

Faith Training: Discipling Our Children at Home

H. Clay Trumbull wrote, “The training of a child’s faith is the most delicate and the most important duty that devolves upon one who is set to the work of child training. More is involved in it for the child’s welfare, and more depends upon it for the child’s enjoyment and efficiency in life, than pivots on any other phase of the training of a child. He who would train a child’s faith aright has need of wisdom, and yet more has need of faith--just such faith as that to the exercise of which he would train the child of his charge.”

Home educating means there are numerous academic subjects to study with our children. But there is no more valuable subject for the Christian home educator than teaching that causes our children to grow in faith, teaching that will bring them up in the nurture (training) and admonition (instruction) of the Lord.

“To bring up,” in the Greek language of the New Testament, is to raise and nourish our children. It is to meet both their physical and spiritual needs. This includes frequent time spent in God’s Word, the Bible, and in learning how to grow in Christ-like character. Faith also needs to be taught daily in the context of life together as a family, deliberately and intentionally.

We read about how this can be accomplished in Deuteronomy 6: “These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.”

First of all, we as parents must have a personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. We cannot pass on to our children what we ourselves do not have. Secondly, faith training is not simply a matter of praying briefly as your day begins or just before science class and thinking that covers the faith aspect of your teaching. Faith and character are components of family living and home schooling all day, every day. Thirdly, our Christian homes should be filled and even decorated with words and art that make us consider and ponder God’s words to us all day long.

Parents are often at a loss about how to train their children in the Christian faith. Should they purchase a complete Bible curriculum? Although there are good curricula available, I would like to suggest some other ways to go about the business of faith training our children.

- Read a child’s devotional together every day. Check at www.cbd.com under Kids’ Devotionals for some book ideas. *Leading Little Ones to God* by Marian Schoolland is a trusted classic for children age 4-10 years old. *A Faith to Grow On* by John MacArthur is great and is recommended for 8-12 year-olds. Some other books to check out: *Big Truths for Little Kids* by Susan Hunt and Richie Hunt (ages 5-9); *Day by Day Devotions: A Year of Character-building Devotions for Kids* by Karen Henley (6-10); and any of the *One-Year Devotions*. Look at www.cbhgospel.net for their *Keys for Kids*, a daily devotional for kids that shares stories, Bible readings, and valuable lessons; hear it online; get the bi-monthly devotional through the mail for a year free of charge; get KFK by email; print it off the website.
- Use a catechism based on the Westminster Confession of Faith. This will be especially good for families of a reformed perspective. A catechism is a comprehensive summary of doctrine

often in the form of questions and answers. Consider *Training Hearts, Teaching Minds* by Starr Meade.

- Read a chapter of Proverbs daily--the chapter whose number matches the date. You will cover the book of Proverbs once each month. Proverbs emphasizes our horizontal relationships with other people, so this study is especially helpful for families.
- Do a topical study in Proverbs as you read one chapter a day. Topics might include: contrast the wise person with the foolish person; find out what Proverbs says regarding friends; how does a strange woman look and how does she behave; what does Proverbs teach about anger or self-control or controlling the tongue. Make lists of what you found and work on putting those lists into practice.
- Read five different Psalms each day. Begin with the chapter of Psalms that is the same as the date, then count 30 ahead four different times. (For example, read Psalms 1, 31, 61, 91, and 121 on the first day of any month.) You will read through the book of Psalms once every month. Psalms emphasizes our vertical relationship with God. Keep a journal of what you learn about who God is and what He can do. Pray your lists back to God, thanking Him for all He does.
- Do a Precept Ministries, International (Kay Arthur) Bible study with your children. Discover 4 Yourself Bible Studies for ages 8-12 years old or the adult Precept workbooks for children 13+ are available on most books of the Bible.
- *How to Study Your Bible, for Kids* by Kay Arthur and Janna Arndt is a way to introduce the inductive method of Bible study to your children and teach them how to use a concordance and an expository dictionary.
- Use any published yearly Bible reading plan or design your own. Check out <http://www.bibleplan.org/others.htm>. Just read through the Bible out loud as a family. Other ideas are to read *90 Days in the New Testament* or *One Year Bible* in any translation.
- Keep a Bible reading highlights notebook or a prayer journal.
- Listen to the Bible on CD in the car, while eating lunch, or at bedtime. Download the Bible to your iPod. For years, listening to Psalms or Proverbs was how our children fell asleep every night.
- Read about great heroes and heroines of the Christian faith. Begin with the four volumes of *Hero Tales* by David and Neta Jackson. Keep a list of the people who intrigued you most and read more about them. Youth with a Mission (YWAM) has a wonderful series of books called *Christian Heroes: Then and Now* at www.ywam.org; read *Foxe's Book of Martyrs* with your high school age children or *Jesus Freaks: Martyrs*.
- *Children's Ministry Resource Bible* "is filled with almost endless options for Bible study with children at home. Fully developed lesson outlines make planning easy, while sidebar and footnote information let you take the lessons as deep as you want to go. Full-page articles and a pronunciation dictionary complement the lessons. Comes complete with a special teacher training section and the Wordless Book, a colorful way to share the gospel message. The Children's Ministry Resource Bible provides just what you need to lead children ages five to twelve into a vital relationship with God." (From the book jacket)