

Letters to Parents

on
Training up a Child



Charles G. Finney

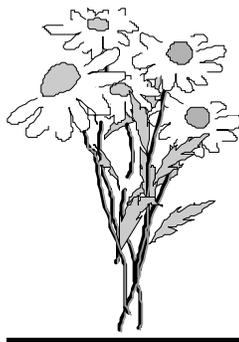
*“Train up a child
in the way he should go;
and when he is old,
he will not depart from it.”*

Proverbs 22:6



DEDICATION

*This book is dedicated to all the parents
who weep for themselves
and for their children
(Luke 23:28);
And to all the children
who love God
and their parents
and want to serve Him wholeheartedly.*



Letters to Parents
on
Training up a Child

by
Charles G. Finney

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**“Behold, children are a heritage from the Lord,
the fruit of the womb a reward.”**

Psalm 127:3

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

Proverbs 22:6

**“Then Manoah prayed to the LORD:
‘O Lord, I beg you...teach us how to bring up the boy...’”**

Judges 13:8 (NIV)

**Jesus said,
“Allow the little ones to come to Me,
and do not forbid *or* restrain *or* hinder them,
for of such [as these] is the kingdom of heaven *composed*.”**

Matt 19:14 (Ampl)

**“He who spares (withholds) the rod
hates his son,
but he who loves him
is careful to discipline him
(diligently *and* early).”**

Proverbs 13:24 (NIV & NASB & Ampl)

**“And the Lord said...
I will judge his (Eli’s) family forever
because of the sin *he knew* about;
his sons made themselves contemptible,
and he failed to restrain them.”**

1 Sam 3:11-13 (NIV)

**“A refusal to correct is a refusal to love;
love your children by disciplining them.”**

Proverbs 13:24 (The Message)



FOREWORD

It is abundantly evident that Satan is waging a most vicious war on our children. He is fattening them for the slaughter, while putting the parents to sleep. Who can say that this is not true?!

Children are bombarded with images and messages promoting immoral living. They are brainwashed into believing the lie of evolution and serving the god of “humanism”. They learn about and stand on their “rights”, instead of fleeing from the “wrongs” (like Joseph and Timothy). They are conditioned to believe that there are no absolutes, no right and no wrong. They learn to see all morality as “relative”. They are taught to debate and reason with their parents and elders, to have “a mind of their own” – without

***Satan is
waging a war
on our
children***

realising that it is (most of the time) the mind of the world, the carnal mind, the mind of Satan. They think they know better than their elders. They are disobedient to their parents. They love the world and the things that are in the world: the lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eyes and the pride of life. They are hooked on their computer games and addicted to their rock music (even so-called “Christian” rock music). They are lured into witchcraft through web sites and books (like the “*Harry Potter*” series). They are pressurised into religious “tolerance”, while denying the truth as it is in Christ. They are taught (at school and in compromising churches) to betray Christ with a kiss. They are systematically drilled into frowning on fundamentalism as foolish, forgetting that “small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it...”(Matt 7:14). They want to be free to sin, free to live for “self”, free to be like “society”, free... to be slaves. Oh, may God have mercy on us and our children!

Parents today, generally speaking, are “*blind... dumb dogs, they cannot bark; dreaming, lying down, they love to slumber*” (Isaiah 56:10). They don’t see what’s wrong in their child’s behaviour or attitude, and *if* they see, they don’t bark, ...and *if* they bark, their bark has no bite! Jesus said, “There is a part of you that is eager, ready for anything in God. But

***Satan is putting
parents to sleep***

there’s another part that’s as lazy as an old dog sleeping by the fire” (Matt 26. *The Message*). They see, but they don’t see, they hear, but they don’t hear. They are drugged with passivity. They are dulled through permissiveness. They are muzzled through sin. They see a child do wrong or not listening to them, but they do not correct it consistently. They may speak once or twice, but then keep quiet, or look away... to “keep the peace”. God says, “They have healed also the wound of the daughter of My people lightly

and neglectfully, saying, Peace, peace, when there is no peace”(Jer 6:14; *Ampl.*). They constantly seek to *divert* the will of their child, instead of lovingly, firmly *breaking* it into submission, as God intended it to be.

Most parents have become weak, because they do not have a clear conscience before God and before their children. They say, “What can *we* do?!”; “How can *we* stop the tide?!”. They are not like Caleb who (at 85 years of age) said: “Give me the mountains”, where the giantlike Anakim are (Jos 14:12). He could say that, because there was a different spirit in him – God’s Spirit. Oh, may God raise us up to be godly parents like Abraham and Joshua.

Jeremiah saw what we see today and said: “For these things I weep; my eyes overflow with tears, because... The children are desolate *and* perishing, for the enemy has prevailed”(Lam 1:16). “My eyes fail from weeping, my emotions are deeply disturbed, my heart is poured out upon the ground [in grief] because of the destruction of the daughter of my people, because infants and nurslings faint in the streets of the city. They keep crying to their mothers, Where is corn and wine [food and drink]? as they faint like wounded men in the streets of the city, as their lives ebb away on their mothers’ bosom”(2:11,12). The children are weak and wounded by sin; they are out on the streets and come to a fall there. *Spiritually, their mothers (and fathers) do not have something to feed them with.*

He said, “The young and the old lie on the ground in the streets; my maidens and my young men have fallen...”(2:21); “...the daughter of my people has become cruel like ostriches in the wilderness [that desert their young]”(4:3). They commit abortion. “Those who feasted on dainties are perishing in the streets; those who were brought up in purple lie cleaving to refuse *and* ash heaps”(4:5)! *How many children were brought up in a royal way, and even dressed in the best, only to end up in a prodigal’s pig sty or a refuse heap, cleaving to and holding on to their ash and dung?!*

“Our inheritance has fallen over to strangers, our houses to foreigners”(5:2). *Our homes are invaded by the “foreigners” on the devil-vision* (the television). We are weak like babies, who can’t even switch off, never mind separate with our one-eyed god. “They ravished (raped) the women in Zion, the virgins in the cities of Judah”(5:11). If not physically, then mentally. “We have become orphans and fatherless; our mothers are like widows”(5:3) – *our fathers are absent*, they are not in the place and position where they are supposed to be. Even when they are present, they are absent. Jeremiah said, “Our fathers sinned and are no more, and we have borne their iniquities”(5:7), “...the persons of elders were not respected”(5:11). “*Woe to us, for we have sinned!*”(5:16b).

In light of all this darkness, Jeremiah cried, “Behold, O Lord, how distressed I am!... ***Outside the house the sword bereaves, at home there is [famine, pestilence] death!***” (1:20). This is the heart of the matter we are facing. Outside the homes, the enemy is wounding, robbing, kidnapping and killing our children; while *inside the homes* there is (spiritual) famine, drought, disease and death!! It may even be that the children go “outside”, because of what they find or don’t find “inside”...

God is speaking to us through Jeremiah and He says, “Yes, we have an enemy *outside*, but the problem is primarily *inside*” – in our homes and in our hearts. In our *own* hearts, and in the hearts of our *children*. “We have sinned!” (5:16b).

That is why the weeping prophet says, “***Let us test and examine our ways, and let us return to the Lord! Let us lift up our hearts and our hands to God in heaven...***” (3:40,41) Why? For “the Lord is good to those who wait hopefully *and* expectantly for Him, to those who seek Him [inquire of and for Him and require Him by right of necessity and on the authority of God’s word].”(3:25)

“The hearts [of the inhabitants of Jerusalem] cried to the Lord. [Then to the congregation, I, Jeremiah, cried]...O..., let tears run down like a river day and night; ***give yourself no rest***, let not your eyes stop [shedding tears]. ***Arise*** [from your bed], ***cry out*** in the night, at the beginning of the watches; pour out your heart like water before the face of the Lord. **Lift up your hands toward Him for the lives of your young children**, who faint from hunger at the head of every street”(2:18,19).

One man who did this, like Jeremiah, was ***Charles G. Finney*** (1792-1875). He was completely broken and humbled before God, saved, sanctified and anointed with “power from on high”. God used him to bring a true Revival in many places and people across the world. At the height of his ministry, he wrote **letters** to the Christians who were converted in the revivals. Some letters were addressed to ministers, some to young Christians, some to older Christians, and others specifically to parents. I have not come across any other letters or teachings that speak so clearly and so practically, and with such conviction and life-giving power on the topic of raising our children for God, as these.

It was thought that by making these letters more readily available to as many as possible people, many children (and even parents) may be helped and even saved. It will be a great help and a spiritual blessing even to those who do not have children of their own. It is taken from “***Principles of Discipleship***”, published by Bethany Fellowship. It provides **Biblical principles for training children in the way that they should go**, not just for parents, but

also for teachers, Sunday school teachers, relatives, and brothers and sisters in Christ.

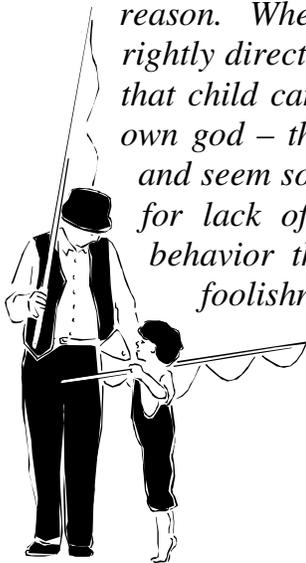
To return to the Lord and to cry out to Him for our children are essential, but more than that is needed. We also need to learn to train up our children in the way that they should go, so that when they are old, they will not depart from it. It is my prayer that the Lord may use these letters to revive us, restore our homes, renew the way we train up our children and (most important of all) redeem our children – to His glory.

The Compiler.
January 2004.

Ps. After preparing this booklet for print, I came across the following portion that touches on the heart of our God-given task and privilege of training up our children. It is taken from “*Weighed and Wanting*” (reprinted as “The Gentlewoman’s Choice”) and written by George MacDonald in 1882.

*“Although a wise mother and a far-seeing father, they had made the mistake common to many parents of putting off teaching their children **obedience** until it was more or less too late. If this is not begun at the first possible moment, it will be harder every hour it is postponed. The spiritual loss and injury caused to the child by their waiting till they decide he’s ready to reason with is immense. Yet there is nothing in which parents are more stupid and cowardly, and even stubborn, than this. A home where children are humored and scolded and coaxed and punished instead of being **taught obedience** is like a moral slaughter-house instead of the training ground it was meant to be. So-called ‘Christian homes’ can be the worst of all in this regard.”*

*“The dawn of reason as a child grows will no doubt help to develop obedience; but obedience is even more necessary to the development of reason. Where there has been no prior **obedience** there can be no rightly directed reason. For a parent to require of a child only what that child can understand is simply to help him to make himself his own god – that is a devil. That some children mature well enough and seem so little the worse for their bad training is no justification for lack of disciplines. So many others display attitudes and behavior that clearly reveal the consequences of their parents’ foolishness.”*

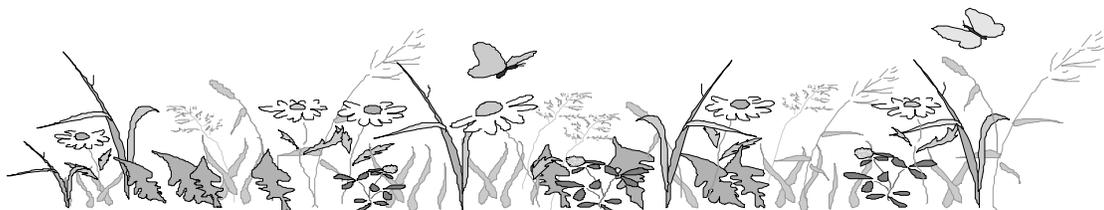


“Then Manoah prayed to the LORD:
**‘O Lord, I beg you...
teach us how to bring up the boy...’**”

Judges 13:8

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1. INTRODUCTION



Letters by Charles G. Finney.

Letter 1

To the young **Christians** who have been converted in the great revivals of the past few years, scattered up and down in the land, wherever the providence of God may have cast your lot.

January 1, 1839.

Beloved in the Lord

My body is so far worn and especially my organs of speech so far exhausted that I cannot visit and preach to you the word of life. I therefore address you through the press, as the most direct and effectual medium through which I can communicate my thoughts.

I propose, the Lord willing, to address to you through the columns of the Oberlin Evangelist from time to time a series of short sermons on practical subjects that I deem most important to you and to the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ. When I shall have said what I desire on those more immediately and highly practical topics, if the Lord permit, I design to give you a series of sermons on some doctrinal topics, especially the moral government of God, including the atonement and the influences of the Holy Spirit in the administration of that government.

A great many of you I know personally, but many more of you know me than I have the honour of a personal acquaintance. You do me the honour to call me your spiritual father, and I have the unspeakable happiness of believing

Consider yourself as personally addressed by me.

that God has made me instrumental in doing you good. Those of you who know me personally know that it is my manner to deal with the souls and consciences of men with great plainness of speech and directness of address. You remember that this was my manner when I was with you. I have the greatest confidence that this is still the only way to do you good.

Now the thing that I desire to do, so far as I am able, is *to lay open before you the very secrets of your hearts*, and also *to lead you to an entire renunciation of everything that grieves the Spirit of God, to a*

relinquishment of selfishness under every form and in every degree, and to hold out before you those “exceedingly great and precious promises” whereby **you may be made “partakers of the divine nature.”** The editors of this paper are willing that I should make it the medium of spreading before you my thoughts, as the providence and Spirit of God shall enable me. I shall give you a sermon as often as my health and other duties will permit; and whenever you receive this paper containing one of my lectures, *I wish you to consider yourself as personally addressed by me. I wish you to read for yourself and feel that I mean you, as though it were a private communication made to you from my own pen, or as if I had a personal interview and addressed you “face to face.”* If I probe your conscience, I beg of you not to be offended and throw the paper aside and refuse to hear me. “I beseech you by the mercies of God,” no, I adjure you by our Lord Jesus Christ to hear me patiently and with candor. Beloved, I expect candor from you; and many of you will not only hear me with candor but with joy. I will try to write as if I had you all before me in one great congregation, as if I beheld your countenances and were addressing you “face to face.” In fact, I will consider you, and I desire you to consider yourselves, as in such a sense members of my congregation as to steadfastly fix your attention on my preaching. I shall take it for granted that you read every lecture, and of course address you from time to time as if you had candidly read and attentively considered what I had already said.

***Go upon your knees
before you read it.***

Unless I can engage you to grant me one request, I have little hope of doing you good. And that is, **as soon as you receive this communication** you will **make me, yourselves and the subject of the proposed lectures subjects of earnest and constant prayer**; and that whenever you receive a paper containing one of the proposed lectures, you **go upon your knees before you read it and lay open your heart in solemn prayer before God and to the influence of truth, and implore the aid of the Holy Spirit to make the word to you alive and powerful.** We shall all soon meet at the bar of God. I earnestly desire to do you all the good I can while I am in the flesh; and as I do not intend to write for your amusement but solely for your spiritual edification, will you pledge yourselves on your knees before God to examine the truth candidly – *make a personal, faithful and full application of it to your own hearts and lives* – and to use it profitably since you will answer to God in the solemn judgment? If these are your resolutions and purposes, I am confident the Lord will bless you. I shall not cease to pray for you and intend to make those of you whom I remember special and particular subjects of prayer; and I entreat you to do the same for me.

