A SHORT BIBLE STUDY

# Raising Children in the Faith

*Short Studies for the Christian Life*



*Teaching Scripture, prayer and faith at home, age by age*

Andrew Dominguez

Trinfinity Enterprises

# Raising Children in the Faith

*Teaching Scripture, Prayer and Faith at Home, Age by Age*

Andrew Dominguez

**Raising Children in the Faith: Teaching Scripture, Prayer and Faith at Home, Age by Age**

Copyright 2026 by Andrew Dominguez.

I own the copyright to everything in this book. I freely allow anyone to read, copy, print, quote, share, and teach from it, and to hand out or post copies, at no cost, as long as the text is not changed and this notice stays with it.

Publishing this book, meaning releasing it as an edition of your own in print or electronic form, whether sold or given away, requires my written permission first. Requests go to andrew@trinfinityenterprises.com.

The full text can be read, printed and downloaded free at trinfinityenterprises.com.

Scripture quotations are taken from the Steadfast Literal Bible (SLB), with familiar English forms of personal names, copyright 2026 Andrew Dominguez. The complete SLB is free to read at trinfinityenterprises.com/slb.

Independently published.

Trinfinity Enterprises, Dayton, Nevada.

This book offers Bible teaching and pastoral encouragement for parents. It is not a substitute for professional counseling. If a child is in danger, call 911.

**A note before you begin.** This book is written to teach the Bible and encourage faith. It shares my understanding of Scripture and is offered for study and spiritual growth. It is not counseling, medical, legal, or financial advice. If you are facing a crisis, a health problem, or a legal or money problem, please reach out to a qualified professional as well as your pastor and church family. To the fullest extent the law allows, Andrew Dominguez, Trinfinity Enterprises, and Andrew Dominguez's heirs, estate, successors, and assigns accept no liability for how this material is used.

# A Note on the Bible Translation Used in This Book

My preferred Bible for personal study, teaching, and research is the Steadfast Literal Bible (SLB). I chose it because it is a word-for-word translation in today's language, built on the ancient Scripture sources: the Hebrew and Aramaic of the Old Testament and the Greek of the New Testament. I prepared the SLB myself, and the Scripture in this book is taken from it.

Where a literal phrase would mislead an English reader, the SLB gives the writer's meaning in plain words. Words added for sense are set in bold italics so you can see what is in the original and what is not.

The complete Steadfast Literal Bible is free to read, search, download, and print at trinfinityenterprises.com/slb. If you want to check a verse in its full setting or read the translation's preface and principles, that is the place to go.

Above all, my desire is not to promote one translation over another, but to faithfully teach the Word of God, encourage careful examination of the Scriptures, and help readers grow in their knowledge, understanding, and relationship with the Lord.

May every page of this book direct attention not to the translation itself, but to the truth of God's Word and the One whom it reveals.

# Contents

Before You Begin....1
Chapter 1: Home Is the First Classroom....3
Chapter 2: Your Example Speaks First....5
Chapter 3: Birth to Three: Love, Songs and Simple Words....7
Chapter 4: Ages Four to Seven: Stories, Prayers and Questions....9
Chapter 5: Ages Eight to Twelve: Building a Faith of Their Own....11
Chapter 6: The Teenage Years: From Rules to Relationship....13
Chapter 7: Correction That Teaches....15
Chapter 8: When a Child Wanders....17
Chapter 9: Single Parents, Grandparents and Everyone Else....19
A Closing Word....21
Age-by-Age Guide....22
Scripture Index....23
About This Book....24

# Before You Begin

> *We will not hide **them** from their sons, recounting to a later generation the praises of the LORD, and His might and His wonders which He has done.*
>
> Psalm 78:4 (SLB)

If you are a parent, you already know the feeling. You love your children more than your own life, and you want them to know the Lord. But you are not sure where to start. You did not go to Bible college. Your days are full. Maybe nobody did this for you when you were growing up. And the world your kids are growing up in is loud and fast and not friendly to faith.

