Train Up a Child...

Train Up a Winner

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Course III – Unit 11, Lesson 1

(New Life Behavior English Edition)

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"If any person be in Christ, he is a new creature..."

(2 Corinthians 5:17)

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Train Up A Winner

In this unit we will study how to raise children. This lesson will discuss the parent/child relationship and traits of a winner. Lesson 2 will look at how parents model winning behavior, and Lesson 3 will look at reinforcing winning behavior.

Before continuing, please write three or four sentences describing your thoughts on the parent/child relationship. Write your thoughts on the enclosed **Response Sheet and then put it out of your sight until the end of this lesson.** Next, we recommend that you read the entire lesson through once without looking up any scriptures. **Finally, go back for a more in-depth study before completing the Response Sheet.**

I. Introduction

Child rearing has almost become a lost art in America. Yes, it is an art, not a science. Each child comes into life with certain genetic potential, but what he or she does with that potential is determined to a great degree by the parents.

Solomon wrote, "Train up a child in the way he should go, even when he is old he will not depart from it." (Proverbs 22:6) Proverbs are sayings of general truth. They are not firm, unshakable statements for every case. They explain how things usually happen. So Solomon is saying if you teach your child certain principles of living and model that life style for him, he most likely will accept that as his manner of living for the rest of his life.

There is no guarantee, but we need to do the best we can. Each of us, even a child, has free will. Regardless of what someone else wants us to do, we will do what we want to do. Frequently, the two are the same. Nobody can force us do something we do not want to do. We have the choice. If there is something we do not want to do, we will withstand all kinds of pressures, even torture and death, rather than do it.

If we train a child to follow the ways of God, then most likely he will. If we teach a child to live a life of selfishness and greed, most likely he will be that way all his life. Most people go through life without really thinking about their life style. Usually, it is only when a traumatic event happens, that they will consider how they are living and then make changes.

II. Parent/Child Relationship

A. <u>The Place of the Child</u>

A child is more than the result of a sexual union between a man and a woman. It is a soul created in the image of God (Genesis 1:26-27, 2:7-8).

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Although a child carries the genetic materials of his parents, he is a separate person. Like them, he is created in the image of God. He or she is a logical, rational thinking person with an immortal soul. A child has the ability to feel all the joys and pains of being human.

Regardless of whether his parents are Christians or pagans, each person will stand before God and answer for his or her own life. Parents are important in helping a child develop mentally, physically, and spiritually. In the final analysis, however, each will be judged on what he or she did or did not do. God does not accept a plea of innocent because parents did this or that to a person. Each parent will have to answer to God for what he did. Each child will have to answer to God for what he or she did.

Once a person passes from childhood and can understand abstract concepts like God and responsibility, that person then becomes answerable to God. If people have been trained in the truths of the Lord, they will find the freedom that comes from being in Jesus (John 8:32). Just because parents did not teach them to live for God, does not mean that they can never find God and live for Him. It means that they must shoulder that responsibility for themselves. It also means that they have a responsibility to try to lead their parents to God.

Also, children are not the property of the parents. God has only loaned the children to them for a few years. In those few years, God demands that the parents do all they are capable of doing to help their child grow and develop into a mature, complete God-fearing person.

The story of Samuel's birth and childhood shows this (1 Samuel 1). Among the Israelites it was a sign of God's disfavor if a couple did not have children. Hannah and Elkanah were such a couple. Once while they were making their annual visit to Shiloh to worship, Hannah, being depressed, went to the door of the Tabernacle and prayed that if God would allow them to have a child she would "...give him to the Lord all the days of his life." Eli, the high priest, saw her and because of her depressed appearance and behavior thought she was drunk. He scolded her and told her to sober up. After she told him about her prayer, he blessed her and told her that God would grant it.

The following year, Samuel was born. She waited several years until he was a young boy before taking him to Eli and dedicating him to God's service. Hannah knew that Samuel did not belong to her. God had only given Samuel to her for a few years. It was during this short period that Hannah and Elkanah trained their son to know and serve God.

A child is a unique individual. In many genetic ways he is like his parents. His skin pigment, facial and body features are similar to theirs. If the parents are tall, their children will most likely be tall. If the parents are blond haired and blue eyed, their children will probably also be. This does not mean that the child is one with his parents. He is not. He might have some similarities, but he is still different.