Charles G. Finney, a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Letter 2

February 13, 1839.

Beloved

I closed my last letter by referring to the fact that several professedly religious periodicals have so referred to what I had said in regard to your being “a disgrace to religion” as virtually to represent me as denying the reality, genuineness and power of those glorious revivals in which you were converted. I denied having said anything in that connection to that effect. But I did assert in my lecture and reassert in my last letter that I believed **many of you were by your lives a disgrace to the religion of Christ**. Now, beloved, I did not say this then, nor do I say it now to bring a bitter accusation against you, but for the purpose of preparing the way to put some questions to your conscience, with the design to turn your eyes fully upon your own life and spirit as exhibited before the world.

And here let me say that when you receive this issue *I desire each of you to consider this letter as directed to you individually, as a private letter to you*, although communicated through this public channel. **I will write upon my knees, and I beg you to read it upon your knees**. And when you have read it as written to yourself and received it, as I adjure you to do, as a private communication to you from me, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, I entreat you to hand it to all your Christian friends in your neighbourhood and within your reach, beseeching them to receive it and consider it as a private letter to them, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Hereafter, should the providence of God permit, I may more particularly address different classes of individuals than I can in this letter. I intend to

I will write upon my knees, and I beg you to read it upon your knees.

address fathers, mothers, husbands, wives, children, ministers, church officers, editors of religious papers, young men and young women – all distinct classes of individuals to

whom particular truths may be applicable. In this, I address you without reference to your age or sex, calling, or position but simply as a professor of the religion of Jesus Christ. (By “professor” Finney means those who profess to be religious, “professing Christians”, not teachers of religion in an educational setting.)

I have said that I fear and believe that many of you, at least are a disgrace to the religion you profess. By this I mean that instead of fairly and truly

representing the religion of Christ in your life and spirit, you in many respects grossly misrepresent it. Do not at this point let your temper rise and turn upon me and say: "Physician, heal thyself." I might, to be sure, confess my own sins; but my business now as "an ambassador of Jesus Christ" is with your own conscience.

And now, dearly beloved, bear with me while I put the questions home to you, as by name.

Are not your life and spirit and habits a miserable misrepresentation of the religion you profess? You are a professor of the religion of Jesus Christ. Your profession of religion has placed you on high, as "a city that cannot be hid." You are not hid. The eyes of God, of Christians, of the world, of hell are upon you.

And now, precious soul, **do you sincerely believe that you feel and act and live and do as the Lord Jesus Christ would under similar circumstances?** Are those around you forced by your life and spirit to recognize the divine features of the character of Christ in you? **Would those that know nothing of Christ be able to catch and understand the true spirit and meaning of the religion of Jesus by an acquaintance with you?**

Would they obtain from your life and example such an idea of the nature, design and tendency of the gospel as would lead them to value it, to understand its necessity and importance?

Are not your life and spirit and habits a miserable misrepresentation of the religion you profess?

Are your spirit and temper and conversation so unearthly, so heavenly, so divine, so much like Christ, as to accurately represent Him? Or do you misrepresent Him? Is not the *temper* that you manifest, the *life* that you lead, your *behaviour*, your pursuits - are not all these in many respects the very opposite and contrast of the spirit of the religion of Christ?

My beloved brother, sister, father, mother, whoever you are, remember that while you read these questions God's eye is pouring its searching blaze into your inmost soul.

What is your temper in your family, among your friends, in your private life, in your domestic relations and in your public walks? Is your behaviour in heaven or is it "earthly, sensual, devilish"?

What is the testimony of your closet? Can it bear witness to your sighs and groans and tears over the wickedness and desolations of the world?

Are those who observe your good works constrained to “glorify your Father who is in heaven”? Or is the name of God blasphemed on account of your earthly and unchristian life and spirit?

Can those that remain unconverted in the place where you live bear witness that a great and divine change was wrought in you by the Spirit of God? In the name of Christ I inquire, **are your unrepentant acquaintances constrained to confess that there must have been a work of God to have wrought so great a change in you, as they daily witness?** Do you think that the interests of religion are really advanced by your life and that you are continually making an impression in favour of holiness on those around you?

Do they witness in you the “peace of God that passeth understanding”?

Do they see in you that sweet and divine satisfaction in the will and ways of God that spreads a heavenly serenity and calm and sweetness over your mind, in the midst of the trials and circumstances to which you are subjected? Or do they behold you annoyed, anxious, worried, easily disturbed and exhibiting the spirit of the world? My dear soul, if this is so, you are a horrible disgrace to religion; you are unlike Jesus. Was this the spirit that Jesus manifested?

Let me inquire again: *what are you doing for the conversion of sinners around you, and what for the conversion of the world?*

Would one hundred million such Christians as you are, and living just as you live, be instrumental in converting the world? Suppose there are a thousand million of men upon the earth and suppose that one hundred million

Would 100 000 000 such Christians as you are, and living just as you live, be instrumental in converting the world?

of these were just such Christians as you are, in your present state and at your present rate of usefulness; when would the world be converted? Are the church and the world better and holier on account of your profession? And are they really benefited by your

life? If not, your profession is a libel upon the Christian religion. You are, like Peter, denying your Saviour; and like Judas, you have kissed but to betray Him.

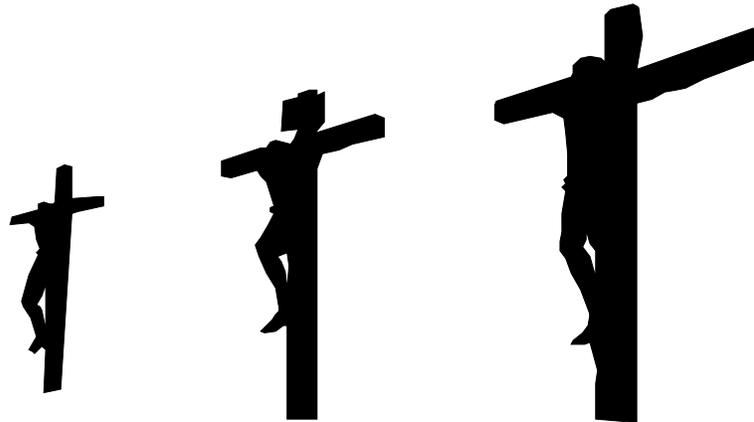
Now, beloved, I will not take it upon myself to decide these questions that I have put to you on my knees and in the spirit of love. Will you be honest and, on your knees, spread out this letter to God our Maker and Christ your Saviour? Will you not upon your knees read over these questions, one by

one, and ask God to show you the real state of your life as it relates to each of them?

And here, beloved, I leave you for the present; and may the Saviour aid you and make you honest in meeting cordially and answering honestly these questions. You must be searched and humbled and broken down in heart before you can be built up and made strong in Christ. Do be honest and in haste, and **address yourself to the work of self-examination** without delay. I beg of you to prepare yourself to receive the consolations of the gospel of Christ, for my soul is panting to spread them out before you. Providence permitting, you may expect to hear from me again soon.

*Address yourself
to the work of
self-examination.*

Charles G. Finney,
A servant of the Lord Jesus Christ.



“Father, hear us, we are praying,
Hear the words our hearts are saying,
We are praying for our children.

Keep them from the powers of evil,
From the secret, hidden peril,
Father, hear us for our children.

From the whirlpool that would suck them,
From the treacherous quicksand, pluck them,
Father, hear us for our children.

From the worldling’s hollow gladness,
From the sting of faithless sadness,
Father, Father, keep our children.

Through life’s troubled waters steer them,
Through life’s bitter battle cheer them,
Father, Father, be Thou near them.

Read the language of our longing,
Read the wordless pleadings thronging,
Holy Father, for our children.

And wherever they may bide,
Lead them Home at eventide.”

From “*Gold Cord*”

by Amy Carmichael.

2. LETTERS TO PARENTS



Letter 3

August 12, 1840.

Dear Brethren and Sisters

In compliance with a suggestion given some time ago that I should, God willing, address some **letters to parents**, I will now commence the series with the hope of promoting the interests of the rising generation. I shall begin with remarks upon **Proverbs 22:6: “Train up a child in the way he should go; and when he is old, he will not depart from it,”** and shall develop my letters from this text, somewhat in the form of a sermon. In doing so, I shall endeavour to: show what is implied in training up children in the way they should go; notice several things to be avoided in training up children in the way they should go; mention several things to be attended to in the training of children; call attention to some of the difficulties in the way of training up children in the way they should go; observe that if the condition is fulfilled, that is, if a child is trained up in the way he should go, it is certain that when he is old he will not depart from it; and finally I will give some closing remarks.

What is implied in training up children in the way they should go?

It implies such thorough instruction as to root and ground them in **correct views of truth**, and in **right principles of action**. If you consult the marginal reading of your Bible you will find the word rendered “train” in the text is, in the margin, rendered “catechize.” The idea is that which I have suggested, to **thoroughly instruct them** in the great principles of righteousness.

It implies such thorough government as **to root and ground them in correct habits in all respects**, such habits of cheerful obedience to parents, correct habits in respect to early rising, early retiring to rest, correct habits in regard to taking their meals at stated hours, and in respect to the quantity and quality of their food, habits of exercise and rest, study and relaxation. In short, all their habits comprising their whole conduct.

***Root and ground
them in correct
habits***

It implies the training of them in a **knowledge of and conformity to all the laws of their being, physical and moral**. This is the way in which they

should go, and it is in vain to expect to train them in the way they should go without giving them thorough instruction in respect to the laws of their bodies and minds, the laws of natural and spiritual life and health.

It implies not only giving them **thorough instruction** in these respects, but the **thorough government** of them and **training** them in all things **to observe** these laws.

Next, I will notice several things to be avoided in training up children in the way they should go.

Avoid for yourself whatever would be injurious for them to copy, and do not suppose that you can yourself be guilty of pernicious practices, and by your precept prevent their falling into the same. *Remember that your example will be more influential than your precept.* I knew a father who himself used tobacco but warned his children against its use, and even commanded them not to use it, and yet every one of them did use it sooner or later. This was as might be expected. I knew a mother who used tea herself but warned her children against it as something unnecessary and injurious, especially to young people, but all her children naturally fell into the use of it. The fact is that her example was the most influential and impressive teaching.

*Your example
will be more
influential*

Avoid all conversation in their presence upon topics that may mislead them and generate in them a hypercritical and wicked spirit, such as all sectarian conversation, unguarded conversation upon the doctrine of decrees and election, speaking of neighbours' faults, or speaking derogatorily of any human being; in short whatever may be a stumbling block to their infant minds.

Avoid all disagreement between the parents in regard to the government of the children.

Avoid all partiality or favouritism in the government of them.

Avoid whatever may lessen the respect of the children for either parent.

Avoid whatever may lessen the authority of either parent.

Avoid whatever may tend to create partiality for either parent.

Avoid begetting in them the love of money. Diligently remember that the love of money is the root of all evil.

Avoid the love of money yourself, for if you have a worldly spirit yourself, your whole life will most impressively inculcate the lesson that the world should be the great object of pursuit. A wealthy man once said to me, "I was brought up from my very infancy to love the world and make money my god." When we consider how impressively and constantly this lesson is taught by many parents, is it surprising that there is so much fraud, theft, robbery, piracy, and selfishness under every abominable form? Many parents seem to be engaged in little else, so far as their influence with their children is concerned, than making them as selfish and worldly as possible. Nearly their whole conversation at the table, and in all places where they are, the whole drift and bent of their lives, pursuits, and everything about them, are calculated to make the strongest impression upon their little minds, that their parents conceive the world to be the supreme good. Unless all this be avoided, it is impossible to train up a child in the way he should go.

Avoid begetting within them the spirit of ambition to be rich, great, learned, or anything else but good. If you foster a spirit of selfish ambition it will give birth, of course, to anger, pride, and a whole herd of devilish passions.

Avoid begetting or fostering the spirit of vanity in any way: in the purchase of clothing or any articles of apparel, in dressing them or by any expressions relating to their personal appearance. Be careful to say nothing about your own clothes, or the apparel of anybody else or of the personal attractions or beauty of yourself, your children, or of anybody else in such a way as to beget within them the spirit of ambition, pride and vanity.

Guard them against any injurious influence at home. Allow nobody to live in your family whose sentiments, habits, manners, or temper may corrupt your children. Guard the domestic influence as the apple of your eye. Have no person in your house that will tell them foolish stories, sing them foolish songs, talk to them about witches, or anything of any name or nature which ought not to come before their youthful minds. Be careful under what influences you leave them when you go from home, and let not both parents take a journey at the same time, leaving their children at home, without apparent necessity.

Avoid every evil influence from outside the home. Let no children visit them whose conversation or manners may corrupt them. Let them associate with no children by going to visit where they will run the hazard of being in any way corrupted.

Avoid the cultivation of artificial appetites. Accustom them to no non-nutritious stimulants or condiments of any kind, for in so doing you will create a craving for stimulants that may result in beastly intemperance.

Avoid creating any artificial needs. The great majority of human needs are merely artificial, and children are often so brought up as to feel as if they needed multitudes of things, which they do not need, and which are really injurious to them, and if they ever become poor, their artificial needs will render them extremely miserable, if indeed they do not tempt them. Consider how simple and few the real needs of human beings are, and whatever your worldly circumstances may be, for your children's sake, habituate them to being satisfied with the supply of their real needs.

Avoid by all means their being the subjects of evil communications. "Evil communications corrupt good manners." This is the testimony of God . If your domestics, your hired hands, your neighbours' children or anybody else, are allowed to communicate to them things which they ought not to know, they will be irrecoverably injured and perhaps forever ruined.

Avoid their reading books that contain pernicious sentiments, anything indecent, vulgar, or of ill report.

Avoid allowing their reading romances, plays, and whatever may beget within them a romantic and feverish state of mind.

Avoid allowing gluttony or any sort of intemperance, eating at improper times, improper foodstuffs, improper quantities of food, and everything that shall work a violation of the laws of life and health.

Avoid allowing gluttony or any sort of intemperance

Avoid all unnecessary occasion of excitement. Children are naturally enough excited. Pains should be taken to quiet and keep them calm rather than to increase their excitement. This is imperiously demanded both by their health and minds. Clubs are often started among children, and great pains taken to stir up an interest and excitement, insomuch that it is often attended with loss of appetite and sleep, and a serious injury to their health and morals. Parents should be on their guard, against allowing their children to be drawn into such excitement or having any unnecessary connection with or knowledge of them.

This subject will be resumed.

Your brother in the bonds of the gospel,
Charles G. Finney.

Letter 4

August 26, 1840.

Dear Brethren and Sisters

In pursuing this subject I will notice several **other things to be avoided in the training of children.**

Avoid everything that can be construed by them into insincerity on any subject, especially everything that may make the impression that your word is not to be depended upon.

