Train Up A Child...

Building a Hedge of Protection

by

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Course III – Unit 11, Lesson 4

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

(2 Corinthians 5:17)

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Building a Hedge of Protection (Job 1:9)

Before you begin this lesson, consider the basis for your decisions. **Write your thoughts on the enclosed Response Sheet and put it away until you finish the lesson.** Next, we recommend that you read the entire lesson through once without looking up the scriptures. Finally, go back for a more in-depth study before completing the Response Sheet.

I. Introduction

Little children tend to believe whatever adults tell them. They also tend to accept as permissible the behavior of their significant others. I once saw my 7-year old niece and 3-year old nephew stuffing their T-shirts inside their shorts. They seemed so determined in their effort that I asked them why. With an air of agitation they said, "That is the way you are supposed to do it! Grandpa does it this way."

For example, in the current American culture, we have certain laws. We require all children to attend school. The parents are required to enroll them in an approved school or provide an approved program at home. Underage youth are not allowed to attend certain movies or purchase tobacco or alcohol. There are child labor laws that prohibit the exploitation of those under a certain age.

In addition to these laws, parents then add their own prohibitions and positive programs for the purpose of protecting the family lifestyle. Some parents restrict certain TV programs and promote weekend religious, cultural, or athletic programs. Some families make regular trips to visit relatives. All this is for the purpose of building values and guidelines for their children's behavior. We say, "It is for your own good."

By their restrictions and promotions they are building a "hedge of protection" against the children losing their family values or being drawn to another set of values or behavioral guidelines. As parents, we set up the hedge so as to help our children develop value-oriented guidelines. These guidelines are to protect them when we are no longer available as their guide.

When we read Job 1:6-11, we see that God had built a "hedge of protection" around Job. This hedge was the structure that enabled him to be upright and shun evil.

II. How to Build A Hedge of Protection – The PMETA Plan: Prioritize, Model, Expect, Teach, Appreciate

A. Step 1 - Prioritize

The first step is for the parents, even before their children are born, to make a list of values and put them in categories and in levels of priority. Difficult as this seems, it will force parents to get to the heart and soul of their family. This may take many hours to do. The summary of the values will provide the family with its own vision and mission statements.

You might say that "*values* determine guidelines, *guidelines* determine decisions, and *decisions* determine destinies." Below is a sample list of value-oriented guidelines. This list is based on the ten virtues in William Bennett's book *The Book of Virtues: A Treasury of Great Moral Stories.* Of course, you will want to develop your own list and then put them in order of importance. The sample list is as follows:

Self-discipline	Courage	Respect*
Compassion	Perseverance	Quality*
Responsibility	Honesty	Effort*
Friendship	Loyalty	
Work	Faith	

*Added by H. M. Motsinger

Here are some examples of cultures that produced value oriented guidelines:

The Mayans – While in the villages of the Yucatan Peninsula, I witnessed Mayan behaviors, languages, beliefs and customs that were 2,000 years old. Yet three hours away, I witnessed the Mayan people exhibiting a modern metropolitan culture. By being isolated in the villages, the distance served as part of their hedge of protection. The men worked together in the fields and the timber business. The women stayed at home and cared for the children. Today, in the city of Cancun, a commercial and tourist city, many Mayans live and work. The business, ease, beauty and excess of easy money (or hope for it) builds a wall of *prevention.* It keeps them from returning to the simplicity and poverty of the villages.

The Mennonites - The Mennonites are another example of building a hedge of protection. They have their own schools. The young marry other Mennonites, live on the family farm and continue to work side by side with the older generations. They make their own clothes, farming tools and food. The only thing they do outside of their own hedge of protection is to sell their goods to non-Mennonites. With this tight

wall of protection, is it any wonder that the Mennonites can maintain their value system over a span of several generations?

The Hippies – The "hippies" of the 60's took their children off to the communes. In many cases a similar thing happened with their children. The concept of sex and children without marriage was passed on to the next generation. With the failure of that system to meet the basic and relational needs of the individuals, many children grew up to reject parts of their parents' value system. The part that seems to have carried over is free sex and children outside of marriage.

