
Raising Children Who Fear God

In a Fearless Generation
A Father's Word on Sacred Stewardship

by
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*"Train up a child in the way he should go,
and when he is old he will not depart from it."*

— Proverbs 22:6 NKJV

A Father Speaks to Fathers and Mothers

Let me say something that may be unpopular in certain circles today. The greatest crisis facing the African family — and indeed families across the world — is not economic. It is not political. It is not even the very real pressures of a rapidly changing social landscape, as serious as those are.

The greatest crisis is the quiet, gradual evacuation of God from the centre of our homes. And it has not happened loudly. It has happened in small surrenders, daily distractions, and the slow, comfortable drift that prosperity, busyness, and the hypnotic pull of screens have made so devastatingly easy.

I say this not in judgement. I say it as a father. As a man who has taught from the word of God. As a man who has thought deeply about this for decades, and who believes with everything in him that the tide can still be turned. But it will require something from us that this generation has been increasingly reluctant to give.

Intentionality.

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Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.

— Proverbs 22:6 NKJV

These few words have been turned over so many times in pulpits and around dinner tables that they have begun to lose their edge. They should not have. Within them sits one of the most demanding promises God ever made to a parent — and one of the most demanding assignments He ever placed on a household.

What follows is a meditation on that assignment. On what it actually means to *train up*, and not merely instruct. On the four pillars of a home where God is feared. On the particular burdens that fall on fathers and mothers in this hour. And on the quiet truth that, even when our children have wandered, the prayers of a faithful parent are never wasted.

The World They Are Growing Up In

Let us be honest about the environment we are raising our children in, because we cannot solve a problem we are not willing to clearly name. Your child lives in a world that tells them, from multiple directions simultaneously, that:

FIVE VOICES OUR CHILDREN HEAR EVERY DAY

Authority is to be questioned, not respected. Truth is personal and negotiable.

Pleasure is the highest pursuit. Faith is either irrelevant or embarrassing. The self is the ultimate reference point for all decisions.

This is not subtle. It comes through music, through social media algorithms designed to maximise engagement at any moral cost, through peer culture, and through an entertainment industry that has been remarkably consistent in its hostility to the values we hold dear.

And it comes, let me be honest, sometimes through the gaps in our own parenting — the inconsistencies between what we say at church and how we live the rest of the week, the faith we perform in public and the faith we actually practice in private.

Training is not the same as *telling*. Training is consistent, patient, repetitive, lived-out demonstration. It is caught as much as it is taught. And that means the question is not only “what are we teaching our children about God?” but the deeper one — “what are they watching us live?”

What Training Actually Means

I have sat with too many heartbroken parents who did the religious things — church attendance, Christian school, family devotions — and still watched their children walk away from faith in their twenties. The pattern shows up too often to ignore. Religion without relationship produces rebellion, not roots.

Training is the patient, daily work of weaving a child's sense of God into the texture of ordinary life. It is not a Sabbath ritual. It is not a Saturday afternoon Bible class. It is not a printed devotional left on the kitchen counter. Each of those has its place, but none of them, alone, will produce a child who fears God as an adult.

What produces such a child is a household where the fear of God is the air, where the name of the Lord is spoken with reverence and warmth, where Scripture is opened with hunger and not obligation, where the parents themselves are visibly being shaped by the very God they speak about. Where, in the simplest words, the parents are walking with God before the children's eyes.

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For I have known him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him, that they keep the way of the LORD, to do righteousness and justice.

— Genesis 18:19 NKJV

Here is the language God Himself used about Abraham. Not “he will teach his children” but “he will *command* his children and his household after him.” There is an authority in the word, but the authority rests on something earlier — “*For I have known him.*” The Lord could entrust Abraham with a household worth commanding because Abraham himself was a man whom God had come to know.

