

How to Train and Save Your Children

By Elmer Ellsworth Shelhamer and His Wife, Julia A. Shelhamer

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How to Train and Save Your Children

**By
Elmer Ellsworth Shelhamer
and
His Wife, Julia A. Shelhamer**

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Chapter 1

RESPONSIBILITY OF PARENTHOOD

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

In the first place if we would find a model child, orally, mentally, and physically, we would begin 200 years before he is born. The parents must be taught how to live. For, sad to say, many people simply exist and have never caught the vision of living to bless others. They exist as animals to eat, drink, and toil for the things that perish.

In the next place, many a person is not fit to marry. There ought to be a law requiring a strict and high standard on all lines in order to secure a marriage certificate. No one should be allowed even to court who is mentally or morally deficient. In addition to this there should be a strict test of compatibility. For, though a person may be sound in mind and body, yet in disposition he may be unfit to live with another.

No two persons should think of living together whose temperaments are too near alike, or too far apart. If too near alike they will not be a help in overcoming each other's weakness. If too far apart they will not be likely to bridge the chasm. One or both must not only have ability, but adaptability to gladly submit as well as rule. It does not require an ounce of Grace, nor a thimble full of brains, to be stubborn and hold out for one's opinion. When they are mismated, or to say the least, when it is hard to understand each other, then the mighty Grace of God must be sought, or there will be two or more blighted lives. Oh, the blasted homes, overcrowded prisons and howling asylums simply because of hasty and mismated marriages.

We must face facts! While many marriages should have been positively prohibited, many others should have required more time. It would seem that at least one year's engagement was not too long prior to the ceremony. And during this time there should not be an instance of serious friction. For, if there is lack of perfect harmony before marriage, it is quite certain that there will be a stormy voyage afterward. Our flooded divorce courts prove that the large percent of divorces come from "incompatibility" and hasty marriages.

Where then does the responsibility lie? In one or the other of the contacting parties. In about nine cases out of every ten where marriage is a failure it can be traced to a party, a dance, or the rear of the church where the acquaintanceship was first made. Had one or both parties associated with the people of God, and like Obadiah, "feared Him greatly," God would have chosen for them. No doubt, if they were now to look back they could remember where the Holy Spirit, or some faithful friend, warned them against taking the fatal step. They had doubts and misgivings at times whether it was the best thing to do. But instead of counseling with the godly, they listened to those who urge them on to their ruin. Love and lust were blind and said, "I just could not live without Mabel or John." Later, the sentimental feeling changed and since then it has been, "I wish I had never seen him."

Well, what is the best way out? Blame each other? No! Suggest a separation? Never! The surest way out of all difficulties is mighty prayer. Think of it! Perhaps a short hour or so with God may change the entire situation and insure a year or more of peace.

A fine investment! If, perchance, the other side of the house is not thereby affected for good, the one who prays will be well repaid. The consolation from heaven will more than repay for what is lacking from earth. Make the best of it; learn the lesson and learn it so well you can teach others. Who know but that in the end, God may rule

and overrule so that you will develop strength of character such as could not be had in any other way. God permits some things in our lives as a last resort to get us to heaven.

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Chapter 2

HALF-DAMNED OFFSPRING

Hardly one in a hundred begins to realize the great responsibility of begetting children. The thought of glorifying God never once enters their minds. The idea of praying for a son as did the parents of Samuel would seem absurd. Now, where children are born to such parents - parents who are haters of God and scoffers at His Word - it will be readily seen that such children are about half-damned when they are born and many of them entirely damned when they are born and many of them entirely damned when but fifteen years of age. Poor little things, products of lust, how can they be a blessing in the earth unless some one teaches them the good and right way? No wonder they are vicious and licentious at an early age. What a pity that these parents went to so much suffering and expense to bring forth children, then raise and educate them, for what? To be a curse in the earth, then die and be eternally damned.

Parents, have you no pity for these little ones who are not responsible for being here? Can you not feel salvation is much more important than their education. Do not think for a moment that you must let them wait till in their teens before they can "intelligently" decide for Christ. No! As soon as they can manifest self-will they can be taught to curb it. -- E.E.S.

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Chapter 3

SHOULD A CHILD BE PUNISHED?

Every organization and institution must have a head. Without it there would be chaos and insurrection. This head must be recognized and respected as such for the happiness and well being of all concerned. The most important institution is the family and yet there are sometimes less honor and obedience here than in any other.

Years ago our grandparents did a great deal of corporal punishing, -- possibly more than was necessary. Now, the world has gone to the other extreme and instead of strict obedience we find the children ruling the home.

The Bible is very explicit in demanding due respect to parents. "Children, obey your parents in the Lord." So intent is our Heavenly Father upon this subject that He promises a reward to those who obey. "Honor thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee."

