All about children



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Acknowledgment

I am grateful to the Lord for allowing me to write and express my thoughts and to share them with everyone who is willing to read with an open mind and heart. My hope is that the reader will allow the words to benefit him and his loved ones.

I would also like to acknowledge all the people who prayed for me, supported me, and helped me put this book together.

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Finally,

I thank the Lord for allowing me to write this book for the benefit of the children.

Special place in my heart

It is not easy for me
to describe the love I feel towards
My Family
My Friends
My Co-workers
My Students & their Parents
Through the years I have been blessed
by their love, care, and support.
I just wanted them to know how much
I appreciate them.

May the Lord always be with each and every one of them.

Introduction

Children are blessings from God, They are the ones who love everything the Lord has provided.

The trees, the flowers
And the plants

Why? Because they are still fragile in the Spirit.

In touch with their inner self,

They have no fear of being closer to the Lord Because they have nothing to hide;

Until we as parents

Put fear in their heart by the way we conduct ourselves

Without the Presence of the Lord

Why am I saying this? And how do I know this?

I have been a teacher at Montessori: New Beginnings Academy for 17 years and have observed children, parents and my coworkers. I have seen how children communicate with their parents and with each other. I am a mother of two beautiful well-rounded children. Through the years, I have learned so many things watching them grow and mature into wonderful human beings.

I am a Sunday School coordinator and a servant in the House of the Lord, which has allowed me to recognize the importance of being close to God. Having Him as a first priority in my life has allowed everything else to fall into place.

Finally, I am a coordinator for the women's ministry at my Coptic Orthodox Church. This has also allowed me to talk to many women and listen to their concerns, and has inspired me to write this book.

In this book, I will go step by step through a child's life trying to identify practical ways to help the child grow into an independent, well-rounded and healthy adult.

This book addresses the values of the Christian community. But it can also apply to all religions that require moral values that strive to change attitudes. This book equips us with a better understanding of what is required in order to have a well-rounded child.

It is our duty as parents to make the environment in which we live harmonious, educational, inviting and safe for our children.

May the Lord open our eyes and let us see the value that can be acquired from reading this book.

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When God Gives a Gift to a Child

It will be full of love inside
It will be wrapped with care and love
It will be full of beautiful dreams

It will be fashioned with goodness and smiles

It will be ready to be shared with another child

It will be made just for him

God ... Is always there to give a gift to a child

A Letter from Your Child

Dear Mom and Dad,

I am writing this letter to you in order to help you understand, support, and communicate with me better and help us improve our lives as a Christian family. When God gave me life, He chose and trusted you to be my parents, so you can take care of me and guide me until I can become an adult who can eventually grow and have his own life and his own family to take care of.

Here are some instructions for you to follow:

- Don't worry about spoiling me yet: When I was born, my brain was one fourth the size of an adult brain. By the second year, my brain will be three quarters the size of an adult brain. So, I am not helpless, passive, and insensitive like you may think. I am active, attentive, discriminating of smells, tastes, patterns etc., and I am still struggling to establish regular functions such as breathing and food intake.
- ♦ I need intimate moments of holding and feeding: In my first years, I depend on you for my survival and loving attention until I can perfect my coordination and adapt to my new

- environment. Each time I pass through a stage "sitting, rolling, crawling, standing ..." I feel more and more independent and can slowly separate from you.
- ♦ I need your love in order to learn how to love and to help me develop the sense of basic trust, "to feel that the world is good and a trustworthy place." By providing the emotional soil, my intelligence can grow and flourish.
- Don't put me on a diet or over feed me: Observe me and I will let you know when I am hungry, sleepy, or need to be changed.
- Don't ignore my needs. Pick me up, talk to me gently, and find creative ways to entertain me. Simple exercises of my limbs allow me to move freely and encourage me to roll over, tickle me etc.
- ◆ By three months old, I can hear as well as an adult, I can see close in and far distances, and I can follow moving objects. So it is a good time to introduce me to different pictures, patterns, and flower prints. Play games with me such as "peek-a-boo" and "little piggy went to the

- market." Make me more aware of my environment and my body parts.
- Since everything goes to my mouth, make sure toys are safe for me and interesting, such as, sturdy colorful plastic, things with different sizes and shapes, different textures (wood, rough and smooth), cool sensations against my gums, ... etc.
- ◆ Once I am ready to explore, it is a good idea to put away all of your precious breakables or books. Secure the entire cupboard within my reach. Place interesting items for me to learn and explore such as wooden spoons, plastic containers, a pile of paper to crush and squeeze, etc.
- Make bath time interesting by giving me some objects to with which to play, but make sure they are safe, don't accumulate water inside them, and none of them are breakable or too small. Let me play with things like a plastic funnel, strainer, egg beater, rubber ball, and squeeze toys, ... etc."
- ♦ It is very important to talk to me, play games with me, and show me your ear, your nose, ...

etc. Show me different pictures of objects around the house or in the street, at the zoo, and read to me to help me to develop language skills.

Now Mom and Dad, once I am old enough and ready to understand, learn, and discover, please:

- ◆ Don't spoil me: Teach me that I should not get everything I ask for. Let me feed myself with a spoon, drink from a cup, and allow me to walk if I am ready. Please don't carry me, so that I have a chance to perfect my coordination.
- Don't be afraid to be firm with me: I can follow simple directions, which will make me feel safe and secure.
- Don't let me form bad habits: I am beginning to know what is and is not allowed, but I have trouble remembering. So be patient with me.
- Don't protect me from consequence: Remember I can only sit for two minutes. I still have a hard time sharing. I still like to explore. I am still messy. Don't forget to give me a hug and make me feel that you love me.

- Sometimes I have a temper when I'm trying out all these new feelings inside me, or I try to find out how you are going to respond, or because I don't like my routine to change (such as missed nap, rushing in the morning, or not eating for several hours, ... etc). Please understand the following about my temper tantrums.
 - → Don't pay too much attention to them.
 - → Find a way to channel this negative energy into a more positive outlet.
 - → Be patient, because they eventually settle down.
 - Show me unconditional love.
 - → Respecting me will make it easier for me to grow up pleasant and be a better person.
 - Change your responses when they aren't productive.
 - → Refuse to give in to overly rude demands. Instead, leave the room.

- → Pay attention to what time of the day my behavior pattern starts and try to prevent it before it happens.
- → Recognize that any little change of my routine can cause me to have bad tantrums.
- Teach me lovingly, calmly, and firmly new skills by modeling the behavior.
- Don't put me off when I ask you questions: Please be patient with me so that I can learn from you, and so I can come to you for guidance later in my life.
- Don't break your promises: It will make me lose faith in you and I will feel badly let down.
- Don't nag: It will make me tune you out in order to protect myself and it will become harder to listen to you when it is an important subject.
- Don't be frustrated with me when I make a mistake: I am still learning.
- Be sincere: Give me praise only when you are truly impressed. Then, I can feel your praise is meaningful.

Now once I become 18 months, I am ready for more challenges and simple rules that I can remember and can adapt to them. It is a good idea to give me a chance to become more independent and that will help to perfect my coordination, concentration, and develop a sense of order in me.

- Arrange bathroom facilities for me: A stool to reach the sink, my own toothbrush, comb, towel, ... etc.
- Teach me how to make my bed, dust, sweep, and set the table and let me help sort socks, ... etc.
- Teach me how to take care of my toys and my books and clean up after working with something or return it back in the assigned place.
- Teach me how to work successfully with scissors, glue, crayons, papers, and put puzzles together, and even memory games that are age appropriate.

Observe me and watch to see what I am interested in, what I am good at, and what I need to improve on.

When school starts, it is a good idea to:

- Choose and lay out clothing to be worn the next day before bedtime, so that there is no rush or fuss in the morning.
- Develop a habit of sleeping early so I can have enough rest time.
- Set a good example for me by being on time.
- Plan time each day with me to be shared together in reading, playing, praying, ... etc."

Remember Mom and Dad that we are a family and in order to achieve a good relationship, we need to be sensitive to each other's needs and treat each other with respect. Please make plans together, read together, and gather information about the best ways to help me grow. Most importantly, pray for me each day and ask God to guide you to be the best parents you can be for me.

Love,

Your son/daughter

I love God ... When do you really say that?

When God is . . . the first priority in your life

When you love God and keep his commandments

When your heart is . . .
. . . Full of love for everyone around you

When you give everything you have . . . to serve him

When you put others . . . before yourself

When no matter what life brings you are content

Preparing For a New Arrival

"Blessed is the man who fears the Lord, who delights greatly in his commandments"

Psalm 112:1

Starting a new family is one of the hardest and most joyful decisions. By the grace of God, the couple becomes of one spirit, one mind, and one soul. When it comes to being a parent, sometimes it is overwhelming because the couple doesn't feel prepared for such a responsibility.

The questions the couple face

1) How can they make sure that their children are growing the way God intended them to be?

"This is my comfort in my affliction, for Your word has given me life."

Psalm 119:50

God's word is never hidden from us, but it is revealed through the Holy Bible. For the couple to

achieve these words, they must work on their parenting skills right when they are united in Holy Matrimony. For they need to prepare themselves, their lives, and their hearts to serve and obey the Lord's commandments and teachings before they attempt to bring up children.

