

Training Children in the Bible

Let us turn to our Bibles to 2 Timothy chapter 3, 2 Timothy chapter 3 verse 15. Let us listen attentively to the word of God, 2 Timothy chapter 3 verse 15. And that from childhood you have known the holy scriptures which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus, let us pray.

Our God above, as we dig into this text, may we be strengthened and encouraged to continue what we are called to do, especially parents with children, to instruct them that they can be like Timothy, the young kids, be like Timothy and have all these truths given to them, the knowing of the holy scriptures, God Almighty, that they would grow up loving you and honoring you. Father God, help the remainder of us who do not have kids or at least not kids in the home, they have grown up, to do what we can to be of assistance in this regard as well, to encourage and to pray to that end that more of the covenant children will be like Timothy. We ask this by the blood of our Lord and Savior, Amen.

The Bible is a book about salvation, it records the history of God's love in Christ shed abroad upon his people. It portrays the growth of the kingdom from the Old Testament in its childhood form to its fuller maturation in the New Testament age with hints, of course, of the future consummation in the new heaven and new earth of this kingdom and of this church. It offers a snapshot as well of various spiritual matters in the form of personal letters in the New Testament and of a long history of God's faithfulness to a faithless church and nation in the Old Testament.

Through all of this various other things, as we know, are mentioned often in passing in the book of the Bible such as schooling and instruction, economics, culinary matters, clothing, housing and other earthly considerations common to all peoples and all places. This is necessary because the Lord did not give us a systematic theology but 66 books of history, personal stories and prophecies centered on what? Redemption found in the Messiah to come in Jesus Christ. These books are written by men who express themselves in unique ways while dealing with problems that were before them and they're going to talk about them, write about them.

Such problems involve many things, not about redemption per se or the saving of our souls. To the extent the Bible covers such matters such as housing and food, for instance, they are true statements, although they're not the focus of the Bible. In other words, the Word of God is neither a cookbook nor a geographical manual.

It is not given to us to teach about these things and many other things that we can learn in life otherwise. Yet at the same time there are many such moral matters in particular that are covered and are relevant such as we read the entire book of the Old Testament, Proverbs, moral lesson after moral lesson, some of which echo pagan writings or rather the pagan writings echo the Proverbs. They teach us what it looks like to live as a believer because part of redemption is sanctification.

It's not just all about justification and going to heaven but about being more like our Lord and Savior, our growth and maturation. Many details are also missing but they are still

important for your growth. Have you ever thought about that? There are things not in the Bible that are still useful for your spiritual growth like reading and writing.

Have you ever thought about that? It would be kind of helpful to know how to read if you're going to read the Bible to learn about Christ, to know the English language or whatever language you have so you can hear it and grow thereby. So there are some things that are necessary, although not sufficient, the Word of God is sufficient to learn. If you want to learn more about Jesus and be a follower of Him, we need to learn those things.

It's a morally important and indeed imperative that our children are taught the basics to get through life because part of those basics are required to get through the Bible. Paul takes it for granted, although here he commends Timothy and the more broad idea of instruction that he was reared in the Holy Scriptures, the Bible, that he knew these things. And what's behind all that was he learned how to, he learned the language so he could hear it as a kid.

He learned to read it as he got older. Those things are important. That's part of what I call sanctified common sense.

We have the Word of God, but He also gave us our minds to fill in the blanks that were a lot of details not there in the Bible. Part of that is when it comes to raising up a child, what does it mean to raise up a child? We want to go straight into the importance of moral instruction of the Word of God and amen and we're going to get there. But part of that instruction that the kid grows up is the basics of the ABCs and your 1, 2, 3s.

You've got to know a little bit about numbers. How are you going to find 2 Timothy versus 1 Timothy? How are you going to find a verse? So these are still necessary and important in their own way. So from a childhood knowing the Bible, that's the first point.