Although our physical appearance is extremely important in the make up of our personality, it is secondary to the mental. In a way, we inherit our attitudes from our parents. This is different from a transfer of genetic material. We inherit their attitudes from their teaching and modeling them to us. Although we cannot change those physical characteristics we inherit, we can change the attitudes we inherit. We do not have to be a "chip off the old block." When parents try to recreate themselves in their children, they are harming them. They are smothering them and not allowing them to become the uniquely independent people God wants them to be.

The rearing of a child is not something the parents do on their own. It is a joint effort between them and God. When God is left out, a child's mental and spiritual development is stymied. He will never be the mature, complete, perfect person God wants him or her to be (Psalms 27:10, 127:3; Ephesians 5:1, 6:1 -4).

B. <u>The Place of the Parents</u>

The parents have a special place in their relationship with their children. A child is not a miniature adult. A child comes into this world totally dependent upon the parents. Without the parents' love and protection, a child will not survive. Infants die within a few days when they are not cared for properly.

Although children need their parents, they have a soul. This means that parents cannot treat their children any way they want to treat them. They have a God-given mandate to rear their children according to the law of the Lord. In a way, parents are God's lieutenants in rearing children.

Parents are to provide a winning environment in which the child can grow and develop (Proverbs 4:1 -4). The home environment is more important to a child's growth and development than is his genetic potential.

What about a child who has the genetic potential to be a great professional football player? Will he ever become one if his parents never allow him to play football? Probably not. If on the other hand his parents recognize that he does have potential for playing sports and encourage him, his chances of recognizing his potential have

greatly improved. This does not mean that he will become one; other environmental factors are involved.

Parents who nurture and love their children set the stage for the children to reach their potential. It is still the job of the children to reach that potential, but parents help them get started.

Parents who physically, mentally, sexually, or spiritually abuse their children have committed a great wrong against them. Most children who come from abusive families, will abuse their children. Most children who come from abusive families will never overcome the unhealthy attitudes they learned as children. One reason for this is that it requires much work, and most people do not want to reopen old wounds. Another reason is that they do not see anything wrong with the way they are living. To them it is natural.

Parents also have a responsibility to provide a winning example for their children (Luke 2:41; 2 Timothy 1:3-5). Of all the ways parents have of teaching their children, providing them with a wholesome Christian example is the most important one. What we do is more important than what we say. When we say something, often we are just parroting what others expect us to say. When we do something, we are acting out what we really believe and think. Jesus recognized the principle behind this when he told His disciples to do what the Pharisees preached, but not what they did (Matthew 23:2-3).

How often have we seen parents punish their children for doing exactly the same thing mother or father did? This is seen more often than we want to think. How about you? Did your parents ever punish you for following their example instead of doing what they said to do? Also, have you ever punished your children for following your example instead of your preaching? Practice what you preach. If you do not, your children will follow your example whether it be good or bad.

Good parents reinforce their children's winning behavior. When a child exhibits winning behavior, how do you treat them? Do you just pass it off as nothing special? Do you ignore it? Do you praise them and let them know how proud you are of their accomplishments? If you *do not* praise them, you are not reinforcing their winning behavior. In the story of Samuel, after Hannah had left Samuel in the care of Eli, each year she would make him new clothes and take them to him. She showed her pride in his accomplishments and let him know that she approved of them.

On the negative side, a good parent will correct his children's losing behavior. A mother or father who does not correct a child's negative losing behavior is not acting in the child's best interest (Proverbs 3:12). He is telling them that he does not care what happens to them.

We see this also in the story of Samuel. Eli's two sons also served as priests, but they abused their office. They stole the sacrifices offered to God and committed adultery with the women who served at the Tabernacle. Eli knew what they were doing, but did not stop it. Because of this, God told Eli that He would destroy his entire family (1 Samuel 2:12-17, 2:27-34, 3:11-14, 4:11-18).

Take some time and think about how you were treated as a child and how you treat your children. Are there any similarities between what we have talked about in this section on the parent/child relationship? If so, where? If not, how does it make you feel? What do you think you can do now to change it?

III. Twelve Traits of a Winner

What is a winner? Winners are people who have developed into the kind of people God wants all men to be. They have either reached their potential or are working on reaching it. Their lives are well-rounded and balanced. They have developed not only physically, but also mentally, emotionally, and spiritually into the best they can be.