Solomon seems to have been of the opinion that corporal punishment was advisable:

"Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying." Proverbs 19:18

"Correct thy son and he shall give thee rest; yea, he shall give delight unto thy soul." Proverbs 29:17

"The rod and reproof give wisdom; but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame." Proverbs 29:15

There are, however, two sides to this question. There is such a thing as ruling a child with so much severity that it robs him of his own individuality. We have known children who lacked poise and self-confidence because of such one-sided training. Very few parents strike the happy medium in child training. We are apt to be severe with the first child and too lenient with the last.

Your child is an embodiment of the faults and virtues of yourself. When he came into the world, not knowing whither he was going, he had no one to give him a start and possess him with graces and dispossess him of failings but yourself. If you are warped intellectually or morally, he is apt to be, for you are the source of his existence.

Now when he misbehaves, consider that, while he should be taught and trained, the culture he requires to be imparted to him by yourself. This brings us to the following principles of child training.

1. Anything you can do to improve your own manners will improve those of your child. No child is responsible for its evil tendencies and should be dealt with kindly and tactfully. Look at yourself as a child. Consider what helped or hindered your manners and apply the principles to that little, helpless creature God has put into your arms to love and to protect.
2. Were you ever punished by an angry guardian or parent? Consider the effect upon yourself to this day, including the lack of respect it gave you for him. A man does not know his great strength when punishing a little one, even in love; and when angry, he has no conception of the unnecessary pain and possible injury he may inflict.

A young father in anger threw his little one upon the bed. Its mother happening to be near, caught the child just in time to keep it from fracturing its tender skull against the bedpost. Humbled and penitent the young father thanked

his wife over and over again for preventing him from injuring the little angel of the home. If anger cannot be controlled any other time it should most certainly be mastered when dealing with children.

3. If you wish a child to have a cheerful disposition, be cheerful yourself. Smile when you do not feel like it. Keep an even spirit. Be gentle at all times. In fact, be a model of what you wish your child to be. This should be the constant study of parents and should concern them more than the acquisition of stocks and bonds.

Determine to become all that the word "father" or "mother" implies so that you, yourself, aside from your admonitions and training will, in the years to come, be the most impressive sermon your son or daughter will ever hear. Be the finest example of piety possible. This is a heritage every parent should leave to a child and an honor that may belong to every one. Each mother should live constantly so that it may be said of her, "Her children rise up and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her." Proverbs 31:28

Self-control will have so refined and improved your own personality that you will discover that you have risen to a mental altitude where you have more influence over those of your own social circle than ever before. Added to this your ever cheerful spirit has caused you to appear younger and much more beautiful; and your calm repose in the arms of your Heavenly Father has given you a power with God and a power with men that you have never dreamed possible.

4. If you were once a weak character, of a passive disposition, you will find yourself developing into a strong one not by becoming bombastic, domineering or authoritative, but by your complete control over your own faults and weakness of disposition.

A child's sensitive little being receives more training from the impressions it gets through the eye and the ear than it does from advice; and for him to see you become angry and hear your unpleasant remarks to and about people will undo much of the excellent training you have given him.

Perhaps you are naturally a strong character, of an active disposition, possibly a little severe and disposed to plow right through everything and every body to accomplish your designs. Your nature needs to be mellowed. Through prayer and humiliation it may become so. If you neglect these, sorrow will come in to soften and sweeten your spirit, but her work is very slow and painful. Insist now upon the training of yourself with your child so that the race for perfection will result in a beautiful character, both for him and for yourself, and you can say to the little ones of your home, "Follow me as I follow Christ." - J.A.S.

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Chapter 4

WESLEY ON CHILD TRAINING

As a rule those who have never had any children of their own can tell exactly how they ought to be trained. But there are exceptions and we believe John Wesley inherited from his godly mother principles concerning child training that are worth repeating. Hear him:

1. "What can we do to cure their self-will? It is equally rooted in their nature, and is, indeed, the original idolatry, which is not confined to one age or country, but is common to all the nations under heaven. And how few parents are to be found even among Christians, even among them that truly fear God, who are not guilty of this matter? Who do not continually feed and increase this grievous distemper in their children?" To let them have their own will does this most effectually. To let them take their own way is the sure method of increasing their will sevenfold. But who has the resolution to do otherwise? One parent in a hundred? Who can be so singular, so cruel, as not more or less, to humor her child? "And why should you not? What harm can there be in this, which everybody else does?" The harm is, that it strengthens their will more and more, till it will neither bow to God nor man. To humor children, is, as far as in us lies, to make their disease incurable. A wise parent, on the other hand should begin to break their will the first moment it appears. In the whole art of Christian education there is nothing more important than this. The will of a parent is to a little child in the place of the will of God. Therefore studiously teach them to submit to this while they are children, that they may be ready to submit to His will, when they are men. But in order to carry this point, you will need incredible firmness and resolution; for after you have once begun, you must never more give way. You must hold on still in an even course; you must never intermit your attention for one hour; otherwise you will lose your labor.