From Childhood Know the Bible

From childhood, here I want to highlight the importance that age matters or the other way of saying it is age doesn't matter, it's any age. The younger the better is what I mean by this. Get them while they're young.

It's a time to mold their minds and their hearts. It's no accident that various studies of criminals show that at a young age or for far too long they were allowed to get away with things. This is especially the case with boys, young boys that grow up into terrible criminals.

They were never properly controlled and taught self-control in particular. The younger the better. We all know this.

We all heard the refrain, although sometimes we forget this truth. Don't wait. As soon as they are in your arms, sing psalms to them.

Bring them to church and of course to baptism. Get them used to Christian things and words and actions. That just becomes part of who they are.

As long as they breathe, they will have what you taught them. I'm sure when you're 70, you're going to still remember some of the nursery rhymes and some of the songs echoing through your head. And that's exactly what it is.

Even if it wasn't intentional, it's part of your childhood and God has so designed it that children are so impressionable that it sticks with us, even if we're not conscious about it. We realize decades later, oh, I don't know why I do this, why have I been doing this? My family always did it. Do I really need to do it now? Sometimes you don't, sometimes you do.

It just becomes automatic to have it. That's the power of instructing at a young age. Now, the other side of reminding this and the importance of this is, yes, they're born in sin, but it doesn't mean they can't learn.

They're born in original sin. They are guilty before God, but it doesn't mean they can't learn. The Lord has created the cradle of the family, has the foundation of both the church and society.

And if they couldn't learn, everything would fall apart. But we know they have learned and the whole entire civilization has survived. I like to use Japan or Korea as an example.

They don't have a Christian past, but they've still got a lot of things done. They're sinners, but they still learn enough to get things through life and create a civilization that somewhat functions, functions really well in many ways. In other ways, of course, they're still sinners.

That's the power that God has created in the family. He keeps it all together in spite of sin, in spite of the fall. So that your words and actions make a difference upon your kid.

Don't give up hope. Don't forget that fact. They don't fall on deaf ears.

Children really watch us like a hawk, even though I know you speak to them and they're like, what did you say? I don't remember you saying that. Sure, once in a while their mind is off far away, but they are paying attention when it comes to a lot of things. God has given us tools to instruct them so that the sin that so easily besets them and besets us can be, as it were, temporarily held back.

And instruction is part of that. Baptism is part of that. From childhood, again, focusing on not just the age, but that you have a childhood, what's implied behind that is you got parents.

You didn't come out of nothing. You weren't made by scientists. Watch the series I have an old copy of, and I haven't seen it in such a long time, Blade Runner or something like that.

And they have these androids that are created full on adults. They had no childhood, no memory, no history. That's not what you are at all.

You have a family. The best arrangement for children is the natural family. You can't study.

When you do these studies, of course, you can't go inside someone's home and find out what are you instructing the kids in. Are you a consistent parent or are you just a lazy bum? You don't really know that. But in spite of not knowing what's exactly going on in the family, they've done a number of studies, many studies over the decades, showing the importance of the family life, the natural family in particular.

From the purity of daughters to the productivity of the sons to the stability of the children when they grow up and have their own family, they show over and over again that the experiment that we've had since the 60s is an absolute utter failure and a horror to society. Decades of experimentation that proves the significance of healthy families by showing us what not to do, divorce and adultery especially, lazy parenting, refusing to discipline kids that harms them, lack of pattern of self-control. And they grow up thinking it's okay to just explode and do crazy things because they weren't controlled when they were younger.

We've seen it. Perhaps you struggle with yourself. The sin is there.

It's not a perfect family anywhere. They still fail. But in spite of that failure, when it comes to large-scale effects upon society, it still makes a difference to have a family, an intact family without divorce.

And I would argue it's the same in the church because the church still has families. The same families that fit in these statistics. Just because you're in a church doesn't mean you're somehow special and exempt from the dangers therein.

Or on the flip side, the blessings of having an intact family. And it goes, as I mentioned before, to the generations. So you grow up with divorced parents.

