

**RAISING UP THE NEXT GENERATION  
FOR THE CHURCH LIFE**

Message 3

**The Responsibility of the Parents in Leading their Children  
to the Knowledge of the Lord**

Scripture Reading: Eph. 6:4; Deut. 6:7-9; Prov. 22:6; 2 Tim. 3:15; Rom. 9:11, 15-16

- I. If we try to summarize the words in the Bible concerning parenting, the main thing parents should do is nurture their children in the teaching and admonition of the Lord and not provoke them to anger or discourage them—Eph. 6:4.**
- II. We must lead our children to the knowledge of the Lord; no family can go on without prayer and the reading of the Word—Deut. 6:7-9; Prov. 22:6; Eph. 6:4; 2 Tim. 3:15; cf. Gen 18:19:**
  - A. The home meetings must suit the children; these family meetings are not designed for you; what you do in the family must suit the taste of your children and must be on their own level— cf. 1 Pet. 2:2; 1 Cor. 3:2:
    1. Some families fail in their prayer and Bible-reading time because their family meetings are too long and too deep; the children do not understand what is going on; they do not know why you are asking them to sit there—cf. Heb. 5:13.
    2. Some home meetings go on for one or two hours about difficult doctrines; this is indeed a great suffering for the children, yet many parents have no feeling about this.
  - B. Another problem with some home meetings is that there is little love in them; it is neither the father's attraction nor the mother's attraction that draws the children to these meetings; it is the whip that keeps them there:
    1. You must think of some ways to attract them and encourage them; never punish your children for not attending your family meeting.
    2. If you punish them once, you may create a problem in them for the rest of their lives.
    3. Parents must attract their children to the family meeting; do not force them to come; this will only result in terrible consequences.
  - C. We suggest having two family home meetings a day, one in the morning and one in the evening; the father should lead the morning time and the mother should lead the evening time:
    1. If you have children at home, you have to wake up earlier; have a little time together before the children go to school:
      - a. Your meeting should be short, living, and never long; perhaps ten minutes is enough; never exceed fifteen minutes and do not be shorter than five minutes.
      - b. Ask everyone of them to read a verse; the father should take the lead to pick out a few phrases and speak about them.
      - c. If the children can memorize something, ask them to memorize; do not quote a whole verse; ask them to remember the meaning of a sentence.
      - d. At the end of the meeting the father or the mother should offer a prayer for God's blessing; do not offer lofty or deep prayers; pray about things that children can understand; do not be long; be simple; then send them to school.
    2. Every time you sit down for your meal, you should thank the Lord for it; whether it is breakfast, lunch, or dinner, you should be sincere in your thanksgiving; help your children to give thanks—1 Tim. 4:4; cf. John 6:11.
    3. The evening meeting should be a little longer, and the mother should lead it; it is not necessary to read the Bible at night, but the family needs to pray together:

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- a. The mother has to gather the children together and talk to them; while the father is sitting next to her, the mother should encourage the children to speak up:
    - (1) Ask them whether they had any problems that day.
    - (2) Ask whether they fought with one another and whether anything was bothering them.
  - b. If a mother cannot make her children speak up, something must be wrong; it is a failure of the mother to allow a barrier to exist between herself and her children:
    - (1) The mother must be at fault if the children are afraid to speak to her; they should be free to speak up.
    - (2) The mother must learn to bring out the things that are in her children's hearts; if they do not want to speak up that day, ask them the next day; guide the children.
  - c. Let them pray a little and teach them to say a few words; this meeting must be living.
  - d. Ask them to confess their sins, but do not force them; there must not be any pretense; everything must be done in a very natural way; if they have something to confess, let them confess; if they have nothing to confess, do not force them.
  - e. The parents should lead them to pray in a simple way one by one; make sure that everyone prays; finally, conclude with a prayer of your own; but do not be long.
  - f. Feed them according to their capacity; once you try to do too much, you will overburden them; pray a few sentences with them and then let them go to sleep.
- D. Let them know the meaning of sin; everyone sins; you must pay attention to the matter of their repentance and then bring them to the Lord.
- E. After some time you should ask them to receive the Lord sincerely:
1. Then bring them to the church and let them be a part of the church.
  2. In this way you will lead your children to the knowledge of God.

### **Excerpts from the Ministry:**

If we try to summarize the words in the Bible concerning parenting, the main thing parents should do is nurture their children in the teaching and admonition of the Lord and not provoke them to anger or discourage them....Being a husband or a wife is a matter of personal happiness; being a parent is something that affects the well-being of the children of the next generation. The responsibility over the future of the children of the next generation is on the shoulders of the parents.