2. "If you are not willing to lose all your labor you have been at, to break the will of your child, to bring his will into subjection to yours, that it may be afterwards subject to the will of God, there is one advice, which, though little known, should be particularly attended to. It may seem a small circumstance; but it is this: Never, on any account, give a child anything that it cries for. For it is a true observation (and you may make the experiment as often as you please), if you give a child what he cries for, you pay him for crying; and then he will certainly cry again. 'But if I do not give it to him when he cries, he will scream all day long.' If he does, it is your own fault, for it is in your power effectually to prevent it, for no mother need suffer a child to cry aloud after it is a year old. 'Why, it is impossible to hinder it.' So, many suppose; but it is an entire mistake. I am witness of the direct contrary; and so are many others. My own mother had ten children, each of whom had spirit enough, yet not one of them was ever heard to cry aloud, after it was a year old. And yet not of their spirits were so broken as to unfit them for any of the offices of life. This therefore may be done by any woman of sense, who may thereby save herself abundance of trouble, and prevent that disagreeable noise, the squalling of young children, from being heard under her roof. But I allow, none but a woman of sense will be able to effect this. Yea, and a woman of such patience and resolution as only the grace of God can give. She that is able to receive it, let her receive it!

3. "It is hard to say, whether self-will or pride be the more fatal distemper. It was chiefly pride that drew down so many stars from heaven, and turned angels into devils.

"Beware of adding fuel to the flame; of feeding the disease which you should cure. Almost all parents are guilty of doing this, by praising their children to their face. If you are sensible of the folly and cruelty of this, see that you sacredly abstain from it, and in spite of either fear or complaisance, go one step farther. Do not suffer others to do what you dare not do yourself. How few parents are sufficiently aware of this? Or,, at least sufficiently resolute to practice it - to check everyone at the first word, that would praise them before their face. Even those who would

not, on any account, sit attentive to their own applause, nevertheless, do not scruple to sit attentive to the applause of their children. Yea! And that to their face! Oh, consider! Is not this the spreading a net for their feet? Is it not doubly hurtful, if they are praise for things not truly praiseworthy; things of an indifferent nature, as sense, good breeding, beauty, elegance or apparel? It has a manifest and direct tendency to infuse pride and folly together; to pervert both their taste and judgment; teaching them to value what is dung and dross in the sight of God.

4. "If on the contrary, you desire without loss of time to strike at the root of their pride, teach your children as soon as you possibly can, that they are fallen spirits, that they are fallen short of that glorious image of God, wherein they were first created; that they are not now, as they were once, incorruptible pictures of the God of glory; bearing the express image of the wise, the good, the Holy Father of Spirits; but more ignorant, more foolish and more wicked, than they can possibly conceive. Show them that, in pride, passion, and revenge, they are now like the devil. And that in foolish desires and groveling appetites they are like the beast of the field. Watch over them diligently in this respect, that whenever occasion offers, you may check the very first appearance of pride.

5. "Possibly you may have difficulty to encounter, and one of a still more trying nature. Your mother, or your husband's mother, may live with you; and you will do well to show her all possible respect. But let her on no account have the least share in the management of your children. She would undo all you had done; she would give them their own will in all things. She would humor them to the destruction of their souls, if not their bodies, too. In fourscore years I have not met with one woman that knew how to manage grandchildren. My own mother, who governed her children so well, could never govern one grandchild. In every point obey your mother. Give up your will to hers. But with regard to the management of your children, steadily keep the reins in your own hands.

6. "Your pains will be well requited if you can inspire them early with a contempt of all finery, and, on the other hand, with a love and esteem for neat plainness of dress. Teaching them to associate the ideas of plainness and modesty; and those of a fine and a loose woman. Likewise, instill into them, as early as possible, a fear and contempt of pomp and grandeur; an abhorrence and dread of the love of money, and a deep conviction that riches can not give happiness. Wean them, therefore, from all these false ends, habituate them to make God their end in all things."

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Chapter 5

ADVICE OF REV. B. T. ROBERTS

1. "If there is any one particular above another, in which Christians should not conform too the world, it is in the training of their children. Generally, in religious, as well as in irreligious families, the proper training of children is neglected. There is no exaggeration in saying that in the vast majority of families the children are wrongly trained. One of the miracles of the age is a well-trained Christian family.