My wife and I raised two daughters, and today we have granddaughters. After 36 years of marriage, I know that passing on faith at home does not happen by accident or by leaving it to Sunday morning. I wrote this book for parents and grandparents who want plain, Scripture-based ways to point kids to Christ in everyday life.

Here is the good news. God did not hand this job to experts. He handed it to parents, ordinary moms and dads and grandparents, and He gave them the best classroom in the world: home. The kitchen table. The car ride. Bedtime. The hard day and the good day. That is where faith gets passed on.

## What This Book Does

This short book walks through how to teach your children Scripture, prayer, and faith at home, one stage at a time. The first two chapters lay the foundation. The next four take you through the ages: birth to three, four to seven, eight to twelve, and the teenage years. Then come three chapters for the hard parts: correction, a child who wanders, and the special situations of single parents and grandparents. At the back is a one-page chart you can keep on the refrigerator.

Each chapter ends with a few questions and a short list of things to try this week. Don't try to do them all at once. Pick one. Then pick another next week. Small and steady wins.

## A Few Notes

Scripture quotations come from the Steadfast Literal Bible (SLB). Words in bold italics inside a quotation are words added in English to make the sentence read clearly. I capitalize pronouns that refer to God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit.

The ages in this book are a guide, not a rule. Every child is different. You know yours better than anyone. Use what fits and adjust what doesn't.

# Chapter 1: Home Is the First Classroom

> *And these words which I am commanding you today shall be on your heart. And you shall repeat them to your sons, and you shall speak of them when you sit in your house and when you walk on the road and when you lie down and when you rise up.*
>
> Deuteronomy 6:6-7 (SLB)

Before Israel ever entered the promised land, before there was a temple or a synagogue or a Sunday school, God told parents to teach their children at home. The passage is called the Shema, from its first Hebrew word, "Hear."

> *Hear, Israel: the LORD our God, the LORD **is** one. And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words which I am commanding you today shall be on your heart. And you shall repeat them to your sons, and you shall speak of them when you sit in your house and when you walk on the road and when you lie down and when you rise up. And you shall bind them for a sign on your hand, and they shall be for frontlets between your eyes. And you shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.* (Deuteronomy 6:4-9)

Look at the order. First, the words are on your heart. Then you repeat them to your children. You can't pass on what you don't have. Faith that is going to stick in a child usually starts as faith that is real in a parent.

Then look at where the teaching happens. When you sit in your house. When you walk on the road. When you lie down. When you rise up. That covers just about every hour of the day. God is not describing one formal lesson a week. He is describing a way of life where God comes up naturally, all the time, because He matters to you.

## Church Helps, But Home Leads

Thank God for good churches, children's ministries and youth groups. They matter. But an hour or two a week can't do what a home does all week long. The church is meant to back up what is happening at home, not to replace it. If a child hears about Jesus on Sunday but never hears His name

at home, the child learns something without anyone saying it: this is for church, not for real life.

## It Is Never Too Late to Start

Maybe you are reading this with teenagers in the house and you feel like you missed your chance. You didn't. Start today. Tell your kids honestly, "I should have been doing this all along, and I want to start now." Children of every age respect a parent who is honest. God can do a great deal with a late start.

> *We will not hide **them** from their sons, recounting to a later generation the praises of the LORD, and His might and His wonders which He has done. And He established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which He commanded our fathers to make known to their sons, so that a later generation might know, sons **who** will be born; they will arise and recount **them** to their sons, that they may set their confidence in God, and not forget the deeds of God, and observe His commandments* (Psalm 78:4-7)

## Study Questions

1. Read Deuteronomy 6:4-9. What has to happen in the parent before the teaching begins?
2. Where in your normal day could God come up naturally with your children?
3. What would your children say matters most to you, based on what they see?

## Try This

- ☐ Pick one regular moment, like dinner, the drive to school, or bedtime, and make it a time to talk about God.
- ☐ Put one verse where everyone will see it, like the refrigerator or the bathroom mirror.