- Pray to gain spiritual wisdom
- Learn the Bible's teaching and obey it
- ◆ Trust in God's promises
- Have a relationship with God
- ♦ Have a healthy relationship with each other
- ♦ Learn to help and serve people in need
- Read books about Christian parenting skills
- Examine yourself and work on your weaknesses
- 2) What are the goals that parents should set up for their children?

"My son, be wise and make my heart glad, that I may answer him who reproaches me."

Proverbs 27:11

Parents should

- Shape their children's hearts to live for God
- Equip their children to face life ahead.
- Raise adults to lead our next generation to Christ

... And that requires teaching them

- Humility, such as ... willing to learn and grow, being able to be teachable, and willing to ask for forgiveness.
- Self-discipline, such as ... to live righteously, to be content, and to fulfill responsibilities.

Integrity, such as ... how to have honest relations with others and in family matters.

3) What is the effective way of parenting?

"If you love Me, keep My commandments."

John 14: 15

- It is not enough to pray each night with your children for you must
 - → Live what you preach throughout the day.
 - → Read the Bible with them according to their age.
 - → Talk about what it means to you to have a relationship with God.
 - → Teach them by example to be thankful and content.
 - → After any family conflict, pray for God's forgiveness.

- Providing a loving and positive atmosphere at home will help the children
 - → To respond better to discipline
 - → To develop good habits
 - → To learn much more
- Spending quality time as a family and enjoying each other will
 - → Encourage open discussion
 - **→** Increase the amount of communication
 - ♦ Talk about your values
 - ♦ Talk about concerns
 - ◆ Talk about expectations
 - ♦ Listen to their ideas and suggestions
 - Children are less likely to challenge the rules

- → Give a chance for teachable moments and test their limits
- Discipline- through discipline you're helping your children
 - → Grow into responsible adults
 - → Be more helpful and less selfish
 - → Choose the right behavior
 - → Develop self-control
 - → Learn new skills
 - → Develop good habits for their minds and bodies
- Once you decide on the method of discipline and discuss these with your children, make sure to be consistent or your children will loss confidence and security, and they will disrespect your authority
- Search for a moment to show how proud you are of them.

What Makes God Smile?

When we love Him with all our heart, soul & mind.

When we obey Him...
... instantly & gladly.

When we praise Him and thank him continually.

When we use our abilities to serve Him.

When every act of enjoyment becomes an act of worship

Children and Family Life

"Nevertheless let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband"

Ephesians 5:33

Although the Christian family starts when the Holy Spirit unites the bride and the groom as one with God, it will not be successful without a constant commitment by the couple being "one in love, self-giving, sacrificing, harmonious, of one mind, one feeling, and one will." Setting the right foundation from the beginning will help the couple to build a godly family.

It is also essential to remember that having children is a beautiful gift from God. In order for them to grow in the image of Christ, we need to provide a Christian home for them.

What is the Christian family?

- One that prays for their children's safety, for them to be surrounded by good and kind people, and to have a good sense of judgment.
- One that prays with their children at mealtime, when leaving the home, and at nighttime.
- One that asks God how to have a positive conversation with them.
- One that remembers that a Christian family is a small, lively, and active church.
- One that has regular attendance of their children at church, communion table, and Sunday school.
- One that provides a calm and loving atmosphere.
- One that owns an icon, cross, and liturgical music and Holy Bible.
- One that blesses God when an everyday task is accomplished.

- One that makes an effort to spend more time with their children playing games, reading, watching a movie, and praying together.
- One that is an example for them when someone is in need by donating items that they don't use any more, buying them something, or making them gifts.
- ♦ One that is an example for their children. For example, when someone is sick, they cook for him, visit him, pray for them to get well, etc...
- One that listens to their children's questions, doubts, criticisms, and point of view.
- One that shows interest in what their children do in schoolwork and sports, and knows who their children's friends are.
- One that creates an atmosphere of thankfulness by modeling a thankful attitude.
- One who plans a budget according to their family needs to prevent fights and arguments.
- One that remembers that no one learns anything through teaching alone. Your children are watching how you handle everyday

situations; how is your relationship with your spouse, others, and your children in tough times and in good times. Modeling is another way to teach children. Remember you do not have to be perfect because God's grace is bigger than your failures. Simply admit your mistakes and let them see that you asked God to forgive you and help you to grow from it.

- One that enforces rules in the house, which the parents agree on to keep the house peaceful. They also need to discipline the children if these rules are not obeyed.
- One who, when a problem arises, uses the situation to instill good character in their children.
- One that teaches their children obedience as part of life.

In this chapter we will discuss some of these subjects.

Discipline in the Christian Family

"Whoever loves instruction loves knowledge"

Proverbs 12:1

Our homes will be far more pleasant if love, kindness, and discipline go hand in hand. We must enjoy our children, but we also, as parents, have a duty to care about our children enough to discipline them.

One of the functions of discipline is to train the child to accomplish a certain task or to adopt a particular pattern, such as:

- Respect the property of others
- Listen when being spoken to
- Follow the house rules such as
 - → Washing their hands before meals
 - → Putting away toys and things after using them
 - → Taking care of their assigned responsibilities

- Being courteous and helpful to others
- Walking and talking in gentleness

Now the Question is how to apply these rules?

First you need to decide as a couple on which rules are essential and which are less important. If there are no set rules, too many rules or unnecessary rules, it can lead to frustration and disobedience, making the rules easily disregarded. One example of a good rule to have in your household is honesty, because people will trust and respect you and God will reward you. As you can see, the rule is well defined and has an important purpose.

Therefore, when deciding on the rules, make sure they are:

- Reasonable
- Applicable
- Demand compliance
- Agreed on by both parents
- Consistent

Motivation and punishment

"For the kingdom of God is not food and drink, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit."

Romans 14: 17

So many people have wrong ideas about punishment, and the first thing they remember is their past experiences with it.

They do not realize that punishment is not intended to be for abusing, hurting, or inflicting pain. But it is intended to teach and help the child to reach each goal successfully and with a good attitude.

Most parents complain about being unable to get their children to school on time because

- They have a hard time waking up in the morning
- They fuss about everything
- They do not respect what their parents do for them

- They take things for granted
- They always ask for more
- They talk back at their parents
- They drive them crazy with their attitude

Parents ask us constantly what we do at school that makes all these children listen to us???? And obey us????

And usually our answer is

- Being consistent all day
- Being fair with every one
- Both teachers agree on the same rules in the classroom
- We make sure when a situation arises, we speak with the children with:
- Respect
- Understanding
- Calm voice
- Eye contact

- ♦ If he does not respond, we talk to him once more, and give him a time out for a couple of minutes to enforce the rules
- ◆ If nothing works, he will need to be isolated from us and the group for a couple of minutes (not able to play with anyone/stay on an assigned chair)

Now what is the reason behind punishment???? The answer is

- Lack of cooperation with the authority and the rules
- A high tendency to break the rules despite discussing them with him
- Eager to show his ego even though he is still so young

Consequences of not following rules

- Will have trouble functioning in the society
- Can be easily persuaded with peer pressure
- Prompt the use of drugs, alcohol, or substance abuse

Dealing with punishment

"My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord, Nor detest His correction; For whom the Lord loves He corrects, just as a father the son in whom He delights."

Proverbs 3:11-12

Dealing with situations and disobedience by spanking will only teach the child to lie or blame someone else; making the child feel angry and resentful towards his parents. There are others ways to discipline your children instead of spanking.

- A warning can be more than enough for most children.
- ♦ When your child hasn't listened to repeated requests to behave, get down on the child's level, make eye contact, touch him gently, and with a kind and firm voice, tell him what it is that you want him to do.

- Always explain to the child what he did wrong, what is expected of him and give him a time out to allow him a chance to think about what he did wrong.
- ♦ When a situation arises that makes you stressed and angry, take time out to calm down before you react [go for a walk, listen to music, discuss the situation with your spouse or pray]. This will help you evaluate alternatives to find a solution and prevent you from over reacting.
- ◆ Giving your child choices can help him work out the problem [ex. If the child is playing with his food at dinnertime instead of eating, give him a choice; "would you like to eat your food or would you like to leave the table." If the child continues to play with his food, you can help him gently to leave and ask him to come back when his ready to eat.
- Consequences that relate to the situation can help teach responsibility [ex. A child who breaks a house possession, he can do extra work around the house to pay for it.]
- When the child talks to his parent in a disrespectful manner, calmly say, "I will be in

the other room. When you're ready to talk with better manners, I will be ready to listen."

- When you're planning to take your family out to the store or to a friend's house, it is a good idea to prepare your children by telling them where they are going and what's expected of them.
- ♦ If the child has done something wrong and is old enough to understand, it is a good time to teach him about confession.

Obedience

"Children, Obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right"

Ephesians 6:1

What is obedience?

It is accepting the rules and the authority that govern our lives without complaining about them.

For example we must learn to obey God's commandments as well as government policies

When children ask why they have to obey? Don't say, "Because I said so." Instead you can say:

- God asks us to obey Him and His commandments.
- God asks us to obey our parents so we can learn from them.
- ♦ It teaches us to get along with others and to learn how to be good people.

♦ Freedom requires rules.