Avoid every appearance of impatience or fretfulness in their presence.

Wholly abstain from scolding at them. If you have occasion to reprove them, let it be done with deliberation, and not in such haste and in such tones of voice as to have even the appearance of anger.

If you have occasion to punish them, first converse and pray with them, and avoid proceeding to severe measures until you have fully made the impression upon their minds that it is your solemn and imperative duty to do so.

Avoid in your conversation whatever might have a tendency to beget in them the spirit of slander and evil speaking. Never let them hear you speak evil of any man. But always, in their presence, as on all other occasions, “be gentle, showing all meekness to all men.”

Avoid as far as possible whatever may be a temptation to them to indulge evil tempers. “Fathers, provoke not your children to anger,” is both the counsel and the command of God. If you find your children naturally irritable and easily made angry, be sure to keep this verse always in your mind, that you may readily and certainly practice it whenever there is occasion to do so. If, therefore, you find your children inclined to the exercise of any evil temper whatever, be sure, as far as possible, to avoid all occasions that may prove too great a trial for them, and cause them to fall into their besetting sin.

Wholly abstain from scolding at them.

Avoid unnecessarily exciting their fears upon any subject. Allow no one to make them afraid of the dark, ...or of witches, or of wild animals. Children are often very seriously injured by creating a morbid excitability upon such

subjects, insomuch that from that time on they are afraid to be alone in the dark. And their foolish fears are often excited even at an older age, in view of things with which they were foolishly persecuted in their youth.

Never give them anything because they cry for it. If they find that they can get anything by crying for it, or that they are any more apt to get it because they cry for it, you will find yourselves continually annoyed by their crying. Children should be taught that if they cry for a thing, for that very reason they cannot have it.

Never give them anything because they cry for it.

I will now proceed to mention **several things to be attended to in the training of children.**

First, **be honest, and thorough and correct in forming your own views and opinions on all subjects.** This is of great importance. For if your children find you often mistaken in your views upon some important subjects, your opinions will soon cease to have much weight with them. It is immensely important that you be well instructed, and know how to answer their questions, especially on all moral subjects. Your opinions ought to carry great weight with them. It is for their own good. Your opinions will naturally carry great weight with them unless they find you in error. Be careful, then, as you wish to preserve your own influence over them for their good, and as you would not want to mislead them to their ruin, to be thorough and diligent in the use of means to obtain correct information on all moral questions.

Let your own habits be both right and regular: your rising in the morning, your retiring at night, the hours at which you take your meals, together with all your domestic arrangements. **Let order pervade everything,** and be sure to



have a time and a place for every work, and everything around you. Have a place for every tool, and let

Let your own habits be both right and regular

every member of your family be constrained to keep everything in its place. And if they have occasion to any tool, they ought to be sure to return it to its place before they put it out of their hands. By insisting upon this, you will soon save yourself and them a great deal of unnecessary trouble.

Be sure that they are up early in the morning, and retire early at night. This is imperiously demanded by their health, and almost universally by their morals. If children are allowed to be up late in the evening, they will not only lie in bed late in the morning, but almost always get into the habit of either

making or receiving visits from neighbouring children. This will bring in its train a host of evils.

See that your temper and spirit are right. “Let the peace of God that passeth all understanding dwell in your hearts, that you may possess your soul in patience.” And never allow your angry feeling to come into collision with theirs.

Let the influence which you have over them be an ever present consideration with you. Do not forget it. Do not be unmindful of it, even for an hour or a moment. *In whatever you say and do in their presence, have an eye to its influence upon them.*

Your brother in the bonds of the gospel,
Charles G. Finney.

Letter 5

September 9, 1840.

Dear Brethren and Sisters

In addressing you further on this subject of **what is implied in training up children in the way they should go**, I call to your attention that in training children, parents should **remember their nature, and that *their will is in the first instance influenced by senses, and not by moral considerations***. Their bodily appetites come to have a strong influence over the will before moral truth can reach the heart through the conscience, unless their minds are enlightened by a supernatural divine agency.

Therefore, parents should remember that **physical training must precede moral training**. Pains should be taken to keep their bodily appetites in a perfectly natural state. And as far as possible, prevent the formation of artificial appetites, and do all that the nature of the case admits to restrain the influence of the appetites over the will.

Physical training must precede moral training

Parents should remember that **all artificial stimulants lead directly to intemperance**; that tea, coffee, tobacco, spices, ginger and indeed the whole family of non-nutritious stimulants, lead directly and powerfully to the

formation of intemperate habits, create a morbid hankering after more and more stimulants, until both body and soul are swallowed up in the terrible vortex of intemperance.

Parents should remember that the least stimulating kinds of diet are best suited to the formation of temperate habits in all respects. And just as far as they depart from a mild, bland, unstimulating diet, they are laying, for the perversion of the child's constitution, a foundation for any and every degree of intemperance.

Parents should remember that the temper of the child is in a great measure dependent upon and intimately connected with his physical habits. If, during the period of nursing, the mother makes a free use of non-nutritious stimulants, she is continually poisoning the infant at her breast, and rasping up its nervous system into a state of extreme irritability. The certain consequence sooner or later will be the development of an irritable temper, with many disagreeable and even disgusting traits of character. If, when the child is weaned from the breast, the irritating process is still kept up, if it is fed with much pastry, unripe fruits, at unseasonable hours and in improper quantities – nothing else can be expected than that it will be a spoiled child.

Parents should secure the earliest opportunity to get the mastery of the will. The very first time, at whatever age children manifest temper and set up their will, they should be calmly but firmly resisted. It matters not how young they are. If they manifest a disposition to obtain a thing by crying, or in any way insist upon having their will, the parent should at once adopt some method of steadily and perseveringly opposing their will in that particular. To press the hand upon them and hold them still when they are struggling and screaming to get up, or even to let them lie and scream is vastly better than to yield any point to them when their spirit is stirred and their will is stubborn.

Get the mastery of the will.

Parents should begin at the outset to get the mastery over the will and then keep it. The most steadfast and uniform perseverance is essential to retaining the mastery of their will. I have always observed that persons whose will has not been early subdued and kept under, are either never converted, or if hopefully converted, make but little progress in piety. I have had so much opportunity of making observation in this respect that if I find a person lingering under conviction and finding it very difficult to submit to God, if I find him grieving and quenching the Holy Spirit, and if converted, given to perpetual backsliding, I often make inquiry, and with scarcely a solitary exception, find that parental authority has never had a thorough influence over him: his will was not early subdued, and ever after, while still a minor, he was not kept in *a state of unqualified submission and obedience.*

Parents should lay great stress upon the *unconditional* submission and obedience of their children. Some parents seem to have adopted the principle of not subduing the will of their children until they are old enough to be reasoned with, when they expect to govern them by reason, and moral suasion as they say. Now it should be understood that anything is moral suasion that acts as a motive, that *the rod is one of the most powerful and even indispensable forms of moral suasion.* It acts as a most commanding motive when the mind is very insensible to the voice of reason.

Parents should stress the unconditional submission and obedience of their children.

It is no doubt the duty of parents to teach their children in the outset that it is their right and their duty to insist upon unconditional submission to their will, to make the child understand from the very first, that *the will of the parent is a good and sufficient reason for the child's pursuing a required course of conduct.* If the child is not taught that this is a good and sufficient reason, if he is left to demand other reasons, and if the parent only succeeds in gaining the child over to any course of conduct in proportion as he satisfies or fails to satisfy the child with the proffered reasons, the child is inevitably ruined. For in such cases, if the reason satisfies the child, and he yields obedience, it is not filial obedience, it is not rendered out of respect for the authority of the parent. It is no recognition of the parent's right to govern or of the child's duty to obey the parent. It is simply yielding to the offered reasons, and not to parental authority. Parents must, therefore, commence the government of the child, and perfect their influence over its will, if they ever expect to do so,

The rod is one of the most powerful and even indispensable forms of moral suasion.

long before the child can be reasoned with. In this respect the parent stands to the child in the place of God, lays his influence upon the will, and holds it in a state of submission to parental authority until the higher claims of God can come in, until moral considerations can be

thrown in upon the mind as the regulator of the will. And ordinarily moral truth will have greater or lesser influence with the will just in proportion to the perfection or imperfection with which parental authority has influenced the will.

Your brother in the bonds of the gospel,
Charles G. Finney.

Letter 6

October 7, 1840.

Dear Brethren and Sisters

In continuing my remarks upon **what to attend to in the training of children**, let me emphasize that **you must keep them, as much as possible, with yourself and under your own eye. Make yourself, as far as possible, the companion of your own children.** There is perhaps no greater error among parents than to allow the children of a neighbourhood to mingle with each other, and without restraint find their own sports and employ themselves

Keep them, as much as possible, with yourself and under your own eye.

as they please. There is scarcely a neighbourhood in which there are not, more or less, children who have heard various degrees of filthy conversation, vulgar, hateful, polluting, immoral, and perhaps profane and blasphemous

things; and whose minds have become deeply imbued, perhaps, with the spirit of the pit or some other abomination, which, if left without restraint, will corrupt all the children in the neighbourhood. Thus, one wicked child, if left to mingle freely with the whole neighbourhood of playful, confiding and unsuspecting children, will defile and ruin them all. **Therefore, beloved, keep your children at home. Allow no children of your neighbours to come within your yard, or upon their playground, without your consent. And be careful not to give your consent, unless you or some responsible adult member of your family can be with them.** Be sure that you do not trust in the purity of a neighbour's children just because their parents are good people, nor assume that the minister's or the deacon's children may be left to mingle with your children safely. You should remember that the

Be on your guard

best of parents may have their children corrupted by contact with other wicked children, and you cannot be sure that they have not been. **Therefore, be on your guard**, or perhaps from the children of pious parents an influence may flow in upon your family that will deeply corrupt and finally destroy your children.

“But,” most parents are apt to object, “we cannot give up our time to our children. We are obliged to attend to other matters.” To this I reply that very seldom is this necessarily so. **If the parents would satisfy themselves with a moderate supply of this world's goods, and abandon their fastidious and fashionable ways of living, they would, in almost all cases, have abundant time for companionship with their children.**

But again it is objected, "Our children need the society of each other. The children of a neighbourhood are benefited by contact with each other. Without this contact, they are apt to be selfish, proud, and to lack interest in others besides themselves." To this I answer, to be sure children need society. They need contact with other minds. They need to be so associated with other human beings as to take an interest in them, to witness the developments of character, and to develop their own characters. But it is believed, at least by me, that **children are vastly more benefited by contact with adult minds than with the minds of children. I mean of course, those adults whose spirit, conversation and conduct are what they ought to be.** And, to be sure, it ought to be contact with those who take an interest in them. *The example of adults has more influence with children than that of children with each other.* And I honestly say, I would not care to have my children ever see any other children, could they be favoured with the right kind of adult contact.

Provide means for engaging their attention at home. Children must have amusement. They must and will be involved in activities. They must have a room and grounds to play in. They must have means and things with which to occupy themselves. And parents can never make a more just and appropriate use of their money than providing with it the means of occupying, employing and educating their children. It is a vast mistake in parents to consider their money thrown away or misapplied when it is expended in the purchase of hobbyhorses, little carts, wagons, sleds, dolls, sets of furniture for their playhouses, needles, thimbles, scissors, boards, hammers, saws, augers, and tools with which their children may busy themselves, and with which to begin to design for themselves the structures which they see around them.

It should be remembered, however, that **children love variety**; they are never satisfied long with any one thing. They should not, therefore, be provided with too many things at once. For should you purchase many things at a time, you will soon find it impossible to provide novelties for them. Generally, a single new item at a time is sufficient to occupy their attention. A child will find a great many things to do with a gimlet. When he has busied himself with this, and finally lays it aside, add a pocket-knife. With his gimlet and knife he can peg pieces of wood together. If to these you add, after a time, a hammer, then a little saw, and thus proceed carefully, but with due attention to just what is needed to sustain their attention, you will render them content at home without occupying much of your own time.

You will find it very important to let your children each have some place for his tools; and let it be an invariable rule, that whenever he has finished using them, they are to be put every one in its place. Let the child be made to feel that it is of great importance that nothing should be lost or mislaid. Thus you will cultivate a habit that will be of vast service to



his little tools, his hobbyhorse, and try to give his little mind a start in the direction of inventing his own activities.

him through life. If he has little carts or wagons, be sure that he never leaves them out in the rain or dew, but has them securely housed; and the reasons why tools should not be exposed to the weather should be made familiar to his mind. If you have but one child, he will be lonesome, unless you take a little trouble in teaching him how to amuse himself. **You must play with him, take him with you** when it is convenient, go into his playroom or playground, show him how to use his little blocks,

You must play with him, take him with you

If you have several children, **endeavour to make them satisfied with each other's companionship**, without feeling a disposition either to go away from home for companions, or to invite those from outside to come to them. They must be restrained and kept from doing these things or they are certainly undone. **This, then, must be a subject of study, of prayer, of much consideration on your part, how you may make your children love each other, be willing to stay at home, and be satisfied with their books, playthings, home, and siblings without roving the neighbourhood for their amusements and activities.**

Cultivate in them a taste for reading. To this end you must read to them yourself, or employ some judicious and excellent reader to read to them. You should yourself continue, from time to time, to search out and purchase such

Cultivate in them a taste for reading.

books as will interest and edify them, from which you can read to them from time to time such stories and things as will interest them and make a deep and right impression on their

minds. But, beloved, **be sure to be judicious in the selection of books and stories.** Read nothing to them which you have not read over yourself. Consider what your children are, and ponder well what will be the natural influence of the material which you intend to read or to have read to them. And in all your selections have the moral bearings of whatever you in any way communicate to them strongly before your mind. **Be sure to let no one at any time give your children books, tell stories, read things, or sing songs, or in any way make communications to them, the moral tendency of which is injurious.**

Encourage them in employing themselves usefully; that is, in doing whatever may be beneficial to themselves or others. In the summer they may keep a little garden. At all times they may be involved in imitating the mechanical arts, making any pieces of machinery or tools for their own use,

little tables, chairs, bedsteads, and in doing, in short, whatever can contribute to the well-being of the species.

Make your children your confidential friends. In other words, you be the confidential friends and companions of your children. Accustom them to confide to you all their secrets and everything that passes in their minds. On multitudes of occasions, they have thought, and not infrequently you will find obvious suggestions from Satan, which, if known to you, might enable you to do them immense good. Now, if you accustom them to throw their little minds open to you, and to feel that you, in everything sympathize with them, they may have the most perfect confidence in you; you will naturally come to be, as **you ought to be, their confidant and their counsellor.** But if you will not give your time to this, if you turn them off and say, “Oh, I cannot attend to you,” or if you treat them harshly, or sarcastically; if you humiliate, embarrass, and treat them with unkindness, if you manifest no sympathy with and for them after repeated attempts to get at your heart, finding themselves baffled, they will turn sadly away, and by degrees seek sympathy and counsel from others. Thus you will lose your own influence over them and give them over to other influences that may ruin them. *How amazingly do parents err in these respects. Father, Mother, how sadly do you err, how grievously do you injure your children; no, how almost certainly you will ruin them, if you drive them by your own wickedness, or leave them to seek for confidential companionship away from home.*

Your brother in the bonds of the gospel,
Charles G. Finney.