While these three examples produced value-oriented guide lines, I don't recommend the hedge of protection offered in these three scenarios!

I offer this following plan as developed by Maggie and Hugh Comer. The hedge of protection they built made it possible for four children to be successful, law-abiding and contributing members of their society.

The Comers – Maggie's stepfather prevented her from going to church or school as a child. So when Maggie became 16, she moved to live with her aunt. She valued church attendance. She also believed that church was where good men went to look for good women. She went to church and found Hugh Comer, a very good man

She valued education so much that at age 16 she enrolled in the first grade, but this did not last. Still believing in the value of education, she went to work for wealthy people to see what they did to be successful. Before she and Hugh married, he had to agree and uphold certain basic values:

- They would go to church.
- They would not spend all their extra money traveling to visit in-laws and family members.
- They would own equity in a house.
- Their children would graduate from college.

These and other guidelines served as the basic hedge of protection for their children. Maggie and Hugh invited only reputable people into their home on Sundays. Each child was prepared to interact with each guest. Their children were to be seen and heard.

When Maggie went shopping, she would take the children. As they rode the bus, Maggie asked them to read the large colorful advertisements in the bus. She explained situations, events and sites as the bus came to them. When there were problems at school, Maggie was there to guide the children through the experiences.

In the book, *Maggie 's American Dream*, by her son James Comer, MD, one can see how values build an invisible hedge of protection for each child. As the children left home for college, the value system went with them. They had internalized the value system and it became their invisible hedge of protection.

B. Step 2 – Modeling

Second, parents must model the value they want their child to adopt and live by. Examples are as follows:

Family Values – Parents must respect each other if they want the children to be respectful of them, siblings and others.

Moral Values – Parents must tell the truth, even when it hurts, if they expect the children to be truthful.

Religious Values – Parents must practice their faith, doctrine, beliefs, etc., diligently if they expect the same of their children.

School Values.– Parents must turn off the TV and increase their own knowledge in some way if they expect the children to do more than just "finish" their homework. Parents must model learning for both the joy and career value of it.

Parents will find it helpful to find mentors for their children. Maggie and Hugh Comer found a medical doctor for James. Later James became a medical doctor.

You can find several models. Some will exemplify certain values and other models/mentors exemplify other values. Providing your children with biographies of honorable people is another inspiring source.

While our son Charles was in college, I remember purchasing and sending him a book on the life of Benjamin Franklin. I had marked certain passages that I thought important for him. I wrote such statements as, "Hey, you can do this!" or "say, you have already done this!"

During the winter break he brought the book home. He told of three things Benjamin Franklin did that he wanted to do:

- First, he found his city, Philadelphia.
- Second, he found his career, printing.
- Third, he found his woman, his wife.

Charles said, "Dad, I want to do the same three things as Benjamin Franklin, but I want to reverse his order for the three. *The first thing I want to do is find my woman!"*

Step 3 – Expectations

In the movie, *Rebel Without A Cause*, James Dean goes to his father to get help in making a decision about playing the game, "Chicken," with some other boys. His father talked around the issue but would never take a stand and tell his son, "NO! You cannot do it!"

Parents who tell their children what is expected of them provide another invisible strand of protection for their children. When the children don't want to do an activity forbidden by the parents they can easily blame their parents and say, "They won't let me." Thus, they save face with peers yet retain their inner structure.

When parents "lay down the law" so to speak, it gives their children a structure that provides limits. This leads the children to feel a sense of protection, importance and love. Children who can do as they please will often say "My parents don't love me. They don't care what I do."

The story goes that Julius Caesar's guards brought him a young soldier found guilty of a military crime. While bowing before the great Caesar he was told to stand up and give his name and rank. The young man stood but did not speak. Caesar demanded that the soldier give his name. Slowly and with shame the youth said, "Julius Caesar." At this the emperor said with anger, "Young man, either change your name or change your behavior!"