Being a Christian family does not mean we deprive our children from having fun or a social life. Children need to experience different situations like going to the zoo, having their friends come over, going to other families' houses, and going to youth camps.

Teaching Independence

"My son, keep My words, and treasure My commands within you."

Proverbs 7:1

It is our duty to raise children wisely by equipping them to be responsible and independent. That is why teaching independence at a young age is a must. There are different ways to teach independence to a child, such as:

- Allowing our children to do small tasks independently according to his/her age will teach him responsibility and cooperation with others. For example:
 - → Teach the child how to dress himself by showing him several times and guiding him through it. Then let him practice it through repetition until he perfects and masters it.
 - → Encourage the child to help by giving him the responsibility of collecting his toys or placing the dishes on the table at mealtime.

- The child will learn from watching his parents, so be a good role model. Cooperate with each other at home for the benefit of the children.
- Allow freedom within limits. For example:
 - → Parents decide on what TV shows are proper for the child, but give him a choice to select from a couple of them.
 - → Always be aware of your child's peers and friends by:
 - ♦ Inviting them to visit and observing how they conduct themselves
 - ♦ Asking questions about them and their family
 - ♦ Listening to what your child is learning from them
 - Also teach your children about how to choose a friend by:
 - ◆ Reading stories to him about the subject
 - ◆ Telling him a story about when you were young

- ◆ Telling him your opinion about the subject
- ◆ Giving him a good foundation at home and church. This will help him to choose friends wisely.
- Coaching the child through situations helps him to develop problem-solving skills, for example:
 - → When a child hurts another child's feelings by harsh words or comments, we can find a teachable moment by calling both children and discussing the matter
 - ♦ Ask the sad child to tell you what just happened?
 - ◆ Ask him to tell the aggressive child how he is feeling
 - ◆ Ask the hostile child if he likes it when someone hurts his feelings?
 - ◆ Ask him how can he make the sad child feel better?

Church attendance

"But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you."

Matt. 6:33

It is important at young age to grow closer to God and know God's love.

Therefore, the church should be a big part of the child's life, for he can:

- Learn more about who God is
- Develop strong faith
- Grow in friendship with Christian peers
- Have a place to go for support when facing tough situations
- Find a community who loves and accepts him

Parents should be consistent about attending church and teaching their children that church and God should be first in their lives. Also, having both regular attendance in Sunday school and following up at home on what the children learned will lay the essential foundation of the importance of the knowledge of God and prepare them for life ahead.

Finally, we should encourage our children from a young age to feel they can discuss and comfortably say anything at home, such as questions, doubts, and their point of view. Otherwise, they will stop telling us their thoughts and their problems. For example:

A child who has no boundaries and eats out of control anything and everything that pleases him will likely grow up with obesity and other problems. On the other hand, the child who is taught to eat only when he is hungry and learns good eating habits will likely grow up healthy and learn to take care of his body.

If we raise children who

- Love God and have a spiritual foundation.
- Grow up in a good home with love and understanding

- Learn to respect the church authority (Priest, Bishop, Pope)
- Learn to pray and to have a relationship with Christ

They will likely grow up to be healthy, happy, and godly adults who will better serve our future generations.

"Having faith and a good conscience, which some having rejected, concerning the faith have suffered shipwreck."

1Timothy 1:19

Raising children God's way

God is giving this child to you Only For a short time $\mathcal{T}o$ Teach him God's way So Please don't delay And Give him a helping hand Give him all you vowed So That someday you can say I am proud

Raising Christian Children

"Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths."

Proverbs 3:5-6

God designed homes to be the living and learning environment for our children. He entrusted parents to love, nurture, teach, and most of all to draw the children near God. In order to allow the children to know, love, and have an awesome relationship with God, parents must first have their own relationship with Him. For children don't only learn about God by talking or by reading about Him, but by how their parents model faith on a daily basis.

- The parents' reactions when they deal with daily situations and problems that arise
- As an example of good worshipers (Reading the Bible, attending church...)

And by failing to do so, they are putting their children at risk of letting the world affect their faith and form a false opinion of God's character and authority. For parents cannot depend on the Church and Sunday school alone to educate their children about God, but they are the ones who have the main responsibility to plan ahead for their children's future because they are the ones who have the power to bring their children towards God or push them away from Him.

Our world is constantly changing; our children are exposed to many issues (drugs, sex, and divorce, resulting in inappropriate behavior and attitude problems ...) and if they lack self-control, self-discipline, and a good foundation, they will end up with unpleasant experiences.

It is very important that the parents' goals for their children are not only to raise them to get a good education, but also to do well in the test of real life. That is why there are some questions parents should ask themselves;

- Do I show love to my children on a daily basis?
- Do I have methods of discipline and consequences? Am I consistent about it?
- Do I practice what I am asking my children to do or do I have my own set of rules?
- Do I have a true relationship with God or am I lacking?

By examining the type of life style the parents have and deciding on their main goals of raising their children, they can determine the methods they will use to achieve these goals.

Some helpful hints for successful parenting

- Make sure your children see and hear you pray and that will encourage them to pray also.
- Read the Bible every day as a family and pray together afterwards.
- Explain the Bible stories, phrases, and scripture in a simple way that your children can understand.
- Focus on the aim you are trying to teach (honesty, obedience, respect...)
- Encourage them to memorize verses that will help them when situations arise in their lives.
- Place God first in everything you do on a daily basis.
- Let them know how much the church and the sacraments mean to you.
- Hang Icons of Saints around the house to get them to feel comfortable with them. This also

- provides an opportunity to talk about the importance of having them around us.
- Make sure they hear you express gratitude for God's blessings in your life.
- Let them see you giving to the Lord and others with a joyful heart and thankfulness.
- Ask them about Sunday school and what they are learning, what assignment they have to do for the next week.
- Attend and encourage Church activities (choir, field trips, church camps ...)
- Make sure to monitor what your children are watching on T.V. and come up with entertainment and activities that are enjoyable for the family.
- Try to be an active member in the church (member of the board, in one of the committees, servant...)

Finally, when you worship God with your heart, mind and soul, you can count on God to guide you and show you the right moment to teach your children and lay down the foundation for the future that lies ahead.

Discipline

Your children are watching you

Night and day

And hear every word

You will say

So give them inspiration

Teach them to pray

And never neglect to discipline

So they will not stray

Discipline

"I rejoiced greatly that I have found some of your children walking in truth, as we received commandment from the Father."

2 John 4

There is nothing in this world greater and more exciting than watching your own infant grow and blossom in front of your eyes and become a productive member in God's family and the society. But without some guidance and principles, there will be many disappointments. No matter how much we love our children and we love to see them happy, smiling and feeling their love toward us, we need to remind ourselves that God trusted us with these children to bring them up in the fear of God and become parents to them by teaching them what is excepted of them as children of God and what is not.

Parenting is like putting a new puzzle together. It contains so many pieces differing in size, shape, and color. It requires different elements to go together (logic, problem solving, persistence, patience ...). In order to place each piece in the right place and time, it requires gentleness and care. In the beginning, it doesn't seem like any effort is being exerted, But

the more it progresses and the pieces start coming together in perfect harmony, the more beautiful the picture appears and makes the person proud of his creation, being born and he can't wait to complete it.

In the same principle, parenting requires putting different elements together (time, love, respect, discipline, consequences, patience ...) in the right places and time. And when it all comes together in harmony, it will help create self-esteem, self-confidence, self-discipline, and well-adjusted human beings that everyone will be proud of and create a healthy generation to come.

Although parenthood appears to be simple to those who have never experienced it, it is in fact very costly and complex. The most common problem that parents face is how to discipline without causing a negative effect on their children.

Sad to say that the majority of parents rely on their past experiences with their own parents. Some experiences are good and some are bad or they develop their own, for example: If the person had a harsh and controlling parent, he may decide to go to the other extreme by spoiling his children (no rules and no boundaries).

There are many different ideas about disciplining children that are in contradiction to sound child rearing. Below are some misconceptions on how to raise children without disciplining them:

- Children should be spanked in order to yield to authority
- Children should have the freedom and right to do whatever they want
- The effective way is to have a constant compromise and negotiation
- Rejection of parental authority in any form is acceptable

As Christian parents, we know that parental authority is supported throughout the Holy Bible because the leadership of parents plays a significant role in the development of the child. By learning to yield to the parents' loving authority, he will learn to submit to other forms of authority such as yielding to God's authority, in school, the rules that govern the community, in employment, ... etc. These are necessary to have healthy human relationships.

There are different types of parenting that can cause unhealthy environments for the children and disrespect of the parents.

- Dictatorial: The kind of parent who yells, hits, criticizes ...Children may look under control, but will live in constant fear, unable to make decisions, never achieving individuality
- Passive parenting: The kind of parent who doesn't apply rules or boundaries ... Children will have no guidelines, no securities, and no consequence. Hence they will be out of control and develop problems later on in life.
- Extreme love: The kind of parent who likes to spoil their children ... Children who are overly protected (doesn't allow responsibilities, lower his maturity level, never had a chance to long for something ...)
- Nagging parents: The kind of parent who nags and yells to get the children's attention. Children usually stop listening to their parents when they nag them. Then, they reach the boiling point when they have no respect for parental authority.

