each other. A divided home produces a divided child. Children are clever. They know how to exploit inconsistencies. If the parents are not unified, the child learns manipulation rather than obedience. One parent becomes the escape route from the other. One becomes the "yes" parent; the other becomes the "no" parent. One becomes the villain; the other becomes the rescuer. This destroys the parents' authority, creates instability, breeds resentment, and turns the child into a strategist rather than a learner. Parents must present a united front, especially in discipline. Differences should be discussed privately, never publicly. A child should never see his parents contradicting each other in judgment.

The responsibility of parents is not merely to govern behavior but to shepherd the heart. Behavior can be forced. The heart must be won. A child can comply outwardly while rebelling inwardly. A child can obey because of fear while despising the one giving the command. A child can perform the right actions while possessing the wrong spirit. It is possible to raise a well-behaved rebel. It is possible to produce a child who obeys in sight but rebels in secret. The responsibility of the parent is to cultivate affection, loyalty, trust, respect, and teachability in the heart of the child. Without the heart, the training will not last past the teenage years.

Parents must also understand that their responsibility begins with themselves. You cannot lead where you do not walk. You cannot teach what you do not practice. You cannot demand what you do not demonstrate. You cannot instill what you do not possess. Parenting begins with self-discipline. Parents who lack self-control will not produce children with self-control. Parents who are spiritually lukewarm will not produce spiritually fervent children. Parents who put the world first will produce children who put the world first. Parents who neglect church will raise children who neglect God. Parents who chase money will raise children who chase pleasure. The child becomes the reflection of the parent's priorities, not the parent's good intentions.

The responsibility placed upon parents is so great that God gives solemn warnings to those who neglect it. Consider Eli. He loved his sons. He raised them in the house of

God. They were involved in the work of the ministry. Yet he failed in two essential responsibilities: he honored them above God, and he restrained them not. His refusal to restrain them brought judgment upon his family and a curse upon his descendants. He was too passive, too indulgent, too hesitant, too late. He talked, but he did not act. He expressed concern, but he did not enforce boundaries. His sons despised his authority because he forfeited it through weakness. Eli teaches us that loving your children is not enough. Being present is not enough. Being religious is not enough. Being sincere is not enough. A parent must lead with strength, consistency, and holy determination.

Parents are responsible not only for what their children do, but for what they become. You cannot guarantee their salvation. You cannot guarantee their sanctification. But you can guarantee their environment. You can shape their habits. You can shape their character. You can shape their respect for authority. You can shape their attitude toward Scripture. You can shape their ability to work, obey, listen, and endure. You can shape the climate in which the Holy Spirit will either find a receptive heart or a hardened one. Salvation is God's work. Training is yours. God will not do what you refuse to do. And you cannot do what only God can do. This distinction protects parents from despair but leaves them no excuse for neglect.

Another responsibility parents bear is to foresee the long-term effects of their decisions. The Bible says a good man leaves an inheritance to his children's children. That means a parent must see beyond the moment, beyond the argument, beyond the inconvenience, and beyond the season he is in. You are not just shaping your child. You are shaping your grandchildren. When you compromise, they will collapse. When you drift, they will depart. When you become inconsistent, they will become rebellious. When you walk at a distance from God, they will run away from Him. When you place sports, entertainment, or money above the church, they will place sin above righteousness. Parents who think only of "getting through the day" ruin the decade. Parents who think only of "keeping peace in the house" destroy peace in the generations.

It is the responsibility of parents to guard their home from spiritual threats. This includes music, media, friendships, influences, and habits that undermine spiritual health. A child cannot discern what is harmful. The parent must discern for him. If the parent allows worldly influences to shape the child's heart, the parent becomes a collaborator with the world in the destruction of his own home. Many parents are shocked when their children adopt worldly values. They should not be. They allowed the world to evangelize their children while they remained silent.

The responsibility of parents is also to discipline biblically. Discipline is not anger. Discipline is not vengeance. Discipline is not humiliation. Discipline is not punishment for the parent's frustration. Discipline is correction with a purpose. The goal is to turn the child toward wisdom, obedience, humility, and righteousness. The parent must discipline in a way that teaches, not in a way that provokes wrath. God never chastens

punitively. God's chastening is never for the purpose of pain. The Bible says that if we judge ourselves, we will not be judged. When God chastens, He does so to restore fellowship, correct direction, and cultivate holiness. He never disciplines because He is irritated or offended. He disciplines for our good. When a parent disciplines out of anger, he is not acting like God but contradicting God. The responsibility of a parent is to discipline with the same goal God has: repentance, restoration, and righteousness.

Parents are responsible for the spiritual atmosphere of the home. Family devotions matter, but they are not the only moment of teaching. Deuteronomy 6 teaches that biblical conversation should flow throughout the day. Scripture should guide decisions, not merely fill a few minutes of reading time. Parents must initiate spiritual discussions, apply Scripture to real situations, and demonstrate biblical thinking in ordinary life. Children must see Christianity lived, not merely spoken. The responsibility of parents is to live a life that makes the Christian life attractive, approachable, and believable.

In short, parenting demands vigilance, consistency, humility, and spiritual determination. God designed parents to be the primary influence, not the school, not the culture, not the friends, not the youth group, and not the pastor. Parents must accept the divine responsibility placed upon them and carry it out with courage and conviction. God entrusted you with a soul that will never die. That responsibility cannot be taken lightly.

You can purchase the book in its entirety at Amazon at <https://www.amazon.com>