

## LESSON 3

# Raising Children to Recognize Truth from Error

---

*These words that I am giving you today are to be in your heart. Repeat them to your children. Talk about them when you sit in your house and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.*

—Deuteronomy 6:6-7

---

**Class Overview:** Kids are picking up a worldview from somewhere. Friends, screens, classrooms, the air they breathe. The question isn't whether they're being formed but who's doing the forming. This lesson trains us to pass faith down the way Deuteronomy 6 calls for: woven through ordinary life, modeled by adults the kid loves, sturdy enough to hold after they leave the house.

---

## Introduction

Sooner or later, it happens. Your son or daughter comes home from school, looks up from a tablet, climbs into the back of the car, and says something that lands like a small earthquake. Mom, my friend says God is just a feeling people invented. Dad, my history teacher said the Bible has been changed a bunch of times. I heard that all churches are OK, since we serve the same God and we're all going to heaven anyway. Why is what we believe right when there are so many religions?

The first things most of us feel in that moment are the wrong emotions. Panic, fear, and anxiety. *Where did that come from? Who's been talking to them? Are we losing them?* The second reaction is even worse. Silence. We don't know what to say, so we put off answering or avoid the question altogether.

Here's what we are seeing. Our kids are picking up information and opinions that can affect their worldview. Everything they absorb is shaping how they read the world: what feels normal, how people should act, what's important in life, what success looks like.

Let's consider something even scarier and even do some math for a minute. From birth to age 18, there are just 936 weeks – 6570 days. Think about that: less than 1000 weeks to raise, teach, and prepare each child to live independently in the world and develop a knowledge and love for God! But we don't really have 18 years. Eight or nine-year-olds have a solid moral foundation and generally have reached what we call the “age of accountability.” After age 13, a child's worldview is generally *fully-formed*. That's only 655 weeks, or 4600 days! Children will still learn and absorb the bible after that, but their basic worldview,

based in God or not, is already set. That doesn't give us much time. And there are *so many* "influencers" in our children's lives! And not all of them will show your child the same degree of care, love, charity, biblical knowledge, and Christian behavior as you do. The big question is: who's having the greatest influence on our children: us, or the world?

## **What Are Some of the More Common False Bible Teachings Children Hear?**

**Serving God will keep your life free from trouble and pain** – ask Joseph and Job and Daniel how that went!

**God will never give you more than you can handle** – please read 1 Corinthians 10:13. Although we will never be tempted beyond our limit to withstand, we are not promised easy solutions to all of life's problems – only God's unending help can keep us from being overwhelmed.

**Always follow your conscience** – despite Jiminy Cricket's advice, your conscience only reflects your worldview, not necessarily the bible.

**Godly living will give you prosperity** – but what about John 16:33, Matthew 19:23, Matthew 6:24, Luke 12:15, and James 4:3?

**You deserve better** – God has blessed you beyond measure - you **ALREADY HAVE BETTER!**

**I need lots of ME time** – for bible study, prayer, service, and Godly reflection, **yes**; for selfish pursuits...**no**.

**If you just try harder, you can be right with God** – we are saved by grace and not works. Our good works are a reflection of our faith, not a pathway to salvation.

**God is always tolerant and forgiving** – before you start to feel too "chummy" with God, don't forget to first read Hebrews 10:26-31.

**God's word may be true, but truth can be relative**; "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father, but by me." (John 14:6). Period.

In Deuteronomy 6, God gave a straightforward answer to teaching our youth almost 3,500 years ago. Right after the *Shema* in verse 4 (Israel's confession of faith), Moses gave Israelites the most enduring set of rules and instructions for discipleship in the Bible. These can apply to all relationships but are especially useful to parents.

Discipleship comes from living your Godly life around those you wish to teach: sitting, walking, lying down, getting up – from rising to bedtime. Teaching faith isn't a program or method or exercise you schedule with your children. It isn't a book or curriculum or class to attend. It isn't something you outsource. It's letting your children see you faithfully living your daily life and explaining why you behave as you do along the way. It's words, actions, attitudes, priorities – it's showing love for God and our fellow brothers and sisters. It's regularly praying and studying the bible with them. It's letting them see how you think and react to situations and people - and how you overcome the problems that come

along. It's letting these things sink into their eager minds and ask important questions along the way. Discernment is a trainable skill, not a shield to raise.