Letter 7

October 21, 1840.

Dear Brethren and Sisters

I will continue my remarks on **what to attend to in the training of children** by urging you to **cultivate natural affection among your children**. Remember, natural affection is natural in no other sense than that *it is natural for children to love those who love them*. Therefore, what is generally called natural affection is cultivated affection. Therefore, great pains should be taken by parents to cultivate among children not only an affection for themselves, but for each other. Many parents, and fathers especially, treat their children in such a manner that their children have very little affection for them, and in many instances, it is to be feared that they have none at all. And then, perhaps, the children are reprov'd for the lack of natural affection. But parents should have consideration enough not to wonder at the absence of natural affection, as they call it, in their children, when they take little or no pains to be worthy of or to cultivate their affection.

Again, **encourage inquiry on the part of your children**. They come into a world of novelties. Before they are a week old, they may be seen staring around the room, as if they would inquire who, and what, and where they are. As soon as they are able to talk, they display the most intense desire to be instructed in regard to everything around them. Now parents, and all other who have the care of children, should encourage their inquiries and as far as is possible, or proper, give them satisfaction on every subject of inquiry. Give them reasons, discerningly detailed, as shall satisfy their little minds.

Parents will find their children inquisitive on those subjects that are by many supposed to be of too delicate a nature to be conversed upon by children. For

Remember that your children will be educated, either by yourself or by someone else. Either truth or error must possess their minds.

example, what constitutes a breach of the seventh commandment, and things of this nature. At a very early age, it is no doubt proper to inform children that they are yet too young to be instructed upon such subjects; but that, at a suitable time, you will give them the necessary information, requesting them at the same time not to converse with others than their parents about such things as these. But prior to the age of puberty, and before an explanation of such things will excite improper feelings, parents should, beyond all question, give their children necessary

instruction and caution upon all such subjects. When instruction is given, caution and admonition should be frequently repeated, accompanied with solemn prayer and instructions from the Word of God, so as to make a deep impression on the mind, and thoroughly to sensitize and awaken the conscience. Parents cannot neglect to do this with guilt in as much as this is a responsibility plainly enjoined upon parents by the authority of God, to teach their children the law and commandments of God. “And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.”

Parents, and the guardians of children, should never allow themselves to evade the inquiries of children by falsehood. For example, when an infant is born in the family, telling them the physician brought it, or that it was found in a hollow tree, or, in short, telling them anything false about it. There is nothing improper, unnatural, or indecent, in letting them know so much upon the subject, as that it was born of their mother. To tell children falsehoods about such things is only still further to excite their curiosity, and create the necessity either of telling them the truth or still more falsehoods.

I would rather pay any price at all within my means, or even to satisfy myself with one meal a day, to enable me to educate my children at home sooner than give them over to the influence of public schools as they are often arranged and conducted.

Be especially careful of the influences that act upon your children at public schools. It often seems to me that parents hardly dream of the amount of corruption, filthy language and conduct often witnessed in public schools. Little children of

the same, as well as of opposite sexes, deeply corrupting and defiling each other. These things are often practiced to a most shocking extent, without parents seeming even so much as to know of it. **I would rather pay any price at all within my means, or even to satisfy myself with one meal a day, to enable me to educate my children at home sooner than give them over to the influence of public schools as they are often arranged and conducted.**

Remember that your children will be educated, either by yourself or by someone else. Either truth or error must possess their minds. They will have instruction, and if you do not secure to them right instruction, they will have that which is false.

Prove yourselves in all respects worthy of the confidence of your children. Let them always witness in you the utmost integrity of character. Let them, in no instance, see in you the appearance of deceit, falsehood, or unkindness. Let your whole heart stand open to them; and in return, you will find that their little hearts will stand open to you. If you show yourselves worthy of their confidence, you can depend on having it.

Deal thoroughly with their consciences. As soon as they are able to be instructed on moral questions, give yourself to a thorough enlightening of their minds upon every precept of the law of God. Put their minds as fully as possible in possession of those truths that will make their consciences quick and as sharp as a two-edged sword.

Guard against the cultivation of so legal a spirit, as to drive them to despair when they have sinned. While you cultivate the most discriminating conscience, be sure also to instruct the little one thoroughly in respect to the plan of salvation by faith in Jesus Christ.

Add physical discipline to moral instruction. I have referred to this subject before, but wish to say in addition that it is doubtless one of the greatest errors in the education of children to overlook the fact that at that early age the discipline of the rod will often present to them a more powerful motive than can be brought to bear upon them by moral truth presented to their uninformed minds. The rod cannot safely be laid aside until the powers of the mind are so fully developed and the mind so thoroughly instructed that the

Add physical discipline to moral instruction.

whole range of moral truth may be brought to exert its appropriate influence upon the mind without the infliction of pain. It seems to me that some parents presume to be wiser than God, taking it upon themselves to decide that it is not wise to use the rod upon children. Remember Proverbs 19:18 and 23:13,14: ***“Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying.” “Withhold not correction from the child: for if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die. Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell.”***

Let them see that your religion is your life – that it is your joy and rejoicing from day to day, and not that it fills you with gloom and melancholy. Many professing Christians have such a kind of religion as to render them miserable rather than happy. They are almost constantly in bondage to sin, and consequently under a sense of condemnation. They are wretched, and exhibit this wretchedness daily before their children. This creates the impression on their little minds that religion is a gloomy thing, fit only for funerals and deathbeds; and only to be thought of on a near prospect of death. Now this is making the most false and injurious impression upon their minds that can be conceived. It is a libel upon the religion of Christ. But shocking to say, it is

almost as common as it is false. Your children should see that you are religious in everything, and that in all things you are not reluctantly but joyfully acquiescent in the will of God.

Let them see that your religion is your life.

By all means let them daily see that you are not creatures of appetite – that you are not given up to the pursuit of wealth or to the pursuit of fashion, not seeking worldly reputation or favour, that neither good eating, nor good drinking, nor good living, in any other sense than holy living, is the object at which you aim. Let them see that you are cheerful and contented with plain, simple food, that you are strictly temperate in all things, in respect to the quality and quantity of whatever you eat, drink, do, or say. **In short, let your whole life inculcate the impressive lesson that a state of entire consecration to God is at once the duty and the highest privilege of every human being.**

Be sure to pray much with and for them. Never punish them without praying with them. Whenever you give them serious admonition pray with them. Pray with them when they lie down and when they rise up. And enforce the lesson by your own example, that they are never to do anything without prayer.

Lay hold on the promises of God for them. Search the Bible for promises. Lay your Bible open before you. Kneel over it, and spread out the case of your children before God. Begin with the covenant of Abraham, and understand that God made the covenant as well with the children as with the parents. And remember that an inspired Apostle has said, *“The promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.”* Take the promise in Isaiah 44:3-5: *“I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground. I will pour my spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring: and they shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water courses. One shall say, I am the Lord’s; and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob; and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord, and surname himself by the name of Israel.”* Remember, that this promise was made more especially to the Church under the Christian dispensation, and respects the children of Jewish parents. Throw your souls into these promises, and wrestle until you prevail.

Be sure to pray much with and for them.

Your brother in the bonds of the gospel,
Charles G. Finney.

Letter 8

November 4, 1840.

Dear Brethren and Sisters

I will now call your attention to **some of the difficulties in the way of training up children in the way they should go.**

One difficulty is **a lack of the requisite information on the part of parents**, and especially on the part of **mothers**, to whose care and management they are principally committed. Thus far, as a general fact, female education has been so much neglected that only a few women have the necessary information for the proper training of children. There is a most sad deficiency in this respect, in the training of young women in reference to their being future mothers. Why, *the education of daughters is one of the most important things in the world.* That women should be educated is wholly indispensable to the salvation of the world. An enlightened and sanctified generation of mothers would exert the greatest influence upon future generations that ever was exerted upon human beings. It is one of “guilt’s blunders,” to educate the sons and allow the daughters to go with little or no education.

There is a most sad deficiency in the training of young women in reference to their being future mothers.

Another difficulty is **the frequent lack of education, and still more frequently of consideration, on the part of fathers.** Most fathers seem to be so much engaged in business, politics, or personal pleasure and recreation as to leave very little time for deep consideration in respect to their responsibility and influence with their children. This is all wrong; for if there is any thing that demands the attention and time of the father; it is those things that concern the well-being of his children. If he neglect his own household, whatever else he does he virtually “denies the faith, and is worse than an infidel.”

A lack of a sense of responsibility in both parents often prevents their training up their children in the way they should go. Without a keen and efficient sense of responsibility, parents will never do their duty to their children, however much they may love them.

A lack of agreement between the parents in regard to training their children becomes another difficulty; for if the parents do not agree upon the course to be pursued, if they do not lend to each other the whole weight of their influence, children will soon see it and parental influence will soon lose its power over them.

Also to be noted is **the ruinous notions that are prevalent among parents** in regard to training up children. Many parents have given themselves so little to consideration upon this subject that their opinions are little more than dreams and old wives' tales upon the subject of training children.

There is often a great difficulty on account of the **irrational thinking and habits of neighbourhoods in regard to their children**. If a parent who is anxious to preserve the morals of his children makes up his mind to keep them at home, it is often unjustly thought and said that it is because he thinks his children better than the neighbours' children. Or, if he keeps his children at home, the neighbours' children

are allowed to come in throngs to visit them. In this case they must be either sent home, at which their parents are often offended; or they must be allowed to remain, introducing the hazard of all those evils that arise from permitting

A lack of a sense of responsibility in both parents often prevents their training up their children in the way they should go.

children to mingle together without restraint. Or, to avoid this, the time of the father or mother, or of some adult member of the family, must be given up to superintend and accompany them in their play. It should be always understood by parents that they have no right to allow their children to go to a neighbour's house to play with his children without first obtaining the consent of the *parents* of such children. And, if they do, they ought to be willing to have them sent home at the discretion of those whose children they visit. Certainly no man has a right to inflict on me or my family the visit of his children without my knowledge or consent. Nor have I any right to do so to him. And I would much prefer my neighbour to turn his horse into my yard to feed without my consent, than to turn his children into my yard to play with my children without my consent. I say *much prefer*. I might say, almost *infinitely prefer*, as the horse would only devour the feed; but who can calculate the evil that my result from one hour's unrestrained and unobserved interaction of children with each other.

Another great evil is the recklessness of parents in respect to training their children. Many parents seem to allow their children to run here and there, to wander like a wild ass's colt. As long as their children are out of the way, it matters little to these parents where they are, or with whom they are keeping company. Now if there is anything in the universe that deserves the

severest reprehension, and I must add, the deepest damnation, it is such a reckless spirit in parents. It is tempting God. No language can describe its guilt.

A great lack of firmness on the part of parents in training their children is another great evil. By firmness I refer to: the government and discipline

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of their children; guarding them against evil influences from outside the home; resisting the commonly accepted practices of society that would subject their children to the kind and degree of contact with other children which will positively ruin them; and, deciding

against those fashions, in regard to dress and many other things, that tend to carry their children away from God.

Another difficulty in the way is **a lack of faith and deep piety in parents.** Many parents seem to have no practical confidence in the promises of the Bible in respect to their children. They have very little piety; and many of them seem not to know that there are such multitudes of exceeding great and precious promises upon which they may rely.

Another difficulty is **a lack of a sense of responsibility to the neighbourhood, in parents.** *An ill-managed family is the greatest nuisance that can infest any neighbourhood.* No man has a right to neglect the proper training of his children, and thereby render them a pest to society, any more than he has a right to build a mill dam that will flood a timbered country and thereby destroy the lives of the people. Now the former is a sin of an infinitely greater degree than the latter. And if a man deserves to be indicted for building such a mill dam, as is often the case, how much more does he deserve to be indicted for a common nuisance in allowing an uninstructed and unmanaged family to pour their abominations over the neighbouring children. Such a family ought to be regarded as a public nuisance. Such fathers and mothers ought to be worked with, advised, admonished and if need be, rebuked and even indicted. And the influence of such families should be as strictly and religiously guarded against as we would guard against the influence of the devil.

Another great difficulty is **the influence of the flesh in the present state of the human constitution.** The bodies of infants generally come into the world saturated with tea, coffee, and often with alcohol. They are born of mothers who have lived on the most stimulating kinds of diet, and from their very birth nurtured upon whatever is calculated to pamper their appetites and rasp their nervous system into a state of the utmost excitability. This promotes a precocious development of all their organs, and gives great power to their

animal propensities. It is almost sure to deliver them over, at a very early age, to the dominion of appetite and lust.

Your brother in the bonds of the gospel,
Charles G. Finney.

Letter 9

November 18, 1840.

Dear Brethren and Sisters

I now come to my fifth observation of Proverbs 22:6: If the condition is fulfilled, that is, **if a child is trained up in the way he should go, it is certain that when he is old, he will not depart from it.**

First of all, because **God said it.**

Secondly, because **He has laid the foundation of the certainty in the very nature of human beings.** It is a fact, well known to everybody, that human beings form *habits* by the repetition of any given course of conduct, or feeling, until their habits become too confirmed to be counteracted and put down by anything but Almighty Power. It is *the law of habit* that lies at the foundation of the difficulty of bringing sinners to abandon their sins. A long indulged and confirmed habit is, in the Bible, compared to the strength and stability of nature itself. God says, "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spot? Then can ye, who are *ACCUSTOMED* to do evil learn to do well." Here the law of habit is compared to the strength and permanency of nature itself. Now if a child be trained up in the way he should go, the

If a child be trained up in the way he should go, the uprightness of his future conduct is secured, not only by the promise and grace of God, but by this law of habit, which is laid deep in the foundation of his constitution.

uprightness of his future conduct is secured, not only by the promise and grace of God, but by this law of habit, which is laid deep in the foundation of his constitution.

Thus **God has put the destiny of the child into the hand of the parent**, who naturally loves it more than any other human being.

But again, God has established **the law of parental affection** for the benefit of the child, and so far as possible, to secure the training up of the child in the way it should go. I might quote a great many passages of scripture in confirmation of this doctrine; but if the text itself does not satisfy your mind, no multiplication of texts would do so.

Here I must notice *an objection* to the view of the subject I have taken. There is one common and grand difficulty, which has seemed to stumble Christians, in respect to their laying hold on the promises in regard to their children, and counting upon their being converted, sanctified, and saved with any sort of certainty. It is this: *Many good men have, in all ages, had shameless and reprobate children.* To answer this, I point out that good men are not always perfect in judgment, and therefore may be, and sometimes doubtless have been guilty of some primary error in training their children.

A great many good men have been so occupied with the concerns of the Church and the world as to pay comparatively little attention to the training of their own children. Their children have been neglected and therefore almost certainly lost. Whatever the case, when they have been neglected, they have not been trained up in the way they should go. So, the condition has not been fulfilled.