# Chapter 2: Your Example Speaks First

> *taking remembrance of the sincere faith in you, which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I have been persuaded that **it is** also in you.*
>
> 2 Timothy 1:5 (SLB)

Timothy grew up to be one of the most trusted pastors in the early church. Paul tells us where his faith came from: first his grandmother Lois, then his mother Eunice. And Paul reminds Timothy that from childhood he had known the sacred writings.

> *But you, abide in the things which you learned and were assured of, knowing from whom you learned **them**, and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which **is** in Christ Jesus.*
> (2 Timothy 3:14-15)

Notice the words "knowing from whom you learned them." Timothy believed what he had been taught partly because he knew the people who taught him. He had watched them live it.

## Kids Are Always Watching

Your children will learn more from how you live than from what you say. They notice whether you pray when things go wrong. They notice how you talk about people who aren't in the room. They notice how you treat their mother or father. They notice whether you say you are sorry. They notice whether the Bible sits on the shelf or gets opened.

That is not meant to scare you. Nobody is a perfect parent, and your kids don't need one. They need a real one, a parent who loves Jesus, tries to follow Him, falls short, and goes back to Him for forgiveness. When you blow it in front of your kids, and you will, own it. "I was wrong to yell at you. I'm sorry. Will you forgive me? I'm asking God to forgive me too." That one moment can teach your child more about grace than a dozen lessons.

## Don't Provoke Them

Paul gives fathers, and all parents, a short but sharp warning.

> *And fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in **the** discipline and admonition of **the** Lord.* (Ephesians 6:4)

Provoking a child to anger can look like a lot of things: harsh words, constant criticism, broken promises, rules with no reasons, favoritism, or a parent who demands what he never does himself. Colossians 3:21 gives the result: the child becomes discouraged. A discouraged child often decides that God must be like the parent who discouraged him. So bring them up in the discipline and admonition of the Lord, the Lord's way, with patience and love.

My mini book Living My Faith at Home looks more closely at leadership and love in the family. This book stays on one job: passing on the faith.

## Study Questions

1. Read 2 Timothy 1:5 and 3:14-15. Who passed faith on to you, and how?
2. What do your children see in you that you hope they copy? What do you hope they don't?
3. Read Ephesians 6:4. What provokes children to anger, and how can you avoid it?

## Try This

- ☐ Let your children see you reading your Bible and praying, not just hear that you do.
- ☐ The next time you get it wrong with your child, ask for forgiveness out loud.

# Chapter 3: Birth to Three: Love, Songs and Simple Words

> *But Jesus, having seen **it**, was indignant and said to them, "Permit the little children to come to Me, and do not hinder them; for of such is the kingdom of God."*
>
> Mark 10:14 (SLB)

People once brought little children to Jesus, and the disciples tried to send them away. Jesus was indignant. He took the children in His arms, laid His hands on them, and blessed them.

> *And they were bringing little children to Him so that He might touch them; but the disciples were rebuking those bringing **them**. But Jesus, having seen **it**, was indignant and said to them, "Permit the little children to come to Me, and do not hinder them; for of such is the kingdom of God. Truly I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will certainly not enter into it." And having taken them in His arms, laying the hands on them, He was blessing them.* (Mark 10:13-16)

A baby can't understand a sermon. But a baby can understand love, safety and the sound of a parent's voice. In these first years, the most important thing you teach your child about God is that the people who speak His name are warm and safe and faithful. A child who is held, fed, comforted and smiled at is learning what love feels like. Later, when you tell them God loves them, the word will mean something.

Watching our granddaughters reminds me how early a child learns what love and safety feel like. Before a small child understands big words, she understands a gentle voice and being held close. When Jesus welcomed little children, He showed they already matter to Him (Mark 10:13-16).

## What to Do at This Age

**Pray out loud over your child.** At feedings, at bedtime, when they're sick. They won't understand the words yet, but they will grow up never remembering a time when they didn't hear their parents talk to God.