## Don't Build a Hedge

In the first chapter of Job, Satan accuses God of 'building a hedge' around Job to protect him from the world. Well, God didn't...but *we* sure try to do that today for our kids! Build a wall. Control all inputs. Tight filters on every device, careful screening of friends, Christian school, Christian camp, Christian curriculum, Christian... everything. These things are fine and the sentiment is right. But if this is our only strategy, remember the wall can't hold forever. Eventually they leave the house, and the world they enter is bigger and louder and uglier than anything we tried to keep out. Children raised entirely behind walls often discover they don't have any practice handling what's on the other side. They've been protected from error but not trained to recognize it. They have answers but no experience. The first hard challenge, such a college roommate, slick podcast, or close relationship, and they're left flat-footed, unable to respond properly.

The only thing worse is benign neglect. Give basic teaching, point our kids in the right direction, and tell ourselves faith is a personal journey. The kids will figure it out, we assume, and pushing too hard will only push them away. We let the culture do most of the shaping and hope something *we* told them sticks. We cross our fingers and hope for the best.

Deuteronomy 6 isn't calling us to become religious helicopter parents. He's not calling for intense indoctrination and then neglect. He's calling for us to actively and persistently *train* our children. We must not only regularly speak God's truth to them but let them see it in action in our daily lives. We need to spend more time with our children, making them well-trained spiritual apprentices. They must learn to live these words until they form the lens through which everything in their lives is viewed.

Here's the reality. Recognizing truth from error is a skill. It's not a gift some have and others don't. It's developed by constant practice of Christian principles under supervision, watching it modeled by us. Children need to be allowed to make mistakes but with gentle correction in the safety of the home or with spiritual mentors.

Our job isn't just to keep our kids away from sin and evil. It's also to walk through the world with them long enough that they learn to see it as Jesus does and act like Him.

*But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained their senses to distinguish good from evil.*

– Hebrews 5:14.

There's a real difference between *Bible stories* and *the Bible*. Most kids' curricula teach the stories. Noah and the ark. Daniel in the lions' den. David and Goliath. The stories are good and they're a fine on ramp. The problem is when the on ramp is the whole journey.

A child who learns the stories and never opens the actual Bible learns something dangerous without realizing it: that the Bible is for kids. A book of safe little tales we move past when we grow up. The

disconnect catches up with them later, usually around the time someone smarter-sounding suggests Christianity is a children's religion they've outgrown.

The remedy is to put the actual text in front of them as soon as they can handle it. Read it together out of the Bible itself, not just a storybook. Even when they're young. Even a paragraph at a time. Let them hear the cadence of Paul's letters, the directness of Jesus, the bluntness of the prophets. Let them ask why the Bible says what it says, in the words it actually uses.

Spotting truth from error is important because false teaching almost always sounds reasonable. The way you tell it doesn't match Scripture is by knowing Scripture. A child who only knows Bible stories has feelings about what's true. A child who knows the Bible has a standard.

Pick a book and read through it together. Here are some suggestions: *Mark*, for the youngest. *James*, when they're ready for something punchier. *Ephesians*, once they can handle Paul. Don't worry about whether they get every line. Worry about whether they hear it. Familiarity is the foundation. Mastery comes later. This is what Lois and Eunice did with Timothy, and Paul came back to it years later as the thing that anchored him: *from infancy you have known the sacred Scriptures.* (2 Timothy 3:15)

## **Five Basic Training Methods That Will Help Accomplish This**

### ***Practice 1: Teach Them the Bible Itself, Not Just Bible Stories***

There's a real difference between *Bible stories* and *the Bible*. Most children's curricula just teach the stories. Noah and the ark. Daniel in the lions' den. David and Goliath. The stories are good and they're a fine exposure to great people of faith and how they dealt with life's difficulties

However, learning the stories without reading the commentary between teaches people that the bible is just that: a story book filled with adventure and drama but not of much use in the real world. Tragically, by never giving the background, we help reinforce the notion that the Bible is for kids, book of safe little tales of morality that we move past when we grow up. It catches up with them later, when someone smarter sounding suggests Christianity is a children's religion they've outgrown.