1

Abraham — The Patriarch God Could Trust with a Household*Genesis 18:19; Genesis 22; Genesis 26:5*

Long before Abraham had grandchildren, the Lord spoke of him with a remarkable confidence: “I have known him.” The man God had called out of Ur was not the most sophisticated of his generation. He was a wandering shepherd in tents. But the Lord saw in him a household leader whose faith would carry into the lives of children and servants alike. By the time Abraham raised the knife on Mount Moriah, Isaac was old enough to ask the question — “where is the lamb?” — and old enough to lie down on the altar trusting his father’s God. That kind of trust did not come from a single conversation. It came from years of an Isaac who had watched his father walk with God in tents, on journeys, at altars, and in the small disappointments of an ordinary life. Years later, the Lord told Isaac that the blessing was being renewed “because Abraham obeyed My voice.” The fruit of one father’s walk with God reached forward into the next generation — and the next — long after his body lay in the cave of Machpelah.

Pillar One: Faith in the Ordinary Moments

The most powerful spiritual formation in a child’s life does not happen in church. It happens at the dinner table. In the car. In the way you handle disappointment, conflict, financial pressure, and personal failure at home, where the mask comes off.

When your child watches you lose a contract and still bow your head and say “Lord, I trust You,” that moment does more for their faith than ten sermons. When they see you and your spouse disagree without anger or disrespect — and then reconcile with grace and genuine apology — they are learning that the faith you profess has real-world application.

When they watch you give generously even when money is tight, serve quietly without recognition, and speak with integrity even when dishonesty would have

been easier and more profitable, they are building a picture of what it actually means to walk with God. That picture will hold long after they have forgotten the outline of any sermon.

Your life is their first and most lasting theology.

There is no shortcut here. No outsourcing of this work. No Christian school, no youth ministry, no Sabbath service, however excellent, will substitute for what a child sees in the corridor of their own home on a Monday evening when nothing dramatic is happening. The ordinary is where character is recognised. The ordinary is where God is either real to a child or quietly decided to be unreal.

2

Jochebed — The Mother Who Sang Faith into a Baby

Exodus 2:1-10; Hebrews 11:23; Numbers 26:59

Jochebed had her son Moses for perhaps three short years before the weaning. After that, by Pharaoh's daughter's decree, the boy would be raised in the palace among the gods of Egypt. Three years. That was the window. What could a mother possibly do in three years that would hold across forty more in the world's most pagan court? She could sing. She could pray. She could speak the name of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob over a nursing child until the syllables of that name became as natural to him as his own. She could whisper to him who he was, whose he was, where his people had come from, and what God had promised. The roots she put down in those few short years held. Forty years in a palace did not kill them. The day came when Moses, raised as an Egyptian prince, "refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God." That refusal had a mother's voice in it. Never underestimate what is being planted in the small years.

Pillar Two: Space for Honest Conversation

One of the greatest mistakes well-meaning, God-fearing parents make is turning every conversation about faith into a lecture. Children — especially adolescents — do not need more information. They need dialogue.

They need to feel safe enough to say “*I am struggling to believe this*” without being met with alarm, disappointment, or a Bible verse fired at them like a warning shot. They need a parent who can sit with a hard question and not flinch. Who can say, when honest, “I don’t know either, but let us look at it together.” Who can hear doubt without treating it as betrayal.

If your child cannot bring their doubts to you, they will bring them to the internet. And the internet has no love for them, no knowledge of them, and no investment in where they end up. The algorithm that next surfaces an answer to your child’s midnight question is not asking what kind of adult they will become. You are.

Create a home where questions are welcomed. Where doubt is treated as the beginning of deeper faith, not as a threat to it. Where God is spoken of as a living, present, personal reality — not a distant authority to be appeased. Where the same Father who answered Job out of the whirlwind is the One you and your children are seeking together.

There is a kind of faith that survives questioning because it was never afraid of it. There is another kind of faith that shatters at the first serious challenge, because it was held tightly precisely because it had never been tested. The home that fears honest conversation often produces the second kind.

3

Hannah — The Mother Who Prayed Her Son into Being

1 Samuel 1-2; 1 Samuel 2:18-19

Hannah's story is one of the great answered prayers of Scripture. Before Samuel was born, his mother had wept before the Lord with such bitterness of soul that Eli mistook her for a drunken woman. She made a vow: if God gave her a son, she would give him back. And she did. While Samuel was still very young, she took him to the house of the Lord at Shiloh and left him there. She did not see him every day after that. She saw him once a year, when she and her husband came up to sacrifice. And every year she came with a little robe she had sewn herself. Picture the love in that small garment. The size she had to guess. The hours she had to find. The prayers stitched into every seam. Samuel's prophetic ministry, which would anoint two kings of Israel, began in the quiet shadow of Hannah's lifelong intercession. A mother's prayers, even from a distance, can shape a prophet.