2. "Train up a child in the way he should go and when he is old e will not depart from it" Proverbs 22:6. This is doubtless true generally; and we should not like to say it is not true universally. We have never seen an exception: we have never read of one. Yet is must be confessed that the children of godly parents are, in many cases, ungodly.

"A large part of proper training consists in practice. 'Trained' soldiers have had more exercise than instruction. To 'train up' implies continued instruction and practice, so that fixed habits are formed. To 'train up a child in the way he should go' is not only to give him right instruction, but to see that he practices, regularly, every duty that he owes to God, to his parents, to himself, and to all with whom he is associated. The practice, which is so generally neglected, is the main practice, which is so generally neglected, is the main part. Without it, instruction becomes, at best, mere theory - like laws which are not executed. A child may have the best instruction and yet, from natural perverseness, or through outside influences, go astray. It does not follow that a child will do right simply because he knows what is right. He must be made to do right; he must be restrained from doing wrong until his principles are fixed, and his habits formed.

A child should be trained up: To obey unhesitatingly those to whom obedience is due. A child brought up to have his own way is not likely to make a Christian; but is very likely to make a bad citizen.

"Take your children with you to church, and as soon as they can, have them take a part in worship. Have them kneel with you and frequently take a part in family prayer. Never allow them to eat without a blessing is asked, and have them ask a blessing. Instead of being afraid of formality, you should be careful to make your children formal Christians. This is as far as you can go. You should teach them that this is not sufficient, and that they must ask God to change their hearts. If they have the form of godliness they will be much more likely to seek the power than they will if they despise both the form and the power.

"Our evangelists who have labored in England have met with much greater success than in this country. The reason is, the people there observe the forms of Christianity much better than they do in this country. Nearly everybody belongs to the church.

3. "Begin early to train your child to work. Instead making yourself the slave of your child, bring up your child to wait upon you. Do not do anything which he should do, because it would take more time to show him how, than it would to do it yourself. In working for you he is benefited more than he is by your working for him. It is a sad sight to see, as a rule, mothers in the kitchen and the girls in the parlor or on the street - to see fathers in the fields at work, and the sons off playing ball. Such scenes ought not to be witnessed.

"One of the first things for a child to learn is to work. Oftentimes a boy would derive more permanent good from working out a season on a farm by the month, than by a year at college. He would gain muscular strength, health, tact, and form a habit of steady, persistent labor.

"One of the greatest trust committed to a mortal is the care of a child. To every mother God says, 'Take the child and nurse it for me, and I will give thee thy wages.' "

4. B. T. Roberts further says, "unless the habit of obedience is early formed, it is not likely ever to be formed. Put a boy of seventeen who, up to that time, has had his own way, under military or naval discipline, and it is next to impossible to make a good soldier or sailor of him. He is always giving his officers trouble. Discharge him, and he is, in society, insolent and lawless. The earlier a twig is bent, the easier it is bent and the more likely it is to keep its place. Before a child is two years of age he should have firmly formed the habit of obeying, without question, his father and mother. It may take some trouble to train a child to this habit; but do it well, and it will save the child and the parents a great deal of trouble afterwards. The criminal class is made up largely of those who did not learn obedience in childhood. The great army of traitors to the cause of Christ is composed of those who never learned obedience. The ranks of backsliders are filled to repletion with those who were always stranger to a spirit of submission. It is more important that a child should be taught to obey than it is that it should be taught grammar, or arithmetic, or the catechism, or the creed.

5. "It is at this point that the education of the day, both at home and in the schools, most signally fails. "The rod and reproof give wisdom; but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame' (Proverbs 29:15). But the fashion of the day requires that neither the parent nor teacher use the rod. This is one reason why there is the great proportion of crime in those states in which there is the least illiteracy. Learning, whether little or much, is dangerous unless it be attended with a spirit of obedience.

Begin then early. Control your child while you can, and you can always control it. But if you allow him to disobey when you can easily enforce obedience, and then console yourself with the thought that when he gets older and knows better he will do as he should, you will find yourself utterly mistaken. As he gets able, he will be likely to abuse you in proportion as you unduly indulged him when he was within your power.

"Respect is the foundation of love. A child, to have proper filial affection, must be trained up to respect the authority of his parents."

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Chapter 6 HOW TO SPOIL A CHILD

Your child! The most precious little bundle the kind Heavenly Father ever laid in your arms! Would you like to know his value? Chemists tell us that his body is worth less than eighty-seven cents, that is, were it reduced to the primary elements of which it is composed: lime, salt magnesia, phosphorus, etc. But, socially speaking, your baby could not be bought with millions. It is yours, a part of you, and reflects your image. There is no question about it, he is the finest little creature ever born. From a mental standpoint he is but a "little lower than the angels, crowned with glory and honor."