The remedy is to put the actual text in front of them as soon as they can handle it. Read it together out of the Bible itself, not just a storybook. Do this even when they're young, if only a paragraph at a time. Let them ask why the Bible says what it says, the reasoning behind the stories in the original words. Review words or situations with them that they don't understand. Spotting truth from error is critically important, since false teaching almost always sounds *reasonable*. A child who only knows Bible stories has feelings about what's true. A child who knows the Bible has a rock-solid standard.

Pick a bible book and read through it together. Don't worry about whether they get every line. Worry about whether they hear it and have an opportunity to discuss and think about it on their own. Familiarity is the beginning foundation, and mastery comes later, when they can correlate and synthesize to put it all together This is what Lois and Eunice did with Timothy, and Paul came back to it years later as the thing that anchored him: *from infancy you have known the sacred Scriptures.* (2 Timothy 3:15)

### ***Practice 2: Talk About the Bible While You Live Your Daily Routine***

*Talk about them when you sit in your house and when you walk along the road.* Formation happens over the course of real life. The conversations that move kids the furthest aren't just the *let's-sit-down-and-have-a-talk* conversations. Those have their place. But the ones that stick are the ones that happen alongside real events.

While you're watching a show together: pause and ask what just happened. What did that character assume that the Bible would push back on? What got rewarded? Who was the bad guy and what made him bad? Was the good guy really good?

When they show you something they're scrolling through on their phone, point out the ad that's selling them an identity. Notice the influencer who's selling an improper feeling, or pretending to offer a certainty that can't be promised. Notice when something feels "off" and ask why.

Driving with your child along can be a real gift. Side by side, no eye contact required – a captive audience. Some of the best discipleship conversations any parent will ever have happen in the front two seats of a car.

The aim isn't to lecture or scold or be 'preachy'. It's to model what discernment looks like in real time. Kids learn discernment by watching us do it. They watch how we name things, how we pause, how we comment or react. They notice and eventually they start noticing on their own. You know the training is working when you see them also pause and reflect on the motives of others.

### ***Practice 3: Let Them Ask Hard Questions and Listen Carefully***

One of the easiest ways to lose your child's trust is to act afraid of their questions by dodging them. Some of the questions are very hard to answer: the eight-year-old wants to know why God let her grandfather die; the fourteen-year-old wants to know why there are different denominations if everyone reads the same Bible; the seventeen-year-old wants to know whether his Christian friends from school who say baptism isn't a salvation issue are wrong. These are honest and thought-probing questions that *everyone* who thinks about the bible eventually asks. They aren't attacks, but heartfelt questions - they ask *you* because they trust you. They're invitations for you to help them grow and even bond with you spiritually.

There are some caveats we should remember:

**Don't pretend to know if you don't.** *I don't know, but let's find out together.* Never lie – they will know, and every other answer you've given them gets re-evaluated.

**Don't make them feel ignorant for asking.** That will silence your child and make them feel foolish or teach them questioning things is forbidden. They will eventually stop asking you and start asking others who may not have the right or Godly answer

**Treat the question as a valid question.** If the question is honest, the answer should be honest. Never deflect with your answer. Using "because the bible says so" is not acceptable. Take the time to open the bible with them, read the passages, and discuss it together. This not only treats the question as important, but treats your child and his concerns as important.

**Don't neglect to Provide an Answer.** If you can't answer right now, take it seriously and wrist it down. Explain that you are not avoiding responding but need to consider it or look up more information. Give a definite time when you will return for a discussion and be faithful to keep that appointment. You will convey the message that the question is important, the child is important, and you are faithful to keep your word. What could possibly show a better example than that?

***Practice 4: Let Them See it Lived Out***

Giving commands and answering bible or moral questions are good practices, but seeing your faith in action will have far more positive affect on your child.

All children grow by watching adults. *All adults:* parents, grandparents, elders, deacons, older couples at church, and everyone else (both the good examples and the bad). They see those who show kindness and encouragement in their dealings with others, those will drop everything and serve another in need, and those who will immediately pray with those who in distress. They see adult Christians who prioritize the needs of others above their own selfish pursuits, and those who show the real joy in who sits behind you every Sunday. All these things are being absorbed, whether planned or not.