"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

It is necessary to realize that our children are temporarily loaned to us for the purpose of loving them and instilling a foundation of values on which the remainder of their life will be built. Also, we should remember that we are accountable through eternity for the way we discharge that responsibility

The use of parental power can determine your child's future. If you use your authority by nagging and scolding, your children will grow up angry and resentful. On the other hand, if you use your authority with loving discipline, your children will grow up with a pleasant nature.

What loving discipline means?

Many parents tend to be reluctant to discipline their children because they either feel guilty about leaving them home all day (to go to work) or to avoid unnecessary struggles. They don't realize that they confused discipline with punishment. Discipline is about monitoring the child to see how much stimulation they can handle and encouraging and reinforcing positive behavior. It is about helping your children to control their own behavior, teaching your children what is expected of them, and helping them to grow in a safe and supportive environment.

In the old days, the new couples relied on the wisdom of the extended family to help and teach them in caring for their little ones. But with the disappearance of the family support system, and instead living with next door neighbors that are often total strangers, the job of parenting became more and more overwhelming, frightening, and constant worry about so many issues (drugs, sex, alcohol and rebellion).

In the family relationship, the element of respect is vital, for the child who lived in a family atmosphere of respect and love, will ultimately go on to respect himself and other people.

There are two kinds of respect

- ◆ Internal respect: It is genuine and comes from the heart ... Children admire their parent's actions and words and want to grow up to be just like them.
- External respect: It is artificial. Children will address their parents in a good manner, but on the inside, they have no respect for them and do not want to follow in their footsteps.

Authoritative

It is the best method of parenting because it combines the feeling of a warm relationship (love, value, support) with firmness (discipline and consequence). It reminds us of God ... that He is a wise, powerful Creator, and also so loving. That is why He deserves the utmost reverence, respect, and obedience. The method is

- Setting Rules and Guidelines Define the boundaries before they are enforced- Establish reasonable expectations in advance (Children should know what is and what is not acceptable behavior)
- Setting Consequences Be consistent about enforcing the rules and the consequences. Once the child understands what is expected of him, he will then be held accountable for misbehaving. Children generally love justice, order, and secure boundaries, but they occasionally challenge their parents' authority in order to determine who is in charge. Parents need to be wise. It is extremely important for the parents to be consistent and confident. Otherwise, your child might lose confidence

- and security and perceive his parents as unworthy of respect.
- Flexibility in adjusting the rules and the guidelines to fit the child's level of maturity -Promote lots of communication between the family members and encourage suggestions, questions, individuality.
- ◆ Parents need to distinguish between willful defiance or childish irresponsibility - It is not wise to punish a child when he forgets to do something, but rather gently remind him and show him again. But if he fails to respond to your patient instruction, then it becomes appropriate to administer the consequence.
- ♦ After the child has received the consequence -It is advisable to take him in your arms and gently talk to him about why he was punished and how he can avoid this next time. Remember the idea of punishment is to instill our values, attitudes, and beliefs with his best interest in mind. By communicating to him in a positive way, you are enforcing your point
- Pray with your child at that time and ask him to admit his fault in front of God and ask God to

forgive him - What a wonderful opportunity to teach your child about God's love and forgiveness

The goal of the method of being authoritative is to teach the child to have

- Self-Esteem
- **♦** Self-Confidence
- Gain social skills
- Have Good values
- Become Socially Responsible
- Have a good sense of judgment

"Commit your works to the Lord, and your thoughts will be established"

Proverbs 16: 3

Finally, it is our duty as parents to examine our own style of parenting and discipline, and then decide if the method we are implementing is effective in leading our children toward a healthy life of adulthood.

Children

Children are gifts from God

So let's take good care of them

And educate ourselves

To inspire their individuality

And cater to their personality

And that will make our home

... much more pleasant

And our children will grow . . . to be the best they can be

Building Confidence in Children

"Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of light, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning."

James 1:17

Babies are a bundle of joy for their parents. When God made them, He gave each one of them special features (eyes, nose, face, body, smile ...) and also gave each one a unique personality.

Some children are born with physical attractiveness (beautiful features...), some will have a special intelligence (excel in math, music, art ...) but the majority of the children just have a normal intelligence and a longing to be loved, accepted, and cared for.

What mistakes do parents make?

- ♦ High expectation: Parents tend to have their own hopes and dreams for their children. Sometime this expectation is unrealistic (highly coordinated, athletic, extremely intelligent, very talented...). These unrealistic expectations can cause the child anxiety and lower their selfesteem.
- ◆ Comparing their child to others: Parents tend to compare their own children to each other. For example, a parent may say that their oldest son is more advanced than their younger child, since he walked and talked early and he is more intelligent. This causes the children to look at each other with a different attitude. Also, comparing your child's development with another child his own age can discourage and hinder the child (ex. "My neighbor's son can read and my son can't even recite his ABC's ...").
- ◆ Too much praise: Some parents think if they praise their children all the time, it will boost their self-esteem. However, in reality, too much unearned praise can cause problems. The child may no longer believe your judgment

- or may want constant praising from others, which will eventually lead to disappointment and laziness.
- ◆ Too much criticism: Parents who criticize their children all the time will damage their children's personality. Some types of negative criticism include telling your children they never do anything right, they always mess, or they are not capable of doing something, etc...
- No rules and boundaries: Many parents worry more about their children's physical or intellectual development and they do not realize that their emotional development is equally important. Therefore, as a parent you need to not only worry about whether your child is eating enough or not excelling in school, but also be concerned about their behavior; are they aggressive, uncooperative, disrespectful, etc...?

What to do?

The key is to start at an early age, loving, teaching, coaching, and disciplining the child as needed. As a new parent, you should:

- Give lots of hugs and kisses
- Tell your child how much you love him
- Show him how much you are proud of him every time he succeeds at a task (such as crawling, walking, talking...)
- Give him little challenging things to do (such as eat on his own, dress himself...)
- Set some boundaries and expectations ("No shouting", "listen to Mom and Dad"...)

Then gradually you can increase your rules, expectations, and consequences according to the child's age

Praising and Criticism

When giving praise or criticism, you should focus on facts and use only phrases that describe the particular situation. For example:

- ♦ I really like the way you...
- ♦ I appreciate that you...
- ♦ I do not appreciate when you...
- What you did is not acceptable

Encourage your child and support him

To encourage your child you should:

- Help him at home by providing plenty of material on different subjects that may interest him or help him with school
- Encourage extracurricular activities (such as music, gymnastics, sports, ... etc). However, do not overwhelm the child by too many activities. Instead, try to only have one or two activities per season.

- ♦ Have an interest in your child's life by finding out his interests and personality. Is he creative, outgoing, sensitive ...? By being involved in his life, you will show him that you care about who he is.
- Be available for his questions and concerns

Instill Christian values

The most valuable contribution that parents can make is to teach their children about faith and the importance of living a Christian life. By doing so, they will know that:

- They are loved and cared about personally by God
- ♦ That their life serves a greater purpose
- No matter their circumstances, God is always there for them

"Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us."

1 John 5:14

Be a parent first and a friend next

Remember children need parents to look up to and to teach them discipline, rules, and boundaries. But they also need love, care, and understanding.

When you empower your child early on and give him the right tools to cope with challenges he may face ahead, he will likely

- ♦ Have self-esteem
- Be able to take responsibility for his actions
- Trust in his judgment
- Have self-Confidence
- Be able to resist peer pressure
- Be reliable and trustworthy
- Follow through on his goals

"The righteous shall be glad in the Lord, and trust in Him. And all the upright in heart shall glory"

Psalm 64:10

Do not overprotect your child. Instead, allow him to face some challenges and frustrations on his own. This will help him build character and gain confidence. As a parent, only interfere when the situation becomes overwhelming for him. Also, remember that children bloom at different times, so just do your best and leave the rest to God.

Communication

Communication is important . . . to have a good relationship with anyone

So . . .

Let us learn how to do it...
... and strive to achieve it

Let us teach it to our children when it is time to receive it

Let us use it . . .
. . . while they are able to perceive it

So we all can be Strong and undeceived

How to Communicate With Your Children

"If we live in the spirit, let us also walk in the spirit."

Galatians 5: 25

Communication is the key to any good relationship and it is a wonderful way to build a home. Good communication between the husband and the wife helps the children to learn the skill of communication inside and outside the home, and when dealing with other relationships (relative, friends, teachers...)

Parents who are using negative communications can have very damaging effects on their children:

- Lecturing: can cause children to stop listening or talking and become defensive
- ◆ Interrupting: can give kids the feeling that parents do not care to listen to what the children have to say. This will discourage the children from expressing themselves
- Criticizing: can cause the children to be resentful and disrespectful

- Dwelling on past issues that have already been addressed: Can make the children angry and hurt
- Finding solutions to the problem without giving the child a chance to use his skills to solve the problem can cause low self-esteem

To build a great relationship with children, positive communication should be used on a daily basis. Parents can ask each child about his interests, feelings, opinions, concerns. This will make the child feel

- ◆ Loved
- Respected
- Appreciated
- ♦ Able to share his thoughts
- ♦ Understood

It is a good idea to start the skill of communication while the children are young. Children tend to ask too many questions, usually to get

- Attention
- ♦ Learn new things

How to communicate with a young child?

