

Teach Your Children the Fear of the LORD

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Psalm 34:11 Text [34:12 Hebrew]:
לְכוּ בָנִים שְׁמְעוּ לִי יִרְאַת יְהוָה אֵל מְדַבֵּר

Psalm 34:10 Author's Translation:

Come, O children, listen to me, I will teach you the fear of the LORD.

Teach Your Children to Fear the LORD

The primary teachers that God gives to children to teach them the words, ways, and works of God is their parents. One of the highest duties that parents have is the delightful privilege and lofty duty to teach their children the fear of the LORD.

It should be noted that in Psalm 34:11, the psalmist gathers the children (“come”) and then commits to teaching them *verbally* (“listen to me”). This here lays forth a helpful model for parental instruction of children. Parents should gather the children and verbally instruct the children daily.

The book of Proverbs reveals why this is so important as it is the fear of the LORD that is wisdom (1:7-8). If a child stores up the words of God within him then he will know the fear of the LORD (2:1, 5; 3:1, 7). Wisdom calls out and begs for the naive to understand wisdom (8:4-5). To know God is understanding and to fear God is wisdom and this is the fundamental building block of all biblical wisdom, knowledge, and learning that parents must instill in their children's hearts and minds (9:10).

So the question is asked, ***how do you teach a child to fear God?*** Here are a few practical suggestions to help.

I. Show them God's glory.

No parent speak of God's greatness too much with the children. No father can point his child to the Sovereign Ruler of creation too frequently. It cannot happen. A parent must show the children the glory of God, the worth of God, the magnificence of God, the praiseworthiness of God, the beauty of God, the loveliness of God, the unrivaled supremacy of God, the uniqueness of God, and the exclusivity of God. The more a parent instills these principles in the hearts of the children, the more the children will be confronted with the glory of God.

Parents can do this in a number of ways. Being outside in creation provides endless opportunities to speak of God's glory and to show God's glory. Pick up a leaf and talk about God's handiwork. Look at the clouds, the raindrops, the snowflakes, the wind bending the trees, the colorful trees on a Fall day, the birds chirping in the morning, the ants crawling on the ground, the warmth of the sunlight. These and so many more

features of creation can reveal the glory, self-revelation, and worthiness of God. Parents can also teach children through regular, consistent, consecutive bible reading with them. When the parents take the Bible and systematically read Scripture to the children and confront them with the wondrous works of God from both Testaments, the children will see the greatness of God! Another way that parents can practically show their children God's glory is by helping them memorize the catechism. This concise way to learn theology via question and answer format is indispensable and should be incorporated by every family to teach children (and the adults!) the entire spectrum of solid, biblical theology.

2. Deal with sin firmly.

Parents can teach their children about God's glory by dealing with sin firmly, swiftly, immediately, and biblically. God does not shrug sin away. He doesn't treat sin lightly. He cannot laugh at sin. So parents should also demonstrate a similar kind of firm action taken against sin.

The most loving thing a parent can do is discipline the child when he has sinned. To discipline swiftly and in a way that gets to the child's heart-motives is key. To bring the gospel of Jesus Christ to bear in every disciplinary situation is essential. To discipline consistently, faithfully, and biblically is to show the children the glory of God — that is, the holiness of God and his abhorrence of sin.

At the same time, to be restored one to another after sinning (against another) also demonstrates God's glory to the children. To repent of sin, verbally confess it to another, and seek someone's forgiveness and then to hear the other person grant that forgiveness also provides marvelous teaching opportunities for giving the children a lofty view of God, His glory, and the fear of the LORD.

It must be noted at this point that dealing with sin firmly does not mean the parents are harsh, mean, rude, or unloving. On the contrary, to discipline swiftly, firmly, biblically, and consistently can repeatedly teach the children to turn from sin, to seek God's forgiveness, to reconcile quickly with others, and to welcome and learn from parental discipline.

3. Live at home blamelessly.

Another way that parents can teach their children the fear of the LORD is simply by living at home with integrity. To live with integrity means to live in a way that is blameless, undefiled, whole. It is to reject double-living; it is to refrain from being double-souled and hypocritical. To live at home blamelessly before the children is to teach them the fear of the LORD. This, however, does not mean that a parent must be sinless and perfect. This can never happen!