The odds of you having a divorced family divorcing your wife when you grow up is greater. And it just goes on generation after generation. They need both mother and father.

They complement one another in training the children, in training Timothy here. Typically, the father will what? Push. Poke.

Prod. I mean, he's the one that grabs the kids and throws them around. Mom's like, what are you doing? Mom's the cushion, typically.

She's the one there when they fall down. Dad's like, you're not bleeding. You're fine.

Mom's like, no, no, the kid really. And they each have their place. Both are needed.

We know this from our own experience and our own lives. And parents may fight or struggle with one another, to be sure. They are sinners.

But in spite of it all, if they stay together, it makes a big difference upon the child. They'll remember that. They'll see this is the way to live life.

This is securing. They'll have that comfort of history behind them. From childhood, again, not just parents and having an intact family, the structure itself, but of course, the quality of instruction.

What are they teaching the kids makes a difference. It's implied here that Timothy was given good instruction. His parents were taking care of him, although we know, I'll mention that in a little bit, he had especially one parent involved in this matter, his mother.

So it's not just having a mother and father, although very important and very helpful, but what they teach. Schools may help. Others like Sunday school and the church may help.

But the parents are there to teach the basics by word and experience. Their example and their instruction by their mouth in teaching them. Everyday living makes a difference.

Mothers can do a great deal in a religiously divided family as well. Timothy's father was a Gentile. He obviously wouldn't teach him the faith, the Holy Scriptures.

But his mother did. 2 Timothy 1, 5 we read, I called remembrance the genuine faith that is in you, which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am persuaded it is also in you. Praise be to God.

And how is that done? It's done through ordinary, mundane family instruction and discipline. Not the exciting stuff that we heard about in Sunday school class and Reformation and Revivals. The Second Great Awakening was a lot of emotionalism and excitement going on.

We still have that today. That's not how you maintain a good, healthy family. It's the long haul.

It's day by day, week by week. You know this. You've been through it.

You've felt your limitations, I know, and your own sins. We all have. But nevertheless, it makes a difference by God's providence, the spirit of God we praise behind what we do.

And the same with fathers. Fathers with unbelieving wives. I've run across more and more of that, unfortunately.

The divorce rate is unfortunately going up. Again, it's not just society. It's in the church.

It's in the church. And wives are like, ah, I'm done with this. I just saw one the other day.

Very sad. He's just like, I can't stay quiet anymore. It's been two years.

My wife wanted to leave me, and now it's finally settled by the law court, so I'm going to tell you guys. I'm sure he's just choking trying to write that down. So he's on his own, a godly man with an ungodly wife.

He too can make a difference. Just flip the imagery here. Not just the mother.

The father can if the mother is an unbeliever. Don't give up hope. Keep trying and persevering.

So the instruction from the parents, both the parents, teaching them these things. What in particular should they teach them? Well, I already mentioned part of it. Life instruction, I want to call it, or maybe I want to use the word natural.

I seem to like that. Earthly training and earthly instruction and contradistinction, but not contrary to spiritual training and spiritual instruction, i.e. the word of God, right? You need both. Practical everyday things needed, of course, to navigate through life.

You can have all the Bible memorized, but if you don't know the basics about getting a job and taking care of a home, what's the point in one sense? In the sense of this, you're bringing shame upon God and Christ because you're acting the fool because your parents wouldn't teach you how to get through life. May your soul save, amen. We want both.

We want good instruction at home. Don't think I can just drop all that other stuff. This is earthly things.

That's not significant. I'm going to go over the Bible all day. Now, I don't think many homeschoolers or others do that very often, but it sounds very pious and holy sometimes.

It just simply isn't. You need earthly training about how to get through life, navigate through life, your ABCs, your one, two, threes, and the like, how to honor people, how to greet them, how to listen well, things that aren't explicitly in the Word of God but assumed by the Word of God. And in some cases, like reading, you can't do much without it.

