

Section 4: God's Good Pattern For Parenting (Part Two)

Lesson 10: Raise Them In the Church & Require Obedience

Introduction

"...a child left to himself brings shame..." (Proverbs 29:15).

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

Nothing floats upstream by accident. If you drop a leaf into the water and leave it to itself, that leaf will be carried away into whatever direction the prevailing current takes it. That is, until eventually, it permanently sinks down into the mire beneath. To go against the current requires deliberate, diligent, and persistent effort. It requires focused and intentional planning that is well thought out and effectively applied.

According to the Bible, the same is true for parenting children. If "a child" is "left to himself," they will "bring shame." The direction of a child's life will naturally conform to the influences and pressures of the prevailing current that swirls all around them. Without persistent guidance, instruction, discipline, care, and restraint from their parents, the natural disposition of a child's sinful heart, together with the prevailing currents of this world, will lead them away from the Lord. That is, until eventually, they too will sink down into the mire of everlasting sorrow, (Isa. 57:20-21).

This is certainly a grim prospect, and one that clearly identifies the great responsibility entrusted to parents by the Almighty. But there is comfort, hope, and strong motivation in recognizing that the opposite is also true. "A child left to himself brings shame" but "a child" that has been "trained up...in the way" of God's Word, will yield the benefits of that holy instruction all the days of their life—and with God's blessing, even unto the life to come, (Gen. 17:7). Indeed, children who are raised in the fear of the Lord bring "joy" to their "fathers" and "gladness" to their "mothers," (Prov. 23:24). They are "the planting of the Lord" which provides the fruits of wisdom and stability for future generations, (Isa. 61:3).

But How Do We Train Our Children Well?

If you are a Christian, surely it is your desire to see your children flourishing in Christ. You long for their love for God to become the rudder which controls the direction of all their thoughts, plans, ambitions, and decisions. You ache inwardly for them to be men and women of prayer, men and women of the Word, men and women who are healthy members of the local church, and people whose treasure does not consist in the fleeting things of this world but rather in the glory and honor of Christ. *But how does that happen?* We know that the conversion and growth of a Christian is ultimately a work of God's sovereign grace by the Spirit and that we cannot manufacture it on our own. Yet, we also know that we are stewards of the children whom God has entrusted to us and that we have a responsibility to "train them in the way they should go." The great burden of this chapter is to contemplate our stewardship as parents by asking: *What does the Bible teach us are the God-given means for helping our children flourish in Christ? What is the pattern for parenting which God has called us to pursue, and which God has promised to bless for our children's everlasting good and his everlasting glory?*

These are not new questions. They are questions which are both *ancient* and *universal*. They are questions which our Christian brothers and sisters in every age and culture have had to wrestle with as they live as pilgrim saints in this world. But thankfully, they are also questions which the Holy Spirit has addressed for our benefit in the pages of holy Scripture. In fact, one such place is the sixth chapter of Paul's letter to the Ephesians. In Ephesians 6:1-4 Paul turns his focus from the roles of husbands and wives in marriage (Eph. 5:22-33) to the roles of children and parents in the family. In four succinct verses the Apostle offers us divinely inspired wisdom that is, all at once, timeless, flawless, and deeply impactful for all who strive to embody it in the actual practice of their lives. It is to these sacred verses that we will devote our primary attention throughout this chapter and the next. As we consider the verses we will see four primary exhortations for parents from the text:

1. **Raise Your Children In the Church (v1a)**
2. **Require Obedience of Your Children (v1-3)**
3. **Do Not Provoke Your Children To Anger (v4a)**
4. **Raise Your Children In the Discipline & Instruction of the Lord (v4b)**

We will deal with the first two of these exhortations in this chapter, and the second two in the chapter to follow. But let's begin by carefully reading the passage of holy Scripture that we want to keep in view:

"1 Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. 2 'Honor your father and mother' (this is the first commandment with a promise), 3 that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land." 4 Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord," (Ephesians 6:1-4).

1. Raise Your Children In the Church (v1a)

"Children..." (Eph. 6:1a)

The minuscule portion of the verse quoted above looks funny, doesn't it? Why does it contain only one word? And how could that possibly be important enough to our study on parenting that we should take time to consider it all by itself? Bear with me as I show you why the presence of this one word is so crucial for us to consider. Let's begin by asking an exegetical question: Why are "*children*" directly addressed in a letter that is expressly written to "*to the saints who are in Ephesus*" (Eph. 1:1)? Moreover, what does this teach us about God's good pattern for our parenting?