*God has put
the destiny of
the child into
the hand of the
parent.*

Many good men have lived in bad neighbourhoods, and found it nearly or quite impossible to train up their children in the way they should go without changing their locations. And although they saw the daily contact of their children was calculated to ruin them, and did, as a matter of fact, prevent their training them up in the way they should go, yet they have, probably from a sense of duty, remained where they were, to the destruction of their children. In such cases, the ruin of their children may be chargeable to their neighbours, because the influence of their neighbour's children prevented their bringing them up in the way they should go.

A few remarks must conclude what I have to say to parents at this time.

You see **the great importance of mothers' organizations.** Mothers must make the training of their children the subject of much consideration, study and prayer. If any mind should be well stored with knowledge, it is the mind of a mother. If anyone needs to understand philosophy – mental, natural, and moral – it is a mother. If anyone needs the wisdom of a serpent and the harmlessness of a dove, it is a mother. It is, therefore, all important that mothers should meet together, exchange views and books, and converse, pray, and devise every measure for training up their children in the way they should go.

There should also be fathers' organizations. *If there is anything important to the interests of this world, it is that children should be universally trained up rightly.* And how amazing it is that fathers are so slow to perceive the necessity of deep study and research, prayer, discussion, reading, and conversation on the subject of training their children. There are organizations among men for almost everything else, and yet, I hesitate not to say that organizations for this end are as necessary and important as for any other object whatever. Pious mothers are often at their wits' end to know what to do to secure the salvation of their children. They are greatly at a loss to know what course of training will most likely result in their sanctification. They go to their husbands; but their minds are engaged in everything else. They have paid very little or no attention to the subject of training their children. And, as a general thing, if a father governs his family at all, it is only by a legal system, more or less rigid, according to his natural temper, habits, and way of doing things. And, notwithstanding, the wife needs the counsel of her husband, and the father of her children; fathers are, as a general thing, little prepared to give them counsel. ***There should be a great deal of consultation between the father and mother of every family in relation to training the children, and a great deal of consideration and forethought.***

How amazing it is that fathers are so slow to perceive the necessity of deep study and research, prayer, discussion, reading, and conversation on the subject of training their children.

But another thing that renders both fathers' and mothers' organizations of the utmost importance is that there may be cooperation and unanimity in the neighbourhood on the subject of training children. If possible, every father and every mother should be enlisted in these organizations, so as to secure the right training of *all* the children in the neighbourhood. For, as I have said in a former letter, one unmanaged family will often, in spite of all that can be done, corrupt a whole neighbourhood. Parents, therefore, ought to be instructed throughout whole neighbourhoods in respect to training their children. For if some families of children are allowed to run about and visit, both by day and by night, it will be difficult to restrain other children; and just as moral influences reveal themselves quickly, so the results will spread as naturally and as certainly as a contagious disease. It is, therefore, of the utmost importance to secure the attention and hearty cooperation of every parent in the neighbourhood.

Permit me here again to revert to a topic, which I have mentioned in a former letter, and say again, that it is of the utmost importance that care should be

taken to **secure the right kind of domestic help**. As you value the souls of your children, do not receive into your family any filthy girl or young man, or old man, that will tell falsehoods to your children, tell them vile stories, use vulgar language, or in any way corrupt their morals or their manners. I would sooner have the plague in my family than to have such influences as these. *I would not allow the nearest relative I have on earth to remain in my family, unless he would refrain from corrupting my children.*

I would not allow the nearest relative I have on earth to remain in my family, unless he would refrain from corrupting my children.

Again, see the great importance of selecting the right kind of Sunday school teachers.

You see the great importance of selecting the right kind of books and periodical literature for you children. There are many books and periodicals, and those too that are extensively

circulated, that I regard as of a very pernicious and highly dangerous tendency. They are calculated to form anything but right thinking and character among children.

All the domestic arrangements of every family should have a special regard to the training of their children. The right training of them should be a prime objective, and every other interest of the family should be made to bend to this. The hours of retiring in the evening and rising in the morning, the hours at which meals are taken, kinds of food, and in short **all** the habits of the family should have a direct reference to the right training of the children. **Nothing should be allowed to enter into the family arrangements that has a tendency to injure their health, their intellect or their heart.** No company should at any time be received and entertained whose conduct may endanger the manners or morals of the children.



Mothers should never, under any pretence whatever, neglect their own children for the purpose of attending to other matters. Mother, remember that nothing can compensate for the neglect of your duty to your children. This is your first great indispensable duty, to train your children in the way they should go. Attend to this then, whatever else you neglect.

Do not suppose that you can attend to this without **being yourself devotedly pious**. *No mother has begun to do her duty to her children, who is not supremely devoted to God, and is not endeavouring to train them up for God.*

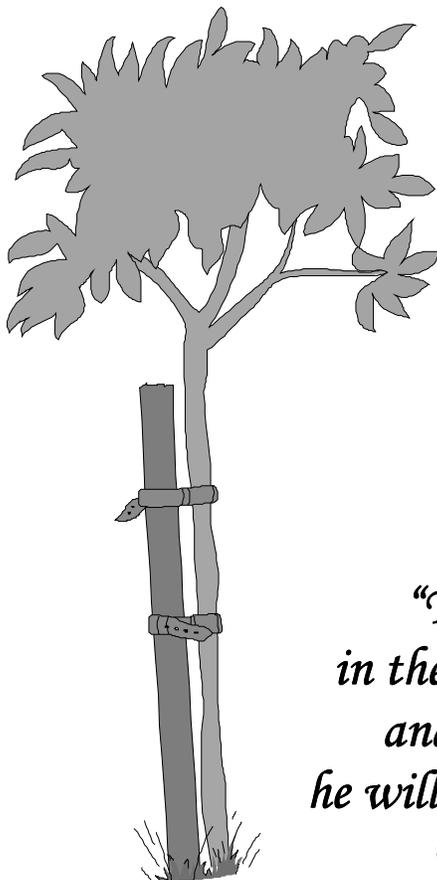
Some mothers will **neglect their children** under the pretence of going to meetings and especially attending seminary, leaving it, as they say, “with

God,” to take care of their children while they do His work. They seem to think the time spent in taking care of their children is almost thrown away. And even some seem unwilling to have children because they shall have to “throw away” so much time in taking care of them. Now woman, you ought to know that a leading objective of your life is to bear and train up children for God – time which you spend in this employment is as far as possible from lost.

Other women, instead of neglecting their children to attend to their devotions, are **neglecting their devotions** almost altogether, and pretending to discharge their duty to their children while they are neglecting God and religion. Now this is equally erroneous in the other direction. No parent can train up children in the way they should go, without maintaining a spirit of deep devotion to God on the one hand, and on the other hand, without paying the most rigorous and unremitting attention to their personal training – physical, intellectual, and moral. Mothers should be emphatically “keepers at home.” While the children are yet minors, mothers should consider it their business to train them up in the way they should go.

***Consult God
at every step***

But in doing this **they should consult God at every step**, and should not imagine that they begin to do their duty any further than they **consult the Word of God and live under the constant guidance of the Holy Spirit.**



If you would train your children in the way they should go, **be invincibly firm in training your own family, let other families do as they may.**

Remember that if you resist the true light, or neglect your duty to your children, God “will visit the iniquities of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children’s children, unto the third and fourth generations.”

Your brother in the bonds of the gospel,
Charles G. Finney.

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

3. THE CONVERSION OF CHILDREN



(A lecture delivered by Charles G. Finney on December 16, 1850, at the Tabernacle, Moorfields.)

The family is, without question, the greatest influence in the whole government of God concerning the destinies of the world. The parents' influence is no doubt the supreme influence. God designed it should be so; this was one reason for establishing the family relationship. It was not only to secure among human beings temporal blessings – the care and nurture of the young – but that parents should exert a spiritual influence over their offspring. The great end God had in view was their spiritual well-being. This was one of His great designs, no doubt; but it is not always kept in view by parents; therefore the great object of the Almighty in establishing the family relationship, at least as far as children are concerned, is defeated.

Remember that this influence, whatever it may be, occurs very early in the lives of children, and is generally decisive one way or the other. The decision that is made in later life, in most cases, is merely the development of what has been thus commenced. The mother begins the work. She heads the undertaking and exerts more influence over the child at first than anyone – or anything – else. If she understands her responsibility, if she is a pious woman, and if she avails herself of the facilities God has put into her hands, she will be, under God, the greatest possible blessing to her child. Children naturally have more confidence in their father and mother than in anyone else, and their position gives them an influence over the youthful mind – for good or for evil – with which no other influence in the world can compare. The results of this influence are formed very early in the child's life, and continue to develop ever after.

The family is, without question, the greatest influence in the whole government of God concerning the destinies of the world. The parents' influence is no doubt the supreme influence.

Parents have a mighty influence over little children. They lead them to their earliest thoughts and give them most of their first ideas. *The spirit of the parent teaches the child a great deal, even before his words can teach him.* The example and influence of the parent is not confined to mere verbal teaching. *Everything he does has an influence over the child; every word the parent says, even before the child can fully tell the meaning of words, has an*

influence over him or her. When the child comes to understand language, the little mind weighs all that it hears and thus the child is educated.

Parents have a mighty influence over little children.

Now if the parents' influence is of a worldly character, if there is nothing in the parent that early leads the child to think about its soul and God, and if that child does not see in the parent a concern for his own soul, the child's education has begun in the wrong direction. If the parent neglects to let his child see his concern for that child's salvation in very early life; if the child does not see that the Christian faith is prominent in the parents' mind; *if he does not see that finding and doing the will of God is the parents' life, and that glorifying God is the parents' chief end, the child will know the truth of it.*

He will understand it, and this truth will have its influence over him, much earlier than parents are in the habit of believing. I have known children whose temperament was such that when very young they talked much about the Christian faith, and were constantly asking questions about it. So thoroughly were their little minds engrossed with the subject that they scarcely seemed to know that there were any other places than those to which their parents were accustomed to go for worship. Even when a stranger comes in, they ask, "Is that person a Christian?"

The early conversion of children depends upon the parents' sowing Christian truth among the earliest thoughts developed in the minds of their children. Curiously, even the smallest children observe when parents pray and recognize God in all their ways. It is remarkable to see the effect of this on their young minds. As they see their parents pray, they get their little chairs, kneel down and try to pray as well. Their mother has been in the habit of taking them and praying with them from their very birth.

As soon as they can understand her, she leads them into her prayer closet, reads the Bible to them, talks about the Saviour, and prays with them daily. Sometimes several times a day. Consequently, you will see them get their little chairs, and have their little meetings, and go down on their knees and pray for themselves. One mother recently wrote to me: "Little Willy gets his chair, kneels down, and clasping his little hands, says, "Oh Lor' (he could not articulate Lord)." Every little child would begin to pray if he had such a mother.

Now the tendency of all this is to keep the little one's thoughts awake. **He will perceive, from the spirit and example of the parents that Christianity is something of supreme importance.** God comes to be in all his little

thoughts. **He sees that Christianity is the great concern of the parents' life.**

He sees that Christianity is the great concern of the parents' life.

Where this is the case, unless there is some error in the teaching or conception of the parent that gets in the way and prevents this influence from producing its natural results, I do not believe there is one case in a thousand in which children are not very early converted. I have known pious parents who have trained their children on the subject of Christianity, but who, from holding certain erroneous views, have laid stumbling blocks in their way. The parents told them some things that were false, which consequently proved injurious to them.

Parents should understand that there is only one of two courses open to them with regard to their children. They must either exert a worldly influence (which would give their little minds an entirely wrong direction), **or a spiritual one** (which will set them after Christian faith). If the proper spiritual influence is exerted, the child's mind will early be caused to ferment on the subject of Christianity. His earliest thoughts will be about God the Father, faith and Jesus Christ. The earliest influences they can remember will be convictions of sin, heaven and hell, Christ and eternity. These thoughts will put their little minds into a state of effervescence. *These influences commence before the child has left the lap of his loving mother.*

Parents should understand that... they must either exert a worldly influence, or a spiritual one.

Things Parents Should Avoid

Be sure you don't stumble on the idea that "you can't expect" the early conversion of your children. A worthy deacon from Birmingham called on me a few hours ago at Doctor Campbell's. The members of his family have all been converted and united to the church. His youngest child is only about ten years of age. He told me that he had been introduced to the deacon on one of the city churches, who had a large family, not a single member of whom has been converted.

On being apprized of the happy condition of the Birmingham family, the second deacon said, "Well you know we cannot give grace to our children."

"Oh, no," replied the Birmingham brother, "but we can use the means in our possession to make them Christians."

When the fact came out that the youngest child was only ten years old, the city deacon shook his head “Ah!” he said, “I don’t believe in forcing people into the church.”

“Nor do I,” was the response. “I did all I dare do, and said all I dare say. But what could anyone do or say, except let her profess her faith in Christ, as other people do?”

One of the greatest stumbling blocks is cast in the way of families by the idea that to expect the early conversion of children is unreasonable. “The idea of a ten-year-old child being converted! Why we cannot believe it!” But suppose I were to preach the funeral sermon of such a child and to say, “He is gone to hell, no doubt.”

“What makes you say so?” you would ask. “Why, surely you do not think that the child is a sinner at ten years of age?”

Indeed he is, and to think otherwise is the greatest and most dangerous error that can be entertained. *If a child has intelligence enough to sin, has it not intelligence enough to be converted? If not, what becomes of children old enough to sin, but not old enough to be converted?* The fact is, it is easier for the Holy Spirit to convert a child, than it is for Him to convert a man.

Now, what is in the way of the child’s conversion? When the child’s little conscience first wakes up, sin takes such a hold of it, that it goes into the greatest agony at the thought of it. This is natural. For the little conscience has not yet been trifled and tampered with. Now cannot the Spirit of God teach such children? Cannot those who understand the nature of faith in the parent understand the nature of faith in God? Cannot those who understand parental protection and love understand the protection and love of their heavenly Father? Cannot those who know so well how to depend on a parent depend on God?

It is less likely they will be converted later, if you allow them to grow up and form bad habits. Bad habits are more easily corrected if you use the best and earliest means to prevent their formation at the start.

They can surely do these things more easily then, than if they wait until they have learned to mistrust everybody and everything from contact with the world. Cannot they, whose tender hearts are so ready to trust, be taught to exercise faith in Christ? This is the most likely time in their lives. ***It is less likely they will be converted later, if you allow them to grow up and form***

bad habits. Bad habits are more easily corrected if you use the best and earliest means to prevent their formation at the start.

The fact is, the Spirit of God is always ready to cooperate with the judicious use of means – and just as ready to cooperate with children as with adults. But parents who do not believe this to be the case allow their children to grow up and escape from under their influence. I have observed that just as far as parents have intelligently used the best means in their power to secure the early conversion of their children, they have to that same extent been successful in their endeavours. But when the contrary has been the case, when no such influence has been exerted, I have not been surprised to find that the children have grown up to manhood and womanhood unconverted.