**Sing.** Simple songs like "Jesus Loves Me" are some of the best theology a toddler can learn. Sing in the car, in the bath, at bedtime.

**Use short, simple words.** "God made the trees." "Jesus loves you." "Let's thank God for our food." Toddlers learn by hearing the same simple things over and over.

**Read picture Bibles.** Choose one that tells the stories faithfully and doesn't add a lot that isn't there. Point to the pictures. Name the people. Let them turn the pages.

**Bring them to church.** Yes, it's hard with little ones. Go anyway. They are learning that the family gathers with God's people every week.

## A Word for Tired Parents

These years are exhausting. Some days you will do nothing more spiritual than survive. That's all right. God sees a tired mom up at three in the morning and a dad walking the floor with a crying baby. Faithfulness at this age is mostly showing up with love, again and again.

> *If the LORD does not build a house, in vain its builders have toiled on it; if the LORD does not keep a city, in vain the watchman has stayed awake.* ***It is*** *in vain for you who rise early to get up, who delay sitting down, who eat the bread of toils; so He gives to His beloved sleep. Look, the inheritance of the LORD* ***is*** *sons; a reward* ***is*** *the fruit of the womb.* (Psalm 127:1-3)

## Study Questions

1. Read Mark 10:13-16. What does Jesus' reaction tell you about how He sees small children?
2. Why is a child's experience of love so important for later understanding God's love?
3. Which of the ideas above could you start this week?

## Try This

- ☐ Pray a one-sentence blessing over your child at bedtime every night this week.

☐ Learn one simple song about Jesus and sing it together.

# Chapter 4: Ages Four to Seven: Stories, Prayers and Questions

> *We will not hide **them** from their sons, recounting to a later generation the praises of the LORD, and His might and His wonders which He has done.*
>
> Psalm 78:4 (SLB)

This is the age of stories and questions. A five-year-old will ask you where God lives, whether the dog will go to heaven, and why Jesus had to die, all before breakfast. Don't be afraid of the questions. They are open doors.

## Tell the Big Story

Children this age love stories, and the Bible is full of them. Creation. Noah. Abraham. Joseph. Moses and the Red Sea. David and Goliath. Daniel in the lions' den. Jonah. The birth of Jesus, His miracles, His death and resurrection.

As you tell them, help your child see that they are all part of one big story: God made a good world, people turned away from Him, and God kept His promise to send a Savior, Jesus. That way the Bible isn't a pile of separate stories. It's one story about one God who keeps His word.

And keep it true. Don't turn Bible heroes into perfect people. Noah got drunk. David sinned badly. Peter denied Jesus. Children need to know that God uses imperfect people, because they are imperfect people too.

## Teach Them to Pray

Children this age can learn to pray simple prayers of their own. Teach them that prayer is just talking to God, who is always listening. A simple pattern helps: thank You, sorry, please. Thank God for something. Tell Him you're sorry for something. Ask Him for something, for yourself or someone else.

You can also start teaching the Lord's Prayer. Jesus gave it to His disciples as a pattern, and children can learn it line by line.

> *Therefore you, pray in this way: 'Our Father who **is** in the heavens, let Your name be sanctified; let Your kingdom come; let Your will come about, as in heaven, also on the earth. Give us today our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also forgive our debtors. And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory into the ages. Amen.'*
> (Matthew 6:9-13)

## Start Memorizing

Young children memorize easily. Short verses work best. Start with ones like Genesis 1:1, John 3:16, Psalm 56:3, and Ephesians 4:32. Say them in the car. Make them into a game. Give a small reward when a verse is learned. What they hide in their hearts now will stay with them for life.

## Answering Hard Questions

When your child asks a question you can't answer, say so. "That's a great question. I don't know. Let's look it up together." Then do. It teaches them that faith is not afraid of questions, and that the Bible is where we go for answers.