Notice first of all that the Apostle Paul does not merely speak *about children* here. He speaks *directly to children*. In other words, Paul's address is intended to be heard by the ears, understood by the minds, and effectively applied within the lives of the offspring of all believers. This observation provides an exegetical insight that is very easy to miss, but is, nevertheless, critical for Christians to rediscover in our own days.

The reason children are directly addressed in a letter written to a specific congregation is because, even from infancy, the children of believers are to be recognized as members of the visible body of Christ on earth. To say it another way, Paul's *direct* address of the "*children*" teaches us that in the mind of the Apostle—as he was inspired by the Holy Spirit—he understood the "*children*" of believers as being numbered among the "*saints*"—that is, as fellow members of the visible church. In Reformed Presbyterianism we practice this conviction by baptizing not only those who profess faith, but also all children who are born of believing parents, (WSC #95). I understand that the biblical case for the baptism of covenant children may not be something you are familiar with or are immediately ready to accept. Moreover, it is not my intention to provide an explanation and defense of that important subject here. Nevertheless, even if the baptism of covenant children is not a position you hold, there are still serious implications from this passage which apply to the God-given role of *every* Christian parent.

For example, the fact that children are *directly* addressed in this inspired letter teaches us that *it is the will of God for children to be raised in the church*. This letter was intended to be read aloud and expounded during the public worship services of the church at Ephesus. Therefore, the fact that children are *directly addressed* means that it was the expectation of God that the "*children*" would be personally present in those services in order to hear this instruction. In other words, this single word within the verse unequivocally implies that the children of believers will be worshipping right alongside their parents each and every Lord's Day. They will be praying with them, singing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs by their side, hearing the Scriptures read and preached by the pastor, and being instructed in the faith just like every other Christian. To state it negatively, the notion of children being sent out of the public worship service to some other alternative activity is completely foreign to the pages of holy Scripture. Instead, we have in this single word a resounding affirmation that "*children*" were not only present in the public

worship gatherings of God's people, but also that they were expected to be listening along and ready to receive the priceless instruction which God had granted *directly* to them through his Word.

Before we press forward, a word of clarification is in order. While I do not want to blunt the edge of the Bible's teaching on this subject, it is also true that the biblical instruction about the inclusion of children in worship requires careful nuance, (Deut. 4:2). For example, it may be argued from passages like Nehemiah 8:2 (and others) that perhaps *some* exceptions may be made for especially young children in their infancy. We should not aim to enforce the inclusion of children in worship so severely as to neglect a proper recognition of the special circumstances of nursing infants or those with special needs. In fact, while there is no explicit teaching on the subject, we do see a number of verses throughout the Bible in which the normal patterns of worship were sometimes temporarily altered in the case of infants, (i.e. I Sam. 1:21-22). Moreover, by no means are we suggesting that children's classes are undesirable or improper. On the contrary, there is much value in providing instruction to our little ones that is well-suited to their present developmental stages. But what we are saying is that *children's activities which in any way supplant the normative biblical pattern of children being present in the congregational worship services of God's people, are out of step with the will of God revealed in his Word*, (Matt. 19:14). This single inspired word of Ephesians 6:1a clearly confirms that it is God's expectation for "*children*" to be included in the congregation of the local church and participating in worship.

So What Does This Mean For Christian Parents?

This means that, according to the will of God, one of the chief priorities in raising our children is for the whole family to be members of a faithful local church where the whole counsel of the Word of God is rightly divided Lord's Day by Lord's Day. It means that, as parents, it is our privilege and obligation before God to continually carry our children to the bosom of Christ from their earliest days, and that one of the most important ways we do this is by training them to participate with us in the worship of God, (Ex. 12:26-27; 13:14-16; Josh. 4:6-7, etc.).