Sometimes I have asked parents if they ever made it a great pressing business to secure the early conversion of their children. “Oh, no; we never set ourselves to make it a pressing business to secure them for God.” “You don’t? Then is it any wonder that they are not converted?” **Multitudes must admit that they never in good earnest set about promoting the conversion of their children and securing it under God.** I could tell you of numbers of cases where such sons and daughters have turned out badly.

Many entertain ideas of God’s sovereignty that are a great stumbling block in the way of the early conversion of their children. The man who said, “We cannot give grace to our children,” doubtless had an idea that God’s sovereignty was connected with conversion in a way that he associates it with nothing else. Such beliefs are folly, but common nonetheless. In every other matter such people exert themselves as though there were some connection between means and ends in the government of God. But they assume that there is no connection between means and ends in the act of conversion, that God sets aside all the laws by which He invariably operates at other times, exercising a peculiar kind of sovereignty in conversion.

Parents do not seem to feel the necessity of applying themselves to secure the early conversion of their children with as much earnestness as they seek their recovery when sick.

I have been very surprised to find that multitudes have such ideas of God’s sovereignty and agency that they can recognize His hand in nothing short of an absolute miracle. For example, when a person goes and talks to a child in such a manner as to make a deep impression on its young mind, the impression is made accordingly; the child awakens to a deep sense of sin and importance of faith in Jesus. But then the parent says, “Let him alone now, and we will see whether you have been merely playing upon the child’s

feelings, or whether the Spirit has been cooperating.” The fact is, the child is talked to in the very way to produce the effect predicted.

If a preacher so discourses as to affect the minds of his audience in a certain way, and accordingly they are so affected, some say, “Ah! God has had nothing to do with it!” They suppose there can be no perceivable relation between the means and the ends in order to have God recognized. But, if there really is any natural and necessary connection between the means and the end, then why is not God recognized – unless He intervenes in such a manner so as to set aside this connection, and causing an effect entirely inconsistent with it?

*I always expect to see
God work in
accordance with His
own established laws*

For example, if you sit down and converse with a child about playing marbles, who could expect that such conversation would be followed by any religious result? And if a minister got into a pulpit and preached about politics, would you expect anybody to be converted? It seems therefore necessary that the subject of the discourse should have a Christian leaning in order to expect a Christian effect. A discourse concerning some historical facts that are in no way relevant to the sinner’s duty would not be expected to achieve the desired results. The preacher must press the matter home, till the sinner fully feels that he is virtually saying, “Thou art the man.” “Oh!” you say, “you have been playing upon his sympathies.”

So where are we to stop? **The fact is you do not, you cannot, expect God to convert anyone when there is not sort of relevant means used.** And if some relevancy, even according to your own ideas of divine sovereignty, is necessary in the means employed, pray how much relevancy is absolutely indispensable? When God works, He can never be expected to commit any infraction of the laws He had ordained for the government of the universe. If He operates according to His own laws, why should it be doubted that He is operating at all? **For my part, I always expect to see God work in accordance with His own established laws, and I recognize Him all the more when I see how nicely He adapts the means to the end.**

He created mind and established its relations to truth, and when He presents truth to the mind, and it is received in accordance with principles He has ordained, am I not to recognize the hand of God in them?

Parents do not seem to feel the necessity of applying themselves to secure the early conversion of their children with as much earnestness as they seek their recovery when sick. A little error in nursing will often have a

most dangerous influence on the health of the patient, and a little error in instruction may induce a serious turn in the thoughts, and perhaps present a fatal stumbling block. If God allows things to take this course in the physical world, He will permit it in the moral world. If certain laws are violated in the physical world, and God allows the thing to take its natural course, why should He adopt a different policy toward the moral world? This is the very way in which God's sovereignty really manifests itself.

If you look round on the natural world, you will see that God permits immense results to turn on the most trifling violation of natural laws. A ship will sink, though it be filled with devoted missionaries, if the natural law is neglected. In fact, if they have neglected to take compass or chart, or some such necessary precaution on the pretence of trusting the sovereignty of God, they have in reality been tempting God by not taking care to adjust

People should know that they can as certainly ruin the soul, as they can kill the body.

themselves to His physical laws. And that ship, although it is filled with missionaries, will go to the bottom! And in such a case, perhaps, the salvation of thousands of souls might be suspended on that ship's reaching its destination safely.

It is the same in the moral world, let mother or father make a mistake, either moral or physical; in one instance it is death to the body – and in the other, to the soul. This is the teaching of the Bible, and it is borne out by experience. ***People should know that they can as certainly ruin the soul, as they can kill the body.***

Care should be taken not to cause the child to stumble through bad government or no government at all. Some govern their families too much. Others not at all. Often the spirit of the whole family government is such as to make a false impression. It is not the firm spirit of God's government. It is either despotic, or not government at all. In other cases, there is one half the time too much rigor and the other half too much laxity.

Oh! That little will! If unsubdued, what will it cost that child to be converted, if it ever is converted!

All such impressions affect these children in connection with Christianity. If the general impression of your deportment should suggest that you are "in God's stead" to them, you cannot underestimate the importance of early seizing their little minds and wills, bringing them under proper control. **Oh! That little will! If unsubdued, what will it cost that child to be converted, if it ever is converted!** *When parents permit the will to pass unsubdued, their little ones get into such a habit of self-will, as to render it extremely doubtful whether they will ever*

bow either to God or man. At the least, it will render it far more difficult for them to do so than it would have been had a contrary course been pursued.

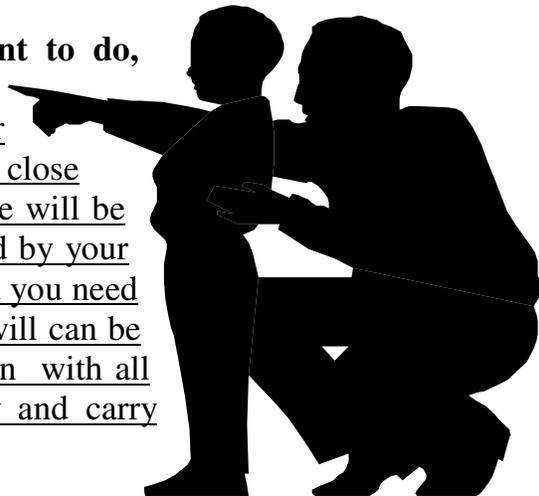
When parents permit the will to pass unsubdued, their little ones get into such a habit of self-will, as to render it extremely doubtful whether they will ever bow either to God or man.

When I see children agonize at their position, unable fully to yield and come into the kingdom, I always suspect they have never been properly taught to yield to parental authority in their childhood. *It is of the utmost importance that parents take hold of this will as soon as it develops itself, and to exert the first moral influence on it under God's moral government, as a representative of the Almighty. Take hold of that little will as a sacred trust under God, holding it by parental authority and love so kindly and firmly that it is lost in your will and controlled by it. Even a look or a motion of the hand, when understood, should be immediately and willingly obeyed.*

When the time comes that the child can understand about God, give the whole weight of your will to lead the child's will to submit to God. Did you ever think what a powerful influence you possess? Where the little will from the first has been held under control, and the child is old enough to be talked to about God, bring all your powers to bear upon it to induce it to yield itself up to God, and you will find yourself, as it were, almost handing your child over to God.

You are not to suppose that because your influence is used as a means, that God has nothing to do with it. He has placed you where you are *in order to use you.* He has stationed you there to watch over the development of that little will, and kindly to control it so that in due season you may hand it over to God through the teaching of the Holy Spirit.

This is the great work you are sent to do, Fathers! Let your parental heart draw the little one close, and let your mind draw the little mind into close connection with yours, and let the little will be as far as possible subject to and guided by your will. Do it prayerfully before God, and you need not fear failure. As soon as the little will can be influenced by Christian truth, pour it in with all the weight of your parental authority and carry that will to God.



***He has placed you
where you are in
order to use you.***

A Christian lady once informed me that she had found her daughter under conviction of sin. “I have so trained her,” she said, “from her infancy, that she regards my will as her law; a look from me is enough. I did not at first understand properly my relation to her with reference to her conversion; but as soon as the thought came before my mind that I could exert a direct and powerful influence in the matter, and that the Spirit of God would use that influence, I took the child with me to my closet and prayed with her. I there showed her that it was her duty to yield up herself to Christ. I talked and prayed with her, and urged the matter in this light: ‘No w, my child, you never hesitate to obey your mother in other things, and I want you now at once to renounce yourself, and give yourself fully up to Christ.’”

Before they left the closet, she said she had reason to believe that her child had really given herself up to God. She said, “Never before had I any idea that the Spirit of God would so use this influence.”

Now observe; this was not any such authority as would threaten to whip the child! – that is neither prudent nor necessary here; proper parental influence can carry the little mind with amazing power. When the whole weight of this parental influence is concentrated upon the single issue: “My child, give your heart this moment to Christ,” what human influence can be more powerful? **And this, of course, is backed up by the work of God, and seconded by the Spirit of God – in addition to that will to which the child has always been accustomed to yield.** I have seen the infinite importance of this not only in my own but in many other families.

Parents are very apt to stumble their children by their temper. A temper destroys the confidence of the child in their parent’s piety, and causes him to doubt their sincerity; and thus the parent loses all hold on him. *Few things more surely and speedily destroy the influence of a parent than to scold them peevishly, or even to speak to them snappishly, and call them hard names.* Anything that savours of ill temper has a dreadfully powerful influence in leading the child away from Christ and counteracting well meant endeavours.

Parents must be careful to feel and manifest concern for their children’s spiritual welfare; if they do not, a young child cannot be expected to feel a concern for himself. Suppose a parent felt truly concerned to keep a child out of bad company, he would remind the child often, keeping it always before the mind of that child. If concerned for his health, he would keep that before the little one, and teach him how to take care of himself. It is just the same with anything else of this kind. *Now the parent ought to feel and manifest a supreme interest in the child’s salvation.*

Let all your conversation plainly indicate that it is so. Let your children see that health, worldly prospects, and everything else must be subordinate to Christian faith. Do these things, and you are beginning right; and by a natural law you can hardly fail to see their early conversion.

Parents often manifest great error in not seeing to it that their children are punctual and regular at public worship. I have been in a great many churches, and have known the history of a great many families. Sometimes I have found households in which the children were both punctual and regular. At chapel pews where some families sat, you would see that all the children, able to come out, were always no more expected to absent themselves from chapel when their parents went, than from the dinner table. *They were not allowed to wander about,* their parents not knowing where they went. Where this is allowed parents have little or no Christian influence over them.

Parents often manifest great error in not seeing to it that their children are punctual and regular at public worship.

Parents must also guard against laxity with reference to the due observance of the Lord's Day. It is not right to throw everything into the hands of the sovereignty of God, assuming that that alone will convert them, whatever influence may be brought to bear upon them; a more damning error never entered the world. Truly, other influences may possibly convert the child, and as other influences may save the child in sickness, but no thanks to the parents in either case.

There is another fault of parents I must notice. They do not take sufficient pains to provide a happy home; the children, not finding friendship and sympathy at home, run about elsewhere in search of it. Their home is not a happy one, and they consequently rove about and come under bad influences. Now a happy home is one of the principal things at which a parent should aim. The home should be rendered so pleasant that the child would rather remain there than go about.

They do not take sufficient pains to provide a happy home.

Dear parents! Are you aware how often a child's life is embittered by the neglect of this? They must be made happy, and have something to love at home, or they will naturally seek company and happiness somewhere else. Oh! That parents would see the necessity of using this and every other means they can devise to secure and retain their proper influence over the little minds! They ought to feel toward you so that they would sooner tell you than anybody else their little thoughts.

Fathers are more apt to neglect this than mothers. Children often seem afraid of their fathers, so that they cannot tell him the workings of their little minds. He treats them with a kind of tolerance, and manifest no interest in their little concerns; and as he does not sympathize with them, they therefore turn to someone else, fall under some other influence, and are gone! How many parents who have had to lament the evil conduct of their children, could look back and attribute their children's behaviour largely to this! The father has been sharp and has not kept his influence over their little hearts.

Oh! How often Christian people, and even ministers, have been so busy with other matters that they have neglected their own children in this respect, shutting them out from their hearts, so they have fallen into other hands, and under evil influences.

Now, dear parents, one of the first things God wishes you to do is to secure and retain the affections and confidence of your children, and to use your influence over them for Him. In order to keep their hearts open to you, let yours be open to them. You will surely secure your end if you do so. But, on the contrary, if they are afraid to approach you because you keep them at such a distance, then, if they are not ruined, it is no thanks to you.

Instead of telling you all the temptations and trials they fall into – all their plans, and the books they read – instead of feeling that in you they have advisers who can and will sympathize with them, they will manifest the same reserve to you on these matters that you have displayed to them and you have, therefore, failed in a vital point.

Another point I wish to notice is **the evil practice of allowing children to wander about where they will in the evening.** As I have said, if you would

Now, dear parents, one of the first things God wishes you to do is to secure and retain the affections and confidence of your children, and to use your influence over them for Him. In order to keep their hearts open to you, let yours be open to them.

make the home what it should be, they would never want to do this. They would rather be with you than anywhere. But if you allow them to go out and keep late hours, they are sure to go in the way of temptation.

I have often seen the injurious influence of holidays being too numerous and long; parents make a great deal of difference at such times with regard to their control over their children. They are allowed to do things then, because

it is a holiday, which you would not permit at other times, and this leads them astray. The holidays are near; what will be your influence over them during that period? Parents! Think of this.



4. CONCLUSION



Letter 10

January 29, 1840.

Beloved Brethren and Sisters

In the last volume of the *Evangelist*, I addressed several letters to the converts of the recent great revivals. Among other things I pointed out to them some of the reasons why they had not grown more in grace. I then designed, long before this time, to address you upon the subject of **your influence over those converts**, but have been prevented until now by the pressure of multiplied duties.

And now, beloved brethren, permit me in the tender affections of Jesus Christ to approach your consciences and your hearts upon this subject. In some places it has been somewhat common for the old professors to complain of the spiritual state of many who were hopefully converted in those revivals. And I have no doubt there has been much reason for complaint. But, beloved, let me inquire: ***How much of the guilt of their present state lies at your own door?*** What, as a matter of fact, has been your real influence over them? It must have been great in every case, either to make them better or worse – to encourage and press them forward, or to depress, discourage, and hinder them in their Christian course.

When they were converted in the midst of you, they were like newborn infants thrown into your arms as nursing fathers and nursing mothers, to watch over, nurture, and guide in the paths of life. Now have you not these

***How much of the
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own door?***

responsibilities, and what account can you give of the manner in which you have treated these young children of God? It is probable you will not deny that you were bound to exercise as much watchfulness over them as if God had really committed to your care a company of children in a state of infancy to train up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Now, suppose there *had* been committed to you the training up of a great number of children and you had paid very little attention to them – permitting them to go where they pleased by day and by night – to choose their own involvements, books, companions, and activities, and to spend their whole time according to their

own inclinations, with very little counsel or reproof administered by you. And suppose that they had, as would almost certainly be the case, fallen into temptation, and the snare of the devil, and become anything but what was desirable. Now suppose also that you had been under solemn oath and covenant commitments, entered into in the house of God over the broken emblems of the dying body and shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, to watch over them with all fidelity and tenderness, to seek their purity, peace, and edification. And in spite of your promises, you had conducted yourself toward them as in the case I have supposed above. Now who can describe or even conceive the guilt of such persons under such circumstances? And if these children should become vagabonds, and outlaws, and pirates, and everything that is injurious to themselves and to their country, who would not hold you in a great measure chargeable with these results? And now suppose that under such circumstances, instead of blaming yourself, you should complain of them behind their backs, and talk among yourselves of the state into which they have fallen – would not such conduct in you be regarded as an instance of almost unparalleled depravity?

