

Parenting God's Way: Part 2

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 08 June 2025

Preacher: Nick Louw

[0 : 00] Someone once said, every child comes into the world with sealed orders, a particular role that they are going to play in God's world.

! And it's the primary duty of parents to help their children unseal their hidden orders. In other words, to discover what it is that God intends them to be and to do in His world.

Now I like that because it reminds me as a parent of a very important truth. And that is that our children are not ours to shape however we want to, into what we want them to be.

Lots of parents might think that, but that's not true and we've been seeing that in the Bible. But it's our job as parents under God to shape and grow children into what God wants them to be.

Because the truth is, God is the true parent of us all. God is the true parent of His children. You have a Father in heaven, the Bible says.

[1 : 16] Now, that's a great relief for anybody who had bad parents in life, isn't it? If you have parents who are not doing their job or you had parents who failed to be good parents, it's a relief to be reminded they were never meant to be your ultimate parents.

You have a Father in heaven. And yet, for a time, God gives earthly parents an important role to play in His parenting of His children.

That's how we've got to see it. That's the biblical perspective. God is parenting His children and yet He calls Christian parents and non-Christian parents, they don't know how and what He's calling them to do.

So, being here is right. Listening out, even if you're not a Christian, to listen to God's instructions for parents. Because He has given us a role to play in how He parents His children.

And as Christians, that is vital to remember that, not just in parenting, but in all things, being a Christian means letting God work through us to do His work in the world.

[2 : 28] That's what we're about. That's why we're here. That's what being a Christian is about. We think it's about being saved so we can go to heaven when we die. But actually, what we learn when we open the Bible is it's being saved so that God can work through us in His world to achieve His purposes.

And especially so in homes. And for parents, for Christian parents, for the Holy Spirit to work through us to do God's work in our children.

And that is why parents especially need to listen very carefully to the parenting course that God has provided in His Word in this verse, Ephesians 6 verse 4.

And as I said last week, while this addresses fathers, it speaks to mothers and fathers. It's just that, as we saw last week, fathers are to take the leading role and they're to drive this.

It's their primary responsibility. But it's an instruction to all parents. And we also saw last week that this parenting course is split into two parts.

[3 : 32] Firstly, what not to do as parents. And we looked at that last week. And then this week, we're going to therefore be looking at the second half, which is what we should be doing actively to help our children unseal their orders and become who God made them to be.

So that's what we're going to look at this morning. But to do that, we first need to understand what God's goal is for children. What is God's goal for children in the world and our children if we're parents?

So the text in front of us says, bring them up. That's how the second half of this verse starts. Bring them up. What does that mean? Well, it means to raise them to a particular goal.

To be a particular type of person. But the question is, what is that goal? Bring them up to what? What are you bringing your child up to be if you're a parent?

What did you, if they've left home, what did you bring them up to be? What was your goal for them? What is your goal for them? Think about it. Because whether or not we consciously recognize that we all have a goal that we want our children to be.

[4 : 49] Most parents think their job is to bring their children up to be productive members of society who lead relatively healthy lifestyles.

And maybe are successful at something. So health and productivity and success are typically a parent's goals for their children.

And our goals are what direct how we parent our children. Whether we know it or not, the goal we have, what we want to bring them up to is direct what we put our energies into when we parent them.

So we want them to be productive, so we invest in schooling and we make sure they have the best opportunities in life. We want them to be healthy, so we give them a balanced diet, we make sure they go to the dentist.

We want them to be successful, so we pay a little bit extra so that they can get coaching in a particular sport, whatever it is. And then we feel like we are doing a good job as a parent, right?

[5 : 49] To bring them up into what they should be. But what if I told you that God's goal for your child is different to yours?

You see, while God wants them to be healthy members of society, same as you, that is not his primary goal for them. No, God's primary goal is that they become like his son, Jesus.

We see in Ephesians 4, God's goal for people, God's idea of what it looks like to be mature. It is in Ephesians 4 verse 13, a couple of chapters back from these instructions to parents, and it says this. Growing into maturity with a stature measured by Christ's fullness. Now, it's fancy words, but basically what this means is that maturity according to God, being mature according to God, is not about how strong you are or how big you are or how healthy you are or how clever you are.

That's how much you are like Jesus. That's maturity according to God. Because that is God's ultimate goal for all humans. That is God's ultimate goal for humanity.