## Study Questions

1. What questions about God have your children asked you lately?
2. How can you help your child see the Bible as one big story instead of many separate ones?
3. Read Matthew 6:9-13. Which line of the Lord's Prayer could you explain to a five-year-old this week?

## Try This

- ☐ Read one Bible story together each day this week and ask, "What does this show us about God?"
- ☐ Teach your child the thank you, sorry, please way to pray.

# Chapter 5: Ages Eight to Twelve: Building a Faith of Their Own

> *And Jesus was advancing in wisdom and stature and favor with God and men.*
>
> Luke 2:52 (SLB)

Somewhere in these years, children start moving from “my parents believe” to “I believe.” They can read the Bible for themselves. They can follow an argument. They start comparing what they hear at home with what they hear at school and from friends. This is the age to build a faith that belongs to them.

I was about that age when Pastor Jimmy Carter took me to church in Victorville and led me to Christ. At about 8, I had already started to question the religious routines I grew up with. Between eight and twelve, children stop repeating what parents say and start asking whether God is really true for them. Answer their questions from Scripture, and they build a faith that belongs to them.

## Get Them Reading the Bible Themselves

Give your child a real Bible of their own, one they can read and mark up. Help them start with a Gospel, like Mark, a little each day. Ask simple questions: What happened? What does it show about Jesus? What should I do about it? Those three questions will serve them for life.

Family devotions can grow up too. Let your kids take turns reading the passage, asking the questions, or leading the prayer. They learn more by doing than by watching.

## Teach the Why

Kids at this age want reasons. Why do we believe the Bible is true? How do we know Jesus rose from the dead? Why do we go to church? Why is that wrong if everybody does it? Give them real answers. If you don’t know, find

out together. My books The Road Home, Dug Up and Written Down, and One God, Three Persons can help you.

Also teach them the gospel clearly, in plain words, so they can put their own trust in Jesus. Many children come to faith in these years. Talk about it. Don't pressure, but don't avoid it either. If your child wants to be saved, sit down with them, walk through what Jesus did, and let them pray in their own words.

## Help Them Serve

Faith grows when it's used. Let your kids help you serve someone: bring a meal to a sick neighbor, write a card to a shut-in, help at church, give part of their allowance. They will begin to see that following Jesus isn't just knowing things, it's doing things.

> *Let no one despise your youth, but be a pattern for the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity.* (1 Timothy 4:12)

## Study Questions

1. Read Luke 2:52. In what four ways did Jesus grow as a boy?
2. What questions about faith do children this age most often ask, and how would you answer them?
3. How could your family serve someone together this month?

## Try This

- ☐ Give your child a Bible of their own and help them read a short passage each day.
- ☐ Ask your child to lead the family prayer one night this week.

# Chapter 6: The Teenage Years: From Rules to Relationship

> *By what will a youth keep his path pure? By keeping **it** according to Your word. With all my heart I have sought You; do not let me stray from Your commandments. In my heart I have treasured Your word, so that I will not sin against You.*
>
> Psalm 119:9-11 (SLB)

The teenage years can scare parents more than any other. Teens push back. They question. They spend more time with friends and screens than with family. Many parents feel like they are losing their kids. But this is also the age when a young person's faith can become deep and strong and their own.

## Keep Talking, Mostly Listening

Teenagers want to be heard. If every conversation turns into a lecture, they will stop talking. James gives good advice for parents of teens.

> *So then, my beloved brothers, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; for the anger of a man does not produce the righteousness of God.* (James 1:19-20)

Ask questions and listen to the answers. Don't panic when they say something that shocks you. A teen who feels safe to say "I'm not sure I believe this" is a teen you can still reach. A teen who is afraid to say it will just stop telling you what they think.

Some of the best talks with teenagers happen side by side, not face to face: in the car, working on a project, late at night in the kitchen. Be available at the times they want to talk, even when it's inconvenient.