Spiritually he is of inestimable value, so precious that Jesus gave Himself up to die a most horrible death to redeem him. Better spoil anything you have than that child. Since some fond parents are so bent on ruining their little ones, we herewith give helpful suggestions for doing so.

1. Let him have his own way. Every department of this world is governed by laws which are for the well being of humanity. To be a law abiding citizen must be instilled into one from infancy, or we can expect nothing but lawlessness and its many ill effects later on in life. Your little darling is cute and his ways are charming. It is a temptation to parents to palliate little offenses in a two-year-old because he is such an angel that nothing he does seems really wrong.
2. Flatter him and praise him to his face for his beauty. A child usually gets enough flattery from outside the home to spoil him. When members of his family add to this it is natural that he should grow up to be conceited, which will lead to insubordination. One mother had a nice way of warding off flattery from friends. When someone would casually remark about her baby, "Oh, isn't she pretty?" she would always say, "She's pretty when she's good."
3. Do not reprove or punish him when he abuses dumb animals, or shows disrespect to cripples or the aged. A child who is permitted to laugh at, or mimic, one who is poor or deformed, is sure to grow up hardhearted and unsympathetic. There is nothing more beautiful than to see a boy or girl help an old person across the street, or rise and give him a seat. What says the Word?

"Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head and honor the face of the old man, and fear thy God. And if a stranger sojourn with thee in your land, ye shall not vex him. But the stranger that dwelleth with you shall be unto you as one born among you and thou shalt love him as thyself; for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt." Lev. 19:32-34.

4. Do not compel him to work; and if you do, always hire him. A child should be thrown upon his own resources more or less and taught to do things without assistance. This is worth more to him than money which is soon spent. A boy or girl of sixteen ought to be able largely to take care of themselves, plus help father or mother. Some have worked their way through college at this age without asking a cent of the parents. History proves that self-made men are as a rule more dynamic than those who have been pampered with ease and luxury.

5. Give him fine clothes and jewelry. It may be gratifying to your pride to dress your little ones in a worldly way and a little better than others. This is a temptation to many parents, but consider the effect upon the child. Mrs. Catherine Booth once wrote thus to her mother explaining why she did not like the dress she had sent for one of the little Booths:

"Accept my warm thanks for the little frock you sent. There is only one difficulty - it is too smart. We must set examples in this direction. I feel no temptation now to decorate myself, but I cannot say the same about the children; and yet, oh, I see I must be decided. Besides, I find it would be dangerous for their sakes. The seed of vanity is too deeply sown in their young hearts for me to dare to cultivate it."

A little dress was once given mother for one of her babies. Mother was thankful indeed, for father was in debt; but the dress was of bright red and rather stylish. Mother noticed that when the little one had it on she strutted about in an important way and her spirit was so haughty that she was not easily controlled. It is alarming to see some parents, who themselves are neat and modest in attire, put little ornaments upon their children. Why put something on your child when she is little that you know she will have to remove if she ever becomes a mature saint: "Train up a child in the way he should go," was formerly good advice; but then that seems to be behind the times now. The same rule will apply to movies, parties, and dances. It is easier to keep him away and educate him against the world now, than it will be later on to induce him to discontinue his attendance at such places after he has acquired a taste for them and after he has been spoiled by their influence.

6. Let your daughter go half naked. Heathenism has always been marked by nudity and our nation is degenerating as other cultured nations have done until we actually are now much like the uncivilized peoples of the globe. Your little girl has a fine, innate sense of modesty placed there by heaven. This lovely trait may be cultivated until she grows up into a fine, modest woman, too lofty in her ideals to stoop to anything unbecoming to an angel in human form. Or, she may be so dressed when a little tot that she will not develop sufficient modesty to hold her own when in her teens from carelessness and sin. Parents often wonder why their own pure girls go astray. It is simply because they were not taught when in their babyhood that their little bodies must be kept covered.

Many parents unwittingly start their children in the way of the world and then expect them to come back into the narrow way later on. They dress them with short skirts, and bare legs, so it is impossible for the dear little ones to cover their nakedness, or be modest if they wanted to be.

One writer gives the following on this subject: "I have observed many little girls eight or ten years old, exposing their limbs nearly to their bodies without any sense of shame. I saw one like this a few days ago among a group of other children. This little girl was the daughter of devout Christian workers. Shame on you, holiness mother, dressing your girls in a way that destroys that delicate sense of modesty which is the safeguard to every young lady's virtue. How can you expect your daughters to grow into pure and virtuous young women when you lay the foundation for unchastity? How can you expect God to hear your prayer for their salvation when you have violated His command, "Train up a child in the way he (or she) should go"?"