- Establish respect and trust
- Sit at the child's level
- Make eye contact
- Listen attentively to what he is saying
- Ask simple questions in a way that he can understand
- Acknowledge his feelings
- Speak in a calm voice
- Give positive input
- Remind him of the family rules and values

How to increase communication?

- Reading to your child every day will develop language skills, encourage him to ask questions, and help you to learn his concerns.
- Have a family meeting when situations need to be verified or changes need to be made
- Take the child on a special outing to a museum or a park or something the child chooses
- Make a habit of communicating with your child on a daily basis to have an idea at to what his day was like outside the home
- Have play time as a family or one on one
- Have Bible study as a family to share your beliefs and values with your children

"The Lord will guide you continually, and satisfy your soul in drought, and strengthen your bones; You shall be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters do not fail."

Isaiah 58: 11

What can parents do when a situation arises?

- Set a time without any interruptions
- Pray together for wisdom
- Work on one situation at a time
- Clearly identify the problem
- Speak calmly and to the point
- Make an effort to treat each other with respect
- Ask the child about what he feels
- Tell the child what you feel
- Give the child a chance to come up with a plan to solve the situation
- Brain storm together to find the best solution
- Agree on a solution and put it in action
- Be loving and compassionate regardless of what happened
- Be willing to forgive and forget

In order to have successful communications, parents need to change some of their attitudes and work on new skills. It is also a good idea to add to their vocabulary some phrases such as "thank you, please, you are welcome" in order to teach young children good manners.

Some phrases parents can use for communication

- Very good
- Good for you
- ♦ I like the way you ...
- ♦ I am proud of you
- ♦ I appreciate what you ...
- ♦ I am pleased that you ...
- I am glad that we had this conversation

I am happy that we get to spend time together

I pray to you O Lord

I pray to you O Lord

To keep us in your hand

I pray to you O Lord.....

To make us understand

I pray to you O Lord.....

To open our eyes

I pray to you O Lord.....

To grant us your peace

So....

We can walk in your ways
without cease

Praying Parents, Praying Children

"And the child grew and became strong in spirit, filled with wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him."

Luke 2: 40

Jesus Christ's life is our best example of family life. Although the Bible didn't mention a lot about his childhood years, we can understand so many truths from Luke 3: 39-52

- His parents did everything according to the law of God
- His parents celebrated the feast of the Passover according to the custom and taught him to do the same
- Jesus was obedient and cooperated with his parents
 - He respected their decisions
 - → He performed his responsibilities with a good attitude

- His parents raised him in a balanced atmosphere
 - → Physically He grew strong
 - → Mentally They gave him knowledge about God
- ♦ Although His parents knew His gift, they never pressured Him
- Jesus increased in wisdom and spiritual growth
- Jesus grew in favor with God and men
- His mother was proud of Him and kept all these things in her heart

Parenting- This is a big word and also a huge responsibility. We should not take it lightly when we plan to have children. We must prepare for it before taking the first step. Parenting is not only about providing the right physical needs for the child, but it is also about providing the right environment for the child to grow from different aspects.

Parenting helps the child to become physically and mentally healthy, in order to prepare him for his future adulthood. Many parents start parenting with a busy and stressful attitude. They get caught up in the amount of work that adds to their daily life such as nursing, clothing, feeding, and educating the child. Some parents involve their children in many activities and neglect the most important part of raising a child, which is having a relationship.

Wise parents start observing the child from their infancy, paying attention and learning about their child's personality. They teach the child and direct him according to his needs and try to avoid comparing between siblings.

When it comes to teaching children religion, many parents don't realize the importance of starting at an early age. They assume that the young child does not yet have the ability to comprehend. Some parents will depend solely on Sunday school and attending the liturgy.

We cannot use the excuse that life so hectic that it prevents us from knowing our children, having a positive relationship with them, or teaching them how to pray and be closer to God. We need to realize that everything should begin with God and our main responsibility as parents is to practice to be in the presence of God. It is then that our lives can become prayers that are pleasing to God.

Then they also brought infants to Him that He might touch them; but when His disciples saw it, they rebuked them but Jesus called them to Him and said "Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; For of such is the kingdom of God."

Luke 18: 15- 16

In the Old Testament, we learn how God commanded the children of Israel to teach the law of God diligently to their children.

God also used young men in His plan (such as Joseph, Samuel, David, Daniel, Jeremiah, etc.) to do many wonderful things. And now Jesus was stressing the point that He does not only want men and women, but He is also welcoming the children and wants us to be like them.

Why is Jesus Christ asking us to be like children?

- Children easily trust in God's ability and power
- Faith comes naturally to them
- Children believe that God is able to do anything
- They are still pure in heart
- They are full of compassion toward others
- They are simple and straight forward in their prayers
- They are honest with God in their prayers
- They tend to let go of their problems after they pray and let God handle it
- They repent more easily than adults
- They have an ability to be receptive to God
- They don't have a line of limitation around God
- Capable of loving, relating and obeying God with depth

- They are able to forgive and forget
- They look at simple things with wonder and astonishment
- They have the ability to see the extraordinary in the ordinary

When parents realize how much potential their children have, their ability that God gave them during their first years of maturity and their ability to grasp and memorize, they will understand why it is vital to teach the children how to pray

Why children should connect to God at a young age?

- They will develop a positive relationship with God
- This gives them an opportunity for their faith to root and grow
- They will come to love God more as they grow older
- They can experience answers to their prayers
- They can develop a relationship of trust with God
- They can develop security knowing that God is watching over them
- They can feel that someone loves them, no matter what kind of trouble they have
- Prayer will come naturally to them and be a part of every task

How to help your children to pray?

- Having a special time and place in your home for quiet time will enhance prayer time
- Help the children quiet down by
 - Turning down the lights
 - → Slowly light a candle
 - → Encourage the children to close their eyes
 - → Teach them to focus on the presence of God
 - Start with a hymn to get everyone in the mood of praying
- Limit exposing the children to many shows on television will help
 - → Enhance prayer time
 - → Allow family to talk and read together
 - Make room for family activities
 - **→** Find time for hospitality

- Teach your child no matter how busy our life may be, our priority is God
- Teach them that we should always be aware of God's presence at all times
- Slow down our daily schedule and children's activities will help
 - → Make children happier and more relaxed
 - → Allow the family to eat dinner together
 - → Allow siblings to bond together
 - → Give opportunities for parents to know more about their children
 - → Give them time to pray together
- Review the day at bed time prayer and thank God for the day
- Read God's word together and pray that God may guide us to see His wonderful work in our life
- Encourage our children to share with us some terrific things that happened to them

- Take advantage of teachable moments to express God's love and goodness
- ◆ Teach your children how God wants us to pray (praise, petition, thanksgiving, confession, intercession, and protection)
- Focus on God's characters and blessings
- Teach them to pray for others that need God's help
- Help them develop healthy spiritual habits
- Avoid lecturing and be a role model instead; listen to them
- Involve the children in church activities
 - → Get closer to God
 - Learn from each other
 - → Learn to care for others
- Exposing them to spiritual growth opportunities can help by asking about your faith and beliefs

- Let your children hear you pray and intercede for them and others
- Let your children hear you admit your mistake and ask God for forgiveness
- Modeling prayer in our daily life (situations, conflict, trouble, thankfulness) is a good example to our children
- Praying with your children can:
 - Help them grow in their prayers
 - Help them feel loved and appreciated
 - → Develop natural conversation with God
 - Develop a life style of loving God and communicating with Him continually
 - → Strongly influence them
- Following up with their Sunday school assignments will teach them to treat it with importance
- It is a good idea to encourage them to memorize verses, hymns and psalms according to their age

"Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show by good conduct that his works are done in the meekness of wisdom."

James 3:13

Finally – Let's decide to be godly parents now, before it's too late and we look back and realize that the problems our children might have are a result of careless parenting. Think of the marvelous things we can do for our children as parents if we take time to observe, plan, and be a part of their lives. We must realize that by allowing them to be close to God, wonderful things will happen, not only to them but also to the whole family.

Teach me . . . O Lord

Teach me O Lord.....

Let me learn Your ways

Lead me O Lord.....

Let me do Your will

Search me O Lord.....

Cleanse all my sins

Love me O Lord.....

Let me love You

Teaching Children How to Pray

God loves his children and enjoys hearing them praying. Therefore, it is our duty as servants of God to teach them during their early years, according to their level, how to address God, and how to have a relationship with God.

"Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of heaven."

Matt 19:14

Levels of Prayer

Pre-School children will be receptive to learn small prayers such as "God is great, God is good, let us thank him for our food" or simple verses like "God is love" or "Love one another."

Kindergarteners can memorize the Lord's Prayer and verses.

First Graders can start learning psalms such as Psalm 23 "The Lord is my Shepherd" and pray individually if they want to.

Second Grader and up can read and write and therefore, will be able to go deeper into their relationship with God. The following is the types of lesson that can help this age group grow in their understanding of prayer.

How to Teach?