Pillar Three: The Atmosphere of the Home

I am not speaking of creating a sterile, joyless environment scrubbed clean of all cultural contact. I am speaking of the spiritual atmosphere — the prevailing emotional and moral climate that your children breathe every single day.

Is prayer a genuine practice in your home, or a ritual performance? Is the Word of God opened with anticipation, or obligation? Is worship something your children see their parents enter into personally and joyfully, or something that happens only between Sabbath service hours? These are not small questions. The answers will outlive you in the spirits of your children.

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And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up.

— Deuteronomy 6:6-7 NKJV

Read those verses slowly. There is no programme here. No curriculum. No formal hour. The vision is of faith woven into the texture of daily life. *When you sit. When you walk. When you lie down. When you rise up.* The whole rhythm of the day. The whole geography of the home. The morning conversation, the journey to school, the moment before sleep.

But Moses adds one short, decisive clause before any of that happens: *“these words shall be in your heart.”* The teaching flows from a heart already shaped by what it is trying to pass on. You cannot, with any consistency, teach diligently what you do not yourself believe deeply. The atmosphere of a home is the overflow of what is in the hearts of those who lead it.

If your faith is real on Monday evening, it will be real to your children. If it is real only on Sabbath morning, they will sense the seam. Children are remarkable detectors of inconsistency. They forgive almost anything except pretence.

4 Joseph and Mary — The Parents Who Raised the Messiah

Luke 2:40–52; Matthew 2:13–23

Even the Son of God needed faithful parents. Luke is careful to tell us that Joseph and Mary went every year to Jerusalem for the Feast of Passover — a long journey, an expense they could ill afford, a discipline they kept anyway. Their household kept the Sabbath. Their household kept the feasts. When Jesus was twelve and astonished the teachers in the temple, He did not do so on borrowed knowledge. He did so on Scripture taught in a carpenter's home in Nazareth. After that incident the Bible records, almost in passing, the simplest verse about Messiah's childhood: “And He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was subject to them.” The One who would soon be subject to no one was, for now, subject to a Galilean carpenter and his wife. Joseph and Mary were not remarkable people. They were ordinary parents in a small town. But they were faithful in the small things — the journeys, the feasts, the daily prayers, the Sabbath gatherings — and God entrusted them with the raising of His Son.

Pillar Four: Pray for Them Specifically

I cannot overstate this. There is a covering that comes over a child whose parents pray for them with genuine faith and consistent intercession. I have seen it. I have experienced it on both sides — as a child of praying parents, and as a father myself.

Call their names before God. Pray for their specific struggles, their specific temptations, their specific gifts and callings. Pray for the friends they will choose. Pray for the man or woman they will marry. Pray for the work that will fill their hands. Pray for the still, small voice that may speak to them in the night when you are not there.

Ask God to make Himself real to them in ways that you as a parent cannot manufacture or engineer. You can give your child many things — love, instruction, provision, a good education, a strong example. But you cannot give them a personal encounter with the living God. Only He can do that. Your job is to keep asking Him to.

There is a profound difference between the parent who prays in general for their children and the parent who calls each name and walks specifically through the burdens of that one life. The first is good. The second is the kind of intercession that shifts the spiritual atmosphere over a generation.

A PRACTICE WORTH KEEPING

Many parents have found it helpful to write down, for each child, a short list of their current struggles, gifts, and callings, and to bring that list before God by name once a week. The list may change as the child grows. The practice lasts a lifetime.