Now, beloved brethren, I suppose that a great many of the converts of these revivals have, defying the pernicious influence of some of you, stood as high in point of spirituality as any members of your churches. They have been led by the grace of Christ, against all the unfavorable influences that many of you have exerted over them, to maintain a life of comparative devotion and zeal in the cause of Christ. Others of them have been discouraged, and stumbled, and finally have been turned back by the tide of influence poured down upon them by the example and instruction of old professors of religion. (*By “professors of religion” Finney means those who profess to be religious, “professing Christians,” not teachers of religion in an educational setting.*)

And now let me inquire, **have you not taught them, either by precept or example or perhaps both, that they must expect to backslide and become cold in religion?**

Have not your worldly spirit and temper, your carnal and sensual lives, been the most impressive lessons that you could urge upon them to lead them to backsliding and spiritual death? Indeed, have you not explicitly taught them that they must expect to backslide? A brother is with me now who says the first thing told him after his conversion was that he must expect to backslide and lose the peace of God which then filled his soul. And this was by an aged man who had been for years a Christian. For weeks this was the great lesson impressed upon him, and it finally contributed in a great measure to draw him away from God into a state of backsliding and sin.

Let me ask again, **have you sought out young converts and conversed with them often upon spiritual subjects? Have you encouraged and**

strengthened them in the service of God and warned them against temptation?

Have you earnestly and affectionately inquired into the detail of their lives, into their business operations, and after their books and associates?

In short, have you looked discriminatingly into those influences with which they are surrounded, and faithfully pointed out and warned them against whatever might naturally lead them astray?

Have you daily made them the subject of prayer?

Have you carefully attended all **the prayer meetings** yourself, and taken pains to ascertain who among them attended such meetings and who stayed away? Have you gone anxiously but kindly and often to those who stayed away and inquired into the reason?

Have you sought out young converts and conversed with them often upon spiritual subjects? Have you encouraged and strengthened them in the service of God and warned them against temptation?

Have you taken the alarm at any indication of backsliding among them, and done your utmost to reclaim and save them from injuring the cause of Christ?

Have you been careful that all your influence and example should be such as would naturally have a salutary and heavenly influence over them?

Have you carefully copied the example of Christ who says “For their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth?”.

Have you avoided all parties of pleasure which you think Christ or an apostle would have avoided? **Have you abstained from all those things and ways which had a natural tendency to divert them from walking with God?**

Or have you, on the other hand, done the very things which have seduced them from the paths of holiness, and been the means of bringing them into the very state of which you complain? I hear that some of you have attended wine and card parties, that you have been deeply engaged in party politics, and have entered deeply into the speculations of the day, and in many respects have done all that was calculated to stumble and destroy the infant piety of young converts.

Now, my beloved brethren, I would get down at your feet and humbly beseech you to look at your responsibilities and guilt in these things. When young converts read this letter will not their minds revert to many of you as the

Are you acquainted with the real spiritual state of these converts in your midst?

instruments of their deplorable downfall? They may be too much hardened at present to deplore deeply their state, or very sincerely or deeply to blame you. But do let me inquire what you think will be their views of your influence if God in mercy should ever reclaim them from their backsliding? Will they not look with as much abhorrence and indignation upon your influence over them as they would upon the influence of Satan himself?

And now, my brother, my sister, have you not much to do to counteract the bad influence you have exerted over them? Have you not a mountain weight of sin to repent of, and confess to God and to them in this matter?

Is it not your bounden duty at once to take up the stumbling blocks out of the way, to confess your dreadful breaches of covenant, to humble yourself and cover yourself as with sackcloth and ashes in the sight of God and in their sight, to deeply mourn over your own sin, and over them as having been led astray by you? *Do you not know, do not they know, does not the world around you know and does not God know the vast amount of evil influence you have exerted over them? And do you ever expect to be forgiven without confessing and forsaking this iniquity?* They have naturally regarded you as fathers and mothers in Israel. Your example has had that influence that parents have over children.

And now, beloved, **are you acquainted with the real spiritual state of these converts in your midst?** Will you not go to them and honestly inquire what influence your example has had over them? Will you not beg of them to be candid, and frank, and tell you the real truth in the case? Will you take up the subject seriously, and inquire on your knees before God what has been the moral tendency of your deportment, and spirit, and manner of life in its bearing upon their piety?

And let me ask again, have not the efforts of your pastors and religious teachers been in a great measure counteracted and nullified by a spirit and temper in you that has been the direct opposite of that urged by them?

At present I will say no more upon this subject, but leave these questions and suggestions to be deeply pondered by you, and will go down upon my own knees, and beg God to search out the deep foundations of your heart upon these subjects.

Will you also take this letter and retire to your closet, and read it upon your knees, praying and asking God to make an application of every sentence to your own heart?

Will you, my brother, my sister, do this honestly, earnestly, and repeatedly, until you get a knowledge of your own standing in the sight of God upon this most solemn subject? May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ incline you to do it, and to His name shall be the praise.

Your brother,
C. G. Finney

P.S. ***Will you, dear brethren, and sisters, consider this letter as addressed to each of you by name; and will you **hand it to as many** of that class of persons to whom it is addressed **as you conveniently can**, and request them also to consider it as a private communication from me to them?***

Will you?!



5. RECOMMENDED READING



*Murray, Andrew. **How To Bring Your Children To Christ.** Springdale: Whitaker House, 1984. ISBN 0-88368-135-8.* This book was written by a man of God who experienced true Revival in his ministry. He's known for his humble holy life in fellowship with God and for his many devotional books on the victorious Christian life. His life and many godly descendants testify to the truth of what he wrote in this book – which deals in 31 chapters with key Biblical principles of raising children for Christ. In this practical Biblical guide to parenting, Andrew Murray shows the essential qualities of being a parent who loves the Lord. He also shows how to build your family in the Lord, alleviate stressful family situations, direct your children's steps, see the needs of your family met, obtain the fulfilment of God's promises, offer godly advice to your children, and lead you children to Salvation. In it you will find Biblical advice and God's promises on how you can (through God) shape and mould the lives of your children for Him and for eternity.

*McClung, Floyd Jr. **God's Man in the Family.** Eugene: Harvest House Publishers, 1994. ISBN 0-89081-881-9.* Floyd and his family served God, as part of YWAM, in Afghanistan, the red light district of Amsterdam and in America. He knew and exhibited "The Father Heart of God" (which is also the title of the first book that he wrote) on the mission field and in his family. In "God's Man in the Family" he discusses the 9 non-negotiables in raising children in God's way. It is not an easy thing to raise godly children when you stay in a red light district, with a satanist church next to you. He shares that it is possible through God and by following His way of doing it.

*Schaeffer, Edith. **What is a Family?** London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1975. ISBN 0-340-20684-5.* Edith Schaeffer and her husband was used by God to start L'Abri Fellowship in Switzerland. Living together in a Christian community, and being a godly wife, mother and grandmother, prepared her to write this very practical book on what it means to be a true family. In it she describes the family as "A Changing Life Mobile", "An Economically Balanced Environment", "The Birthplace of Creativity", "A Formation Center for Human Relationships", "A Shelter in the Time of Storm", "A Perpetual Relay of Truth", "An Economic Unit", "An Educational Control", "A

Museum of Memories”, “A Door That Has Hinges and a Lock”, and as “Blended Balances” – to God’s glory.

*White, Paul Dr, and Clifford Warne. **Jungle Fables and Polar Parables.** Hong Kong: New Life Literature Ltd., 1981. Distributed by New Life Literature Ltd., Spur Road 4, I.P.Z., Katunayake, Sri Lanka.* There are 12 stories in the series. These animal stories (in comic format) are action-packed and grips the attention of young and old. They illustrate key concepts and truths from the Word of God, with a clear message of salvation through Christ. Here are some of the titles : Little leopards become big leopards (and big leopards kill!); The great wall (of sin); Safe as poison; Monkey in a lion’s skin; The helpfulness of hippo; Wisdom of donkeys; etc. We strongly recommend these books.

*Johnston, Jill. **You can Change the World.** Carlisle: OM Publishing, 1992. ISBN 1-85078-108-7.* This is the children’s version of “Operation World”. It is excellent for children (and adults!) to inform them about the needs of people groups in the world and how to pray for them. The author arranged 26 countries and 26 people groups (where little is known about God’s love shown to us in Jesus) in alphabetical order. Each section starts with a story about someone from that country or people group. The stories, pictures, information and suggestions for prayer are very helpful.

*Carmichael, Amy. **Kohila (The Shaping of an Indian Nurse).** Madurai: Alleluia Print Services, 2001 (1939). ISBN 81-901277-0-5. Order from: The Dohnavur Fellowship, D – 627 102, Tirunelveli District, Tamil Nadu, South India.* In this book “Amma” (Mother) or Amy tells the true story of a young girl that was saved from a forced life of evil in a temple of Satan in South India. It shows how she was taught and shaped by God (through Amma and others). Many principles of raising children (in God’s way) are highlighted and illustrated. Deep spiritual truths are revealed.

*Carmichael, Amy. **Gold Cord.** Fort Washington: Christian Literature Crusade, 1983 (1932). ISBN 87508-068-5.* This is the inspiring story of the fellowship that was started by God in South India for the purpose of saving young children from the deepest darkness and training them to become faithful lovers of the Lord Jesus. The book points out the main lessons God taught them as a family (of hundreds). It is one of the best and most valuable books I’ve ever read in my life.

*Houghton, Frank. **Amy Carmichael of Dohnavur.** Dohnavur: The Dohnavur Fellowship, D – 627 102, Tirunelveli District, Tamil Nadu, South India. Also from Fort Washington: Christian Literature Crusade, 1953. ISBN 0-87508-084-7.* This book tells the story of Amy Carmichael, the leader of Dohnavur Fellowship in Tamil Nadu, India. It is an amazing and inspiring

true story of what God can do with a life that is fully surrendered to Him and walking the way of the Cross. She (like Jesus) became a corn of wheat that fell into the ground, died, and brought forth much fruit – to God’s glory. See also “Gold Cord” and “Kohila”.

*Schoolland, Marian M. **Leading Little Ones to God: A Child’s Book of Bible Teachings.** Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1962. ISBN 0-85151-029-9.* This book is designed for the daily use of parents as they read to little children. Each of the 86 portions contained in it unfolds some great truth, is beautifully illustrated, and provides helpful guidance as parents and little ones talk, sing and pray together. The author says, “This book will help us to find God and to know Him. It will help us to learn about God. We will learn how great and wonderful He is. We will learn how He takes care of us. And we will learn how to love Him and to live close to Him even though we cannot see Him.”

*McClung, Floyd Jr. **The Father Heart of God.** Eastbourne: Kingsway Publications, 1985. ISBN 0-86065-326-9.* In his work with *Youth With A Mission* (in Afghanistan, Amsterdam’s red light district, and across the world), Floyd McClung has met many people who suffer from deep emotional hurts and fears. Time and again it has been the discovery of God as Father – perfect and reliable, unlike any human parent – that has brought healing and liberty. In this book he shows how our relationship with our earthly father (or the lack of it), can influence our relationship with our heavenly Father. He describes the wounded heart of man, the father heart of God, the broken heart of God, the waiting loving Father, why and how God heals wounded hearts, the role of fathers in the Lord, and more.

*Ten Boom, Corrie. **In My Father’s House.** Old Tappan: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1976. ISBN 0-8007-0783-4.* In this book Corrie ten Boom tells the wonderful story of the Home she grew up in. In it “we are introduced to some of the unforgettable personalities who shaped her life: Casper, her father, whose wisdom touched everyone with whom he came into contact, from small children to intellectuals... Mama, who kept the peace in an active household... Bettie, with her gentle way of reaching out... Tante Anna, who came for a six weeks visit and stayed for forty years... and Jesus, who was as much a member of the ten Boom family as anyone.”

*De Vries, Anne. **The Children’s Bible: Bible stories simply told.** Ross-shire: Christian Focus Publications Ltd., 1996. ISBN 1-85792-166-6.* This is a beautifully illustrated Children’s Bible, which contains 100 chronological stories from the Old and the New Testament, simply written for children. It makes the Bible stories more easily understandable and real for them. The over 80 illustrations are detailed and excellent. Intriguing information boxes are scattered through the text.

*Bonhoeffer, Dietrich. **Life Together**. London: SCM Press Ltd., 1954. ISBN 334-00904-9.* This book is a spiritual classic that looks at the Biblical principles of life together as Christians under the Cross. It distinguishes clearly between humanistic (soulish) love and true spiritual love. It looks at “Community”, “The Day Together”, “The Day Alone”, “Ministry” (of holding your tongue, of listening, of helpfulness, of bearing one another’s burdens, of serving, of preaching), “Confession (of sins) and Communion”. It is excellent for all who seek to live in fellowship with others to God’s glory.

*Hession, Roy. **The Calvary Road**. Alresford: Christian Literature Crusade, 1950. ISBN 900284-16-1.* This book was born out of the East-African revival. In short simple sections Roy Hession explains the deep truths of “The Calvary Road” – the way of the Cross. Without walking in this Way, there can be no personal revival and no revival in the home. It’s lessons and truths are crucial in the life together of any family as well as in the life that is to be taught to children. In it he speaks, among others, about brokenness, walking in the light, the way of fellowship, conviction of sin, confession of sin, cleansing, cups running over, the way of fellowship, the highway of holiness, revival in the home, the power of the blood of the Lamb, and the question: “Are you willing to be a servant?”, revival in the home, being a servant. In it Roy Hession says, “Revival is just the life of the Lord Jesus poured into human hearts”, and, “To be broken is the beginning of Revival.”

*Bagster, Samuel. **Daily Light**. London: Samuel Bagster & Sons Ltd., 1975. ISBN 575061L02.* This book contains daily morning and evening scripture readings, grouped around a certain theme-verse. It is only the Word speaking. Excellent for personal and family devotions.

*Bunyan, John. **The Pilgrim’s Progress (Part 1 & 2)**. Springdale: Whitaker House, 1973. ISBN 0-88368-096-3.* Charles Spurgeon said that he had read this book more than a hundred times! It is a spiritual classic that describes (with a very rich reference to Biblical pictures and verses) the journey of the Christian (Pilgrim) from the City of Destruction (the world) to the Celestial City (heaven). The temptations, trials, triumphs, failures, friends and enemies (and much more) he meets on the road are similar to what every Christian may face in his own journey to heaven. The second part of the book deals with the journey his wife (Christiana) and children undertook (afterwards) in following him.

