

Teach Them Young

Three Parenting Directives

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As I was preparing this sermon today, I had to consider a minute or two whether I could expect any brain surgeons or neuroscientists to be in the audience. If there were, I was going to ask the person to come on up and just go ahead and say what I was going to say because I am sure they could do it a lot better.

But I concluded, knowing us, we do not have any brain surgeons or neuroscientists among us. So I guess there are not any out there—perhaps there are and I just do not know it. But if so, you can inform me later and tell me all the mistakes I made.

Most of us though probably have not done very much research at all into the human brain. It is not something that a lot of us are really interested in. We might have a read an article or two about it. But if you would rather read Spiderman comics or Neurosurgery Daily, which would you do? I do not think there is enough information coming out for there to be a Neurosurgery Daily. But you understand what I mean. We would rather do something else other than read about brains.

Truth be told, not many people in or out of the church know much about the human brain. Period. And despite it being that small an area between our ears, the sum of human knowledge on the brain is actually fairly limited compared to what one would think. Here it is. It is with us all the time. We carry it around on top of our spines. A 10-pound bowling ball, as my chiropractor likes to talk about it. It is there with us all the time.

But it is only recently that we have had much science done on the brain. And with scientific advancements like imaging and such where they can look at your brain through an imaging machine while you are doing something—saying certain words, reading certain things, looking at certain things—they can tell where the activity is happening and come up all kinds of neat little conclusions.

And there are a lot of brain surgeons out there or whatnot and people who are interested in this, at least compared to us normal average people, and they have done a lot of numerous studies recently. So man's knowledge about the brain has increased significantly in the past couple of decades especially.

But in comparison with other scientific pursuits—certain other areas of biology or

physics or whatever—the study of the brain is a cutting edge frontier.

So let us learn a little bit about the brain today—just enough to give us an understanding of a very significant fact. And I want to thank Frank Nelte down in South Africa for the research he did. I am essentially lifting it from something he published not too long ago. So ‘Thank you’ to him.

Here is where we get down to specifics. In the human adult (people who are 20 and above) brain, there are an estimated 100 billion nerve cells called ‘neurons.’ Neurons process and transmit information to other cells. So when you want to pick up your hand, neurons have to fire in your brain so that all the nerves get the message that you want to pick your hand up and so some of those 100 billion nerve cells do the job. So neurons transmit information to other cells.

In addition to the neurons, there are more than 100 billion ‘glial’ cells (derived from a Greek word which means ‘glue’). These glial cells stick the neuron cells together. They support and protect the neurons both in the brain and anywhere else there is nerve tissue.

So you have a 100 billion neurons and more than a 100 billion of glial cells. They are all floating up there in your head.

By themselves, and even with the glial cells, neurons are pretty useless. If you had a single neuron, it could not really do anything. It is like having a light bulb and nothing to connect it with—it is not going to go off. It is just going to sit there.

So neurons only have value if they are able to connect to other neurons and thus a pathway of information is built. They need to be able to communicate with other cells. So they have to have a bunch of neurons to communicate with. This is a very important point. The more active connections that a neuron has to other neurons around it, the more valuable that neuron becomes. It makes sense. A neuron, if it has no value if it is alone, the more neurons it has connected to it, the more valuable it becomes.

So the greater number of connections that a brain’s neurons have, the greater the brain’s overall potential. The trick is to get as many connections between neurons as possible and that allows the brain’s abilities to work better. It allows the brain to function at a higher level.

You have probably heard that we only use 10 percent of our brain; it might be more, it might be less. But we do have a lot of matter between our ears that just does not work

for us because the connections have not been made. The more connections that are made, the better.

And by the way, let me just throw this out there just for your understanding or just for your thinking about it, speculating a little bit. Frank Nelte brought this up in his article: It is a restriction of the number of connections that is the difference between the pre-Flood brain and the post-Flood brain.

One of the things that God did after the Flood was say, "Hey, these people's brains got too big, got too good, and they were using all of this brain power for evil and it made them super wicked." And so after the Flood He said, "Okay, I'm going to reduce this." And he also believes, which is kind of an interesting thought, that when Solomon asked for understanding, God took the restriction off and He allowed Solomon alone, of all the people after the Flood, to be able to have as many connections as his brain could build. Interesting thought. Just something I thought I throw out there so you can think about that.