5

Lois and Eunice — Three Generations of Faith

2 Timothy 1:5; 2 Timothy 3:14–15; Acts 16:1

Timothy's mother Eunice was a Jewish believer married to a Greek husband. We are not told that the father shared the faith of his wife and his mother-in-law. What we are told is that Eunice, with the help of her own mother Lois, raised Timothy in the Holy Scriptures "from childhood." Three generations: a grandmother whose faith dwelt in her first, a mother who carried that faith into her own household even without the support of a believing husband, and a son who would carry the gospel across the Roman Empire as the Apostle Paul's closest co-labourer. When Paul wrote to Timothy near the end of his own life, he reached back through three generations to name them. "I call to remembrance the genuine faith that is in you, which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am persuaded is in you also." A mother and grandmother who would never see Asia Minor, never preach in Ephesus, never face a Roman court, raised the man who would do all of these things. Faith carried by patient women across generations is a force no empire can break.

A Word to Fathers

I want to speak directly to the fathers for a moment, because I believe we carry a particular responsibility here that we have not always taken seriously enough.

Research confirms what Scripture has always taught — the spiritual temperature of a home is disproportionately set by the father's engagement or disengagement with faith. When a father leads spiritually, the entire family climate shifts. When a father is absent, distracted, or indifferent, even the most faithful mother is pulling weight that ought to have been carried by two.

And leading spiritually does not mean being the loudest or most theologically articulate person in the room. It means being present. Being consistent. Being the

first one to apologise when you are wrong. Being the one your children see on his knees, not just in the pulpit.

It means having conversations with your sons about what it means to be a man of God in a world that has largely abandoned that standard. It means speaking worth, identity, and purpose over your daughters so consistently and convincingly that no smooth-talking young man with hollow intentions can tell them something about themselves that contradicts what their father already established.

Your daughter's first sense of how a man should treat a woman is gathered from how you treat her mother. Your son's first sense of what manhood looks like is gathered from how you carry yours. You do not get to escape this. You only get to choose what they will gather.

Your children do not need a perfect father. They need a present, faithful, God-pursuing one.

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And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.

— Ephesians 6:4 NKJV

Paul places the responsibility squarely on fathers. Not because mothers are not involved — they obviously are, and in many homes more deeply — but because there is a particular spiritual weight that the father is called to carry. To carry it badly is to provoke. To carry it well is to bring up. The difference between the two phrases is the difference between a son who becomes a man of God and a son who spends years in rebellion against the God he associates with a father who never embodied Him.

A Word to Mothers

And to the mothers, I want to speak a word of recognition before I speak a word of charge. You carry the daily, unphotographed, often unthanked work of forming small lives in countless small ways. The Lord sees this work, even when no one else does. He is keeping account of it.

Of the parents we have just walked through in Scripture, four of the five are women. Jochebed sang faith into a son she would soon lose to a pagan palace. Hannah prayed a prophet into being and gave him back to the Lord. Mary raised the Messiah in a Galilean carpenter's home. Lois and Eunice carried three generations of faith across the difficulty of a household where the father was not a believer.

There is a particular kind of formation that mothers carry and that fathers, however faithful, cannot quite replicate. The voice of a mother often becomes a child's inner voice for life. The hymns she hummed while cooking become the songs they sing in their own kitchens forty years later. The small acts of patience under pressure become the instinctive responses of their own adulthood. The way she spoke about the Lord becomes the way they speak about Him.

If you are a mother carrying spiritual leadership in a home where your husband is not yet walking with God — or where he is, but the burden of daily formation has fallen more on you than you ever expected — take heart. The Lord has done some of His greatest work through mothers in exactly this position. Keep singing. Keep praying. Keep speaking the name of God over the small lives in your care. What you are planting will grow.

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Her children rise up and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her: 'Many daughters have done well, but you excel them all.'

— Proverbs 31:28–29 NKJV

When the Children Have Wandered

Perhaps you are reading this and the children are already grown. Perhaps you are carrying the quiet weight of regret about years when faith was not the priority it should have been in your home. Perhaps you did your best, and still the child you raised in the fear of the Lord is far from Him today.

I want to say this to you gently but clearly: it is not too late to pray. It is not too late to have honest conversations. It is not too late to model, even now, the kind of faith-filled life that can still reach an adult child's heart.