- ♦ Tell the children ...
 - "Today we are going to learn how to stand in front of God and pray"
 - ◆ See if the children understand what prayer means. Explain to them that when we pray, we are standing before God talking to Him.
- When the disciples wanted to pray, they asked Jesus
 - → "Lord, teach us to pray."
 - → Ask the children if they know what he said to them. Read together Luke 11 and find out what he said?
- Recite together the Lord's Prayer.
- Ask the children what they think is important about the Lord's Prayer.
- Start the Lesson...

"Today we are going to discover what Jesus meant and that will teach us about how He wanted us to pray."

Our Father...

- **♦** Who is our Father?
 - ♦ We have two fathers, one in heaven and one on earth
- → Do you like to talk to Mom/Dad about...
 - ♦ What you did in school?
 - ♦ Who your friends are?
 - Things that you enjoy or things that trouble you
- Do you think Mom and Dad are wise enough to give you advices and directions?
- ➡ With our Father in heaven you can talk to Him about anything. He is always listening to you and cares about what you say and feel. He also is much wiser than Mom and Dad.

Who Art in Heaven...

- → Is God only in Heaven?
 - ♦ God is everywhere; He knows not only what we do and say, but what we think too.
- → Revelations 4:7-11 tells us about God's glory and His throne in heaven. Let's read it and find out what it is about.
- → Now can you imagine the living creatures and the 24 elders praising God continuously without stopping all day and all night.
- ❖ So what should we do when we stand in front of God? We should stand in love and respect.

Hallowed be Thy Name...

- → This means: God's name is Holy
- ➤ We should always start our prayer with Thanksgiving. Do you know that Abouna always starts any prayer or function in the church with the Thanksgiving Prayer. Does anyone remember this prayer? (Servants: it is a good idea to have the students memorize this prayer).
- → We should thank God for all the things He gives us [home, family, friends, food]. Also, praise him for His mercy, love, and forgiveness.

Thy Kingdom Come...

- → Here we are praying for God to come into our hearts and help us to be better people.
- → Ask Him to help you and comfort you through His words, and help Mom/Dad to do the best for the family.
- → Pray for God's Church and for His people to have a strong faith.

Your Will Be Done on Earth as it is in Heaven...

- → Here we pray for all that God desires for us to happen, since we know that He knows what is best for us.
- → Ask God for His Holy Spirit to help you and teach you how to live a godly life and to be a better person.

Give us This Day Our Daily Bread...

- → Who can tell me things that we need each day?
- → Pray for your health, protection and other everyday needs.
- → Pray that God gives you talent for His glory.
- → Pray that God guides your steps throughout the day.

And Forgive Us Our Sins...

- → Tell God how sorry you are about any wrong things you have done. Have you misbehaved in school, church, home, etc...? Were you mean to others or are you angry with someone?
- → Ask God to help you to overcome your bad habits.

As We Forgive Those Who Trespass against us...

- → Do we forgive others when they wrong us?
- → Ask God to teach you how to forgive and let go of the things that trouble you.
- → Ask God to help you love your enemies instead of staying angry with them.
- → Pray..."Help me O Lord to love everyone and lead me away from hate and envy."

And Lead us not into temptation, But Deliver Us From the Evil One...

- → What is temptation? What are evil things?
- → What are examples of wrong things that children your age desire to do?
- "Please God protect us from evil things and keeps us close to you"

- → Pray that the Lord helps you to know right from wrong and to help you to stay away from things that cause you to sin and to help you overcome sins that may already be in your life.
- → For example, pray... "Teach me, O Lord to be willing to share, to appreciate what I have and be content, and to be willing to give instead of receive."

In Christ Jesus our Lord, for Thine is The Kingdom, and The Power, and The Glory, Forever, Amen...

- → Who has the glory and the power?
- → Again we thank You O Lord and we praise You always and forever, Amen

- How does God answer our prayers?
 - → Through the word of the Holy Bible
 - → Through a word of wisdom from our parents
 - Through a word of wisdom from our priest or teacher
 - Through other mysterious ways
- Copy the Sample Prayer [last page] for the children and ask them to write their own prayer and bring it back next week as their homework.
 - → They can write completely from the sample, using some of the sample, or use their own words.
- The following week, when it is time for prayer, let each child read his own prayer. This will help you as a servant learn more about your children's concerns, so that you can guide them more in your lessons by focusing on what matters to them. It will also help them:

- → Increase their knowledge about how to pray by listening to each other praying.
- **→** Gain confidence of praying in front of others.
- → Feel at ease since they have already written the prayer.
- You can also copy their prayers and make a special prayer card for each child to use with his Prayer book book.
- Ask them from time to time to write a new prayer or add to it until they feel comfortable praying on their own.

Sample Prayer

Thank you lord

- ♦ Thank You Lord for the new day.
- ♦ Thank You in everything You give me.
- Thank You for the entire daily gifts we get from You.
- ♦ Thank You for giving me a good day.
- ♦ Thank You for loving me so much.
- Thank You for my family.
- Thank You for my special friends.
- Thank You for the food we are about to receive.
- Thank You for being my Lord

Please God

- Please guide me through the day and keep me close to You.
- Please guide my Mom and Dad to the right decisions.
- Please guide my lips to a kind word to say
- Please guide my hand to do Your work today
- Please guide my feet to always walk in Your way.
- Please help me to be kind and good to others.
- Please help me to do the right things.
- Please stay with me through the night and keep my family and me safe until morning light.
- ♦ Please Lord help ----- To feel better.
- Please help my friend ----- to come to church and learn about You.

Sorry Lord

- ♦ I am sorry Lord for acting the way I did today, please help me and lead me in Your way.
- Forgive me O Lord for all the wrong things I did today.

Blessings for others

- Bless our church, the priests, and the people
- Bless the poor and those in need

Teach me Lord

- Teach me to speak with kindness and care.
- ◆ Teach me to be willing to share.
- ◆ Teach me how to pray.

I appreciate

- ♦ I appreciate having this day to grow.
- ♦ I appreciate my family and friends.
- ♦ I appreciate my life

Add these two lines to your prayer....

- Bless my heart so I may love everyone.
- Through the prayers of Your saints, hear us when we say: Our Father------

Facts

Open your heart to the lord... He will fill it with love!

Open your mind to the Lord...

He will put in it beautiful phrases!

Open your soul to the Lord... He will bestow upon you His gifts!

How lovely it is to be with God. It will be a life of love and peace!

So Hurry up and open yourself up to Him

Hassle Free Homework

"When my heart is overwhelmed; lead me to the rock that is higher than I."

Psalm 61: 2

Homework is an important part of the child's education. It help the child understand and remember what he learned in school and help the parents to have an idea of what the child's is working on at his grade level.

One of the most tiring battles that effect peace at home between parents and their children every school year is homework. In order to end these unnecessary battles, parents need to follow a few steps.

- Read to your child daily starting at a young age.
 - → Gain good reading skills
 - → Value reading and writing
 - → Getting into the habit of reading
 - → Have knowledge in various subjects

- Model the value of learning by being a good example for your child (read a book, or listen to tapes about different subjects, etc...)
- Schedule a consistent time to be set for homework that you and your child can agree on such as
 - → Right after school
 - → After resting for an hour
 - **→** After dinner
- Assign a place for studying and provide the materials needed to complete the homework
- Provide a quiet work environment and try to limit the distractions as much as possible during homework
- Give some words of encouragement
- Teach your child to start with a prayer before doing his homework
- Some days the child might not have homework or has already completed it in school. It is advisable to keep the routine going and have

him do extra study such as (read a book, work on mathematic quiz, or science project, etc.).

- Teach the child some organization skills by teaching him how to
 - → Organize his work space and his materials
 - → Break down big assignments into small tasks
 - → Write first draft then the final paper to be neat
 - → Make a schedule for (when his project and assignments are due)
 - → Have a special folder for the finished assignments
- Don't give in when the child complains about doing his homework on his own but remember good habits will take time to develop so
 - **→** Be consistence
 - → Follow guidelines
 - Be patient
- There are other ways you can help your child with his homework such as

- → Ask him to save his questions to the end and you will review them with him
- Encourages him to discover the answers on his own
- → Give him some clues of how to solve the problem in hand
- Check his homework and let him be aware of his mistakes
- Make sure he is ready for exams by asking him some questions on the subject
- If there are projects that are coming up, plan it together
 - ♦ What supplies are needed
 - ♦ When the project is due
 - ♦ When the best time to start
- Avoid negative comments and criticisms. Rather, focus on the part that the child accomplished well and acknowledge his efforts of trying to solve a difficult task.

- Attend school Open House. It will give you a chance to meet your child's teachers and find out
 - → What your child is doing in the school
 - → What is the teacher's opinion about him and his work
 - → What are the teachers expectations from him

"If you know that He is righteous, you know that everyone who practices righteousness is born of Him."

1 John 2: 29

Remember homework is the child's responsibility and through these responsibilities he will develop many skills, habits, and also gain self-esteem. So don't over protect him. Let him work through disappointments and successful experiences on his own to help him for real life.

Adolescent

The people around me They keep coming with parties They keep coming with crowns They fill my cup with amazing drink They lift me up to another world They greet me everywhere I go They make everything possible for me And yet my life means nothing to me My soul is in distress Without the love of my Lord For I need to be one with Him But He is the one who can make it happen And lead me to His way

Adolescence

"Rejoice, O young man, in your youth, and let your heart cheer you in the days of your youth; Walk in the ways of your heart, and in the sight of your eyes; But know that for all these God will bring you into judgment."

