

Passing On Our Faith to Our Children

A Study for Parents

Prepared by
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I. OUR CHILDREN ARE CALLED

Acts 2:38-39 "...you shall receive the gift of the **Holy Spirit**. For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will **call**."

The United Church of God study paper, "*Are Our Children Called Now?*" examines this subject thoroughly and is recommended reading for all parents. Some quotes (emphasis added):

"A converted parent really has but one course of action. He or she **must** follow Abraham's example of **teaching** his children God's truth..."

"God revealed through the prophet Malachi that, 'He seeks godly offspring' (Malachi 2:15)."

II. THE URGENCY OF OUR RESPONSIBILITY

1. Our Children Will Not Learn God's Truth From The World

God does not change and pure religion is "to keep ourselves unspotted from the world" (*James 1:27*). Most American youth today will *not* be taught biblical principles.

2. A Time Of Great Testing Is On The Horizon Of Our Children's Future

Matthew 24:24 "For false christs and false prophets will rise and show **great signs and wonders to deceive**, if possible, even the elect."

2 Thessalonians 2:3, 9-11 "The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all **power, signs, and lying wonders**, and with all **unrighteous deception** among those who perish, **because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved.**"

3. God Charges Parents With the Responsibility Of Instructing Children In His Truth

Deuteronomy 6:5-7 "And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. **You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up.**"

The Church's goal is to *supplement* parental instruction—not take it over for them.

4. Teaching God's Truth Must Begin In Childhood!

2 Timothy 3:15 "...and that from **childhood** you have **known the Holy Scriptures**, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus."

Our children are called, just as the child Timothy was. But they will not “absorb” God’s truth by “osmosis” or by breathing the air in a “church family’s” home! They will not become convicted of God’s truth by default! They must be *taught* God’s truth!

5. We Must Not Let Excuses Keep Us From Fulfilling This God-Given Duty.

- **“My children might find it boring.”**

Classes in school might also be “boring”, but that is no reason to excuse them from class. We know the subject matter will be beneficial to them in the long-run, so we expect them to pay attention to the material. Studying the Bible may not always be “exciting,” but there are ways to study it that will make it more interesting and better retained. Children can also learn that when they make effort to learn from God’s Word, He will bless them.

- **“I’m not a good teacher. I wouldn’t know where to start or how to do it.”**

Every parent is teaching something every day, by the values we model to our children. Is studying God’s Word one of them? When we make the effort to give our children Biblical instruction—however awkwardly we may start out—they will learn that this is very important to us and to our family, and that it should be to them. This study will provide practical tips showing how to getting started.

- **“There’s no time.”**

We are pulled in many directions in life. However, if providing our children regular instruction in God’s Word is a priority to us, we will find the time to do so.

Ephesians 5:15-16 “See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but **as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil.**”

- **“My children aren’t converted and won’t understand the Bible anyway.”**

It is a serious error to assume our children cannot understand the Bible! God commanded *all* parents of His called-out nation to teach their children about Him and His laws...with the obvious expectation they could and would understand, and that they would follow God’s instruction as a result.

We must remember the tremendous significance of our children being “called.” They *are* given the same ability to understand God’s truth and the same *invitation* to pursue it—and ultimately receive the Holy Spirit—as their parents were given.

1 Corinthians 7:14 “For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the [believing] wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the [believing] husband; **otherwise your children would be unclean, but now they are holy.**”

It is indeed true that due to the free-moral-agency—which God allows *all* of us—our children may choose not to pursue their calling in adulthood. But if they choose not to embrace God’s truth, let it not be because we did not teach it!