"Not one of you mothers would think of dressing your little girls as you do if it were not the fashion. It is easier to keep your children from the pride of the world, than to get them out after they have been cultivating their pride under your sanction, for only a few years. Just observe the younger girls, 12 or 15 years old, children of holiness people! They are dressing in the fashions with brazen faces. How few of them are saved and live for God. They sit in the house of God, unmoved under the most earnest appeals of the faithful minister. They sit and whisper, chew gum and laugh in the face of the preacher. I want to say emphatically, that as long as your daughters live under your roof and are supplied by you with the money to buy their clothing, you are responsible for the kind of clothes they wear, also for the company they keep."

7. If you would spoil your child, let him flirt and go out nights. The place for every child in the evening is at home with his parents. Suitable books and periodicals should be provided so he will have no excuse for wanting to leave. Home should not be extravagant but it should be attractive. My grandfather on my father's side subscribed for nineteen educational and religious papers and magazines for his large family of children. In the evening they practice music, studied French, and sat around the fire reading. The boys all turned out well. One of them, Rev. T. B. Arnold, became the publisher of the Sunday School literature for the Free Methodist Church. Another was a

professor of music in a holiness college. Another became a noted Sunday School worker, and still another the editor of "The Reformer," a minister and a lecturer.

It pays to put money into home comforts, and the best of literature for your children. If your child shows talent for art or elocution, see that he has lessons. Let his mental nature develop as fast as it likes, for

"Satan finds some mischief still For idle hands to do."

Place in the children's hands all the literature you can find on the subject of purity. Educate them to look upon children who flirt and who marry young, as beneath their respect. Show by precept and example, from the start, the evils of impurity, and of associating with anyone, either boy or girl, who is not an earnest Christian, and has not the highest ideals of purity. If your child is properly trained, he will then be obedient, and God will become responsible more or less in protecting, promoting and prospering him in after life. J.A.S.

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Chapter 7

COMPULSORY CHRISTIANITY

But, can we compel our children to become Christians? Yes, and No! While they must of their own free-will submit to God, yet we can so humble ourselves and prevail for them that, as a rule, they will yield. Their yielding, however, may hinge upon several things.

1. Being companionable. Many homes are more like boarding houses than a happy family circles where mother frequently sits on father's knee and the children feel easy and secure in his presence. If parents made home more attractive and inviting instead of everlastingly lecturing and scolding, perhaps the boys and girls would prefer staying at home in the evenings instead of seeking comfort from outside sources.
2. Their salvation may hinge upon taking time occasionally to have a revival around the family altar. It is not enough to go through the stereotyped form of family prayers. This can become dry and repugnant. But it will pay to break through the formality and get the blessing of God down once in a while.
3. Their salvation may hinge upon the confession of a parent. Most children have heard their parents blame and criticize each other, but few have ever heard them apologize for any little inattention or manner which would have been thought out of place during courtship.
4. Their salvation may depend upon a parent's confession to the child. Never think for a moment that this is beneath the dignity of a parent. If you would have your child break down and confess, set him the example. Get him alone and there humbly apologize for every place where you were too soft or too severe; where you spent more time scolding than weeping over him; apologize for feasting, rather than fasting for his salvation; for instilling rivalry rather than religion in his young mind. If parents yearned for true piety rather than popularity in their offspring no doubt they would become eminently pious instead of vicious.
5. Their salvation may hinge upon the parents' entering into a secret covenant between themselves and their God. Such a covenant may involve one thing or another. But instead of it being irksome it will afford much comfort and assurance as to the happy outcome of the children's guidance, protection and salvation. This covenantal relationship will enable a parent with one act of faith to defy hell and demand in Jesus' name the housing of all your family in heaven. What a pity then if these parents are so coarse and covetous that God cannot led them into such a heavenly covenant. It would seem that ministers, who in reality are Levites, should raise children only for their tribe- the ministry. Why? While the family was growing up, the parents were more or less handicapped in the work of soul winning. Hence, in order to recompense this loss, some, if not all, of their children should take up the same line of work and accomplish what the parent failed to accomplish. - E.E.S.

How to Train and Save Your Children

By Elmer Ellsworth Shelhamer and His Wife, Julia A. Shelhamer

Chapter 8

WHY YOUR CHILD IS NOT SAVED

Though otherwise a temperance man, his father kept cider in the cellar, which gave the little fellow a thirst for something stronger.

He was faithfully warned against the evils of tobacco, but, somehow, father's old pipe used to say, "It can't be so bad, or father wouldn't use it."

His mother used wine to season mince pies, gave him whisky and sugar for colds, and patent medicine containing alcohol when sick. Then she wondered why HER boy had such a craving for strong drink! They were always praying that he should become a Christian, but forgot that his salvation largely depended upon the confidence he had in the minister, whose failings were frequently mentioned around the table or fireside.

