

Letters to Parents [#1]

by Charles Finney

Parents must thoroughly instruct and govern their children in correct views of truth and right principles of action to ensure they will not depart from it when they are old.

Scripture: Deuteronomy 6:6, Proverbs 6:22, Ephesians 6:4

Topics: "Parenting", "Child Development"

Description

Charles Finney addresses parents in his sermon 'Letters to Parents [#1]', emphasizing the critical role they play in training their children according to Proverbs 6:22. He outlines the importance of thorough instruction in truth and moral principles, as well as the necessity of setting a good example, avoiding harmful influences, and fostering healthy habits. Finney warns against various pitfalls, such as favoritism, materialism, and exposure to negative influences, which can hinder a child's development. He stresses that parents must be vigilant in creating a nurturing environment that promotes righteousness and well-being. The sermon serves as a guide for parents to raise their children in a way that aligns with God's teachings.

Transcript

DEAR BRETHREN AND SISTERS:--

In compliance with an intimation given some time since, that I should, God willing, address some letters to parents, I will now commence the series, with hope of promoting the interests of the rising generation. I shall commence with remarks upon Prov. 6:22: "Train up a child in the way he should go; and when he is old, he will not depart from it," and shall throw my letters upon this text some what into the form of a sermon. In doing which I shall endeavor to show,

I. What is implied in training up a child in the way he should go.

1. It implies such thorough instruction as to root and ground them in correct views of truth, and in right principles of action. If you consult the marginal reading of your Bible you will perceive, that the word rendered "train" in the text, is in the margin rendered "catechise." The idea is that which I have suggested, to thoroughly instruct them in the great principles of righteousness.

2. It implies such thorough government as to root and ground them in correct habits in all respects, such as habits of cheerful obedience to parents, correct habits in respect to early rising, early retiring to rest,

correct habits in regard to taking their meals at stated hours, and in respect to the quantity and quality of their food, habits of exercise and rest, study and relaxation. In short all their habits comprising their whole deportment.

3. It implies the training them to a knowledge of, and conformity to all the laws of their being, physical and moral. This is the way in which they should go, and it is in vain to expect to train them in the way they should go, without giving them thorough instruction in respect to the laws of their bodies and minds, the laws of natural and spiritual life and health.

4. It implies not only giving them thorough instruction in these respects, but the thorough government of them and training them in all things to observe these laws.

II. I will notice several things to be avoided in training up children in the way they should go.

1. Avoid in yourself whatever would be injurious in them to copy, and do not suppose that you can yourself be guilty of pernicious practices, and by your precept prevent their falling into the same. Remember that your example will be more influential than your precept. I knew a father who himself used tobacco but warned his children against its use, and even commanded them not to use it, and yet every one of them did use it sooner or later. This was as might be expected. I knew a mother who used tea herself but warned her children against it as something unnecessary and injurious, especially to young people, but all her children fell into the use of it of course. The fact is that her example was the most influential and impressive teaching.

2. Avoid all conversation in their presence, upon topics that may misled them, and beget in them a caviling and wicked spirit, such as all sectarian conversation, unguarded conversation upon the doctrine of decrees and election, speaking of neighbors' faults, or censoriously of any human being. In short whatever may be a stumbling block to their infant minds.

3. Avoid all disagreement between the parents in regard to the government of the children.

4. Avoid all partiality or favoritism in the government of them.

5. Avoid whatever may lessen the respect of the children for either parent.

6. Avoid whatever may lessen the authority of either parent.

7. Avoid whatever may tend to create partiality for either parent.

8. Avoid begetting in them the love of money. But remember that the love of money, is the root of all evil.

9. Avoid the love of money yourself, for if you have a worldly spirit yourself, your whole life will most impressively inculcate the lesson that the world should be the great object of pursuit. Said a wealthy man to me, "I was brought up from my very infancy to love the world and make money my god." When we consider how impressively and constantly this lesson is taught by many parents, is it wonderful that there is so much fraud, theft, robbery, piracy, and selfishness under every abominable form? Many parents seem to be engaged in little else, so far as their influence with their children is concerned, than making them as selfish and worldly as possible. Nearly their whole conversation at the table, and in all places where they are, the whole drift and bent of their lives, pursuits, and every thing about them, are calculated to make the strongest impression upon their little minds, that their parents conceive the world to be the

supreme good. Unless all this be avoided it is impossible to train up a child in the way he should go.

10. Avoid begetting within them the spirit of ambition to be rich, great, learned, or any thing else but good. If you foster a spirit of selfish ambition it will give birth of course to anger, pride, and a whole herd of infernal passions.

11. Avoid, begetting or fostering the spirit of vanity in any way, in the purchase of clothing, or any articles of apparel, in dressing them or by any expressions relating to their personal appearance. Be careful to say nothing about your own clothes, or the apparel of any body else or of the personal attractions or beauty of yourself, your children, or of any body else, in such a way as to beget within them the spirit of ambition, pride, and vanity.

12. Guard them against any injurious influence at home. Suffer no body to live in your families, whose sentiments, or habits, or manners, or temper may corrupt your children. Guard the domestic influence as the apple of your eye. Have no person in your house, that will tell them foolish stories, sing them foolish songs, talk to them about witches, or any thing of any name or nature, which ought not to come before their youthful minds.

13. Be careful under what influences you leave them when you go from home, and let not both parents take a journey at the same time, leaving their children at home, without manifest necessity.

14. Avoid every evil influence from abroad. Let no children visit them whose conversation or manners may corrupt them. Let them associate with no children, by going abroad themselves where they will run the hazard of being in any way corrupted.

15. Avoid the cultivation of artificial appetites. Accustom them to no innutritious stimulants or condiments of any kind, for in so doing, you will create a craving for stimulants, that may result in beastly intemperance.

16. Avoid creating any artificial wants. The great majority of human wants are merely artificial, and children are often so brought up, as to feel as if they needed multitudes of things, which they do not need, and which are really injurious to them, and if they ever become poor, their artificial wants will render them extremely wretched, if indeed they do not tempt them to fraud, theft, and robbery, to supply them. Consider how simple and few the real wants of human beings are, and whatever your worldly circumstances may be, for your children's sake, for truth's sake, for righteousness' sake, and for Christ's sake, habituate them to being satisfied with the supply of their real wants.

17. Avoid by all means their being the subjects of evil communications. "Evil communications corrupt good manners." This is the testimony of God. If your domestics, your hands, your neighbors' children or any body else, are suffered to communicate to them things which they ought not to know, they will be irrecoverably injured, and perhaps forever ruined.

18. Avoid their reading books that contain pernicious sentiments, or any thing indecent, or vulgar, or of ill report.

19. Avoid their reading romances, plays, and whatever may beget within them a romantic and feverish state of mind.

20. Avoid suffering gluttony, or any species of intemperance, eating at improper seasons, improper articles, and improper quantities of food, and every thing that shall work a violation of the laws of life and health.

21. Avoid all unnecessary occasion of excitement. Children are naturally enough excited. Pains should be taken to quiet and keep them calm rather than to increase their excitement. This is imperiously demanded both by their health and minds. Societies are often gotten up among children, and great pains taken to get up an interest and excitement among them and to perpetuate this excitement, insomuch that it is often attended with a loss of appetite and sleep, and a serious injury to their health and morals. Parents should be on their guard, against suffering their children to be drawn into such excitement or having any unnecessary connection with or knowledge of them.

The subject will be resumed.

Your brother in the bonds of the gospel,

C.G.FINNEY

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