[7 : 17] God wants a world that is populated with people like his son, who is the true human. Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ. He is the image of God's intent for us all. We look at Jesus, we don't only see our savior, we don't only see our king, we also see God's goal for all humans in that man.

God's goal and God's intent for us all, including our children, is to be like Jesus. Which means the first step in Christian parenting is to realign our goals for our children to match God's goal for our children to become like his son.

And what we find is when we realign our goals for our children according to God's goal, then the things we do to parent them will start to change. And what we put our energy and focus into won't so much be in just the schooling and the coaching and the diet and all that stuff.

Actually, we'll realize there's other things we need to be doing. And we'll be asking how do we parent our children in our daily home lives according to that goal that God wants for them.

[8 : 38] So parents, how are you? You might be able to tell me what you're doing to bring up your children physically and mentally, but what are you doing? What is part of your routine at home to bring them up to become like Jesus?

That's a vital question we need to be asking as parents if that is God's ultimate goal for them.

Fortunately, it's not hard to answer that. Well, at least to answer what we should be doing because God has made it very clear in his word what we should be doing in this verse, Ephesians 6, 4.

What we should be doing to mature them towards his goal for them. And it's in two parts. And they are training and instruction. Training and instruction.

Right there is the primary job description for Christian parents. Training and instruction. So let's look at each of them in turn.

Firstly, training. The word is also translated in some versions, discipline. And it means the same thing. And it's more than just telling them what is right and what they should be doing.

[9 : 50] Training, discipline is more than that. It's training them to do what is right. Not just telling them to do what is right. It's like if you go to the gym, you can just have a gym membership, but you can also get a personal trainer if you have extra money to pay.

And that personal trainer has a particular job to train you to get fit or to lose weight or to get strong, whatever it is. But what they do, they don't just sit and tell you, oh, you should get fit.

Okay, so make sure you go off and get fit. Come on, you can do it. They don't just talk to you. Right? They train you. They come alongside you.

They give you the particular exercises you need to do. And then when you're doing them, they come alongside you and they help you. Come on, you can do it. You can do it. No, ten more push-ups. Come on. You know, they train you.

They discipline you. Because these things, and this is why people employ personal trainers, we won't do them by ourselves. We won't do the extra ten push-ups by ourselves.

[10:59] Right? There's someone shouting at us to do it. Not that parents must shout at their children. That's not what I'm getting at. But, you get my point. A trainer is someone who's there to push you to do, to go beyond what you would normally do by yourself.

To do the things that don't come naturally to you. And that's when we need training in our lives. To when we need discipline. To do the things that we don't do naturally.

To do the things that don't come naturally to us. And here's one of the big revelations of scripture, is that doing what we should be doing in life, does not come naturally to any of us.

It's called sin. We're sinners. We're sinners. And that means that the things that we were made to do, the things that God wants us to do in life, do not come naturally to us.

To any person. But especially children who have not even learned the disciplines to train themselves, like as adults hopefully we have.

[12:09] Children especially need disciplines from their parents and rules when they're young. To help them to do the things they wouldn't normally do by themselves.

And not just to be told, but to be trained. To be helped. For parents to come alongside and develop habits with their children. Homes are to be training grounds to become who we are not naturally inclined to be.

And so homes are where children get trained to do things like sacrifice for others. In simple ways like washing the dishes.

They get trained to do things they don't feel like doing. By taking out the garbage or picking up the dog poo. You see, giving chores at home, which is part of any healthy home, is not just about using your children for cheap labor.

That's a part of it. But giving them duties and chores to do in the home is not just because you realize, oh I've made two new employees. And they don't cost anything.

[13:20] Well they actually do. But I can just get them to do whatever I know. That's not what chores is about. Okay, we don't give them chores just because we need things to get done. It's part of the training program.

To help them. To discipline them. To do the things that they don't naturally do. As is the rules that we lay in our homes.

And the consequences for breaking those rules. Being disciplined. Being disciplined. That's another job of parents.

And it's not comfortable for parents to do often. To discipline. To deliberately cause discomfort to our children.

And that will be uncomfortable for them. This training. And this discipline. And parents won't want to do it. We want our children to be happy. We want our children to be comfortable.

[14:20] We want them to have every day. To be a good day. But according to this, parents need to be willing to make their children uncomfortable. It's actually a vital part of parenting.

Is to be willing to make your child uncomfortable. You know what? Even our Heavenly Father is willing to make his children uncomfortable.