The greater number of connections that a brain's neurons have, the greater the potential of the brain, the higher the functioning of the brain. These connections between neurons in the brain are called 'synapses.' Synapses are the conduits that pass the information on between neuron cells. So you have a neuron cell here and a neuron cell there and they are connected by a synapse. And there are many synapses in the brain. This is all very simplified just so you know there is a lot more going on in the brain than just this. But I have reduced it down to these few little ideas.

Now we get into some more numbers. In the adult brain, each of those 100 billion neurons (these are big numbers, very hard to understand) has on average about 1000 synaptic connections to it. So there are 100 billion neurons and there are 1000 synaptic connections going out to that many neurons nearby.

What this means is there are about 100 trillion connections with other brain cells. We have gone beyond understanding pretty much of numbers. But 100 billion times 1000 makes 100 trillion connections. That is how many are going on in the average adult brain.

Just to give you an idea of the size of these things, if you were go in and dissect a brain and just pull out enough brain tissue to be the size of a match head (the sulfur match or whatever that you would strike)—very small—that little piece of brain tissue would contain about a billion synaptic connections. That is cool. So small, but a billion connections in that little itty-bitty piece of brain tissue.

It is these kinds of connections that empower the brain to function and perform all tasks that a human body has to do; not just intelligence, but making your body work. And so everything that you do—everything you hear, everything you smell, everything you taste, everything you see, and all the other activities, not only of your senses but of all your limbs, all the ways you can touch and feel things—all of those things have to have synaptic activity in the brain telling you what is going on.

So you not only can be intelligent in terms of knowledge and be able to understand neurosurgery or something like that, but you could also be intelligent in terms of muscles.

The people who are great athletes—the ones that could put a golf ball on a green 90 percent of the time—are phenomenally intelligent in terms of their muscle skills. And it is not just that. Hitting a baseball is very difficult. If you hit it one in three times, you are thought to be a pretty good ball player—of pitched ball that is.

Peyton Manning or some of these others are able to throw a football and put it within the circumference of a tire or something way downfield. Those guys are smart muscle wise, and it is all because they have developed the synapses in the brain that allow them to do that. Everything that we do has to have synapses firing (if you want it to put that way), neurons firing, and messages going out along the synapses telling the body what to do and how to react.

So, as we found out, the more synapses that are in use, the higher functioning the brain, the smarter the person, the better skilled he is in whatever application that he is doing.

That is adults. Now let us go to babies.

Babies are born with more or less the full complement of 100 billion neurons just like an adult brain. So when a baby is born, it has all the material that it needs for functioning at a very high adult level—the cells are there, the neurons are there—but remember what I said: Neuron cells alone, without the connections, are essentially worthless because they have no information to pass on and none can be passed on to it. So it sits there.

However, even though it has a 100 billion neuron cells, it does not have the synapses built yet. As a matter of fact, they do have some synapses because they have got to function in the little ways that they do function. They will eat, they will cry, they will allow the stuff to come out the other end. There are things that babies do. They can touch, feel; they can do all these things; they can see a little bit; they can hear. They have those abilities. But only about a quarter to half of their neurons have synaptic

connections. The rest have to be built. That is why a baby cannot do much.

You know, you have seen these commercials where they have made these babies do the latest dance or skateboard or something like that. They simply cannot do it because even though they have all the neurons, they do not have the synapses connecting all these things together to allow them to have a lot of very fine motor skills or whatever. They cannot do it because the synapses are not there.

But large areas of the human brain develop and grow exponentially after birth. A baby is born, it comes into the world, and suddenly it has a whole world to take in and those synapses start being built and firing. And all those raw neurons are hungry for connections. So, by age 3 (we are talking about 1000 days roughly), a child's brain would have formed around 1000 trillion synaptic connections. That is 1 quadrillion synaptic connections by age 3!

This is mind blowing! Those synapses are growing, in those three years, at a rate of nearly 1 trillion new synapses per day. Think of it! 10 million synaptic connections per second! That little baby, sitting there doing nothing, is not doing nothing. It is building synapses at 10 million per second, 600 billion per minute. That is just incredible! A child, by age 3, therefore has 10,000 synapses for every neuron.

What did I say about the adult human? I said he has about 1000. A child by age 3 has 10 times more synapses than an adult brain.

Now what does this tell us? It tells us that this rapid brain development gives small children the potential to learn hundreds of new things every day. Every synapse that is built is carrying information that is tying the network together. So each time they learn something, they are building a network of these synapses to other neurons so that they can recognize things, remember things, be able to do certain things. They are all being used and they are building all this knowledge and information in their brains, by all these synapses connecting the neurons, and their brains are just alight all the time.