We have to realize how serious this responsibility is. God has placed a person's body, soul, and spirit, even his whole life and future, into our hands. No individual influences another individual's future as much as parents. No one controls a person's future as much as parents. Parents almost have a say in whether their children will go to hell or to heaven. We must learn to be good husbands and good wives, but above all we must learn also to be good parents. I believe that the responsibility of being a parent is more than that of being a husband or a wife.

### **LEADING THE CHILDREN TO THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE LORD**

We must lead them to the knowledge of the Lord. A family altar is indeed necessary. In the Old Testament the tabernacle was linked to the altar. In other words the family is linked to service and consecration to God. No family can go on without prayer and the reading of the Word. This is especially true with families that have children.

### **Meetings That Are on the Level of the Children**

Some families fail in their prayer and Bible-reading time because their family meetings are too long and too deep. The children do not understand what is going on. They do not know why you are asking them to sit there. I do not like it when families invite us to their homes to speak about deep doctrines and then force their children to sit with them. Some home meetings go on for one or two hours about difficult doctrines. This is indeed a great suffering for the children. Yet many parents have no feeling about this. The children sit there, but they do not understand. For example, if the topic is on the book of Revelation, how can they understand it? The home meetings must suit the children. These family meetings are not designed for you; your meeting is in the meeting hall. Do not impose your standard on your family. What you do in the family must suit the taste of your children and must be on their own level.

### **Encouraging and Attracting**

Another problem with some home meetings is that there is little love in them. It is neither the father's attraction nor the mother's attraction that draws the children to these meetings; it is the whip that keeps them there. They do not want to join. But they come because there is the threat of the whip. If you take away the whip, they will not come. This will never work. You must think of some ways to attract them and encourage them. Do not punish them. Never beat your children for not attending your family worship hour. If you beat them once, you may create a problem in them for the rest of their lives. Parents must attract their children to the family worship hour. Do not force them to come. This will only result in terrible consequences.

### **Meeting Once in the Morning and Once in the Evening**

We suggest having two home meetings a day, one in the morning and one in the evening. The father should lead the morning time and the mother should lead the evening time. Get up a little earlier. The parents must not remain in bed after the children have taken their breakfast and gone to school. If you have children at home, you have to wake up earlier. Have a little time together before the children go to school. Your meeting should be short, living, and never long. Perhaps ten minutes is enough. Fifteen minutes is the longest it should be. Never exceed fifteen minutes and do not be shorter than five minutes. Ask everyone of them to read a verse. The father should take the lead to pick out a few phrases and speak about them. If the children can memorize something, ask them to memorize. Do not quote a whole verse. Ask them to remember the meaning of a sentence. At the end of the meeting the father or the mother should offer a prayer for God's blessing. Do not offer lofty or deep prayers. Pray about things that children can understand. Do not be long. Be simple. Then send them to school.

Every time you sit down for your meal, you should thank the Lord for it. Whether it is breakfast, lunch, or dinner, you should be sincere in your thanksgiving. Help your children to give thanks. The evening meeting should be a little longer, and the mother should lead it. It is not necessary to read the Bible at night, but the family needs to pray together. In particular, the mother has to gather the children together and talk to them. While the father is sitting next to her, the mother should encourage the children to speak up. Ask them whether they had any problems that day. Ask whether they fought with one another and whether anything was bothering them. If a mother cannot make her children speak up, something must be wrong. It is a failure of the mother to allow a barrier to exist between herself and her children. The mother must be at fault if the children are afraid to speak to her. They should be free to speak up. The mother must learn to bring out the things that are in her children's hearts. If they do not want to speak up that day, ask them the next day. Guide the children. Let them pray a little and teach them to say a few words. This meeting must be living. Ask them to confess their sins, but do not force them. There must not be any pretense. Everything must be done in a very natural way. Let them take some initiative themselves. If they have something to confess, let them

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confess. If they have nothing to confess, do not force them. There must not be any pretense. The pretense found in many children is the result of pressure from strict parents. Children do not tell lies, but you can force them to tell lies. The parents should lead them to pray in a simple way one by one. Make sure that everyone prays. Finally, conclude with a prayer of your own. But do not be long. Once your prayer becomes long, children become bored. Feed them according to their capacity. Once you try to do too much, you will overburden them. Pray a few sentences with them and then let them go to sleep.

### **Paying Attention to Their Repentance**

Let them know the meaning of sin. Everyone sins. You must pay attention to the matter of their repentance and then bring them to the Lord. After some time you should ask them to receive the Lord sincerely. Then bring them to the church and let them be a part of the church. In this way you will lead your children to the knowledge of God. (*The Collected Works of Watchman Nee*, vol. 49, pp. 520, 541-544)