III. HOW TO INSTILL GOD’S TRUTH?

Three Major Categories Of Imparting God’s Truth:

1. God's Revelation: Teaching and Studying the Bible
2. Our Walk With God: Instilling God's Truth Through Conversation
3. Instilling the Habit of Prayer

1. God’s Revelation: Teaching and Studying the Bible

Deuteronomy 6:6-7 “And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. *You shall **teach** them diligently to your children...*”

The word translated here as “teach” is the Hebrew word, ‘*shanon*’, which means to sharpen, whet, teach (incisively), pierce, or inculcate. The idea is to intensively impart instruction through the means of instruction that is more structured, as when we conduct daily family Bible Study. The idea behind the word ‘*shanan*’ includes repeating or reviewing scriptures, and even the repetition of scripture in order to imbed the scriptures in the mind.

A. What Basic Subjects to Cover?

In light of the urgency of instruction (above), what are the most important subjects that our children need to be grounded in before they leave home?

- ✓ Proof of God’s existence
- ✓ Reality of Satan
- ✓ The foundation of the Old Testament
- ✓ Basic History of Israel
- ✓ The Commandments and meaning of the Holy Days
- ✓ Fundamental doctrines of God’s Church
- ✓ Various heroes of the Bible
- ✓ The Gospels and life of Christ
- ✓ History of the New Testament Church
- ✓ Basics and outline of prophecy
- ✓ Personal prayer
- ✓ Sometimes the best subject to study is the one they are asking about.

B. Each Child Should Have a *good* “working” Bible

In order for our children to learn the Bible and become familiar and comfortable with handling it, studying it, and using it, they need to *have* one. Copies of this book—God’s Word—are inexpensive enough today that every child old enough to read can have his/her own copy.

- ✓ A Bible in which they can mark or write.
- ✓ Thumb tabs are very helpful—stick-on tabs can be purchased.
- ✓ A true Bible, not a pseudo-Bible or a children’s storybook-type volume. It should contain all the same scriptures a regular Bible has.
- ✓ The New King James Version is a good choice for a “working” Bible.

See handout, “*Which Bible Translation to Use*” for more details.

C. Good Habits to Develop...

1. Try to establish a regular time. Many families find that having family Bible study works best at the start of the day, before other activities and distractions can crowd it out. Others have found ways to make study time with their children in the afternoon or evening. Whenever the time, having a set, regular time helps develop Bible study as a habit—to carry into adulthood. You may want to start out with a shorter time period—say 15 or 20 minutes, and work up to a longer period.

2. Sit at a table when possible, where the setting and atmosphere is clearly ‘study time’ and the family comes together with attentive respect for God’s Word (as opposed to lounging around on the floor or couch, or each sitting or standing in various places around the room). Make sure the table is clean and uncluttered.

3. Minimize distractions. Keep the radio, television, etc. off. If the phone tends to ring during study time, take it off the hook or turn it down and use an answering machine.

4. Make it a pleasant time. We are placing value on God’s word and the special privilege of studying it. Ideas:




- Special beverage
- Candles or lantern on the table

5. Start with a brief prayer together, asking for God’s help in understanding and fearing and appreciating His Word. Family members can take turns leading the prayer by day.

6. Give a notebook to each child with dividers labeled:

- Maps
- Time line
- End-time prophecies
- World tomorrow
- Miscellaneous
- Doctrinal Proofs
- Memory verses
- Sabbath service notes
- Other sections can be added along the way.

7. Give each person a set of colored pencils for marking his or her Bible

-  Marking our Bible is an aid to help concentrate on the scriptures and learn them. It helps get their hands into the Bible, and learn how to study it and become comfortable with it. There is a hand-eye-brain connection that helps reinforce the words whenever we write out scriptures or mark within them.
-  A marking system helps us remember where a certain scripture is found. It can help locate the passage when we want to find it again.
-  It helps make studying the Bible itself more interesting for children... of all ages (including adults). When a marking system is started, then there can be the goal of marking the unmarked sections of the Bible. Marking adds a creative and interactive dimension to learning the Bible.

See handout on “*Marking Your Bible*” for more details.

D. Ways To Study the Bible



Start with Genesis and continue reading verse by verse (perhaps with the exception of genealogies). If your family starts soon enough, you might actually read the entire Bible through together.