Little kids are knowledge and skills sponges. That is all they do. They are just taking in information and building these connections and pathways and networks in their heads so that they can make something of it, they can understand it. They effortlessly absorb information.

Set a kid down and allow him to listen to Mozart, he is pulling everything into his head—it is there. And he is learning to develop an appreciation for very fine music.

A three-year-old brain far outstrips an adult brain in the capacity for acquiring knowledge and skills. There is no contest. They are at least 10 times better than we are. A little kid can grasp something that fast whereas an adult will have to take a little bit longer to understand how it works.

Have you ever noticed when a new technology comes out, it is always the little kid who is telling grandma how to do it. These kids seem to be just hardwired for our little phones and things like that that come out and they can do it without a problem whereas the adults have to get a manual and figure it out, or make all kinds of stupid mistakes before they can figure it out.

But that is one of the ways that we can see outwardly that these synapses are growing in the child's brain. He just has an ability to learn new things much faster than we do, as I said, at least 10 times faster. Kids pick up these things almost effortlessly and adults struggle. They are just superior to us in terms of acquiring new information and putting it into use.

But (there is always a 'but' it seems) it does not last. Around age 12, about the time that puberty starts to really kick in, the brain begins to prune back most of the unused synaptic connections. So though it had about 1 quadrillion synapses, it pares down 80 to 90 percent of them. Remember, you have got to get back to about one-tenth, in an adult brain, of what a child has. So, at age 12, there is a pruning of these things and most of the synapses that are unused are pared back because it is dead weight in a way, you could say. The body is just being efficient. If it is not being used, why are they there? Why is it costing the brain all these pathways and dead ends that are not leading to anywhere because there is no map anymore for these things?

So by early adulthood, while very few of the neurons have died, many of the pathways that the child has not used will disappear. They are gone forever, pretty much all gone. There is a little bit growth of synapses that can happen through learning.

As adults, we can learn things but it is like teaching an old dog new tricks. It is very much more difficult to learn these things while we are older. Our bodies just do not function as efficiently. Things are happening so that we just do not learn as fast. Try to pick up a language when you are two, you can speak it without an accent; try to pick up a language when you are 22 to 32...42, you are going to sound like wherever you came from who has just put that language on top of it. So you are going to speak Portuguese with a Brooklyn accent or something. That is just how it works.

The child, with all of these other synapses, are able to not only pick up the grammar and

the words and whatnot, but they are able to pick up the sounds and they are able to make their little lips and tongues and palates and whatever else form these sounds that we cannot do because we did not learn them when we were young. So we cannot do that 'eu' sound or the 'ch' sound or any of those other things properly because we did not learn them when we were young, but kids do.

And so it was recommended that kids be taught languages early. If nothing else, turn on the language tape. Do not even tell them what language it is or make them do any of the exercises or anything. Just turn it on and they will start making sounds on their own. And so when they go in whatever grade—junior high or high school—to pick up their two years of French, hopefully those sounds are still there and they will be able to speak the language much more like a native than somebody who has not had that exposure when they were young will be able to.

So the only way then, because of this pruning back of all these synapses, one can minimize the loss of these synapses in the brain is for the child to use as many of those 1 quadrillion synapses as regularly as possible before then. Do you understand what I am saying? The child's mind has to be stimulated along these lines.

If you want a child to learn Spanish, well, make sure he learns it all the way up through age 12. Start it when he is young and keep on going. Because at age 12 these synapses start getting pared back and he is going to lose a lot of those things that he may have learned when he was two or three or four. But if he has been learning them all along, he is going to retain them. They are used pathways, they are pathways with maps, and so the body will not pare them back. It will retain them. This will work with anything, not just Spanish. It could be music and teaching them how to play the drums or the flute or guitar or piano.

Why do you think Mozart was such a phenomenon at four, five, six? It is because he had a quadrillion synapses going, and his father, very wisely, kept him learning these things. And so he was able to come up with 'Twinkle Twinkle Little Star' very early because his mind was just working, all of those synapses firing all the time. It was child's play to him. So that is the thing we have to do.