*Bunyan, John (1628-1688). **The Holy War**. New Kensington: Whitaker House, 1985. ISBN 0-88368-706-2.* Few books have shown me Christ as this one. Written by the author of “*The Pilgrim’s Progress*”, it shows in allegorical way, the battle that rages for the town of Mansoul. El Shaddai built this town (of man’s soul) for him and his Son, Emmanuel. They put a

wall around the city that can be entered only through one of the sense-gates (eye-gate, ear-gate, etc, as the gates are opened from within. The heart-castle in the centre of the town was for them to inhabit, to the benefit of the inhabitants and the glory of El Shaddai. Diabolus and his evil hordes seek though to capture the city, break down El Shaddai's image and kingdom, enslave the inhabitants and establish their reign of darkness. Many important principles of spiritual warfare and repentance and godly living are vividly portrayed.

*Parry, Alan and Linda. **The Evergreen Wood.** Rydalmere: Hunt & Thorpe Australia Pty Ltd., 1992. ISBN 1-85608-145-1.* In this book, "*The Pilgrim's Progress*" (by John Bunyan) is retold for children, using animals to depict the different key characters. "The journey to *The Evergreen Wood* is full of terrible fears for a little mouse – of hawks, weasels, rats, wildcats, and foxes. Christopher (the mouse) meets unexpected friends, whose advice, generosity, and sacrifice help him on his way. For the easy roads are the most dangerous of all, and few who start the journey reach its end." It is well illustrated and brings the message across in a powerful, effective way.

*Sproul, R.C. **The King without a Shadow.** Chariot Family Publishing, no date. ISBN 0-7814-0257-3.* This children's story wonderfully illustrates that God is light and there is no darkness in Him at all. It shows that we all have a shadow over our souls, caused by sin – and God's light deals with it. It is also beautifully illustrated.

*MacDonald, George. **The Wise Woman (The Lost Princess).** London: Chariot Books, 1978 (1875). ISBN 0-89191-163-4.* In this book MacDonald tells the story of two children who grow up in very different situations, literally miles apart from each other. It illustrates in an amazing way how children are spoiled by their parents by not raising them in the way that they should. It also illustrates how the Wise Woman goes about correcting the children and the parents – God's way. According to C.S.Lewis, this is one of the best books of George MacDonald.

*Chambers, Oswald. **My Utmost for His Highest.** London: Oswald Chambers Publications & Marshall Morgan and Scott, 1927. ISBN 0-551-05147-7.* Apart from the Bible, this book can be seen as one of the most helpful of all books to read, especially as a daily devotional. It contains the cream of Oswald Chamber's ministry, carefully selected by his wife, after he went to be with the Lord. It is based on shorthand notes that were taken down (verbatim) by her, as he ministered to the students at the Bible college in England, as well as to the soldiers in the camp in Egypt (during the first world war). As a gifted man, completely abandoned to the Lord and filled with the Spirit of God, what he shared was based on an experiential knowledge of God, the Scriptures, the total depravity of the human heart, and the all-

sufficient riches of Christ's finished work on the Cross. He knew that only Christ could fill the last aching abyss of the human heart. "Abandoned to God", giving "My Utmost for is Highest", he reached to what was ahead, for he believed (as he often said) : "The best is yet to be"! Some would prefer to read the modernised version, while others would like to keep to the original version (which is also our recommendation).

*MacDonald, George. **The Laird's Inheritance.** (Original title: "Warlock o' Glenwarlock"). From "A Scottish Collection". Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1998 (1881). ISBN 0-7642-2148-5.* This Scottish novel depicts the principles that governed the behaviour of a poor but godly father in the raising of his only son. It shows that an earthly, material inheritance is nothing compared with the eternal, spiritual inheritance we can leave our children, by pointing them practically and truly to Christ. When He becomes their inheritance, all else becomes shadows.

*Schaeffer, Edith. **L'Abri.** Worthing: The Norfolk Press and Henry E. Walter Ltd., 1969. ISBN 854-79371-2.* This book tells the story of the fellowship that God started in Switzerland through the ministry of Francis and Edith Schaeffer. L'Abri became a haven for seekers after God. High in the Alps, many lost, confused, bound, seeking people came - young and old alike. Within the context of a family fellowship, around the Word of God and in Christ, many people met God and many lives were restored. It shows how any family can and should become a mission station.

*Finney, Charles. **Principles of Salvation.** Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1989. ISBN 1-55661-032-7.* This book contains 23 sermons by Charles Finney on the process and assurance of salvation. It discusses true and false repentance in a magnificent way. The sermons are grouped around the three themes of: "Christ or the Crowd", "The Call of God; the Capacity of Man", and "The Charge of the Church".

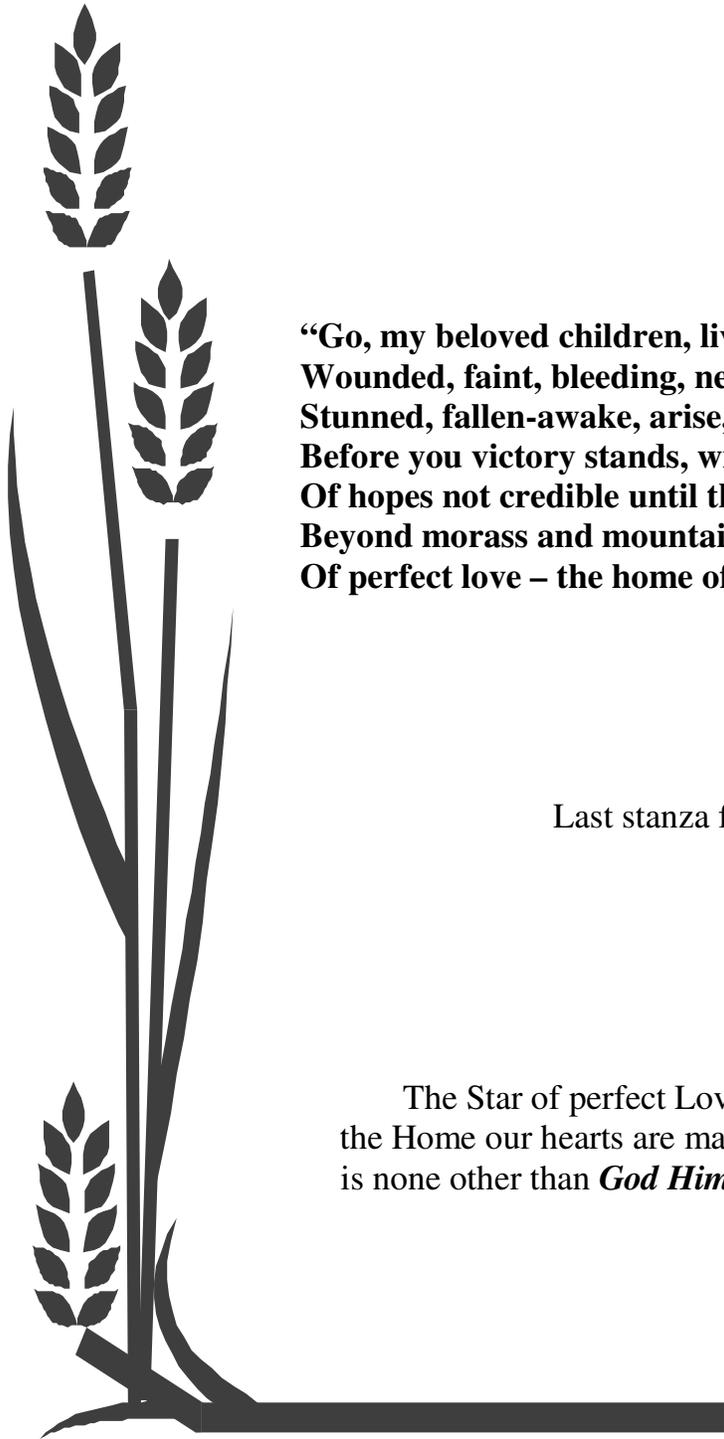
*Finney, Charles. **Principles of Consecration.** Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1990. ISBN 1-55661-051-3.* Fourteen selected sermons of Charles Finney are combined in this book. They deal with the essence of complete consecration or commitment to Jesus Christ. It includes sermons on "Submission to God", "Self-denial", "The True Service of God", "The Necessity of Human Governments", and others.

*McClung, Floyd. **Living on the Devil's Doorstep.** Milton Keynes: Word Publishing, 1988. ISBN 0-85009-142-X.* This is the story of a missionary family in Afghanistan and the red light district of Amsterdam. It shows the struggles that families encounter in life and more especially on the mission field, as well as the solutions (through Christ). It's very practical, based on real life experiences, with valuable lessons for all.

*Schlink, Basilea. **The Christian's Victory: How to Overcome Sin.** (Original title: "You Will Never Be The Same"). Basingstoke: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1972. ISBN 0-551-00318-9.* How can we overcome sin? Asked this question, the author sets about prescribing Biblical "spiritual medicine", dealing one by one with 45 different sins which can mar the Christian's life, helping us to recognise them in ourselves, and pointing out the costly remedy. The original title of the book speaks for itself : "You will never be the same"! She speaks clearly about sin in Christians, the importance of hating sin, confessing sin (bringing it into the light), and the way to victory over it. The book is very practical, truthful, straightforward and helpful.

*Murray, Andrew. **Reaching your World for Christ** (originally: **The State of the Church**). New Kensington: Whitaker Press, 1997. ISBN 0-88368-500-0.* This is one of the most important books that Andrew Murray wrote. He personally read it repeatedly, even to his old age. It deals with the state of the church, and therefore with the spiritual state of each Christian and family. He shows how the state of the home church determines the state of the mission church, and how the state of the church is determined by the state of the members (the Christians). He makes an urgent heartfelt plea that we'll not say "peace, peace" when there's no peace, that we'll see our lack of spiritual power, the lack of the supernatural power of God in our lives and churches, the lack of true conversions, the lack of prayer, the lack of holiness, the lack of revival, and the resultant slack obedience to "go and make disciples of all the nations". He also points out the remedy, through the valley of decision, through conviction, contrition, confession, and consecration, and through prayer and the supernatural working of the Holy Spirit of God – filling his children to overflowing.

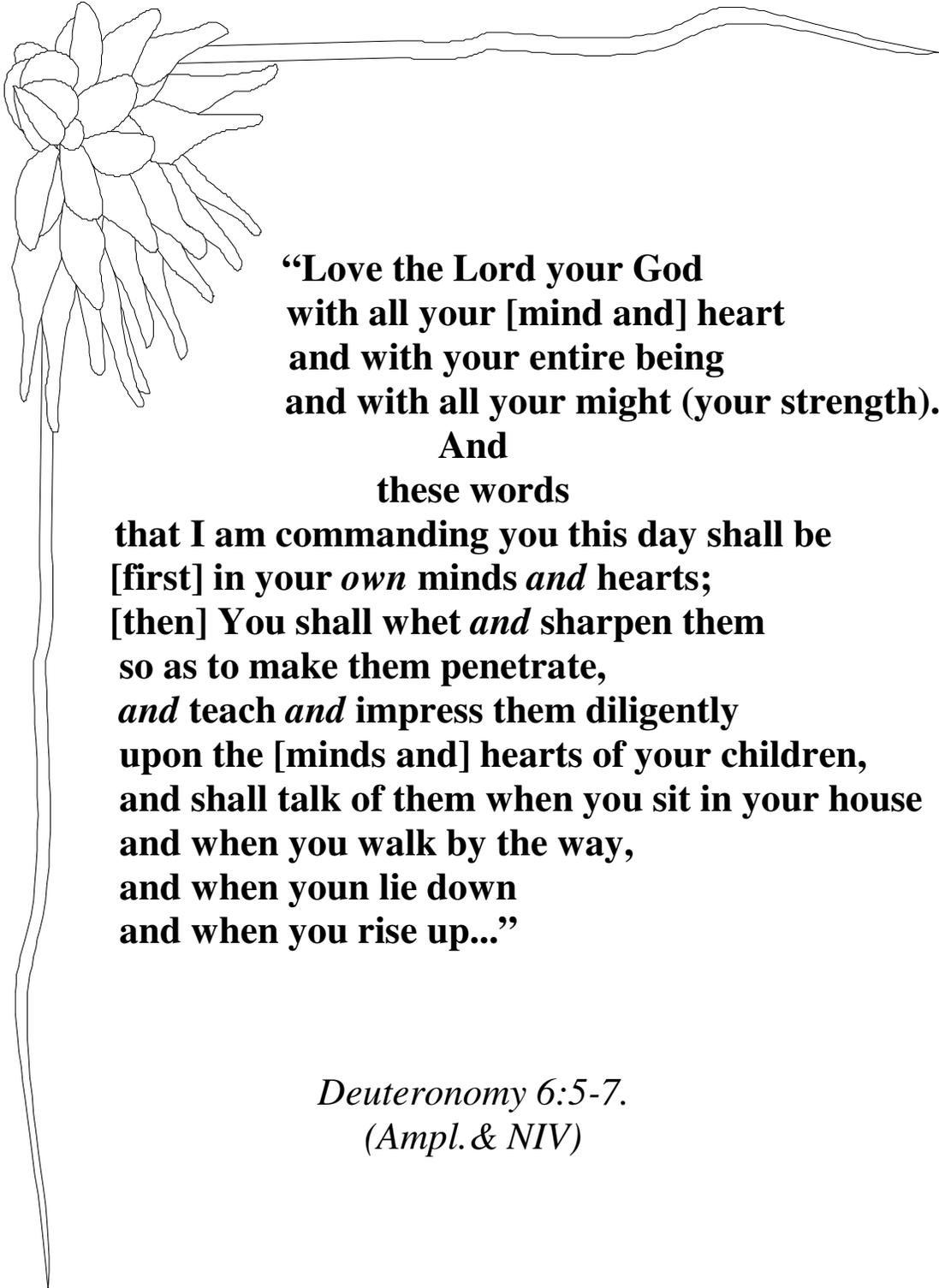




**“Go, my beloved children, live your life.
Wounded, faint, bleeding, never yield the strife.
Stunned, fallen-awake, arise, and fight again.
Before you victory stands, with shining train
Of hopes not credible until they *are*.
Beyond morass and mountain swells the star
Of perfect love – the home of longing heart and brain.”**

Last stanza from “Diary of an Old Soul”,
by George MacDonald.

The Star of perfect Love,
the Home our hearts are made for,
is none other than *God Himself...*



**“Love the Lord your God
with all your [mind and] heart
and with your entire being
and with all your might (your strength).**

And

these words

**that I am commanding you this day shall be
[first] in your *own* minds *and* hearts;
[then] You shall whet *and* sharpen them
so as to make them penetrate,
and teach *and* impress them diligently
upon the [minds and] hearts of your children,
and shall talk of them when you sit in your house
and when you walk by the way,
and when you lie down
and when you rise up...”**

*Deuteronomy 6:5-7.
(Ampl. & NIV)*