## Give Them Strong Reasons

Teenagers will hear hard challenges to the faith, from teachers, friends, and the internet. Don't hide those challenges from them. Face them together. Can we trust the Bible? Did Jesus really rise? Why does God allow

suffering? Isn't every religion the same? There are good answers to every one of these questions, and a teen who has worked through them at home is ready when the questions come later.

## Move from Rules to Relationship

Rules matter, and teenagers still need boundaries. But the goal is not a teen who follows your rules. The goal is a young adult who loves Jesus and follows Him when you're not around. So, little by little, explain the reasons behind your rules, give them more choices, and let them carry more responsibility. Talk about God's design for things like dating, sex, money, and friendships, and why His way is good.

Most of all, pray for them. Pray for them by name, every day. Pray for their friends, their future spouse, their faith. There will be days when prayer is the only thing you can do for your teenager. It is never the least thing.

## Study Questions

1. Read James 1:19-20. Why is listening so important with teenagers?
2. Which hard questions about faith do you think your teen is hearing right now?
3. What is the difference between a teen who follows rules and a teen who follows Jesus?

## Try This

- ☐ Ask your teen one question about what they believe this week, and just listen.
- ☐ Write down your teen's name and three things to pray for them, and pray them daily.

# Chapter 7: Correction That Teaches

> *Now all discipline for the present does not seem to be of joy, but of grief; but afterward it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.*
>
> Hebrews 12:11 (SLB)

Every child needs correction. The Bible says so plainly, and it calls correction an act of love.

> *The discipline of the LORD, my son, do not reject, and do not loathe His reproof; for whom the LORD loves He reproves, and like a father a son **in whom** he is pleased.* (Proverbs 3:11-12)

Hebrews says God corrects His children the same way, for their good.

> *Furthermore, we indeed had the fathers of our flesh as correctors, and we respected **them**; shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live? For they indeed disciplined **us** for a few days according to what seemed good to them, but He for **our** benefit, so that **we may** share His holiness. Now all discipline for the present does not seem to be of joy, but of grief; but afterward it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.* (Hebrews 12:9-11)

## What Correction Is For

Correction is never meant to inflict pain. Its purpose is to stop an unwanted or unhealthy action and to raise a child with respect and a true understanding that every action has a consequence, good or bad. That is how God corrects us. He doesn't correct us because He is angry and wants to get even. He corrects us because He loves us and wants us to share His holiness.

So before you correct your child, ask yourself one question: am I doing this to help my child, or to let off my own anger? If it's anger, wait. Walk away, pray, and come back when you are calm. James says the anger of a man does not produce the righteousness of God.

## How to Make It Teach

**Be clear ahead of time.** Children should know what is expected and what will happen if they disobey. Surprises feel unfair.

**Be consistent.** If the same thing earns a warning one day and a punishment the next, children learn that the rule depends on your mood.

**Fit the consequence to the action.** Let it be connected and reasonable. A child who breaks something helps pay for it. A child who misuses a privilege loses it for a while.

**Explain the why.** Help them see what was wrong and why it matters, especially as they get older.

**Always restore.** When the correction is over, it's over. Hug your child. Tell them you love them. Don't keep bringing it up. That is how God treats us when we confess our sins.

## Correction and the Gospel

Correction is one of the best times to teach your child about grace. When they have done wrong, they understand sin better than at any other time. Tell them that everyone sins, including you, and that Jesus died to take the punishment we deserve. Pray together. Let them hear you ask God to forgive them, and let them hear that He does.

## Study Questions

1. Read Hebrews 12:9-11. What is the goal of God's discipline in our lives?
2. Why is it important to separate correction from your own anger?
3. How can correction become a time to teach your child about grace?

## Try This

- ☐ Sit down with your spouse or another parent and agree on clear rules and consequences.
- ☐ After the next correction, end it with a hug and the words "I love you."