If you want your child to be a wordsmith, read to him. Keep reading to him. Teach him how to read. Shove books in his face. Keep him reading. Because those quadrillion synapses are going to be fired when he is hearing it, while he is imagining what is going on, while he is reading it himself. And he is going to retain not only the love of reading but he will retain the meaning of words and even memorize things. Kids are able to memorize poetry and that sort of thing far better than we can.

This would go for Bible verses as well and obviously the Word of God. You would want to read the Word of God, to get that in there early, so that you have those synapses being built of the way God thinks. *God thinks* is what in this Book and so if we read the Bible to our children, then they are going to have a part of the mind of God in their own minds just by virtue of having the Book firing between those neurons by those synapses.

So that is how you make sure that they do not lose a lot of those synapses. Make sure they are learning. They will learn by default. If you do not put something in their heads, they are going to find something else to put in their heads, which is why you have to be their first line of defense in giving them good stuff, right stuff—stuff that will be helpful and beneficial to them as they age.

Children who are highly stimulated and challenged—challenged to do math problems, challenged to read a little bit beyond their grade level, challenged to play a musical instrument and play it well, and also challenged physically (Do not just give them a ball. Show him how to throw the thing; show them how to throw a knuckleball; show them how to throw a curved ball and tell them “Don’t do that until you are 16 or so.”)—will develop the memory and the intelligence while they do it.

What did Tiger Woods’ dad do? He stuck a golf club in the kid’s hand almost before he could walk. And what is he? He is the best golfer in the world. He developed those skills when he had a quadrillion synapses firing, and they have stuck with him to this day (he has had his ups and downs, but he is still pretty much the best golfer in the world).

You could do that with figure skating. You could do that with any kind of sport—gymnastics or even swimming. You think “Oh no, I don’t want to throw Jimmy in the pool.” It is okay. You teach him how to swim. Those little tykes can learn how to swim when they are still in diapers and then you have got a problem. But even so, they can learn.

There is a video going around the Internet about these kids basically being thrown in the pool, but they have learned how to float, so there is no problem if they fall in. They probably did it on purpose because they want to float. But you can teach little kids things that you would not think they could learn, but they can do it because they have got all these synapses firing.

And so they have got to be highly stimulated and challenged, especially in their first 10 to 12 years. That is when all the growth in their brain is happening. And if we do that, they are likely to retain a higher number of synapses in their brains than their

counterparts who have not been so challenged. The ones who have not been challenged, who have actually been a little bit lazy in their use or their parents have not given them the learning that they require (because those brains want to learn, they want to be stimulated), are going to pay the price later because they are not going to have as high a capacity as a child who has been stimulated in these ways.

But you know what, it falls to us to do this because almost universally the education systems of this world squelch the mental development of children. Think of this. First of all, they do not get any education from this world (and this is probably really good) until they are five or six. They have been trying to push this down with public preschool and all that sort of thing and get them in there earlier than that. But all they are are daycares—most of them.

Even if you do get your kids into one of these little preschools, they do not teach them all that much. They may teach them a few things and make them able to do kindergarten or first-grade work, but the child's brain is crying out for more. The educational system will not do it.

Even after they get into school—like in first, second, third, fourth, fifth grade—the process that public schools especially puts them through is what would you call lax, deficient, slow, boring.

Why do you think all these boys have ADHD? Half of them are bored out of their skulls because their brains are just going, they want some stimulation. If the schools would give them stimulation, perhaps they would not be a problem. But everything is cookie cutter in the public schools and they want to tamp that sort of thing down and not give those just burgeoning brains something to do.

Do you know what this is? This is Satan the Devil's world. He is trying as hard as he can to put a chokehold on our potential. He does not want human beings who can think. God wants human beings that can think. Satan wants human beings that will follow because they have not been taught to think.

So our job is to help our kids develop. Use that time when they are young wisely. Stimulate those brains. Give them something to do. You will be surprised what they will be able to grasp. They may not like certain things. They might get bored. Probably with their boredom, they are way ahead of whatever it is you are trying to teach them. They have too much time to think and do other things.

But throw on that language tape, throw on good music, allow them to hear certain

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things, buy some teaching company courses and let them watch them instead of Sesame Street or some rot like that. Give them something really stimulating that they could sink their teeth into. It is up to you how early you want to start that, but remember that they have got just massive potential in their brains.

And if we do not allow them to use it, then by the time they get to puberty, those synapses are going to start being cut back. It is not that they will be dumb—that is not it at all—but it does severely limit their potential going forward. The way that this society is set up, most of the learning is done in those teenage years and early adult years when they are actually losing all these synapses. So we need to get a little bit ahead of the game.