He was allowed to play with the neighbor boys, to remain on the streets after dark, where he learned coarse jokes and love-songs, and was sent to school in the morning before family prayers, but his parents only said, "We can't force John; in God's own time he will be saved."

They decided to give him the privilege of deciding for himself what was right, instead of following their dictates, and he did decide - when it was too late to save him. "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it." - Proverbs 22:6

Her mother let her go half dressed when young, then expected her to choose modest apparel when older.

Continued stories in Sunday School papers and magazines gave her a desire for fiction, instead of a taste for deep, logical, mind-stretching literature.

The parents, though shouting happy at church, did not carry that same holy serenity every day; thus their spirits did not get the children under conviction.

She was so much appreciated that she was spoiled; and not being accustomed to yielding her will to her mother, she found it difficult when older to yield to Christ.

The parents did not live so that the parental influence would help the children to overcome sin and resist temptation; and because of false modesty, they were not early warned against secret vices, hence became an early prey to their evils.

At home, little differences of opinion arose, at which times the parents became heated in their discussion in the presence of the children, who decided that if that was religion, they did not need any.

Her parents tried to keep her pure, but did not like to cross her wishes regarding her company, not realizing the beaux, however religious, are not beneficial to the young, and that all thoughts of such things should be kept out of the mind until the proper age.

Another hindrance was the admission into the home of secular music. Though a musical education is good, yet

there is always danger when marches, waltzes and quicksteps are used, even for practice, for one rarely ever discontinues their use after once having started.

The parents were very religious; but on weekdays, as they sat by the fireside, the conversation was mostly on money-making and business, and the children's minds were educated to believe that, after all, the main thing was to get out of debt and make money; hence they grew up miserly and worldly-minded.

The salvation of the children was not uppermost in the parents' minds. They were satisfied to offer up short prayers for them at family worship, without spending hours alone before God for their salvation.

Reader, if guilty on any of these lines, humbly confess it to your children and to God, asking Him to undo all that you in ignorance or otherwise have done toward marring His plans for the salvation of you and your household. --
J.A..S.

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Chapter 9

PLANNING AND PREVAILING FOR THE CHILDREN

Parents plan for earthly advantages. If they live too far from where they work, they plan on moving nearer. If they want special school privileges, they plan to move, even though it means extra expense. If they want better health, they sell out and go to a different climate. But, strange too say, these same parents, for the sake of a little cheaper rent or a few extra dimes, seem content to live so far from a good church that the children cannot go regularly to a spiritual Sunday School, or attend old-time revival meetings. What is the result? These children grow up to be Sabbath breakers, marry into the wrong families and in the end the parents shed more tears, and pay out more money than would have been the case had they considered that the salvation of their household was the first and most important thing in the world.

One reason why many children do not become Christians is that the parents have not had them seek the Lord while they were small. The question arises, "How old should a child be before he becomes a Christian?" We would answer, just as young as he shows any inclination, and parents and guardians should encourage and woo that inclination. It is considered wise for children to begin the study of music, elocution, and art very young, and why not let them begin the Christian life as early? The Catholics say, "Give me a child until he is seven years old and you can have him after that." But we Protestants let our children go until they are in their teens, then let them decide for themselves and they usually; decide wrong.

We ought by all means to insist upon our children's being saved just as early as possible. I have known of little ones three, four, and five years of age who were gloriously blest, and when they are saved that young they will likely never depart from God, provided the parents deal gently and wisely with them. They may fail at times and lose grace, as children do, but the method that will keep them is never to tell them they are backslidden, but simply let them pray and ask forgiveness. If they once decide that they are entirely backslidden they will be tempted to go into sin deeper. Let them fell, "Of course I'm a Christian, I would never be anything else. If I get angry or speak unkindly, I will apologize and go right on." This will help hold them until they become established.

We should prevail in prayer for our children's salvation. Mrs. Catherine Booth said she had no time to raise children who would not be Christian. She made them feel from the start that there was nothing else to do but to serve the Lord. Her method was a success. A young lady, a minister's daughter, attended one of our schools. Though twelve years of age, her parents had never seriously talked with her about her soul's salvation; consequently she had never sought the Lord. While in a school revival she was very stubborn, and it was only after much persuasion that she yielded to Christ, and even then she did not stand long.

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Chapter 10 WHEN ALL ELSE FAILS

Perhaps the greatest sorrow that could come to parents is that of losing a child eternally. To know that the little darling God laid in your arms some years ago has fought against prayers and loving counsel and has dashed headlong into sin and finally into hell is a grief beyond our ability to describe.