Surely someone will say, "*But my children are so young. They don't understand what is happening. They won't sit still. I am distracted the whole time by caring for them.*" If this is where you find yourself, know that you are in good company. All parents who have endeavored to raise their children in the church have wrestled with these challenges and felt the echo of these sentiments in their own hearts. Discipling children is not an easy task, and we should not expect it to be. The calling of parents is a calling to self-sacrifice that requires us to continually give ourselves away for the sake of our children. However, the key to persevering in this aspect of Christian parenting is in a change of perspective about the hardships and struggles we face along the way. Let's consider this in three ways:

1. Your Attitudes & Actions Related To Worship As a Parent Are the First Sermon Your Children Ever Hear

First, it must be granted as true that young children may not yet understand much of what is said or done during a worship service. But it is a mistake to think that just because children may not yet be able to understand the content of worship that this means they are not learning anything or that they are not being spiritually formed by their inclusion. As a parent, every time you attend (or neglect) worship, you are teaching your children how to think about God, the Bible, Christianity, the Church, etc. They may not yet understand the sermon delivered from the pulpit, but what they will understand, by observing the attitudes and actions of their parents, is whether not Christ is worthy of their devotion. They will see by our example whether or not Christ is truly the treasure of our heart, whether or not his Word is the bread of our soul and the rule of our life, whether or not we count it a joy to gather with the saints and worship the Lord, or whether it is a begrudging thing in our eyes and an afterthought. Long before our children grasp the sermons preached from the pulpits of local churches they are being deeply formed by the sermons that the lifestyles of their parents preach to them everyday—and especially every Lord's Day.

2. Training Our Children Isn't Just About Their Sanctification, It Is Also About Our Own

Second, helping children learn to sit still and participate is not an easy task. There are certainly times when a parent needs to step out for a moment to soothe (or discipline) their child. But perseverance in this difficult work is not only good for your

child, it is also *part of your own sanctification*. As Christians, we are not called to love God in a fictional environment that is free from all inconvenience, discomfort, and distraction. We are called to love and serve the Lord in the midst of the real world where temptations and struggles abound everyday. Part of the blessing of raising our children *in the worship service*, is that it teaches *us* how to love God even in the midst of distractions and annoyances. Moreover, as we noted above, our perseverance and persistence in training our children will powerfully communicate the preciousness of Christ to their hearts. Even if they cannot articulate it with their own words, they will see by our unwillingness to give up in training them, that the Lord Jesus Christ must be greatly important.

But, as a final note on this second point, we must also remember that the goal is not for our children to *sit still*. The goal is for our children to behold the glory of Jesus Christ, personally receive and rest in him by faith, and worship him from a heart of joyful surrender to all his holy will. This means that the use of *harshness* in the spiritual training of children is not only *unacceptable*, it also *counter-productive*. Our children may need us to discipline them for their behavior at times—even *at church*—and this is right, (Prov. 3:11-12). But our discipline as parents should always have the clear goal of *winning our children to Christ*, not merely *getting them to sit still* or *look the part*. Our methods for training our children in worship must support the desired end in view, otherwise we will run the risk of creating a cold and heavy-handed impression of God in their hearts, rather than that of a faithful, loving, and welcoming Father. Far too often, the harshness of otherwise faithful (and orthodox) parents has been a catalyst for the spiritual rebellion of their children. Just as surely as some parents fall short by failing to properly include their children in worship, so others fail by attempting to force the hearts, minds, and bodies of their children into submission, rather than prayerfully shepherding them toward the Lord of all grace. We must guard ourselves from straying from God’s wisdom in either of these misguided directions.

3. Preparation For a Soul-Satisfying Sabbath Begins Monday Through Saturday In the Home

Third and finally, part of the challenge we face with our children *on Sundays* is because of a lack of devotional patterns in the life of the family *Monday through Saturday*. Parents are not only called to raise their children *in the church*, they are also called to lead their children in prayer and in the Word of God day by day in the home, (Deut. 6:7). The pursuit of God by the family is a part of the daily life of the Christian home, not just a once a week activity on Sunday. We will think much more about spiritual training in the home in the next chapter when we consider Ephesians 6:4, but for now let two things be said:

1. First, when children are learning to pray, sing praise, and listen to the Word of God in smaller increments throughout the week during family worship times, they are much more likely to develop the capacity to participate in these things with the gathered saints each Lord’s Day. Daily training in the home yields many invaluable benefits for our families, but one of them is that it helps prepare our children to flourish on the Lord’s Day. Just as regular physical exercise helps us strengthen the capacity and endurance of our physical muscles, so regular spiritual exercise helps us strengthen the capacity and endurance of our spiritual muscles—that is, those faculties and habits which are most central to our pursuit of Christ. T
2. Secondly, the nature of the activities of the week—and *especially of Saturday night*—will have a significant impact on the readiness of the body and mind on Sunday. Children who are overtired, distracted by worldly endeavors, or already thinking about the “*fun*” activities they are going to hurry off to after church, have not been set up for success by their parents. When God began to teach his people how to “*remember the Sabbath day*,” and “*keep it holy*,” one of the first things he did was teach them that faithful Sabbath observance requires *preparation*, (Ex. 20:8). This is why God told his people to gather twice as much manna on the eve of every Sabbath, and why God kept that manna from spoiling, (unlike other days; see Ex. 16:22-26). God’s purpose was to teach his people to make due preparations for his holy day, so that they and their families could joyfully seek the Lord without unnecessary distractions caused by earthly cares. My dear brothers and sisters, we would be wise to follow this sacred pattern in our own parenting today.

And so we have seen, from a single word, that it is God's express will for parents to *raise their children in the church*, worshipping the Lord right alongside their parents, and receiving God's appointed means of grace Lord's Day by Lord's Day. This is a critical part of what it means to "train up a child in the way he should go," (Prov. 22:6). Now we will consider the second exhortation derived from Ephesians 6:1-4 which is for parents to *require obedience of their children*.

2. Require Obedience of Your Children (v1-3)

"Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. 'Honor your father and mother' (this is the first commandment with a promise), 'that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land,'" (Eph. 6:1-3).

Once again, there is a tremendous amount for us to learn about God's pattern for parenting from these three verses. First of all, let us ask a simple question: *What are children called to do?* The answer is clear: "children" are called to "obey [their] parents in the Lord." And if God calls children to obey, then what does this teach us about God's calling for parents? It teaches us that *parents are called to require obedience of their children*. That is such a simple truth that it may seem unnecessary to state. However, in our present times, it is an aspect of every parent's calling for which there is much need for renewed clarity and commitment—even within the church. While we all want to have sweet and warm relationships with our children, that desire must never be pursued by *avoiding our calling to hold our children accountable to God for their behavior*. Firm and consistent discipline, when dispensed in tenderness, patience, and love, is not a hinderance to relational intimacy and sweet communion among family members, it is the very catalyst to it. Over and over again the Scriptures plead with parents not to believe the lie that *withholding discipline* is how we show our children love. The counsel of the all-wise God is the exact opposite:

"Whoever spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is diligent to discipline him," (Prov. 13:24).

"Folly is bound up within the heart of a child, but the rod of discipline drives it far from him," (Prov. 22:15).

"Do not withhold discipline from a child; if you strike him with a rod, he will not die. If you strike him with the rod, you will save his soul from Sheol," (Prov. 23:13-14).

These verses are certainly not promoting abuse. Nor do they provide approval of parents who lash out at their children in sinful anger, (Eph. 4:26). Instead, they are teaching us that the loving and self-controlled application of discipline—including the *discipline of chastisement*—is an expression of true parental love that does much good to the child who receives it, (Prov. 13:24). Firm and consistent discipline that is offered in love is a means of helping our children overcome the numerous "follies" of their natural temperaments, (Prov. 22:15). Moreover, according to the Holy Spirit speaking in Scripture, the loving application of discipline is a primary means by which God holds back our children from running headlong into "Sheol," (Prov. 23:13-14).

There is a great need for Christian parents to renew their minds with respect to Scripture's teaching on these points. We have been inundated with the world's blatant contradictions of God's Word when it comes to parenting, (Gen. 3:1-5). We are told that firm discipline is inherently unloving, that it is harsh and stifling to the child, and that it will cause them to develop all sorts of emotional disorders in adulthood. But, dear ones, that is a blatant lie. Abuse will certainly render these sorrowful effects. But when discipline is administered with consistency and love, and within the atmosphere of a stable and encouraging home, the Bible teaches us that it is one of the chief means the Holy Spirit uses to guide our children away from *the broad path of destruction* and into *the narrow path that leads to life*, (Matt. 7:13-14). In fact, if you hold that discipline—including *chastisement*—is inherently unloving or wrong, then you stand guilty of accusing the Almighty God of being sinful in his treatment of his children. For it says in God's Word: "My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him. For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives," (Heb. 12:5b-6). The heart the matter is this: *If we ourselves would be godly, and if we would see our children be godly, then we must trust the wisdom of the Lord set forth in his Word and strive by faith to cultivate a pattern of healthy, loving, and consistent discipline within our homes.*

But the lessons of this passage are not only found in *the call for children to obey*, and *the call for parents to require to obedience*. Equally important is for us to notice *what means Paul uses to call children to obedience* and *what ends Paul uses to motivate them*. We must notice this because the means and ends used by the Holy Spirit in Scripture should be the same means and ends employed by Christian parents in the rearing of their children.