# Chapter 8: When a Child Wanders

> *And having risen up, he went to his own father. But while he was still far distant, his father saw him and was moved with compassion, and having run, he fell on his neck and kissed him.*
>
> Luke 15:20 (SLB)

Some parents do their very best, and a child still walks away from the Lord. If that is you, I want to speak to you directly in this chapter.

## What Proverbs 22:6 Says, and What It Doesn't

> *Train the youth according to his way; even when he is old he will not turn aside from it.* (Proverbs 22:6)

This is a wonderful verse, and it is true. But it is a proverb, not a promise. Proverbs tell us how life usually works in God's world. Children raised well usually stay on the path. But Proverbs doesn't promise that every child will, any more than Proverbs 10:4 promises that every hard worker will get rich. Every child is a real person who makes real choices. Adam and Eve had a perfect Father, and they still sinned.

So if your child has wandered, don't carry guilt that isn't yours. Confess the failures that really are yours, because we all have them, and receive God's forgiveness. Then leave your child in God's hands.

## What You Can Still Do

**Pray.** Keep praying, for as long as it takes. Many grown men and women came back to Christ after years away, and many of them say a mother or father never stopped praying.

**Keep the door open.** Look at the father in Jesus' story of the prodigal son. He didn't chase his son into the far country. He didn't approve of what his son was doing. But he kept watching the road, and when his son came home, he ran to meet him.

**Love without approving.** You can love your grown child, welcome them, and enjoy them, without pretending that wrong is right. Your love tells them God's love is real. Your honesty tells them God's truth is real.

**Talk less, live more.** A wandering child has usually heard all the arguments. What they need now is to see that your faith is real, that it gives you peace, joy and kindness that the world can't give.

> *And let us not lose heart in doing the good, for in **its** own time we will reap, not fainting.* (Galatians 6:9)

## Study Questions

1. Read Proverbs 22:6. Why is it important to understand it as a proverb and not a guarantee?
2. Read Luke 15:11-24. What did the father do, and what didn't he do?
3. If you have a child who has wandered, what would it look like to keep the door open?

## Try This

- ☐ Write a short prayer for your child and pray it every day.
- ☐ Send your wandering child a note that simply says you love them.

# Chapter 9: Single Parents, Grandparents and Everyone Else

> *A father of the fatherless and a judge of widows **is** God in the dwelling place of His holiness.*
>
> Psalm 68:5 (SLB)

Not every child grows up in a home with a mom and a dad who both follow Jesus. Many are raised by a single parent. Many have one believing parent and one who doesn't believe. Many are being raised by grandparents. If that is you, take heart. God has used homes like yours again and again.

I helped lead youth mission trips to Baja, Mexico, for five straight years and volunteered at church camp for several years. You do not have to be a child's parent to make a lasting difference in their faith. Sometimes a grandparent, youth volunteer or mentor is the person God uses to steady a young person.

## Timothy's Home

Remember Timothy? Acts 16:1 tells us his mother was a believing Jewish woman, but his father was a Greek. As far as we know, his father was not a believer. Timothy's faith came from his mother and his grandmother. God used two faithful women to raise one of the great leaders of the early church.

## For Single Parents

You may feel you are doing the work of two people with the energy of half of one. You are not alone. God calls Himself a father of the fatherless. Lean on Him, and lean on His people. Ask your church for help. Let a godly man or woman of the same sex as your child be a mentor. Do what you can, and trust God with what you can't.

## For Grandparents

Grandparents have a special place. You may have more time and patience than you did as a young parent. Pray for your grandchildren by name. Tell them your story of how God has been faithful to you. Read them Bible stories. Take them to church. Write them letters about the Lord they can keep. And always support their parents. Never undercut them in front of the children, even when you disagree.

## For the Rest of Us

Even if you have no children at home, you can help. Children's workers, youth leaders, aunts, uncles, neighbors, and church members all play a part. Psalm 78 says one generation tells the next. Every believer is part of that chain.

