



Guide Your Children Toward God's Family

Your child — just like you — has the incredible potential to become a perfect, immortal member of the God Family! How well are you as a parent helping him toward that goal?

By Robert E. Fahey

It will happen one day between you and your child.

You will feel a resistance. To no particular thing — and to everything. You will find yourself explaining an instruction that ought to be obvious. You won't be talking heart to heart with your youngster. Instead, there will be disagreement and discord. Suddenly, you will feel you need a

lawyer to talk to your own kid. You will present your case with unassailable facts, but your points will be hurled back at you as proof that *you* are unreasonable.

Your child will be manifesting a carnal attitude — “the spirit of this world.”

Your warfare is not of the flesh! You are up against a spiritual force.

And if you don't know it, there is no way you will overcome it. You and your child will both lose!

The spirit in man and our children

Your child has the spirit in man. When you understand that, certain things become plain. Each human mind is individual. By giving your

child the spirit in man, God granted him freedom of choice.

During his life, he will make his own decisions. At the end of that life, your child, then fully mature, will stand before Jesus Christ and be judged as an individual, according to his works and the character he has developed. Your opinion will not be needed — nor will your justifications, excuses or apologies. Your child will have to stand before Christ alone.

Now, as your baby sleeps peacefully in his bed, he is totally dependent on you for everything. But remember, in a few short years, his mind will decide whether to listen to you or not! Your effective control will cease. Cooperation with and submission to you will become voluntary. He will decide whether to obey the Fifth Commandment — and all the other commandments, too. Your child is a separate person, distinct from all others. Even from you!

Because your child has the spirit in man, his mind will begin to absorb human knowledge. For the first few years, you and your family are the only teachers your child has.

Your children set apart

As Christ has revealed through His apostle, Herbert W. Armstrong, I Corinthians 7:14 shows that the unconverted children of Church members are set apart — holy (see page 10). The children of Church members have access to God and “the things” of His Spirit!

Knowing about the spirit in man and that our children have access to God’s spiritual values provides *the key* to successful childrearing for members of God’s Church. It shows the way to “Train up a child in the way he should go” (Prov. 22:6).

Your child can learn the things of God. You can teach him that God is the Creator and that He placed men on earth for a purpose. You can explain how your child came to have consciousness and tell him of God’s generous offer of eternal life to those who obey Him. Your child can begin to comprehend God’s plan as pictured by His Holy Days.

Of course, you will not be the only influence in your child’s life. At school he will learn mathematics, science, history, art and music. He

will also learn from television, comic books, magazines and other kids. His mind will gobble up information — and all the “things of a man [or woman].”

Sooner or later his mind will also be subjected to the “spirit of this world,” which will work to instill vanity, hostility to authority and selfish desires of the mind and flesh. The degree to which he responds to that wrong spirit depends on his recognition of that spirit for what it is and his abhorrence of those attitudes.

Unlike others, Church children *do* have a choice. They can turn their minds toward God and the things of God — or they can turn toward the bitter, hostile attitude of the adversary. Ultimately, it is their decision.

As a parent in God’s Church, it is your job to teach them to make the right choice. You can teach God’s values before your child is subjected to Satan’s world and its carnal attitudes.

Teaching God’s values

Admittedly, it is going to be difficult to teach God’s values if you don’t appreciate them yourself! If you don’t value the personal calling you have to be part of God’s firstfruits, to understand His Word, to fellowship with His people, to participate in His Work and to back His apostle, you can’t teach anyone else what an enormous blessing it is to live God’s way of life and be a member of the Body of Christ.

If you find yourself in that condition, your first step in training your children is to start drinking in God’s Holy Spirit yourself! You do that by studying His Word, by following His laws fully from the heart and by rejecting Satan’s evil attitudes.

You begin at the beginning. Your children have access to God because His Spirit dwells in you! If you neglect it, keep one foot in the world and reflect Satan’s cynical, negative, frustrated attitude, your children’s access to God is diminished.

If God’s Spirit permeates your life and you delight in being in Christ’s Body, your family’s access increases. Paul saw that in Timothy’s family, “When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which

dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also” (II Tim. 1:5).

Give vs. get

God views all human attitudes and subsequent actions in terms of two broad ways of life. Mr. Armstrong has explained these two ways so even a child can understand them — one is the way of *give*, the other the way of *get*.

Those with God’s Spirit will evaluate attitudes the way He does. True Christians will read which spirit is which and then choose the way that is pleasing to God — the way that leads to joy, cooperation, mutual respect and, most of all, peace!

“But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish [of Satan]. For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy” (Jas. 3:14-17).

Teach your child, while you can, to recognize the two distinct ways!

Many everyday experiences can be used to demonstrate the fruits of one way as opposed to the fruits of the other — squabbles between playmates, following rules, thinking of others, telling the truth, care of others’ property. You will be astounded how clearly you can teach God’s way — and how quickly your child will learn it.