Let us go to Proverbs 22 and we will see that this concept is just hinted at—it is not said directly. This is a memory scripture, we all know it:

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

It does not say train up a child when he is young. But it does, does it not, because the next clause says that “when he is old he will not depart from it.” So it is recognized. It is one of those things that is not written down, but you know it, that this training up of the child is when he is young; as a matter of fact, when he is no longer a child, he is no longer young. Young is when they are a child.

What I am telling you about this brain research that has been done is that this window of opportunity of training the child goes up to about age 12 and then starts to close. It does not completely close; you could say that it is pretty much closed when they become independent of you and they go off to start their own families and do their own things. But it is better to do it as early as possible—to get your licks in early, as it were—so you can cut off some of the potential problems that may come later.

And so we have learned here today that their minds are fresh when they are young and that is the time to get in there and teach them God's way especially, but also these other things (the more intellectual or athletic pursuits) because that is when it is going to stick the best—when they are young. We have got to make use of that vast potential.

For something very similar to this, let us go to Lamentations 3.

Lamentations 3:27 It is good for a man to bear the yoke in his youth.

This is another one that hints at this same idea, that it is good to load your kids down with burdens (I am talking intellectual and that sort of burdens) when they are young. Make them do the hard work when they are little. Make them learn a lot while they are little. They will think it is play. Their minds will love it because they are soaking it in.

But if you load them down while they are young—not so much that it seems onerous or something, but God put it into the human mind that it can handle a lot of stuff when they are little kids—they could bear those burdens whereas later on, when we are a little older, we would think that it is really terrible and hard. But God gave them grace, as it were, and allowed them to tackle these burdensome learning activities while they are young and love it. So the earlier you get to them, the better.

Now I know in this culture we think kids should play and they should play all the time. And that is not bad. Play is fine. But we should probably limit their mindless play. You have to be the judge of how much that is. But if you could make the learning fun, make it enjoyable, they will think that is play and they will be able to bear these burdens of learning some of the hard things. Trying to say the German umlaut or something like that would be a burden to me right now, but a kid would pick it right up and have no problem with it. That is when you do it—when they are young and their minds are fresh and going about a jillion miles a minute.

So pleasantly stimulate those active brains with music and language and numbers and math and reading, especially with God's Word, along with your regular childrearing practices and make sure you institute those when they are young too.

I think maybe one of the best pieces of advice I can give parents about raising their children is to make sure you let your child know who is boss as early as possible because their quadrillion synapses are willing to take that in and say "Yes sir" and "Yes ma'am." Once they know it when they are young, then you have got that over with and you can go on to other things. So it clears up a lot of things. And of course, Proverbs 22:6 says when they are old they will not depart from it. So you have a bit of a promise there that if you put those things in early, they are going to stick and they are going to be a part of their normal everyday way of thinking and behaving. They are going to do it without a thought. So do it early. And by doing this, you are going to do your children a lifelong beneficial service. You will start them off right.

If you remember my last sermon, I gave you an assignment to read Genesis 18:17-19 and try to pick out the three things that made Abraham's childrearing so wonderful that God would commend it. So that is what I want to do: I want to go back to that now. We

will come back a little bit to this idea that I have already introduced about teaching your children young.

We will have a little bit of review here. But we need to consider God's statement about Abraham's childrearing because it is one of the very few commendations of a person's ability to teach his children in the Bible.

Remember, we saw also (it is not mentioned necessarily straight out) that Joseph and Mary were probably pretty good parents. As I said, they raised the best Man ever and He grew in stature and all those things, under their tutelage. So they were very good.

But Abraham is a very special person in Scripture. We will mostly be concentrating on verse 19. This was when God was about to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah.

Genesis 18:17-18 And the Lord said, "Shall I hide from Abraham what I am doing, since Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him?"

That is an interesting thing, just stick it in the back of your mind. Because what He is saying, in setting up verse 19, is that Abraham was the progenitor not only of a great nation, but through him Jesus Christ would come, and the blessings that would come because of what Christ would do, were going to come through Abraham's line. So there was a great deal at stake here. God is saying, "I should probably tell Abraham what I'm going to do because he's a pretty important person in My plan. He needs to know things."

Genesis 18:19 For I have known him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him [now we will get to some of these things, but think in terms of getting a nation to the point of Christ and what Christ would have to do. This is why He had called Abraham] that they keep the way of the Lord, to do righteousness and justice, that the Lord may bring to Abraham what He has spoken to him.

