## Teaching Values to Children

by Harry Osborne

To say that our society faces grave problems is hardly a new thought. It is rare that a week goes by without some news of a shocking act being committed that most of us would have considered unimaginable. Murder, car-jacking, rape and drug trafficking are standard fare on television and in the newspaper. The only shock still present is that the perpetrators are getting younger and younger. Our juvenile court system is inundated with the volume of cases against youthful offenders. More problems are certain as these become older offenders.

It is no coincidence that an alarming breakup of the family is happening at the same time that the rest of society seems in chaos. Whether it be that parents have abdicated their rightful place of teaching proper values and behavior or that less desirable people have usurped that place, the fact remains that a sense of right and wrong is not being instilled into many children today.

To cure the problem, parents must take the initiative. They must teach their children and instill a proper set of moral values. They must also fight against efforts by others to change those values to the hedonistic and humanistic values of the world around us.

The Bible shows how parents can instill a proper set of moral values. It starts with teaching a child about the will of God as stated within His word. That process does not start when the child reaches age 18, or 12, or even 6. It starts from the time the child is a baby.

There is an example of two commended generations of godly mothers recorded in Scripture. Timothy's mother, Eunice, and grandmother, Lois, are commended for their exemplary faith (2 Timothy 1:5). A notable factor in their successful effort is seen in the description of their efforts in teaching. When did they start? The Bible tells us:

"And that from a babe you have known the sacred writings which are able to make you wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus" (2 Timothy 3:15).

The word "babe" used regarding Timothy's age is the same word used to describe Jesus while in the manger (Luke 2:12, 16) and John while in the womb of Elizabeth (Luke 1:41, 44). We make a great mistake if we put off teaching our children until a point we think they may understand everything. By that time, it is too late to do much of the teaching we should have already done. Mothers and fathers alike would do well to follow the good example left by Lois and Eunice in their teaching of children. It is greatly needed in our time.

Notice the following instruction given to us by God's word regarding the responsibility of parents to teach and train their children in the righteous path of truth from God's word:

**Deuteronomy 4:8-9** - "And what great nation is there that has such statutes and righteous judgments as are in all this law which I set before you this day? Only take heed to yourself, and diligently keep yourself, lest you forget the things your eyes have seen, and lest they depart from your heart all the days of your life. And teach them to your children and your grandchildren...."

**Deuteronomy 6:6-7** - "And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart; you shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up."

**Ephesians 6:4** - "And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord."

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

We must all see the seriousness of training and teaching our children in the principles of God which will give them proper values. After all, our children are a heritage of the Lord (Psalm 127:3) and we will give an answer to God in the Judgment for our handling of them. Let us make every effort to teach them as Abraham taught his children long ago and was commended by God as follows:

"For I have known him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him, that they keep the way of the Lord, to do righteousness and justice, that the Lord may bring to Abraham what He has spoken to him" (Genesis 18:19).

Parents, let us not shirk our duty to instill values in our children by leaving it to others. God will hold **us** responsible for doing that **ourselves**. While it is true that some mothers must work outside the home while children are still very young, it is also undeniable that much of the practice stems more from desire than necessity. The result is that many children gain their values from unbelievers known far better to them than their own parents. No other person and no amount of material possessions can replace the value of mothers and fathers spending both quality and quantity time with their children. Over the years, it has become increasingly clear to me that parents will end up spending about the same amount of time with their children -- one way or another. They can spend that time from the beginning in showing proper love, care, concern and instilling the needed values. Or they will spend the time in remedial efforts to reach the unguided and undisciplined child once he or she is in trouble. The first expenditure of time will usually be effective. The second rarely is.

Our schools and the rest of our society will function much better if all of us as parents will take seriously our responsibility to provide our children with a proper moral basis for action. More importantly, the church of the future is being shaped as we teach our children. If they are taught well, God will use them to His glory in spreading the truth. If we fail to teach them, their souls and our souls are in jeopardy, and the cause of Christ will suffer from the lack of preparation. The proper basic values can only be instilled as a result of studying the Bible with them repeatedly, consistently and diligently. Let us be sure we are fulfilling that which God expects of us in laying the proper foundation of truth in the hearts of our children.