Being a winner will vary from person to person. This is due to our different abilities and potentials. Being a winner for one person could be being a loser for another. There are some traits that all winners have in common. They might not have them to the same degree, but they possess them as much as their potential allows. They are the following:

A. Gives and Accepts Love

Giving and accepting love is extremely difficult in modern American society. The main reason for this is that the concept of love has been so degraded and confused that many people do not really understand the real meaning of love. Another reason is that we live in a “me-first” society; most people want to receive love without giving it. You cannot. To get love, people have to give it. Paul provides some thoughts on the nature of love in 1 Corinthians 13:3-8. How does it fit into your idea of love? Remember, at the Last Supper Jesus told His disciples that love would be the distinctive mark of His followers (John 13:34).

B. Is Guided by Truth

Truth is treated like love in our society. We are told that all is relative; truth like beauty is in the eye of the beholder. *This is one of Satan's big lies.* Jesus says that not

only is there an absolute set of knowledge that is true, but that it will set us free (John 8:32). A winner knows this; he searches for the truth and when he finds it, makes it part of his life.

C. Is Responsible for His/Her Own Behavior

God made each of us responsible for our behavior. Others might influence what we do, but we decide to actually do something. As much as we might want to escape this responsibility, we cannot (Ecclesiastes 12:14; Romans 14:10-12; 2 Corinthians 5:10).

D. Responsive to Self and Others

We *are* our brother's keeper. It is not a popular idea today, but it is true. Jesus said, "The second is like it, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'" (Matthew 22:39) This teaches us two points. The first one is that we are to love and take care of our selves. Second, we are to treat others as we treat our self. Easy? No, neither is, but if we are to be complete, mature, winning persons, it is something we must learn to do.

E. Recognizes His/Her Strengths and Weaknesses

This is the idea of knowing yourself. Do a personal inventory. What are your strong points? What are your weak points? Are you pleased with them? If not, do something about it. God said that you *can* change (Philippians 4:13).

F. Can Lose Without Blaming Others

We all fail at something, sometime. Once we realize this, we do not have to look for someone on which to blame our failures. Failure usually is the result of our not knowing how to do something, trying to do something too fast, being vindicative, or showing off. The vast majority of the time when we fail, it is our own fault. Failure is one way we learn. If we do not learn from our failures, we are doomed to keep repeating them (2 Samuel 24:10).

G. Feels a Brotherhood to All Mankind

In a very physical way, we are all related. We are all descendants of Adam and Eve. Therefore, we have an obligation to want only the best for each other. When we recognize this, we start changing the world. It might not be a big change, but nevertheless, we have made some change in our small corner of the world (Matthew 22:39, 28:19; Mark 16:15).

H. Dedicates Himself/Herself to a Greater Cause

A winner is not caught up in his own small world. He sees the world as place to do great things, especially service to God. He will search for a cause that will help

mankind and then devote his life to it (Matthew 6:33; Romans 8:28; 2 Corinthians 4:16-18).

I. Possesses Personal Integrity

He or she has a set of beliefs by which to live. These beliefs are more important than life. If a person is not willing to die for his beliefs, he believes in nothing. The early Christians were such people. They believed in Jesus as the Savior of the world and died rather then reject Him.

J. Trusts and Obeys God

They believe that God is faithful to fulfill His promises. Because of this, they live a life of obedience to God's will (Proverbs 23:7; Acts 2:38; Galatians 2:20; Hebrews 11).

K. Lives the Abundant Life

Jesus promises His followers that they will not only have life, but *will have it abundantly!* That means they will live the kind of life that God wanted us to live when He created Adam and Eve. Adam and Eve rejected it, but we have been given a second chance. What will you do with it (John 10:10)?

L. Finishes the Course

A winner is not a quitter. He finishes what he starts. Although times and events become hard, he keeps on doing what he know needs to be done. In the end, he proves that he is a winner (2 Timothy 4:6-8).

IV. Conclusion

God wants us all to be winners. He wants us to start learning and living a winning life from the day we are born and continue until the day we die. To get us started on our journey of winning as parents, he has given us the responsibility to teach our children how to be winners. Are you doing your job?

Now, please start over and study the lesson and the related scriptures. **When you finish your in-depth study, return to the enclosed Response Sheet and write your answers to the study questions about this lesson.**