By What Means Does Paul Call Children To Obedience? By The Word of God.

“Honor your father and your mother...” (Eph. 6:2a; Ex. 20:12).

When Paul teaches “children” about the life that they *should* be living, and the types of behaviors they *should* desire to embody, he does not do so by pointing to the norms of culture, nor to family traditions, nor to any other fickle foundation that is subject to change. Instead, the basis of every exhortation Paul gives to the children is founded upon the timeless, unchanging, and inerrant Word of God, (Eph. 6:2-3). That is to say, who Paul wants to see these children become, as well as what he requires of them, is not based on the popular and celebrated positions of society. It is not based on gaining earthly wealth, comfort, and advantages. No, Paul’s formation of the children of the church has one aim and one desire: *To see the children of the church grow up to be godly men and women whose hearts, minds, and lives are shaped by the Word of God*. This is why he speaks to them according to Scripture, and expects of them what God himself expects. Beloved, the same things should be able to be said of the parenting of every Christian parent. It should be said that what we expect of our children, what we promote in their lives, and what we celebrate in our homes—*above all else*—is their growth in godliness and their progressive conformity to the will of God as it has been revealed in his Word, (Prov. 3:1, 5-6).

Everything Christian parents do for their children should be based on the Word of God. For example: *Why do we want our children to have good character?* So that they are liked by others and employable someday? Those are not bad motivations, but they are also *not supposed to be our chief motivations*. We want our children to have good character so that they live lives that are “*pleasing to God*” (Col. 1:10), and lives that “*adorn*” the gospel of grace in a way that commends Christ to the world, (Tit. 2:10). *Why do we want our children to learn to read and to be well-educated?* So that they can obtain a profitable career and maintain a comfortable lifestyle someday? Once again, those are not bad motivations but they are also *not meant to be our chief motivations*. The primary reason we want our children to learn to read is because our God has chosen to reveal himself through writing. We want our children to learn to read so that they can read God’s Word for themselves day by day, sitting at the feet of Christ morning by morning, and choosing the good portion just as Mary did so long ago, (Lk. 10:41-42).

Moreover, *what sorts of behaviors should parents discipline? And what sorts of behaviors should parents reward?* The answer is simple: *Parents should discipline and reward that which God disciplines and rewards in his Word*. The obedience which parents are called to require of their children is not an arbitrary obedience to whatever fickle whims happen to be occupying the parent’s heart at the moment. No, parents are called to require their children to obey the will of God revealed in Scripture. What God *commands*, parents are to instruct their children in, and then expect and enforce. What God *forbids*, parents are to instruct their children in, and then disallow and consequence. What God *praises, blesses, and rewards*, so parents are to praise, bless, and reward in their children. It is the will of God revealed in the Word of God that is meant to give shape to all our ambitions, instructions, discipline, and encouragement as Christian parents. We are not raising our children to be the celebrated champions of the world’s values, ideas, and ambitions. Nor to climb the world’s ladders of success. We are raising our children in such a way that when Christ returns or calls them home, they will hear his voice whisper over their hearts, “*Well done my good and faithful servant... Enter into the joy of your master,*” (Matt. 25:21).

But there remains one final aspect of this passage for us to consider. We have seen that *parents are called to require obedience of their children*, and we have seen that *the pattern of that obedience is to be founded upon the Word of God alone*. But now we want to consider a final question:

By What Means Does Paul Seek To Motivate Children To Obedience? By The Promises of God.

“Honor your father and your mother” (this is the first commandment with a promise), “that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land,” (Eph. 6:2-3).