There are three thoughts I wish to emphasize in this chapter.

1. God willeth not the death of any and hence your child may be saved.
2. God is able. No matter how deep into sin one has gone, God can save, provided He can have the full cooperation of the child's will.
3. There are some prayers more easily answered than others. This is because there is little or no opposition in the form of antagonizing forces. God can more easily overpower all natural hindrances than He can a mind that is set against Him. This is partly because Satan unites with a free moral agent to combat God. A simple little prayer will often bring an answer if it is for needed finances, health or some material thing that can be answered without coming up against an obstinate mind. In the latter case prayer must be of a different nature. It must be prevailing, importunate, interceding. This will of course take more time than the other and will consume more strength, but it is necessary to the salvation of souls.

Importunate prayer often leads one to fast. And it is sometimes the case that if a person does not have a spirit of prayer for an unsaved one, a decision to fast and pray for that soul will bring that spirit of prayer which is so necessary to his salvation.

Dr. Chapman in his "Revival Sermons" says: "We have had days of prayer. I wonder how many of us have had nights of prayer. We have prayed minutes for our children. How many of us have prayed by the day for our children?"

"Do you believe," said a young woman to me in the city of Boston, "that if my mother and I should pray all night that my brother would be saved?" I said to her, "If I were you I would pray all night if I were led to do it." To my certain knowledge that brother had not been within four miles of the place of meeting. Before ten o'clock they were on their knees. At twelve o'clock they were praying, at three o'clock they were still crying out unto God, when the mother rose from her knees to say, "I believe God will hear us," and closed her eyes in sleep. I saw that young man the next evening stand in the great church and say that he had spent a sleepless night. I heard him say that he occupied a most important position in the city of Boston. He said, "This morning, as the day was breaking, I gave myself to Jesus." I think the story of the Shunammite in the Old Testament that we might thus learn how to pray. "As the Lord liveth and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee."

"One evening my telephone rang. When I went to answer the call I heard a voice that seemed to me to be almost choked with emotion say, 'Will you pray for me?' and I said, 'Certainly I will pray for you. But will you not meet me this evening at the close of the service?' I went to the service that night and at the close of the meeting there came up to me this man who had telephoned me. He said he had occupied a responsible position as bookkeeper in the city. He said, 'My father is a minister, my mother is a sincere Christian. I have been feeling the power of their

praying. I have felt a great sense of need in my soul, and when I heard the song this evening, "O Mother, when I think of thee, 'tis but a step to Calvary," I bowed my head and took Christ.' " This young man may have been thus saved without much of a struggle, because he was truly penitent and had not resisted light as some have. But weather it is a long or short battle it will certainly pay to pray through and obtain the smile of God rather than lose the soul. -- J.A.S.

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Chapter 11

ARE ALL THE CHILDREN IN?

I think oftimes, as the night draws nigh,
Of an old home on a hill,
Of a yard all wide and blossom-starred
Where the children played at will;
And when the night at last came down,
Hushing the merry din,
Mother would look around and ask,
"Are all the children in?"

"Tis many and many a year since then,
And the old house on the hill
No longer echoes to childish feet,
And the yard is still, so still;
But I see it all as the shadows creep,
And tho' many the years have been,
Since then I can still hear mother ask,
"Are all the children in?"

I wonder if when the shadows fall
On the last short, earthly day,
When we say good-bye to the world outside,
All tired with our childish play;
When we step out into that Other Land,
Where mother so long has been,
Will we hear her ask, just as of old -
"Are all the children in?"

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Chapter 12 CHILD EVANGELISM

Teach your children to win souls by giving them tracts and books to distribute, and by taking them with you on your rounds of gospel work. When you call on a person, pray before you leave and ask the child to offer the first prayer. "A little child shall lead them."

If you keep your children busy for God, Satan will not have such an advantage over them. Husband and I took our baby Evangeline to the death cell of the Atlanta jail. The little one sang a song for the condemned criminal, then husband prayed. For about twenty-two years she thus labored for the Master, until at the age of twenty-five she was translated.

"I WAS SICK ... and ye visited me." - Jesus Christ.

Have you been to the hospital, the infirmary, the almshouse, and the insane asylum this week? Imagine yourself there in lonely despair with no one to call on you! Get some good books and tracts. Hasten, for Jesus is out there sick and wants you to minister to Him.

"I WAS IN PRISON ... and ye came unto me." - Jesus Christ

"When I was in the penitentiary," said a baby-faced boy to me recently, "the automobiles would go speeding by on the highway, but it seemed that nobody thought of me. Everybody just simply forgot us behind those big stone walls. I was under deep conviction for sin and wanted somebody to help me, but nobody came." That wasn't your boy, was it? -- but it might have been!