This is the situation about which Paul wrote when he addressed Timothy. Paul commented about the faith his grandmother (Lois) and mother (Eunice) had passed to him (2 Timothy 1:5). There's a realization that, although faith and salvation are not hereditary, teaching in love spreads from Christian to Christian by example, which allows faith to grow and blossom. That's why we have families and the church.

Part of the job is making sure your kids are surrounded by other Christians whose lives reinforce what's said at home. Bring Christians to your house. Make sure everyone attends bible class. Attend services whenever the doors are open. Speak to people at service, of all ages – and show your kids you know their names. Away from the building, talk about people in your church family the way you'd talk about beloved relatives - in Christ, that's what they really are.

***Practice 5: Involve Them***

Do you give your children chores to do at home? Most everyone would agree that's important, not just to keep the household running but to teach good habits for when they leave home. How about "spiritual chores"? It's not human nature to give of your things to supply the needs of others, or serve others by helping with physical chores when they are unable, or visiting people at church when they're sick of in the hospital, or babysitting for the young mothers at church, or even transporting them in your car (when you're a little older) to medical appointments or the store. But it's *great* spiritual practice. Just like praying for one another.

There is nothing more difficult **and** uplifting than to plead with God to help your adversaries. It's really hard to curse someone and then turn around and ask God to bless them (do your kids see you do this?). All these things teach humility and love, strengthening the realities of Christian adulthood for the child.

Of course, it goes without saying that *showing* these actions and letting your child *see you do them first* is the priority, invaluable in instilling these desires into little minds..

## Conclusion

The whole point of training discernment in our kids is what comes later in life: the college roommate who questions everything, the job that surrounds them with people who think faith is silly, the never-ending media assault. What will they do and how will they react when their faith and the bible are vigorously challenged? The first time they must take a stand without us in the room, or when they must defend another believer who is being persecuted, will they stand firm? We want them anchored when those moments come.

Paul painted the picture when he wrote to the Ephesians:

*Then we will no longer be little children, tossed by the waves and blown around by every wind of teaching, by human cunning with cleverness in the techniques of deceit. But speaking the truth in love, let us grow in every way into him who is the head, Christ.*

— Ephesians 4:14–15.

Paul also reminds us that maturity is more than just growing old:

*When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I set aside childish ways*

– I Corinthians 13:11.

It also involves preparation:

*But in your hearts, revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect.*

– I Peter 3:15

That's the goal - children who *grow up* to become firmly grounded Christians who can speak the truth in love to a world that needs both.

All parents fail sometimes. Faithful parents still have kids who walk away, sometimes for years or even permanently. Some of the most heartbroken parents in our pews did everything they knew to do. And some of the most rooted Christians you'll ever meet came to their faith late, with no teaching or encouragement from home. There is no perfect formula – just lots of effort and work and love.

We plant. We water. God gives the growth (1 Corinthians 3:6–7). Our work is to be faithful. We can do that much. Let the word do its work - the results are from God.

## Memory Verse

*But as for you, continue in what you have learned and firmly believed. You know those who taught you, and you know that from infancy you have known the sacred Scriptures, which are able to give you wisdom for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.*

## For Discussion

1. Tell us about a moment when a child — yours or someone else's — asked you a question that caught you off guard. How did it go?
2. Most of us learned faith from someone before we figured it out for ourselves. Who first taught you to look at something and ask whether it was true? What did they do that worked?
3. Deuteronomy 6:7 says to talk about God's words "when you walk along the road." What are the modern equivalents? Where does this conversation actually happen — in the cars, kitchens, and screens of your life?
4. The lesson named two ditches: the *bubble* and the *shrug*. Which one do you instinctively lean toward, and why do you think that is?
5. Where's the gap right now between what you believe and what you've put into words with the kids in your life? (Your own children, grandkids, nieces and nephews, the kids in your church family — wherever they are.)

6. Lesson 4 takes us into adult friendships across belief lines, the college roommate, the sibling, the neighbor who follows a different gospel. How does the way we train discernment with kids shape what we'll need with friends?