Teach him the pleasant results of God’s way. For example, God always tells the truth. Who could trust anyone who lies? Show him by example that your *yea* means *yes*, just like God’s does.

It follows that your *no* must also mean *no*. Consistently. If your child is going to respect you, he will have to respect your *nos*. If you regularly must give instructions more than once, your word is not respected. Do not expect a spirit of cooperation or obedience. Expect negotiation. Expect strife. Expect rejection.

Respect and affection will help turn your child’s heart toward you.

That's the attitude God wants in you. It is the same one you want to see in your child.

Read your child's attitude

You have to read your child's attitude. There will be times, especially in the early years, when you know you are talking heart to heart in open, honest communication. Those times are priceless! Value and use those occasions to build your relationship. Later, they may not come often enough. Should your child strongly turn his mind toward the spirit of the world, no amount of money will buy it back.

Sooner or later, your child will display a carnal attitude. He may do a specific task you request, but resistance is present. The underlying spirit is critical. Your motives and competency are being questioned — his opinions, wants and grievances fill his mind. Thoughts for others are shut out by a wall of self-pity. Pride and defiance mean the heart is lifted up (Ezek. 28:17). What to do?

The situation is delicate. If you fly into a rage, you will be exhibiting the same wrathful spirit he is. Then you both will descend into a standoff of antagonism and recrimination. Some families, once in that situation, never ascend out of it!

Paul wrote Timothy about how to work with people in that attitude. "The servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at [to do] his will" (II Tim. 2:24-26).

Keep your spiritual cool. This is where your early teaching comes in. If you have taught your child to recognize Satan's attitude and he does not want to go that way, you can discuss the problem with him. Lift the controversy to the spirit level. Then work back to the particular difficulty. Show the attitude, then the action and the inevitable result. He may see what has happened and reject that carnal attitude. It could be that simple.

Sometimes stronger methods are

needed. If your child has a defiant, hostile spirit, your goal is to replace it with a humble, contrite one. If words don't do it, then some form of discipline is your next recourse. There is nothing that produces contrition as quickly as realizing that you are not as high and mighty as you thought you were. God sends His prophets — then His armies!

With young children, the usual form of discipline is spanking. Some have overused spanking and turned their homes into virtual concentration camps of punishment and abuse. These parents are oblivious to the fact that they are instilling a hostility and seething defiance that will one day be forcefully expressed. They actually help the adversary.

Or they are producing a cautious, half-hearted, wait-and-see attitude that is the first sign of a crushed spirit. Carried to its fullest extent, it just gives up. It quits. Like Satan, its situation is hopeless.

Others never use any discipline or authority. These parents often delude themselves into thinking that they are in charge. All acts of willful defiance are ignored or rationalized. Should the reality ever hit home, *they* become the ones with the crushed spirits, staring hollow-eyed at the wall, wondering what went wrong.

People have had these results because they either couldn't or didn't read the spirit and insist on cheerful obedience from a right heart.

Godly discipline

If your child is in a wrong spirit and doesn't turn from it, the results are sure to be evil. If left unchecked it will lead to every curse this God-rejecting world has had to endure.

God is love. God disciplines. Foreseeing the diseased fruit of a wrong attitude, God corrects to bring about contrition (Heb. 12:5-8).

The Designer of the human body seems to have built it so that a properly applied spanking on the backside of a youngster can produce a change of heart — from proud to humble, from self-willed to cooperative, from self-pity to gratitude. It is comforting for your child to know that someone benign yet firm is in control!

That means before you ever spank,

you should have a good look at your attitude. If your motives are selfish and wrathful, there is no chance of your efforts producing a godly attitude in your child (Jas. 1:20). Be sure you are in control of yourself and are in a right spirit.

Your child has to learn self-discipline. Teach him to recognize and reject the defiant, hostile spirit he has begun to express. Explain the attitude problem you see. Also explain the specific fault. It is a service to let him understand the problem and know what is expected of him, by God and you.

Then spank! The number of swats and force should be appropriate for the offense. You should never cause injury or even come close.

You will be serving your child another way. Most people are unaware of the bad results a selfish attitude brings, because the consequences usually come much later (Eccl. 8:11). By disciplining your child when he needs it, you bring the explanation and the penalty for a wrong spirit closer.

Don't be afraid to make it hurt. You are helping your child avoid the spirit that leads to sorrow and rejection by God. If that attitude continues to adulthood, your chance to help is past! "Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying" (Prov. 19:18).

With older children, spanking becomes less appropriate. A charitable spirit will know when. Loss of privileges or blessings or an old-fashioned scolding can replace swats. The principles remain the same.

Don't forget mercy! When the attitude is repentant, God forgives. That means you and I don't get the penalty we deserve. Your children learn about God's mercy from you. Your job is not to punish for every tiny offense; that will only provoke him to wrath — push him into the attitude of the adversary. But God is not mocked either. Don't let your desire to show mercy become a license to disrespect and defy you.

One more caution. Don't expect your children to behave as if they are converted. They cannot have the fruits of God's Spirit until they are baptized and begotten of His Spirit. To expect them to act like fully

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FUTURE GODS?