Don't we know it? We saw that earlier in Hebrews 12. Let me read it to you again. Hebrews 12 from verse 7. It says, endure suffering as discipline.

The same word. Discipline. Training. God is dealing with you as sons. Children. For what child is there that a father does not discipline?

But if you are without discipline, which all receive, then you are illegitimate children. You see what that verse is saying? God doesn't even spare his beloved children from experiencing discomfort in life.

[15:25] And in fact, he often deliberately sends it to them. It doesn't mean he doesn't love and doesn't care for his children. But he knows that they need it.

He knows that we need it. When he sends us discomfort deliberately in our lives, it's because we need it. Because of sin, we can't become the people we need without it. But the end of the time, this discipline, these times of trial and discomfort are training us.

The end of Hebrews, not the end, the end of the section in Hebrews 12 says in verse 11, No discipline seems enjoyable at the time.

But painful. Painful. Painful. God sends his children pain. And sometimes it's the role of parents to send their children pain.

Later on, however, the verse goes on, It yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it. And it's the same for our children.

[16:35] They need uncomfortable discipline from their parents. Now, sadly, there's been a move away in our modern society away from this in parenting.

If you read modern parenting books, there's less and less and less on this. And it's all about pleasing and making your children happy, but nothing about making them uncomfortable. And disciplining them. It's very unpopular in today's society to discipline your children. And we see the results, don't we? We see the results of children coming into adulthood today.

But the Bible is clear on this throughout in Proverbs. Let me read to you something from Proverbs 23 verse 13 says, Don't withhold discipline from a youth.

If you punish him with a rod, he will not die. I like the good news version of this. You know, good news Bible. It's a simpler, easier to read version. It says, don't hesitate to discipline children.

[17:46] A good spanking won't kill them. But this verse, Proverbs 23 verse 13, Don't withhold discipline from a youth. If you punish him with a rod, he will not die.

It also has another meaning, which is that discipline will save him from death. If you punish him, if you discipline him, he will not die. It'll actually save, that discipline will save him in future from things that will endanger his life, both in this life, but ultimately his eternal life as well.

This discipline, this discomfort is actually ultimately what's going to save a child from harm. And that's why Proverbs 13 verse 24 says this, The one who will not use the rod hates his son.

But the one who loves him disciplines him diligently. And we've got to remember from that verse, discipline is actually out of love. And it must always be out of a place of love.

Discipline must come from a concern for what is best for my child, never out of my own anger.

Never out of my own frustration or my own emotions.

[19:06] We saw that last week. Parenting should never be driven by our own emotions. And if discipline, especially inflicting discomfort on your child, is driven because of your own emotions, your own emotions, then you need to stop, you need to go to your room, you need to breathe, you need to pray for self-discipline yourself, you need to ask God what is best for my child, and then go out and then do what you need to do.

But this here, training, discipline, this is the first duty, positive duty of parents in this verse. Training them in habits that they need, that they're not going to train themselves in.

And disciplining them. And it's much more than just telling them things. It's coming alongside them. It's doing the hard work of building the habits they need. Working with their weaknesses, helping them to overcome those weaknesses.

It's much more than just telling them things, to train them like this. And before we move off from this, it's worth mentioning one very important part about training our children, parents.

You need to make sure you are trained first. Okay. If you are going to be an instrument for God to grow them to become like Jesus, you better make sure that you are growing to become like Jesus yourself.

[20:29] Nobody is going to listen in the gym to an unfit personal trainer. Right? Who comes alongside you. Do 10 more push-ups.

Oh, I've got to go sit down. I'm so unfit. You're not going to listen to that personal trainer. Your child is not going to listen to you, if you are trying to train them to be something that you are not working towards being in your own life.

And that you've got disciplines and that you have prioritized growing to become like Christ yourself. It's your example that is going to mean a whole lot more to your children than your words.

They'll be empty words if they don't see it in you. So parents, you need to make sure you're trained up first. But, moving on to the next instruction, which is instruction.

That is also a vital duty. So while telling our children things is not enough, we've got to train them and discipline them. Telling them is also a vital part of our role.

[21 : 37] Actually using words. Telling them the right things. And this is something that many parents neglect as well in today's world. Instruction.

Because you see something else that children in this world can't get by themselves is truth. And they're certainly not going to get it by listening to YouTube influencers. There is such a thing as truth and there is such a thing as lies in this world.

And our children need the truth, but they're not going to get it themselves. And just as God's priority for you, for all his children, is to speak the truth into their lives.