This is what convinced God that He would go ahead and tell Abraham about what He was going to do to Sodom: "I need to tell him because he's this important personage in the plan and he's got to be able to teach his children the right way, and he needs to know these things as part of his education in the knowledge of God." That is generally what this is all about.

But what it does here is it shows that God put His stamp of approval on Abraham's skills. He said, "This guy is going to be able to teach his children and make it good childrearing, something that will last not just the one generation but will go down many generations. It will be so good that it will start a trend, start a movement that's going to go all the way down into eternity."

God does not think small. He says then very early in this verse that the reason why Abraham was able to do this—the reason why he was going to be such a good father—was because God Himself had revealed Himself to him: "Because I have known him."

We sometimes do not think very deeply about the relationship that Abraham had with God. We know that he was the friend of God. But the more I study the life of Abraham, I am convinced that they had a more than passing acquaintance with each other. I think they were intimate friends. I think the number of appearances of God to Abraham in Genesis is just a small sampling of the times that Abraham and God talked. Was not Abraham able to look out there and say, "Hey, there comes God. He's coming to visit. Let's get dinner going"? I think they knew each other very well.

There had to have been a reason for this, and of course there was. It was because Abraham needed to know God inside and out and the best way he could do that would be to know Him intimately, personally. And we have to remember that at this point in time—about 2000 BC down to 1800 BC or so—there was no Bible. How was Abraham going to know God? He had to do it personally.

So God here gives us a little bit of an insight into His own mind. He said: "I've known him and I can't withhold this from him either because this is going to help him see further down the line of history and to teach his children good things" so that we will get to Christ, we will get to the blessing of all humanity and not only that, we will get to all that is in the Kingdom of God.

Of almost all the personalities in the Bible, there is really only one good type of God the Father, and that is Abraham. The man is special in the Bible, in all of history. Isaac, of course, is a type of Christ. So obviously there is a great deal that we can learn about Abraham's example as a father. He is the human example of God the Father that we have to look at, and there must be a lot in this that we can glean from his life. It is sad that we do not have more about Abraham, but God obviously thought that this was enough.

But it is incredible to think that God must have had a *much* closer relationship with

Abraham than we can actually see in the Bible. I mean, we come upon chapter 22 and God says “Abraham, go out and kill your son” and Abraham says “Isaac, go get the firewood.” He must have known God so well that he knew that there was going to be a lesson out of this and that there was going to be intervention. But he also knew that God demanded that he obey Him and so he did exactly what God told him to do, up until the point he was raising the knife.

You have to think that they must have had such a close relationship that he knew something big was up and that God normally would not have asked him to do this until He is going to show him something wondrous and so he followed. “Sure, God. Sarah, I’ll gone for a few days, taking Isaac with me.” So think about this as we go through these three connected escalating directives that are in this verse. Why do not we just do that now?

I am going to skip over something because of lack of time. I was going to go to Hebrews 12:5-10. That is the section where Paul tells us that God disciplines us. He says that as our parents disciplined us physically, God disciplines us spiritually. But we can turn it around and look at it another way. In the way that God trains us, we should train our children because He is the perfect example of the perfect parent. And that is what He taught Abraham. He taught Abraham how to be as perfect a parent as possible.

So we need to look at Abraham’s method here as much as is here so that we have a good example of the kind of parenting that God gives us that we should give our children. They all fit together—Abraham’s example, God’s example as a divine parent, and our ability to take these principles and put them into our own childrearing practices.

Let us look at these three things again. They are signal to you, as you read it with the word ‘that.’ So He says:

Genesis 18:19 For I have known him, in order **that** he may command his children and his household after him, **that** they keep the way of the Lord, to do righteousness and justice, **that** the Lord may bring to Abraham what He has spoken to him.

Those are the three things, each one of those things after the word ‘that.’

The way it is constructed here is that they build on each other, and that is why I called them escalating directives. They are connected, you can take them separately, and they also build on each other.

So you have the fact that “he would command his children and his household after him.” That is the first part. Then it escalates up to that the type of way he is going to teach his children is “the way of the Lord.” It then escalates further after that. Because he has taught them and he has taught them the way of the Lord, then the promises can be given. If you take out any of the steps, it does not finish; the promises will not happen.