It is possible, however, to endeavor to live with such purity, with such humility, with such willingness to repent, confess, and reconcile that the children see a full transparency and a total honesty in the way that the parents live their lives. This is what gives the children the fear of the LORD. Why would the children want to fear God when the parents live a

double life? They may live one way in church-environments but while at home — when the children see and observe them most intimately — they prove themselves to be different persons with different passions, enjoying different pleasures, and loyal to a different master. Another way that parents can teach their children the fear of the LORD is by striving — with God's help, by God's Spirit, and by gazing upon Christ's sufficiency — to live complete, upright, blameless, and irreproachable lives both in the innermost parts of home-life and in the public venues. Essentially, the children see that God owns the parent's heart, mind, and life at *all* times — whether in the private setting of the home or out in public.

4. Plead with them eternally.

A necessary element of parenting must include gospel-pleading. It is essential for parents to realize that children are born enemies of God and apart from the merciful quickening of God's Spirit to regenerate them, sanctify them, keep them, and glorify them, they are hopelessly and eternally damned. This provides the present way that parents can teach their children the fear of the LORD, namely, to plead with them eternally. This speaks to evangelism. This refers to the ongoing, fervent, constant, passionate pleading with the child to consider eternity.

A parent must beg his child to be spared from hell where God's wrath is forever unleashed upon deserving sinners. This teaches the children the fear of the LORD. It teaches them that eternity matters and that this life is not the end.

One practical way that parents can do this is by realizing that every disciplinary situation is an open door for presenting the gospel and pleading with that child to repent and turn to Jesus Christ. To show them their sin, their shortcomings before God's most-holy standards, and the due penalty for their rebellion allows the parent to most gloriously show the child that the penalty that they deserve has been fully placed upon another — Jesus Christ — if they would only believe in Him, come to Him, surrender to Him, follow Him. O how parents need to plead with their children! Parents must never be ashamed to beg for the children to believe in Christ and be spared from God's judgment.

5. Prioritize worship of God Almighty.

Parents cannot overestimate the importance of worshipping God — especially when children are watching. Children know when events and activities are important in the life of the family or not. This shows the necessary duty incumbent upon parents to prioritize the worship of God so that the children will learn the fear of the LORD. This can happen in many ways, but here are just a few examples.

Parents can teach the fear of the LORD to the children as the young children see dad and mom engaging in regular private worship. The fervent praying of dad and the ongoing prayers of mom leave indelible marks on the children's souls. When the children see the parents daily delighting in the study and meditation of God's Word, it shouts to the children that this is priority to dad and mom.

Not only is private worship important but family worship also helps instill the fear of the LORD in the children. To *gather* the children so they have to *listen* to the parent frequently throughout the week as the family meets for family worship is necessary to teach and instruct the children in the Word of God and thus provide them with the fear of God. Family worship does not need to consist of lengthy times each day. It can be 5, or 10, or 15 minutes (time may vary depending on the ages of children, the interaction of the children, etc.) but the key element in family worship is consistency, frequency, and faithfulness. Family worship biblically includes three necessary elements and church history has shown this to be essential in childrearing: (1) the reading of the Word of God, (2) praying together as a family, and (3) singing rich hymns and songs. One could only trust that the more the parents gather the children and instruct them in the Word of God daily, weekly, monthly, and yearly, the more they are learning the fear of the LORD.

Parents teach their children immense amounts about God as to whether corporate worship is important or not in the life and culture of the family. How a family prepares for the Lord's day teaches the children how important worshiping God is. After all, preparing for vacations takes work and much preparation. How much more should the worship of Almighty God! How a family acts during corporate worship speaks volumes as to the family's view of God. How the parents reflect on the sermon, re-teach the sermon to the children, and whether or not they ask thought-provoking and heart-searching questions also reveals much to the children about the importance of corporate worship in the family life and in childrearing. To go faithfully to corporate worship teaches the children the fear of the LORD. To make church-life, the preaching of the Word, the fellowship with the saints, the Lord's day of worship, and intentional heart-preparation a priority are just a few ways that parents can clearly communicate to the children that God must be feared and He deserves to be worshiped.