That should be a parent's priority for their children as well. To lay out truth about life and eternity before they face all the lies in this confusing world.

That their parents are the first ones to tell them how things are. To tell them what the world is and what it's like. And what's true about it. And in fact, it's not only the first people they hear truth from.

[22 : 48] But what they hear from their parents is the most foundational thing in their lives. That all the other things that they hear after that are built on.

A person's most foundational beliefs about life and eternity will always come from what their parents told them when they were kids. It's true. It's true. I mean, I look at my own life and in hindsight, I realized that so much of what I believed about God as a young adult.

You know, in my early twenties, didn't actually come from Sunday school that I went to or the church sermons that I listened to.

But it came from what my parents told me when I was a child. They laid the original belief framework of my life. And that's how it works. That's how God has set it up.

That what the parents tell a child, whether it's true or a lie, is going to lay the original foundation for their lives. Parents.

[23 : 53] This is a big responsibility, isn't it? The ideas that you plant in your children, especially when they're young, have a powerful sticking ability.

And that's why you've got to make sure you don't just tell them what you think is true. You don't just tell them the stuff that you like. You've got to make sure that you are discerning what is really true and telling them that.

It's like my job as a preacher to you. Every Sunday, it's not just to tell you my opinions. It's not just to tell you the things that I like to believe. It's I've got to do my hard work in making sure that what I'm telling you is the truth from the Bible.

And that's a parent's job for their child as well. And that's it's because of the sticking ability that what a parent tells their child when they're young. It's because of the power of a parent's words into their child's framework that God says it is the primary responsibility of parents and not the church to teach your children the truth.

Throughout his word, we see this right from the beginning. It is the parent's job and especially the father to teach their children the truth about life.

[25 : 07] So we saw this earlier in Deuteronomy 11. I'll just read a few verses again. This is speaking to the ancient Israelites and God says to them, imprint these words of mine on your hearts and minds bind them as a sign in your hands.

Teach them to your children. Talking to the fathers. Talking to the Israelite head of the household. Teach these to your children.

It doesn't it doesn't say just you know take them to synagogue. And let the rabbi teach them. While that's important and it's important for Christian parents to bring their children to church.

The primary role is for the for the father. Teach these things first to your children talking about them when you sit in your house and when you walk along the road and when you lie down and when you get up throughout life.

Homes and not churches are to be the primary discipling center. The home is the primary discipling center.

[26 : 10] That's where the framework of belief will first be established. That's where it will be strengthened and that's where it will be applied into our children's lives as we get to know their challenges and their struggles and then the things that are happening at school and what's happening with their friends.

And we talk about that around the Bible. It's then that we can apply the truth of the Bible into those situations. That doesn't happen at church. No. Homes are to be the primary discipling centers where they first hear these truths come out of the word and applied into life.

And that is why more than ever in history we need today to recapture the idea of what is called family worship.

This was something that was ingrained in early Christians for centuries and centuries and for the last few centuries we've lost it largely and we need to recapture it.

Family worship or family devotions which is referring to a Christian father leading his family in regular time around the Bible at home.

[27 : 21] That's what it is. That's what it is. And it is essential. And I want to talk about it but what I'm about to say I know is going to make a lot of dads feel guilty this morning because I know you're not doing it.

But I'm sorry I have to say it. It's going to make me feel guilty because I know I'm probably not doing it enough and I'm a pastor. And I know the excuses.

Dads, guys, I know the excuses. I've used them. Oh, you know, it's so hard to find time. I get home from work, I'm tired.

I just want to turn on the TV. Okay, sure, I know it's important but I don't know where to start. You know, I'm not trained. But guys, none of those excuses negate the fact that this is what God is calling for us to do.

We need to do this. This is our God-given duty as fathers. It actually would have been much easier in the 1600s where it was rules for church membership and parents were disciplined if they didn't do it.

[28 : 29] The director for family worship in 1640 states this. I quote, This is serious stuff.

This is serious stuff.

It was the job of ministers to police and enforce that family worship was happening in the homes.

Why? Because the church knew that the primary way God teaches children the truth is not through church.

It's not through Sunday school or youth groups or children's ministry, important as those are. It's through their parents. And so parents, this is our job. This is our duty.

If you're not doing it, you need to start. And you know what? It's not as hard as you think. You don't need a Bible degree to do it.