That is why I said God decided that He would know Abraham and tell him these things because this was part of the plan. Abraham needed to know this in order to fulfill these steps. He needed to know this bit about God’s character as part of what he would teach his children.

So we have these three things and I want to go through them one at a time. Always keep in the back of your mind that God revealed Himself to Abraham so He could perform these things. You cannot do any of these things without the revelation of God.

The first one: “that he may command his children and household.” The sense of the word ‘command’ here is to train or to set in order. So it was a course of discipline. It was a way of arranging and organizing things. It was a ‘plan’—maybe the best one word for it.

God intervened in Abraham’s life and revealed His way to him so that he could pass that knowledge of God on to the next generation through a training process. That is the important part here. God made sure that He revealed Himself to Abraham so that he would set up a childrearing process—a way of teaching his children.

So we can conclude two things in the way this is worded. First, parents are in charge. God wanted Abraham to command his children and his household. So there is ultimate authority, as it were, in the father and the mother. They are in charge. As my dad said in his recent childrearing sermons (I guess this was a couple of years ago), we need to change our way of looking at childrearing as child-focused to the other way around, to being *parent focused*. That is one of the reasons why early on I started calling it ‘parenting’ because that needs to be the focus. The children need to understand that the parents are in charge, not them.

The second thing that we learn from this is that the parents are working toward a positive goal. They are to teach their children, and we know from the next one that it is God’s way. It is a positive goal of passing on vital information. So they are to have a godly plan of childrearing and follow it as closely as they can to bring peace and order, not confusion—that is satanic. God is not the author of confusion but of peace, and He

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brings order. We are not to be like the world's parents who have no idea what they are doing and they often just let their kids grow up. We are to have a plan.

Let us go to Deuteronomy 6. God follows these three steps in Deuteronomy 6. It is very interesting.

Deuteronomy 6:1-3 Now this is the commandment, and these are the statutes and judgments which the Lord your God has commanded to teach you, that you may observe them in the land which you are crossing over to possess, that you may fear the Lord your God, to keep all His statutes and His commandments which I command you, you and your son and your grandson, all the days of your life, and that your days may be prolonged. Therefore hear, O Israel, and be careful to observe it, that it may be well with you, and that you may multiply greatly as the Lord God of your fathers has promised you—‘a land flowing with milk and honey.’

That is as far as I want to go at this point. I just want to show you that as Moses was going into this chapter, he was commanded that these things be passed down. It is very similar to what he says here that Abraham would command his children and his household after him. And Moses goes here and says not just “sons,” but “grandsons and all the days of [one's] life.” So it is an ongoing process from generation to generation that these things were supposed to be taught. If you want a summary, we are to have a training plan and if you want to add on to that, the parents are in charge.

Genesis 18:19 that they keep the way of the Lord, to do righteousness and justice.

It is not just any old plan and they are not just to have any old authority. They are to base it all on the way of the Lord. This is what we found when we went through Ephesians 6:4 about “training and admonition of the Lord.”

So, in this second point, the primary goal of our training plan is to teach and perpetuate the knowledge and way of God to the next generation. What this does is this brings God's blessing to the next generation. That is how we have got to look at it. It is not an onerous duty. It is a way we can extend God's blessing to our children through this training.

Our parenting methods have to hew the line very closely of God's way of life, to teach

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our children the way to behave in a godly way in private and in public. That is the difference between righteousness and justice. They both talk about the same basic understanding, the same basic way of acting, but righteousness tends to be personal and internal whereas justice tends to be public. They are based on the same godly principles, but one is more inward and the other one is more outward.

And so we are supposed to be training our kids in God's way so that they are not only good at home but when they go out into the world and try to make their own way, they are good witnesses of God's way there too and they will do the right thing, not just at home but in public.

As we saw in that last sermon on Ephesians 6:4, this kind of teaching is done through exercises and drilling, giving the kids things to do to help to teach them through our verbal teaching of them (what we say—not just warning them or admonishing them, but also teaching them verbally—and perhaps, most of all, by our example). Because as I said earlier, they are information sponges and the thing that they like to absorb the most is their parents and the way they act and the way they talk and all those things. Their eyes are focused on us all the time when they are young. So make sure that your example meets that godly perfection. That is a high goal, is it not?

Back to Deuteronomy 6. This is exactly what Moses tells parents to do. He starts off giving them the understanding:

Deuteronomy 6:4-5 Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one! You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength.

That is the basis for what we do and especially for our childrearing.