> *And all your sons **will be** taught by the LORD, and great **will be** the peace of your sons.* (Isaiah 54:13)

## Study Questions

1. Read 2 Timothy 1:5 and Acts 16:1. What encouragement does Timothy's family give to a single parent?
2. How can a church family help parents pass on the faith?
3. Is there a child outside your own family you could encourage in the Lord?

## Try This

- ☐ Grandparents: write your grandchild a letter about how God has been faithful to you.
- ☐ Single parents: ask one trusted believer to pray for your children every week.

# A Closing Word

You will not do this perfectly. Neither did I, and neither did anyone you admire. But God doesn't ask you to be perfect. He asks you to be faithful, and He promises to work in your children's hearts in ways you will never see.

So love your kids. Live your faith in front of them. Talk about God when you sit and when you walk, when you lie down and when you rise up. Pray for them every day. And leave the results to Him.

If you want to go further, my mini book Living My Faith at Home looks at leadership and love in the family, Building a Marriage That Lasts looks at the marriage your children are watching, and The Road Home lays out the gospel in plain words you can share with your kids when they are ready.

My own walk with God was not a straight line. I drifted more than once and had to be restored by grace. What gives me hope as a father and grandfather is that God's faithfulness does not depend on us being perfect parents. Our job is to plant and water faithfully and trust the Lord with the growth (1 Corinthians 3:6).

# Age-by-Age Guide

Keep this page where you will see it. Pick one thing at a time.

| Age | Scripture | Prayer | Faith at home |
|---|---|---|---|
| Birth to 3 | Picture Bible; simple words like “God made you” and “Jesus loves you.” | Pray over your child at feedings and bedtime; pray before meals. | Sing simple songs about Jesus; bring them to church every week. |
| 4 to 7 | Tell the big story of the Bible; memorize short verses. | Teach thank you, sorry, please; start the Lord’s Prayer. | Welcome questions; read a story a day; let them see you pray. |
| 8 to 12 | Their own Bible; read a Gospel; ask what happened, what it shows about Jesus, what to do. | Let them lead family prayer. | Teach the why; share the gospel clearly; serve someone together. |
| 13 to 18 | Face hard questions together; give strong reasons. | Pray for them by name daily; pray with them when they let you. | Listen more than you talk; move from rules to relationship. |

# Scripture Index

This index lists the Bible passages quoted or cited in this book. The numbers after each passage are chapter numbers. “Intro” is Before You Begin, and “Back” is the closing pages.


- **Genesis:** 1:1 (4)
- **Deuteronomy:** 6:4-9 (1); 6:6-7 (1)
- **Psalm:** 56:3 (4); 68:5 (9); 78:4 (Intro, 4); 78:4-7 (1); 119:9-11 (6); 127:1-3 (3)
- **Proverbs:** 3:11-12 (7); 10:4 (8); 22:6 (8)
- **Isaiah:** 54:13 (9)
- **Matthew:** 6:9-13 (4)
- **Mark:** 10:13-16 (3); 10:14 (3)
- **Luke:** 2:52 (5); 15:11-24 (8); 15:20 (8)
- **John:** 3:16 (4)
- **Acts:** 16:1 (9)
- **Galatians:** 6:9 (8)
- **Ephesians:** 4:32 (4); 6:4 (2)
- **Colossians:** 3:21 (2)
- **1 Timothy:** 4:12 (5)
- **2 Timothy:** 1:5 (2, 9); 3:14-15 (2)
- **Hebrews:** 12:9-11 (7); 12:11 (7)
- **James: 1:19-20 (6, 7)**

# About This Book

God gave parents the first and best place to teach a child about Him: home. Not a classroom, not a church building, but the kitchen table, the car ride and the bedside.

Raising Children in the Faith walks parents and grandparents through how to teach children Scripture, prayer and faith at every age, from the first bedtime prayers to the hard questions of the teenage years. It shows how your example speaks first, how correction can teach without harm, and what to do when a child wanders from the Lord.

Each short chapter ends with study questions and simple ideas to try this week, and an age-by-age guide at the back fits on the refrigerator.