[29 : 36] In fact, you would have received this morning on your way in a guide that I wrote specifically for you, fathers and mothers if there's no father at home.

Parents and of course, wives need to support and help their husbands to do this. But there's a guide and it's not hard. You read through it and you realize, oh, I can do this.

So I'm just going to highlight, if you don't have it, if you didn't receive it on your way in, then make sure you get one. I'll also, I'll put it on Church Connect later this afternoon, the Connect app, so that you can have access to it if you don't have it in hard copy.

But it's simple. How to run a family devotion at home. You start by praying. You make sure everyone has a Bible in front of them. You open the Bible, you read something in it. Okay, decide before and what you're going to read.

It's not hard. There's some steps there. After you read it, you ask, what stood out for you guys in this passage? Anything strike you? Is God saying anything to you in this passage?

[30 : 38] And you just let everyone have a turn to share. And the Holy Spirit does some amazing work in those times. Yes, at the beginning it'll be awkward. No one will know what to say because they haven't done this. You just keep on persevering and eventually it'll come out and God will start to speak to people.

That's what he does in his word. And you have this amazing discussion. And this conversation where things come out and you get to connect with your children on this deep level.

And talk about the most important things in life. And then you apply it. And you wrap it up. And then you pray. And then you carry on with your life. Doing that regularly, it's not hard.

It doesn't need to take a huge amount of time. But if you just carve out those times, it's vital for your children learning what is true.

And hearing that from their parents. These are very important things to do. And I promise, I promise if you do it regularly, you're going to start connecting with your children on a deeper level.

[31 : 41] And you're going to wonder why you never did this before. Try it. Just try it. Okay? And you'll see what I mean. God's truth should infuse family life.

As we see in Deuteronomy. You know, when you sit, when you walk, when you lie down, when you get up. In the ordinary course of life, God's word needs to be in the home.

God's word is what must dominate in the Christian home. And yet sadly, in so many, it doesn't.

In so many Christian homes even, it's the TV that dominates. Or it's school work that dominates. Or it's sports that dominates.

But you need to teach your children actually God's word is primary. You need to teach your children. Yes, I know there's a sports event, but it's church.

[32 : 44] You need to teach your children. Yes, I know we need to do this, but it's family devotions. It's Bible time. And this is more important. Just the habit of that will ingrain in your child's mind.

There's something more important than worldly things. Just them seeing their parent put that above the other things. The Christian home is to be different to the rest of the world.

Your home needs to be different. If it's going to be, as we learned a few weeks ago, when we looked at God's place of the Christian home in his world. If your home is going to be the force against evil and darkness in this world that God intends it to be.

It needs to be different. And that will begin with the parents. And especially the father. As he instructs and trains his children up in the way they should go.

As he does what this verse says. Fathers, do not stir up anger in your children, but bring them up in the training and the instruction of the Lord. And as I close, those last words, of the Lord, are very important.

[34 : 07] This training and instruction is of the Lord. Of the Lord. Because he is your child's Lord. He is their authority.

And your child is going to stand before him one day. Think about that. Your children are going to stand before the Lord one day.

And how you raised them and whether you obeyed this and took it seriously. Will have a huge bearing on whether they are ready for that day or not. So let's pray God will help us to do that. Will you bow with me? O Lord, you are our father.

Our father in heaven. And we thank you for giving us parents through whom you exercise your discipline and your training to us.

[35 : 15] Lord, help us who are parents to do that well. To realize that we are instruments that you will use to train your children to prepare them for that day when they see you.

And to make them like Christ. Help us to take these instructions very seriously. Not to ignore them. Not to take them as suggestions. But to take them as what they are.

The commands of our Lord. And help us to set our homes right where they are not right. Help us to put into practice the disciplines that need to happen in our homes for your children to become who you want them to be.

And we pray that you would help us, Lord, in these things. In discipline and training as well as instruction. I pray, Lord, that for those homes that do not regularly have family devotions.

That you will change that. That you would cause routines to change. That your word can be the thing that is primary in those homes. And we pray that for all our homes.

[36 : 28] Because, Lord, we are all sinners. And we all drift away from good disciplines. But especially, Lord, help parents to establish those disciplines. To push through their own inclinations and their own bad habits and their own temptations.

And to do what they know is the most important thing for their children. And, Lord, thank you that we are all your children and ultimately you are our Father. And you are training us to become like your Son, Christ.

We pray that you would continue to do that and that we would get on board with that training. In Jesus' name. Amen.