Deuteronomy 4:6-9 And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

Wherever you are, whatever you are doing, whatever you say—whether you are going in, whether you are going out, whether you are in the house, whether you are out in

public—everything has to be based on these things: the Lord is one; love your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your might; and you have to be a good witness of what you just agreed to, in loving God and all that.

So this is the template for childrearing that Moses gives us. It is clear that it came all the way from Abraham because that is what Abraham did. He taught his sons, Isaac especially, to keep the way of the Lord to do righteousness and justice.

This is where Proverbs 22:6 and Lamentations 3:7 come into play about teaching them early. When this training is applied from a child's earliest days, it sticks with him. When they see you doing right and good and loving God and loving neighbor when they are young, that example is going to stick with them. They are going to follow it. They learn very quickly and early who is in charge and they look to you for everything. And the foundations of truth that you teach them when they are young will sustain them throughout their life. That is essentially what Proverbs 22:6 says.

If we do this properly—if we train them in this godly way—he will retain a great deal of it, he will practice it. Even when his synapses are being pruned away, he will retain it and practice it and there is a promise that it will make such an impression that he will pass it on to his children. That is what God wants us to do. It goes to the next generation and the generation after that and then these generations have the same command on them that they are to pass it on to their generations. It just keeps being built up generation after generation after generation and it becomes a way of life for an entire nation. And that is what God is building up: He is building up a spiritual nation, a Kingdom in His church.

I do want to say just that this is not an iron-clad promise in Proverbs 22:6—that our children are going to be called by God and they will be in the church. But it does put them in a place where it *can* happen, and so we need to make sure that we do our parts. But what it does say though is that if we do our job in training them, they will follow that training when they are independent of us and they will live as mature adults and they will reap the benefits of it.

If you want a summary statement of this, we are to train their characters to follow God's way. That is our job. So we have a plan and that plan is to teach them God's way to build their character.

The third thing he says here: "that the Lord may bring to Abraham what He has spoken to him." That is the third of these directives. In other words, as I have mentioned before—the training of Abraham, the childrearing practices that are godly—this process

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plays a major role in God's overall plan. It is important that we do this step. It is only by such training that God can fulfill His promises to us and ultimately entrance into His Kingdom. How can I say that? Because He is practicing the same thing with us.

When we do this with our children, we are starting the ball rolling on their own training under God. We are just, in a sense, surrogates. We are establishing the foundation. And so God says, "You do your part in your time and I'll make sure it gets perpetuated. But your part is to make sure that you prepare a people to be receptive for what I'm going to do." Usually it is through a calling. But our part in the process is essential. We need to make sure that the next generation is ready for God to work with them. They are not totally without understanding of the way of God.

Deuteronomy 6:17-19 You shall diligently keep the commandments of the Lord your God, His testimonies, and His statutes which He has commanded you. And you shall do what is right and good in the sight of the Lord, that it may be well with you, and that you may go in and possess the good land of which the Lord swore to your fathers, to cast out all your enemies from before you, as the Lord has spoken.

This is part of the plan that God set up for Israel, but has spiritual ramifications because we are going through the same process, except our Promised Land is the Kingdom of God. And so we have got to do our part in this process to make sure that there is a people that God can work with and eventually bring into the Kingdom of God and give eternal salvation to. God will never fail us. He always has other ways that He can call people, but He would rather have a people prepared—a people who already know His way and are ready to learn more.

So we can fail Him by not perpetuating God's way in our own family. I am talking about the training that we give our children. The training that we give our children is a part of our education and growth. It is putting ourselves in the place of God in this child's life and using what God has taught us to help that child get his start toward the Kingdom of God. And that goes all the way on to everlasting life. It has spiritual, eternal ramifications. The better we do, the further along the line we place our children so that they can be ready for God's calling.

So the summary on this one is we are to prepare our children for God's Kingdom and in the process prepare ourselves for it with God's help.

I will finish then. I do have a section I am going to skip over, but I think you understand

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it. I was just going to reiterate. Please go Psalm 115. We will finish right here. I hope this is encouraging.

Psalm 115:12-14 The Lord has been mindful of us; He will bless us; He will bless the house of Israel; He will bless the house of Aaron. He will bless those who fear the Lord, both small and great. May the Lord give you increase more and more, you and your children.

We can see from these verses that God is eager to bless us. And if we include Him and His practices in our childrearing, in our parenting, we will reap the blessings of His very generous Spirit.