You need to learn how to read. And so the basic, even to advance instruction in the home, reading, writing, basic math, how to ride a bike, self-care, personal hygiene, how to avoid danger, how to watch out for crazy people, this is part of what it means to raise a kid. These are important things as well, and they are part and parcel of what it means to be a believer.

Being a believer doesn't mean we throw out all common sense out the window, but we add to that common sense the great truth of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. And that molds and shapes, therefore, our ultimate goal and purpose as believers. From childhood, not just natural instruction, everyday instruction, instruction to get through this earthly life as a man, as a woman.

There are some different tracks as they get older, it becomes more clear how to instruct them a little differently in that regard. We have spiritual training, which is what's highlighted and emphasized here. I brought up the prior stuff because a lot of that is missing these days, it seems to me, when people talk a lot about what it means to be a Christian.

Some of that stuff is going off by the wayside. All Scripture is given by inspiration, excuse me, verse 15, and that from childhood, so You have known the Holy Scriptures, you've known the Bible, you've known the truth of who Jesus Christ is, the Messiah to come. Spiritual or supernatural revelation, not just natural revelation, that's part of it, but the

supernatural revelation is especially what we hone in on as churches and as believers because it makes all the difference in the world.

You can do a lot of things your neighbor does, and they can be very good things. I'm glad that our neighbors do these things and take care of us and are very neighborly towards us. But they do not have, if they're unbelievers, the supernatural truth of the Bible, of Christ.

And that's a sad thing, but it also makes us stand out a little differently. Teach the Bible, both the practices and the teaching, the doctrine and practice. You need both.

The head and the hands. And earthly things as well, but especially in spiritual things. The head and the hands.

Teach the Bible, the books of the Bible, the structure of the Old and New Testament of these 66 books and why they're put this way, of the people therein and the history thereof. Who's Abraham? Who is David? You can read the stories, but it's okay to get supplemental help, like a summary of the stories, especially when they're younger, because the kids' mind, what, wander off? They're bored, they're tired, they're distracted. And parents know these things, so they adjust, as God adjusts His instruction at times in the Word of God to His audience, because they're too foolish or otherwise distracted.

And this is where the Christian family can really shine. You may be deficient in other things, as I know when it comes to homeschooling, for example, you feel very deficient at times, you're like, I forgot a lot of things I went through in high school, what in the world am I going to do with this? But these things here, you can especially go over and teach them, even if you've got the other basics of life, reading the Bible to them, talking about the Bible. Even if you don't have all the answers, don't be a parent who thinks you've got to have all the answers.

The kids will see through it. Don't be making things up. Just say, I'll look into it later, I'll ask the pastor, or I don't know, depending on the question at hand.

Pray in accordance to the Word of God. They will hear your prayers and see your prayers. Guide your lives by it.

When you sin, and it's a public sin as a parent, acknowledge the sin. It's a sin against your child, acknowledge the sin. And therefore you teach them what repentance looks like.

Children are watching. Christian education is not just a formal time in which you set something aside throughout the week to teach them a little bit of Bible. That's good.

That's a good thing to do if you're homeschooling in particular. But the informal, the everyday instruction and moments of life, as I just mentioned with respect to sin and repenting, they'll see an example of this, even though it wasn't Bible time. And you can quote that relevant Bible passage.

Do practical things. I mentioned this in Sunday school class a few years ago. There's a big thick binder book that shows all these verses and relevant verses, both by example and by

positive command and negative command, about each of various kinds of sins, of hatred, of laziness.

It's like two or three pages at a time for each category. So you can go through this and find the relevant passage that you think might be a good example or a verse for the kid to memorize if he's struggling with anger. Why not? Those are what? Those are what? Practical things that are not in the Bible that you can figure out on your own sometimes or get advice from someone else to mix it in with the supernatural, natural common sense to reinforce the truth.