- Take turns reading; each person of the family reading several verses or a passage.
- Stop to mark subjects with the colored pencils as often as needed.
- Do some advance preparation; such as maps for the area you will be reading about.
- Help your child draw a time line of the historical events you are reading about.
- As a parent comment about what is being read, or ask a question about how what is being read would apply in your child’s life or in your family.



Read a specific book of the Bible. This is helpful when you want to concentrate on a particular subject. For example...

- To learn more about our speech and the tongue, study the book of James.
- For Passover, read the gospel of John.
- The book of Proverbs has 31 chapters...one for each day of a month. Proverbs is an excellent choice to study with children... repeatedly!



Review Sermon notes. Ideas...

- Take turns sharing what each person got out of the sermon the previous Sabbath.
- Check a Sabbath or Feast of Tabernacles tape out of the church library and listen to it together...stopping the tape to discuss what is being said or to mark your Bibles.



Write out verses together. God instructed the kings of Israel to write out for themselves a copy of the scriptures. (Deuteronomy 17:18). There is value to writing out the scriptures, and perhaps your family could choose one book of the Bible to cover together by each writing out his or her own copy of the book. You could continue to have family Bible study even if you had laryngitis...since little or no dialogue is needed while writing out the scriptures!



Study end-time prophecy.

- Go through a UCG brochure on prophecy, Revelation, etc. Each family member can take turns reading from the brochure, while everyone turns to the scriptures cited.
- Go through the book of Revelation together.
- Help each child draw a time line of the sequence of end-time events.



Go through a piece of the church's literature together. Once again, take turns reading and turn to the scriptures cited, marking them as you go. There are booklets covering the Sabbath, clean and unclean meats, heaven and hell, the doctrines of the Church, the 10 Commandments, etc. Or you could go through an article in the Good News together... or even an entire issue.

2. Our Walk With God: Instill God's Truth Through Conversation

Deuteronomy 6:7 "...and shall **talk** of them..."

The word translated here as the word "talk" is the Hebrew word '*dabar*', which means to speak, declare, converse, command, promise, warn. This refers to teaching God's truth during normal, daily conversation. God intends parents to be taking advantage of every opportunity throughout the day to reinforce and teach God's words and laws...

- "when you sit in your house..." For example, during conversation at the lunch or dinner table, at the end of the day when everyone is relaxing in the family room together, etc.
- "...when you walk by the way..." Taking our children walking is not only a good time to have some good talks, it's also good exercise. Why not make regular walks together a habit? This part of the verse also applies to riding anywhere together in the car.
- "...when you lie down..." Brief talks at bedtime before going off to sleep.
- "...and when you rise up..." In the morning before everyone goes in separate directions, at the breakfast table, while getting ready for school or work, etc.

Our children need to hear about our own personal, spiritual walk with God. Examples:

- What led up to your baptism.
- How God answered your prayers in an everyday life experience.
- Events that caused you to doubt momentarily and how God proved Himself.
- How God may have gotten your attention or corrected you when He needed to.
- How God helped you to see something useful when reading the scriptures.
- How certain scriptures had a real-life application in your life.

Proverbs 22:6 “Train up a child in the way *he* should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.”

Each child has his or her own personality. It is our challenge as parents to work with each child in accordance with his or her own talents, traits, and perspectives. Some tips:

- Ask God to help you help your child connect with God’s truth.
- Seek Counsel from the ministry.
- List each child’s unique leanings and talents. Show how certain Biblical heroes had those same talents and proclivities.
- Find out what your children are thinking and feeling, their hopes and dreams, what they are watching, reading and listening to; what kind of lifestyle attracts them, who their heroes are, who their friends are, etc.

3. Instill the Habit of Prayer

Hebrews 4:16 “Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”

- Help them understand they can go to God for help and strength
- Help them to see God wants a relationship with them
- Let them see you pray and talk to God on a regular basis
- Use the outline in Matthew 6:9-13. Each family member could cover one aspect of the outline. Coach them in what to pray about.