Ecclesiastes 11: 9

Adolescence is the time when children transition from the immaturity of childhood and gradually mature to adulthood. It is also a time for them to

- Have a relationship with others outside the family
- Learn through opportunities that prepare them for life ahead
- Explore and develop their personalities
- Discover oneself- behavior, attitude, intimacy

During this time the adolescent undergoes so many changes

Physical Changes:

The body starts to develop and change, but each child will start puberty on the body's own schedule.

- Some bodies will grow fast may cause the child to be clumsy
- Some bodies will grow slow may cause the child to worry
- Too many hormones cause the child to develop acne
- Voice changes may cause temporary cracking, then it will start to get deeper
- Hair growth on the face, under the arms, and on other parts of the body
- Increased sweating and body odor

Mental Changes:

Adolescents go through tremendous brain growth and development such as

- Move from concrete to abstract thinking
- Develop skills in problem solving
- Learn more advanced and complicated materials
- Eager to gain and apply knowledge
- ♦ Increase ability to have a long term plan
- Consider a range of ideas and options

Emotional Changes:

Dealing with hormonal changes inside and outside your body can be a challenge. Adolescents might feel some of these symptoms

- Over-sensitivity get angry, or short tempered
- Mood swings from being happy to being sad
- Craving privacy
- Excessive sleeping
- Very worried his appearance, his physical development, and his school performance
- Some can develop depression they don't think highly of themselves or try to stay away from people or don't think life is worth living

These changes happen gradually and are composed of a set of transitions that usually start around 11-13 years of age and end by 17 years of age when they become young men and women. It is true that adolescence can be a frustrating and challenging time, but it can also be a time when the children can be

- Imaginative
- Eager to learn
- Evaluating their life
- Learning decision making

And once they get through this years successfully, they become a mature young adult who can find work, meaningful relationships, and can gain a place in the world.

How adolescents describe themselves?

"Even a child is known by his deeds, by whether what he does is pure and right"

Proverbs 20: 11

- Personality: friendly, responsible, sensitive, have lots of ideas, outgoing, and sometimes goofy....
- Around their friends: cheerful, act their true self, rowdy....
- Around their parents: anxious and stressed because
 - → Parents expect too much of them
 - → They can't be themselves
 - **→** Parents don't understand them
 - **→** Parents still treat them like kids

Why adolescents give in to peer pressure?

- Supportive companionship
- Understand and appreciate individuality
- Want to be independent from their parents
- Lack of self-confidence
- Lack of self-worth
- Have mutual interests
- Enhancing each others' self-esteem
- Uncertain about their abilities
- Child comes from an authoritative family
- Provide a feeling of security, safety, and belonging
- Don't receive enough affection from their parents
- Don't get approval from their parents

In general, adolescents usually choose friends who are similar to them, in attitude and behavior. So they can be a very good influence for each other or vice-versa.

Prepare your children for adolescence?

- Provide a healthy environment calm, safe, loving
- Create a good atmosphere mutual respect, trust, honesty
- Whave a relationship with your children both as a group and individually. This is the best safeguard your children will have
- Teach them rules, responsibility, and consequence
- Teach them to rely on God in their decisions, tasks, and concerns
- ♦ Teach them the importance of accepting limits
- Develop open communication that creates a foundation of talking when situations occur and conflicts emerge during adolescence
- Monitor what they watch T.V., video games, computer, music, magazines
- Gradually give them some independence

- Show them you understand the issues that are important to them and sympathize with their concerns and feelings
- Monitor school work and assignments from a healthy distance. But be realistic and encourage him only to do his best
- Get to know your children's friends and discuss how to make good choices concerning friends and friendship
- Use opportunity to teach them about God, your beliefs, and what is right and wrong
- Help them to explore their values how to look at things through God's eyes, relationships and morality
- Help them to think on their own, develop the ability to make right decisions, and to solve problems
- Avoid using sarcasm, criticism, or excessive praising
- Encourage them to participate in activities that interest them

- Focus on their strengths and emphasize positive behaviors
- Model good behavior and good values that you want your youth to develop

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

Proverbs 22: 6

What to do during adolescence?

- Discuss rules, responsibilities, and consequences in advance and agree on what is fair and proper for their age
- Give them more independence. This is essential to help them establish their identity
- Be flexible choose your battles, help communication to continue
- Know all you can about their friends invite them to your home, know their families, and their values
- Listen carefully to what they are revealing about their friends, in order to find out their attitudes. When they go out, make sure you know where they are going, with whom, and for how long
- Talk to them about the risk of drugs, smoking, and alcohol
- Talk about the risks related to sexual activity and provide them with books that are appropriate for their age. Stress purity, chastity, and abstinence

- ♦ Be available –adolescents need parents who
 - → Monitor their development
 - → Are sensitive to their needs
 - **→** Are able to understand them
 - Can help them to create a healthy and wellbalanced individual

"Oh turn to me, and have mercy on me! Give Your strength to Your servant."

Psalm 86: 16

What can mothers do to help their adolescent daughters?

- Talk to them about the changes that are about to happen-Menstrual cycles, body changes, and how to cope with them
- Explain to them what is normal for girls
- Help them feel comfortable and respect her privacy
- Acknowledge their concerns Visit health professionals and read books together about the subject of maturity
- Make them feel good about their bodies go shopping together, plan a healthy diet, and exercise
- Be understanding and affectionate about the situation until they adjust to it and it becomes normal

Finally parents, you are the important source of the adolescent's guidance and support during their struggle toward becoming independent. Be a good role model, practice good values, stick with a

challenging job, teach them winning isn't everything, treat each other with respect, love your children regardless of their attitude, be patient, and be supportive. Also parents need to make their children understand that their future health and happiness doesn't happen by chance, but by our actions and choices (drinking, smoking, bad company, ...etc.) will have serious consequences. Talk to them about making wise decisions.

"She opens her mouth with wisdom, and on her tongue is the Law of kindness"

Proverbs 31: 26

Teens

Their heart is ready to grow

From being little to young

So

Let's not discourage

Let's not delay

What we have started

Let's give them room to grow

And be independent

So we can be proud

What about Teens?

"I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in the darkness, but have the light of life."

John 8: 12

It is very important that parents start in the child's early years to teach him and guide him through love, obedience, and discipline to

- Have a positive attitude toward life
- Have positive relationships with all family members
- Learn how to choose wisely
- Develop problem solving skills
- Develop an interest in a hobby
- Establish the habit of reading
- Be humble enough to listen to other opinions

Once children enter middle school, they gradually change. That is where the teenage years begin. Some of their characteristics are

- Arguing with their parents
- Demanding more independence
- Dominated by peer relationship
- Worry about being accepted and loved
- Emotionally controlled by hormones
- Start questioning parents (values, authority, and rules)

It is one of the most difficult periods parents have to face. Our world back then was completely different from the way it is today. Our children now have to face challenging issues such as

 Growing up with too many electronic devices: T.V, Internet, cell phones ... all which leave them no time for

- → Sitting in silence (reading, meditating...)
- → Family conversation (quality time, advice...)
- **→** Examining oneself
- The pressure of sex is everywhere: in school, among peers, chat rooms, music, the malls (clothing, cosmetics, etc.)
- Alcohol and drug abuse
- ♦ Teens with broken families
- Different values and beliefs
- Worries of being accepted among groups

"Hear my voice, O God, in my meditation; Preserve my life from fear of the enemy."

Psalm 64: 1

The question now is why are teens starting to isolate themselves from their parents and find comfort in their peers?

- They think parents are clueless about what is going on in their life and their everyday surroundings
- They fear that their parents might be judgmental of them
- They don't like their parents to lecture them, without the parents even listening to them
- They are trying to protect their parents from freaking out about what goes on in their daily life
- They worry that parents might intervene and try to fix their problems

What should the parents do to break this wall between them and their teens?

- Be open with your teen about your feelings, and how you love him unconditionally and follow these steps
 - → Tell him that you are willing to listen to him without preaching or judging

- → Tell him that your relationship with him is very important to you
- → Ask him if you are doing anything to discourage him from talking to you
- ◆ Let him talk and show him genuinely that you are listening and ask him what he thinks. This will help you to
 - → Maintain open communications with him
 - → Learn about his feelings and values
 - → Get the opportunity to give him sound guidance

"Hear a just cause, O Lord, attend to my cry; Give ear to my prayer that is not from deceitful lips"

Psalm 17: 1

What can parents do for their teen to have a positive relationship?

- Pray for your teen everyday and ask God to
 - Protect him from evil things
 - → Give him wisdom and strength
 - → Help you to guide and support him
- Pray together
 - → At meal time
 - → As a family project
 - → Attend church
- Set rules together and be clear about consequences
 - → Appropriate behavior at (home, school, church...)
 - **+** Curfew
 - → Motor vehicle
 - → House responsibilities
- Encourage him to volunteer with the family. This will help you to

- → Spend quality time together
- → Teach him to care for others not only for himself
- → Develop a positive attitude
- Get to know his friends, make sure they have the right attitudes, and are a good influence on him
- Encourage him to participate in church and school activities
- Discuss with your teen your views on sex, drugs, and alcohol
- Enforce respect (don't allow screaming in the house) and try to have calm discussions between family members
- Find time to spend together as a family and also one on one, in order to have fun together
- Look for a teachable moment and ways to give advice
- Apologize when you lose your temper or judge too quickly

- Attend teen activities and special events (sports, plays, etc...)
- Pay attention to his school work and guide him to find ways to help him be more successful

"Keep me as the apple of Your eye; Hide me under the shadow of Your wings."