Other things, of course, are to slow down and take a break as a parent, as a side note. Don't get too intense sometimes. Kids will see this and they start getting tense.

You start freaking out, they're going to start freaking out. Mom and dad can't handle it. What's going to happen to me? It's okay to back off a little bit and say, we'll talk about it later or we'll handle this later.

That takes wisdom. The importance of positive reinforcement as well as negative reinforcement or punishment. Positive reinforcement, of course, I mean, good job, keep it up, you're almost there.

These are good things. There's a time for that and often many times, I think, especially when they're young and frustrated or something. But negative reinforcement shouldn't be forgotten either.

That's swift, it's clear. You explain exactly what the sin is and why they're being disciplined or spanked. Sometimes it's not always just a sin per se, they just did something foolish.

They didn't know anything better. You have to grab them or maybe you do something sudden and they're like, oh, what happened? And don't forget, we have each other. In the spiritual instruction, in the sins that they're doing or the positive things, the commandments they're not doing, so they're sinning by omission for the kids and you're there and you're frustrated, sometimes it's helpful to get a new fresh eyes.

Someone you trust in the church or another church or community in your life, a Christian, come along and give you advice. Of course, the church, God and the church gave preaching and teaching to not just all the adults but to the kids, you kids, you're multiplying, there's more of you now, this is great. I'm preaching to you as well.

Bible studies, catechism, which is a way of organizing the Bible so it's more understandable for the kids and, of course, formal schooling is important for the Christian, for the young Christian child. Lessons for you kids, I was mostly talking to the adults, of course, and other who can help parents but you children have a responsibility as well. Don't just think, ah, it's fun time, yay, to prepare yourself to listen and to grow, to get enough sleep, to control your diet sometimes, if you get too much, your stomach gets bloated and you can't sleep well, you stay up all night because you picked out the night before on ice cream, it's okay, sometimes your parents sometimes indulge you and you can say, I don't want any more ice cream, I'm sorry.

I've seen that, you can literally do that and parents are like, okay, yeah, you're probably right. You can do some of this stuff, especially as you become older children, the younger kids, of course, learn to obey and promptly and even cheerfully, to help, willingly, volunteer and see what you can do. You can do little things, little hands, I've seen it, and be an example to one another as well.

You older kids are an example to the younger kids. They watch you as well and you know what else you can do, children, you can read the Bible on your own. If you know how to read some, ask mom and dad what's a good passage to read or places to read.

Some parts of the Bible are harder than others, I grant that. Ask questions, take notes, these are the ways in which you can be helpful and you can do what you can to help your parents instruct you. And I want to dig more into what this spiritual instruction is, the second point, the Bible which shows us salvation.

Know the Bible Which Gives Us Salvation

The Bible which shows us salvation. Calls it the holy scriptures because they are special and they are perfect because it was inspired and created by the spirit of God working through holy men. All scripture, verse 16, is given by inspiration of God.

It is God-breathed and is therefore profitable for all kinds of things that the man of God, the woman of God, the child of God may be complete or mature, thoroughly equipped for every good work. That's why it was important for young Timothy to be taught these things by his mother of the holy scriptures and that you are taught by your parents, that you are blessed to have parents who want to teach you these things. The Bible in particular, the holy scriptures, is composed of two parts, law and gospel.

Law and gospel. The law is the moral demands of perfection as summarized in the Ten Commandments, you'll see that in all kinds of places, in all kinds of particular details in the Bible. The Ten Commandments themselves are but a summary of God's moral laws, a lot more detail.

You'll see that in the case laws of Deuteronomy for example and elsewhere in the prophets. The easiest example, that's why you hear me use it so often, is cheating, kids. Which commandment does cheating fall under? Which of the Ten Commandments is cheating? Well ask yourself, what is cheating? It's lying and stealing combined into one.