Expectations is a two-fold strand. It bespeaks first of requirements, rules, laws, etc. The second fold in this strand bespeaks of parental confidence. It is a sign that the parents know the child can turn down the temptation to violate the family value system. When parents leave out confidence, children in a moment of anger are apt to say, "You don't trust me!" Sometimes they may even act out the violation. When parents include it, the children receive encouragement (courage within) to carry out their expectations. Expectations is a key factor in maturation. As an immature person we do the right thing so we don't want to suffer the pain of the penalty. As a more mature person, but still not where Christ wants us, we do the right thing because we do not want to lose the friendship of one or more persons important to us. When we reach the desired level of maturity, we say "I do these things or I don't do these things" from my own inner voice. Paul reached the highest level of maturity when he said, "It is not I that live (think, feel and act) but Christ who lives within me." In Galatians 2:20 ff, Paul continues by writing that he does this by faith in Christ who loved him enough to die for him. I also refer you to Philippians 2:1 -8, where Paul talks about letting the mind of Christ live in our minds. This way, our expectations of ourselves come from Christ.

Step 3 – Teaching

Teaching means you explain *what* the value is, *why* it is important, *where* it is in the hierarchy of values, examples *when* it is to be followed, and with *whom* it is most applicable. Then the parent can give illustrations of public figures following or violating the value. They can also share stories about how they themselves utilized that particular value.

We must allow a free flowing discussion within the family. Very seldom should a parent resort to "Because I said so" as a reason for following that value. In Deuteronomy 6:4-9, Moses lays out a very effective teaching plan and schedule. What we teach should be based on verses 4 and 5. "The Lord our God, the Lord is One. Love the Lord your God with all your soul and with all your strength." The schedule given is as follows: When you:

- sit at home
- walk along the road
- lie down
- get up

This looks like four times each day, doesn't it?

- "Sit at home..." eating time (instead of T.V. time)
- "Walk along the road..." traveling in the car to and from school, etc. (The kids would also love a walk with you!)
- "Lie down..." bedtime to hear the activities of the day and set goals for tomorrow.
- "Get up..." wake 'em up, feed 'em, hug 'em and encourage them to "take on the day.. .with the mind of Christ."

Correction is not so much to punish as it is to teach. So correction is a part of teaching. All of us will sometimes violate the values. When children violate a value, we need to make sure they know and believe that confession, before being caught, is the easiest and best route to follow.

Paul warns parents who taunt and punish their children in a vindictive attitude. The children will become exasperated, embittered and discouraged (a loss of courage). (Ephesians 6:4; Colossians 3:21) Future happiness should be the basis for correction.

Step 5 – Appreciation

For the family member carrying out a value to the expectation of the parents, expressed appreciation is the highest reward.

When a parent is reluctant to say, “I am proud of you,” or “Thank you,” or something similar but instead says nothing or perhaps says, “She knew what she would get if she didn’t. . .” it prepares the child to become emotionally distant and in most cases angry at the parent. In due time a negative relationship will develop and the youth may purposefully violate values. Be grateful for the good behaviors, however little. This brings a calmness to a child/youth. This closes the loop. The loop being, (1) parents stated the expectation, (2) children achieved the expectation and now, (3) parents say, “Thank you.” Saying “Thank you” can take many forms such as a smile, a touch, a hug, kind words of praise, or telling someone else what the child did. Parents who are on the lookout for achievements to compliment will find them. Parents on the lookout for faults will find them. The problem in the latter case is that youth will find ways to avoid being around you.

Finding ways to show appreciation is the best way to reinforce the acceptance of the values/guidelines and reinforce the probability that the behavior will reoccur when a similar situation arises. To show appropriate appreciation, we refer you to the DISC information. The High D style child/youth may want more decision-making authority. The High I style child/youth may want more social privileges. The High S style child/youth may want more time with one or both of the parents. The High C style child/youth may want you to set the same requirements for other family members, including the parents. Knowing each child/youth’s individuality will make it easier for you to provide appropriate appreciation.

Another part of showing appreciation is to allow teenagers to have more and more freedom each year to test your values and modify them so that by the age of 18 they will have accepted our values and personalized our values and behavioral guidelines.

Summary

The PMETA plan will be easy to follow and effective in helping you achieve your objective. Do not expect anyone, including yourself, to be perfect. Also do not expect your children to adopt all of your values. In fact, you will probably revise your guidelines as you mature, and especially as your children become adults and begin having as much influence on you as you used to have on them.

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.