God is not limited by our parenting mistakes. He is a Redeemer. He specialises in stories that looked finished and were not. Some of the most beautiful testimonies you will ever hear in the kingdom belong to people who came home in their thirties, forties, fifties, after years of silence. Their parents had stopped seeing the answers. They had not stopped praying.

The story of the prodigal son was told by the Lord Himself, and in it the father never goes after the wandering boy and never ceases to wait for him. When the son finally appears on the horizon, the text says the father saw him “while he was still a great way off.” That phrase only makes sense if the father had been looking. Every day. For years. The watching is the part of the story we forget.

Keep watching. Keep praying. Keep the door open. Do not slam it shut in your grief or in your anger, however justified those feelings may be. The same God who brought the prodigal home is still in the business of bringing prodigals home. And He often does so in answer to a parent's tears that He alone has seen.

And for those of you with young children still in your home — you have in your hands one of the most sacred stewardships God ever entrusts to a human being. Do not manage it. Do not outsource it. Do not assume the church, the school, or the culture will do what only you can do.

Raise them with intention. Raise them with love. Raise them with the living, breathing, daily demonstration of a faith that actually works — in joy and in sorrow,

in abundance and in need, in the bright mornings and the very dark ones. Raise them to know the God who is faithful.

A Personal Examination

Before the final word, sit with these ten questions. Sit with them slowly. Some of them will be uncomfortable; that is part of their work. Do not rush past them. The honest answers are where the change begins.

- 1 Do my children see me pray when no one else is watching, or only when someone is?
- 2 When I face disappointment, do my children hear faith in my words — or only frustration, complaint, and fear?
- 3 Have I created a home where my children feel safe enough to bring their doubts and questions to me, or have I made them feel that doubt itself is a betrayal?
- 4 Do I impose religion on my children, or do I model a relationship with God before them?
- 5 Am I more concerned with my children's external behaviour than with the state of their hearts?
- 6 When did I last call each of my children by name in prayer before God — specifically, by their real struggles and gifts, not in general?
- 7 Does my walk with God in private match the profession of faith I make in public — or is there a seam my children have already detected?
- 8 Is the spiritual atmosphere of my home actively cultivated, or merely assumed?

- 9 Have I let my work, my phone, or my own distractions crowd out the daily conversations my children most need from me?
- 10 If my children walk away from God in their adult years, will it have been because of what they saw at home, or in spite of it?

Final Word

The same God who said of Abraham, “I have known him,” and entrusted him with a household worth commanding, is still looking for fathers and mothers He can entrust with a household.

The same God who held a small boy steady through forty years in Pharaoh’s palace because his mother had whispered the name of the Lord over him in three short years is still able to hold your children steady through the world they are walking into.

The same God who heard Hannah’s tears and gave her a prophet she would see only once a year, and shaped that boy by the prayers of his mother and the small coats she stitched, is still listening to every prayer you whisper over your children in the night.

The same God who watched a Galilean carpenter and his young wife raise the Messiah in obedience, in the rhythms of Sabbath and feast and Scripture, is still raising up His servants through the ordinary faithfulness of ordinary parents in ordinary homes.

The same God who carried genuine faith across three generations in the household of Lois and Eunice, even without a believing husband at the head of the home, is still able to carry your faith forward into the lives of children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren you may never meet.

The pattern is always the same: a parent who feared God, a household where His name was spoken with reverence and warmth, and a generation that rose up to carry that faith further than their parents ever did.

Pray for your children specifically, not generally. Speak the name of the Lord in your home so often and so warmly that it becomes the most natural name on the tongues of

your children.

Apologise quickly. Forgive freely. Bend before correction yourself. Let your children see you reading the Word with hunger and not duty.

Protect the atmosphere of your home as fiercely as you would protect their bodies from harm. The spirit of a home is a more important inheritance than any building, business, or fortune you will ever leave behind.

And on the days when your strength fails — and it will — remember that the Father who calls you to raise His children in His fear is Himself the One raising your children alongside you. You are not alone in this work. You have never been alone in it.

Because the world they are walking into will test everything they know. And on the days when it does, the only thing that will hold them is not what they were told.

It is what they watched you live.

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And if it seems evil to you to serve the LORD, choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve... But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.

— **Joshua 24:15 NKJV**

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