The Scriptures use all sorts of motivations to encourage us toward obedience. God warns, he threatens, he reasons, he persuades, he entices by enumerating the advantages of obedience, and he also promises blessings and rewards. All of these motivations are Biblical, and should be used in their appropriate applications for the discipleship of Christians—including the discipleship of our children. But there is a sweet reminder set forth in Ephesians 6:2-3 that parents should not miss. Of all the sorts of motivations available to him, which form of motivation does Paul exercise (*and emphasize*) in his exhortation of children here? He seeks to woo children unto obedience to God’s will for their lives *by recounting unto them God’s promises of goodness and blessing to all who abide in his will*. Paul does not merely set forth the bare requirement of the commandment alone (i.e. *“Do this!”*). No, he also deliberately emphasizes the blessed promise of God contained within it. He seeks to win the hearts of children to a life of obedient-faith and submission to God by spreading before their eyes the banquet of blessing which God has guaranteed to all who fear his name and strive to walk according to his Word. There is a precious lesson for Christian parents contained in these verses, and it is a lesson which should form the primary pattern of discipline in our own parenting.

It is very easy for parents to persistently discipline their children by pointing out the negative, and by pronouncing warnings and threatenings against the disobedient behaviors present in their children. This is not altogether wrong. For God himself speaks this way with some frequency throughout the Bible, (see Proverbs 1-7). But let us take careful notice that when the Holy Spirit set forth *this* passage of Scripture—in which the explicit instruction of God is given for children and parents for all time—the motivation which God chose to employ was not rooted in *fear*, but rather rooted in *reward*. He did not seek to conform children to his will by instilling *dread of consequence*, but rather by fanning into flame their *desire for true delight*. So should it be in our parenting, dear ones. We must be careful that we do not become a resounding gong of negativity to our children—especially when we are seeking to help their souls see the joy of knowing, loving, and serving Christ. When our tone, demeanor, and speech are *always stern, condemning, and critical*, how will our children ever come to know the sweet blessing of communion with God the Father? If our voice is always gruff and our brow always furrowed, sadly, it is likely that our children will come to regard God as *a relentless taskmaster* who is *never pleased, never encouraging, and never approving*. The call to obedience will seem like *a burden* rather than *a blessing*, (1 Jn. 5:3). But that, is not the heart of God at all! It is true that God condemns sin and *“will by no means clear the guilty,”* (Ex. 34:7). But it is also true that God sent his only Son to suffer in the place of sinners because of the great love which he holds in his heart for his people—even *a people who have greatly fallen short of his glory*, (Eph. 2:4-5).

Therefore, when we strive to require obedience of our children—as *we should!*—let us do so with all the forms of motivation which are found in Scripture. But let the chief note of our song be the note of *promise, of blessing, of reward, of glory, of joy, and of never-ceasing delight in the presence of God Most High*. Let us remind our children not only that disobedience leads to misery, sorrow, and death. But also, and more frequently, let us compel them unto Christ by teaching them that trust and obedience to all God’s holy will leads even the poorest pilgrim to fullness of life, fullness of joy, and pleasures at the right hand of God forevermore, (Psalm. 16:11). This too, and perhaps even with equal urgency, is an indispensable part of the holy pattern for parenting which our God has set forth in his Word.

Conclusion:

In the next chapter, we will consider the two final lessons on Christian parenting from Ephesians 6:4. But as we have begun to review our holy calling as Christian parents, perhaps your first and dominant thought is this: *“O how greatly and how frequently I have failed in this work!”* If that is your heart, let me say that you are not alone in those failings, nor are you without hope. In God’s economy of redeeming grace and by his unstoppable power to save, even our failings can be turned for blessing to our children. How? Because when we deal with our failings in humility and repentance, they become opportunities

for us to disciple our children by teaching them what it looks like to rest in the grace of God in the midst of our continued battle with sin. When our children see us admit our faults, seek forgiveness from those we have wronged, and persevere by continuing to strive after the good and wise pattern which God has prescribed for us in his Word, they will learn gospel lessons which will guard their hearts for a lifetime. They will see that our heavenly Father is truly merciful and kind, *“a God ready to forgive,”* (Neh. 9:17). They will see that the Christian life is not about pretending to have it all together, but rather sincerely striving to love God and be conformed to Christ’s image, (I Sam. 16:7). They will see that humility is a critical part of every Christian’s life, and that only the proud pretend to be without error, (I Jn. 1:8). Most all, they will see that the grace of God purchased by the bleeding wounds of Christ is an ever-sufficient satisfaction for all our sins so that we can have true rest, security, and certainty of our salvation even though we will struggle all the way to glory:

“³⁷All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out. ³⁸For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me. ³⁹And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day. ⁴⁰For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day,” (John 6:37-40).