

To me it's still a little strange, but I feel as if today (this Sunday) is a rather special day for me. It's my first Father's Day as a father. It's ok if you roll your eyes a little. I know I haven't done any real work at all as a dad, maybe next year I'll see things differently, but right now I am excited to be a father. I've been getting a lot of advice about what to expect and what to do, many things I hadn't thought about yet. It's pretty clear that being a parent has a lot of responsibility. It's a big responsibility because babies and children need others to take care of them! Infants and children can't provide for even their most basic needs like food, clothes, and shelter. Anyone can agree failing to provide for these needs would be neglectful and abusive! But these physical needs aren't the only needs a child has. A child needs to be taught all of God's Word, and needs to be trained to live a Christian life. It's Time to Build! It's Time to build up our children.

There is a common saying that the Christian Church is only one generation away from extinction. While this is a slight exaggeration, since Jesus promises that there will be believers until the end, this saying makes a valid point. It only takes one generation of parents not teaching their children God's Word for disaster to strike. We see this happen all too frequently from the Old Testament right up to Christian families today. A frequent problem is not seeing children for what they are. Children aren't born as uncorrupted angels. They inherit a deadly sinful nature from their parents just as surely as they have their father's eyes and mother's nose. Children need to be taught from early on about their own sin.

At first you might be surprised and maybe a bit offended when you see in the Bible God calling even infants and children full of sin. We can always safely assume that God knows what he is talking about. When he created the world, he created it "very good" but since the fall of all humanity into sin, we have all inherited a corruption that ends in death. You don't have to wait long to see babies show their sinful nature. You see their selfishness as they cry and scream and cause trouble. You don't have to teach children to lie, hit, run away, and not listen to their parents. We can certainly see that sinful nature in children causing them to sin.

But it isn't just others who "suffer" from the sins of children. Yes, the children themselves suffer from sin too. Children not only inherit sin from their parents, but they learn to follow all the bad examples parents set for them. Children suffer from the pains of teething, the risk of disease and sickness. They suffer from bullies in schools, and sadly even the worst kinds of mistreatment from adults who should be caring for them instead of harming them. Without sin, there is no death, yet we do see the horrifying effects of a sinful nature in a sinful world when we see children die.

That's all the more reason to teach children about God through his Word. Children need to hear and learn about their God who gave them life and who loves them. Children need to know who God is. That he created the universe and everything in it. That he has a plan for them. That he has provided them with everything that they need. Children need to know who Jesus is and what he did for them. They need to know that Jesus welcomes the little children into his arms. Children need to know that Jesus is the Good Shepherd who cares for them. Children need to know that Jesus died for them and rose from the grave so they won't suffer the affects of sin forever, but one day be with their Savior for all eternity where there will be no more tears or sadness.

God has certainly given parents as a blessing to children, to keep them alive and healthy, and to provide for all their needs, including their need to be taught. God places a lot on parents, especially fathers. God expects parents to lead by example. God expects that parents teach their children about God every day at home. All members in this congregation promise at the public baptism ceremony to see to the spiritual care of children. Adults can do a lot for children. Adults can give children food and everything they need. Adults can take children to where they need to be and provide laughter and love.

God has blessed us by making us able to show love to children in so many ways. Yet we must recognize what we can't do. We can't stop a child from dying. We can't stop a child from suffering from the consequences of sin in this life or in eternity. We can't do that for ourselves, much less anyone else. That is what God does. God is the one who assures us that his Word is powerful and effective, and that

his Word will not return to him empty. God promises to send the Holy Spirit in Baptism to wash away a child's sins by creating life-saving faith in Jesus. God promises us eternal life through him and makes death a transition, and not the end. God promises that faithfully instructing a child in his Word will produce the results he promises. When it's Time to Build up children, it's time to teach them God's Word. Where we can only fail, God comes to our rescue.

God promises that his Word is effective when it is taught. He also promises to bless the godly training of his children. We know that children have to be trained to do everything they need to do; Starting with eating, walking, talking, and potty training. Once again it is clear what hard job it is to be a parent, yet what a blessing God provides in those who are able to care for the young.

The training of children doesn't end of course in the toddler years but continues for more than a decade! Children are taught an increasingly complex list of skills, from tying shoes to mowing the lawn; playing the bass to driving a car. As a child grows, the complexity and depth of godly training increases too. Children are trained about their own sin and about the daily struggle that takes place inside them between their sinful nature and their new man, their heart that responds to God in faith. Children need to be trained to read, understand, and rely on God's Word as their ultimate authority and guide in life. This cannot be stressed enough! Children need to be trained to watch out for temptations that the devil will use to trip them up. Children need to be trained to make the distinction between doing what is right according to God's Word, and what is popular.

As children grow older and older, the temptations may multiply faster than parents think. Children and teenagers have a wonderful resource in their Christian friends and families. You will always have God's Word to guide you. All children reach an age when they begin to question or in some way challenge what they have always accepted. Parents, don't assume that the devil doesn't know this and that he doesn't work extra hard to use the world to turn your children from Church, from the Scriptures, and from their faith.

As children are trained, they need to know what the world says about creation and evolution, its views towards sex and addictions, and its view of the Scriptures themselves. We have nothing to hide, nothing to be ashamed of. It's always better to teach your children yourselves about the threats and temptations we face, rather than have the world introduce them. When it's time to build, it's time to train a Child in the way he should go.

Raising, teaching, and training a child is the biggest job a parent will have. I'm sure it can be an emotional mix of pride, worry, and concern. But remember you aren't alone. You have your church praying for you and supporting you. You have other Christians willing and able to assist you as you teach and train your child. Most of all of course, you have God by your side. Remember he is the one who set up the family system in the first place! In a sinful world, sinful people and sinful actions will cause failure and disappointments, but God will never disappoint you by breaking any promises. He will do what he says. We will work continuously to bless your efforts as a parent. He will forgive child and parent alike.

Children we have talked a lot about the jobs parents have today. I hope you recognize how God has blessed and taken care of you through other people. You might not always have the blessings from parents God always wants for you, but you will always have a loving Father in heaven who always cares for you and who always knows what you are feeling and what you are going through. You know you have a God who loves you, because he sent Jesus to die for *you* so you will be with him in heaven one day.

On this Father's Day, thank those whom God has given to be the dads in your life. Thank them for all your needs they provide and have provided for. Thank also your Father in heaven, who has given us fathers, and mothers, and many others to care for you. Thank your Father also for providing what your family on earth could not give: forgiveness, everlasting life, and unceasing peace. Amen.

1. What are the needs children have?
2. What do all children have when they are born?

3. How do children become sinful?
  4. In what ways do children suffer from sin?
  5. What are some things children need to be taught?
  6. How are parents blessings?
  7. What can't parents do?
  8. What are some of the promises God makes for parents and children?
  9. What do children need to be trained to do?
  10. In what ways is God a perfect Father?
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1. Share the ways you have been blessed by your parents/guardians.
  2. A/D It's fair for God to deny sinful children entry into heaven.
  3. Discuss how parents have been helped by other adults in their responsibilities.
  4. How would you go about training a child/teenager to face challenges to their faith from the world?