That's two commandments, isn't it? That teaches you already the Ten Commandments are but a summary, a handy way to remember important truths is what that means. And so the knowing of the Bible having the law in it and therefore the use and function and importance of the law for the Christian, not only for conviction that it brings guilt upon us, that's one use of the law. Another use of the law is to restrain evil, especially in society, to hold back wicked men.

And the third use is to guide us as believers. This is especially the good thing for the Christian life and our sanctification. He didn't leave us to our own devices, we walk around saying, what exactly should I do in my life? How do I honor God? And God says, I gave you the Ten Commandments, it's the same moral law before you were saved and the same moral law after you were saved.

The only difference is your relationship has changed to the law. You are now a child of the King and that royal law has been fulfilled by Jesus Christ and His life and His death for you as we'll hear more this afternoon. And that leads us to the Gospel, the good news of salvation and deliverance from sin and death, the power of sin and death, Hosea 13, 14.

O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? Paul's quoting Hosea 13, 14, telling us that our Messiah, He ransomed for us, died in our stead because He knew the only way to save us, we who cannot, will not, and would not obey the Ten Commandments and thought, word, and deed. We are wretched, depraved sinners. He can and will and did for His own people.

And the law in the Gospel and the relationship as law in Gospel, that they're not conflated, they're not contrary to one another, but they're used in their own way as God has so designed them where the law brings conviction and the Gospel brings relief, but the law also shows us how to live a holy life after we have that relief, a life of gratitude as the third part of the Heidelberg describes things, guilt, grace, and gratitude. Paul writes, the Bible that is here, which are able to make you wise for salvation, the Holy Scriptures, through faith which is in Jesus Christ, verse 15. He didn't write for salvation through works, but for salvation through faith, faith which is in Christ Jesus, believing and trusting in Him and not in your baptism, not in your own good works, no matter how sincere, even sincerity itself is not the grounds or the reasons why you are redeemed or justified in particular, but by faith and faith alone and one object, Jesus Christ.

It's about what He has done, not even the faith itself is the grounds or the material cause of your justification, it is merely instrumental or a tool, like the open hand of a beggar. Does that feed him? No, it's the food in the hand that feeds the beggar, and it's Christ Jesus that feeds our soul. And this is the good news when you know we are in a bad state.

Learn your Bible as parents, related to the family, as those with kids who have left the home, learn it, of course, for the sake of others so that you can speak to them when the time comes. And, of course, the children, young or old, study and read the Bible, ask questions. You all have a responsibility to learn the Holy Scriptures and its truths, to read it daily if you are able, to understand, ask questions, to take notes, perhaps, about your questions, to apply it to yourself first and to others who are around you, because the Word of God is not just there for your own personal entertainment so that you feel good and holy, but that you may be useful to one another in the Kingdom of God.

And all of this to draw closer to Jesus our Lord and Savior. And you children, again, for Paul is now a grown, excuse me, Timothy is the grown-up child here, but he learned it from childhood, a little wee child, learn your Bible like Pastor Timothy did when he was a child. Listen to the Bible when your parents read it.

Take notes when your pastor is preaching. Pray to the Lord to open your eyes to see more of Jesus and of your own sins and never trust in how good you are or how good your family is to get to heaven. The Creator of heaven and earth has guided your circumstances and made things such that where you were born and who your parents are is not an accident of history, but purposely designed by God that you would be baptized and are baptized and thus brought into the covenant in a way others are not so that you can be instructed as a child in this environment of love and of care and of godly discipline.

It's a public holy mark upon you that should drive you with both external pressure upon you and a good sense of pure pressure, godly, pure pressure upon you to confess Christ when you've come of age and follow Him all your days. Let us pray. Precious Spirit of love and truth, be with our families in particular and those near the families that can assist and help the families that they can instruct their children that they would know the Holy Scriptures, know not only the Bible verses, the memorization is appropriate, but especially to know the heart of the Bible, Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior and that through faith and faith alone.

And may this indeed be for all of us, I pray. Our Lord God Almighty, Amen.