Psalm17: 8

Finally parents, remember your teens are moving gradually from childhood to adulthood, so you need to be well prepared to help him/her grow and make wise decisions. Remember from time to time to tell them, "I love you" and "I am proud of you." Some day, you will both look back and smile.

Without you ... O Lord

Without You O Lord
I am a baby without a mother
To hold me in her arm
To feed me when I am hungry
To comfort me when I cry

Without You...O Lord

I am a lost sheep

Walking in the desert

Without any hope

Without any shelter

Without You....O Lord

I have no one to give me comfort

No one to lead me to the shore

No one to feed my hunger

No one to watch over me

Without You...O Lord I can't imagine... How that could be?

Choose the Right Entertainment for Your Child

"Blessed are You, O Lord! Teach me Your statues. With my lips I have declared all the judgments of Your mouth."

Psalm 119: 12-13

Parenting is the most difficult profession you will ever come across because children's' education begins at home. As parents, we have the most awesome responsibility in teaching our children

- How to conduct themselves in a good manner inside and outside the home
- How to get along with others
- How to have self- control
- How to obey the word of God
- How to have self-esteem
- How to be independent

Watching Television and listening to children's conversation at school and the way they play with each other can be overwhelming. Parents

don't realize the harsh effect these TV shows can have on their children's' behavior

My co-worker has three young children. She told me "my children at home have no manners. They fight constantly with each other and they have no imagination when it comes to having fun. I either end up punishing them or have to constantly entertain them. What can I do?"

So I asked her if she allowed them to watch violent shows on TV.

So she looked at me and said that all shows now promote violence, including cartoons. She said there was nothing educational on TV for the kids, without some violence or unkind words. She felt there was no where to hide from the influence of television.

She asked me what can parents do to prevent their children from watching these kinds of shows?

I told her there are many things you can do to entertain, educate, teach manners, teach new skills, have pure fun together, and most of all grow to be a healthy human being.

Avoid watching any programs that promote violence

- Talk to your children and get them to realize that these programs can make them misbehave and get them into trouble
- Be open to letting them watch undesirable shows, while you are next to them, to show them specific scenes that support your claim that these shows are harmful

Finding healthy programs for children and youth to watch can change the children's attitude right away and make them pay attention more to what you say:

- Give them a motivation to try new plans
- Discover new activities and ways to play
- Avoid any activities that does not benefit your children mentally and spiritually
- Add new concepts of learning to play every day for fun such as
- Find good shows for your children to watch. Be sure to watch with your children from time to time
- Talk to your children about what are they watching and what interests them

See what they learned and give them some insight about what you learned

It is also a good idea to find some educational tapes in the Library, the book store, or through Scholastic programs that involve tape accompanied by a book. Why???

There are different books and tapes that accommodate a range of ages and they are usually fun to read and watch. Make sure you read the book first

- To give them an idea about the content of the book
- To address a few points you enjoyed learning
- To see what the children understood

Then you can watch the movie all together as a reward and maybe have some popcorn or dinner to make the day special for them

There are many other ideas that we can use around our home with little effort and little preparation time, that can be readily available

Cooking activities

This type of activity can be very fun and rewarding for children. It can teach them so many things like

- Preparation
- **♦** Texture
- Sizes
- **♦** Taste
- **♦** Smell
- Color
- Weight
- Measurement

- Soft and hard
- Rising
- Sitting
- Fraction
- Sequence
- Cleaning
- Movement
- Dry and liquid

Cleaning activities

It is one of the great ways to exercise the child's body parts and help the brain to expand because it involves so many movements such as

- Bending
- Standing
- Reach up or down
- Move body from left to right motion
- Sitting

Shopping activities

When it comes to leaving home for any reason, children need to be reminded that there are rules and expectations. This will help the children be on their best behavior.

Also parents need to go as a family, at least until the children understand how to act and what the parents' expectations are.

It is also advisable to

- Make a list of what items are needed
- Cut coupons for items
- Count how many items you need to buy
- Split the items between the adults and the children, each according to his size
- Dress the children for the outing will remind them that they are outside the house
- Give everyone a chance to
- Have a chance to find an item
- ♦ Touch items and count them

- Help each other
- Place their items on the grocery counter
- Help carry groceries to the car

Also there are consequences for misbehaving at the grocery store, such as not being able to participate in any activities when they return home. They also need to recite the rules once more.

Make a fun outing at home

This type of activity allows the children to use their

- Imagination
- Creativity
- Gain problem solving
- Make them more outgoing

Bring a child size tent and place some fun/educational items in it (maps, books on traveling, activities to go with the scene,etc)

Different trays with activities

Bring some materials just for fun and change them from time to time such as

- Sand and Shells
- Play dough and cookie cutters
- Rough and smooth paper or items
- Tree leaves
- Strings and laces
- Assortment of buttons with various sizes and colors
- Chipped wood pieces
- Clay artwork
- Some grocery items used for arts and crafts
- Coupons and scissors
- Straws and pieces of colored paper for necklace making

Having a pet at home

Children who have the privilege to own any type of pet at home will have the advantage of learning

- Responsibility
- Caring for others
- God's care for us
- Love for animals
- Sacrificing time and energy

"For if we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord."

Roman 14:8

Finally, it is up to us as parents to teach, educate, watch, and help our children to grow in a healthy environment and to be all they can be.

Some guidelines to Christian entertainment

There are different kinds of entertainment. We can select what is right and profitable for us and what is not. We also need to make sure that all we do, we do with a good conscious and give glory to the Lord.

Don't get me wrong, entertainment is a vital aspect in each one's life, but when it consumes our lives, then it is not a good thing.

There are different types of entertainment

- Nobbies in which we can learn new skills or develop new techniques. Find things to do on a weekly basis (photography, pottery, sewing,etc.)
- Books and magazines: Through them, we can learn new ideas that help make our life better and more healthy (science, hobby, religious,etc.)
- Sports and any type of physical work-out can enhance our coordination and health (exercise, skating, fishing, etc.)

- ◆ Television: Everyone has a television and there are many interesting programs that we can benefit from and enjoy.
- Dancing and drinking: As Christian people, the idea of dancing and drinking should not be promoted.
- ♦ All these entertainment ideas are not forbidden, but we as Christian must understand something. If anything, no matter how good and fun and pure it is intended to be, if is done outside of the boundary of Christian values, it will become unhealthy for us. That is why we need to use our Christian judgment in everything we do in life. Otherwise, we are going to allow this to degrade our relationship with the Lord.

May the Lord give us wisdom to see His will for us and to glorify Him at all times.

"Finally, brethren, farewell. Become complete. Be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you."

2 Corinthians 13: 11

All about me ...

When I was young...
I wanted to love Jesus

When I was an Adolescent...
I did not want to know Jesus

When I was a teen...
I did not know Jesus

When I was married...
I tried to know Jesus

When I had a child....
I could not wait to love Jesus

When I was a teacher....

Jesus grew in me

A Letter from Me

Dear parents

I wanted to close this book with a few words. That is why I am writing you a letter to tell you that life can be so rushed and tiring but when we choose to be responsible for other human beings, we need to make time to be available for them, observe them, direct them, teach them the right ways to grow in God's fear, love them, and model good manners, so they can be the best they can be.

Our goal always is to be the best parent we can be to this child. No matter how hard we try to forget it, we need to remind ourselves that we are here to guide and lead this new generation to a better future.

By living in a society that is rushed and full of demands, we need to protect our children from the surrounding negativity in the environment and be active parents in their lives. Remember they depend on us to love them and care for them and teach them how to live in this world without being affected by the society.

Children are a blessing from God. They come in different forms. In order for them to grow healthy, we as parent need to give them the chance to grow and sprout the way God intended for them, not the way we would like for them to be. With good and effective parenting, we can achieve that goal.

God is in the midst of His children. Through prayer and supplication, we can discover what God's plan is for each one of them. We can understand the mystery of each child and his growth. Then we can direct him according to his needs.

Let us teach our children what they ought to be learning so they can grow in the best manner, knowledge, endurances, and strength to face what is going to lay ahead of them.

Let us also teach them how to be happy despite all the circumstances around them and to be content with what they have and what they achieve.

"Unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain who build it."

Psalm 127:1

Finally, Mom and Dad I wish you all the best and may the Lord grant you all of His wisdom to walk in His way and be His people.

Sincerely

Nagwa

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Children are blessing from God,

They come in different shapes and sizes

They are the apple of their parent's eyes

They are the future generation that will lead

They cannot be

Lazy

Sleepy

Weary

For God will be in the midst of them
So

Let us teach them what children ought to be

Let us teach them about God's plan

Let us teach them to grow in his fear

Let us teach them to grow healthy & happy

For they deserve our attention

May the Lord grand us his wisdom

To walk in his way

And to be his people