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"drawn" by God through the Holy Spirit, the man MAY, if he is willing to repent and believe, be converted. In other words, once called by the Father, such person is no longer CUT OFF FROM GOD!

Now see how that applies to the children of converted parents. It does not mean they may be converted while still too young. It DOES mean they are NOT, like children of unconverted parents, CUT OFF from God. IT MEANS THAT THEY MAY BE TAUGHT ABOUT GOD BY THE BELIEVING PARENT.

Just as the converted adult is, as part of the BODY OF CHRIST, one of a SEPARATE AND PECULIAR PEOPLE (I Pet. 2:9). We live IN the world, but we are not OF the world. We labor to carry Jesus' Gospel TO the world, yet our fellowship is with God and Christ and other brethren — NOT with the world. HOW WONDERFUL!

A believing, converted parent places his or her children in a SPECIAL CATEGORY — apart from the world.

Let me make this CLEAR! The most widely believed ERROR in "Christianity" is that God is calling ALL to conversion, and Satan is trying to keep them "lost."

But Jesus said plainly, "NO MAN CAN come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him." At creation, God CUT ALL HUMANITY OFF from Him, except for the VERY FEW He would specially call. And those few are NOT called *just* for salvation. They are called for special service preparing for the KINGDOM OF God. That special service is the REASON why they are called now.

Those NOT called now WILL BE CALLED TO SALVATION, either in the Millennium — if they still then live — or by being resurrected in the Great White Throne Judgment after the end of the Millennium.

Those called NOW — and for special duty preparing for the Kingdom — have SATAN to overcome. And *that's tough!* Those NOT called now WILL BE CALLED after Satan has been put away from humanity.

When Jesus said (John 6:44), "NO MAN CAN come to me, except the

Father which hath sent me draw him," He meant that ALL OTHERS simply CANNOT come to Christ as Savior, even if they wanted to — but in all cases I have observed the un-called DID NOT WANT to come to Christ — except the many who have been deceived by the false gospels of nearly all the sects of "Christianity." There is much *false* conversion.

Now look again at I Corinthians 7. For example, in this passage, in verse 16, regarding the unbelieving husband, sanctified by the converted wife, "For what knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save thy husband?" It is speaking of an unbelieving husband being "CONSECRATED" (set apart in a special category), whom the believing wife, by keeping the marriage intact, *may* save.

The same is true of your children. They are "consecrated," but that does NOT mean "saved." Yet it means they are in a special category where they MAY BE converted when sufficiently mature.

But WHAT A WONDERFUL TRUTH!

Your children are in a special (consecrated) category. You may TEACH THEM about Christ — about the things of the Bible. Their chances of being CONVERTED when sufficiently mature are MULTIPLIED!

Although Satan is going to influence your children, almost from birth, toward his rebellious attitude, YOU may counteract this by YOUR TEACHING YOUR CHILDREN THE TRUTH ABOUT GOD! And when sufficiently adult THEY WILL BE CALLED. None of this is true of children outside truly converted parents!

How precious is your child?

Jesus picked up little children — infants — and said that "of such is the kingdom of God," and except we repent and become humble as a very small child, we shall not inherit the Kingdom of God.

Brethren, God's Church is not showing even *half* the growth it should have from the oncoming generation of our members. This shows we have NEGLECTED the teaching of our children! When God has called YOU for special service in loyally backing the proclaiming of the Gospel to the world by God's Church, He intended that your *children* should also be called and enter into the Work of God's Church. □

God's Family

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mature Christians will only frustrate and discourage them.

Your child's servant

It is tempting to think you are more important than your child. That is how this world thinks. People always want to know, Who is the greatest? The oldest? The biggest? The smartest? But God says the greatest is the servant.

Your child's heart must be won! You can serve him most effectively if he knows you seek his welfare above all else. He should love and respect you for your wisdom, justice, high standards and mercy. It also helps if you are broadminded and have a sense of fun. Life shouldn't always be a heavy burden. A cheerful, positive spirit lifts everyone.

To win a young heart requires communication, affection, time. It can't be done overnight. Don't be a nervous novice and expect everything to be right immediately. You will drive everyone crazy. Have patience.

Most of you parents did not grow up in the Church. Yet you are still here, trying to do God's will. Your child must ultimately decide which way he will go. But God did not give him the spirit in man for nothing. God intends to make your child a member of His Family! Even if he goes the wrong way for a time, when he starts to return to God, as he is almost sure to, he will have a head start on what you knew when you started.

Your children could be among the pioneers of the world tomorrow — some of the first to live in Jerusalem under the rule of Jesus Christ and all His saints. Some time during the Millennium, they too will be changed from mortal to immortal and join you as full Sons of God.

There will be no such thing as age for you. You all will be fully mature members of the Kingdom of God. Picture a discussion you and your child might have then about your former physical lives together. What you want to be able to say then should have a significant impact on your relationship now. □