

For the Love of the Family

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Godly Advice for Today's Families

Helping People Change Their Lives Biblically

Getting the Heart of The Child

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Matthew 22:37-39, Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.

Proverbs 4:23, Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.

As I have studied the Bible on the subject of the home, children, and marriage, something that is so important and so very much missed today is getting the heart of the child. Proverbs 23:26, ***My son, give me thine heart, and let thine eyes observe my ways.*** The desire of For The Love of The Family is to help others in the area of the home, children, and marriage. Depending on statistics and how they are taken, consistently we see anywhere from 60 to 80 percent of all children who grow up in an Independent Baptist home do not go on to serve God. In fact, in many instances the problems of their lives are destructive for themselves and destructive to others. I recently had someone write to me and say, "I want to get my child's heart. I do not want them to be a robot and then go off into destruction when they leave the programmer." Interesting thought. Much of what goes on today is just that. Our children are destroyed because we do not see it as a heart issue.

Ephesians 6:6, ***Not with eyeservice as men pleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart.*** I believe that accurately describes the issue. Our children grow up as men pleasers, but when they are old enough they see no power or desire to live a Christian life. They may go to church, even read their Bible, memorize verses, are home schooled, or in a Christian school but destruction comes from their life. The parents are broken hearted and do not know what to do. I hear this all the time from Christian parents.

The parent has to understand the responsibility to get the heart of the child and keep it. Ephesians 6:4, And ye, fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the **nurture and admonition** of the Lord. Did you see the two words here **nurture and admonition**? The word nurture means to feed, nourish, educate, and train, in instruction of the heart. The word admonition means gentle reproof, counseling, and instruction in duties, caution, and direction of the heart. This is a serious and awesome responsibility. The word wrath in Ephesian 6:4 means anger with a strong desire to avenge. Think about it, a child who grows up in a Christian home and is so angry at their parents that they want vengeance on the parents. Why because the parent never understood or was not taught this is a heart issue and how to deal with it.

So, in this article I am going to try to explain what it means to get the heart of the child.

The goal of every Christian parent in life should not be to rear a good kid or have students who are excelling academically, are great athletes, and so forth. The goal is to equip our children, these young saints for the work of the ministry (Ephesians 4:12, Mark 10:45). Our goal as Christian parents is to train them to stay on the road of usefulness to God. If, in the end, they are unusable to Christ, they are not handling life spiritually and wisely, both they and we have failed.

1. The parents must have a real, intimate, personal, and passionate relationship with God. This cannot be a mechanical relationship. Without this everything else will fail. I have written about what this means and the article *How To Have A Real Relationship With God* is available on our web site. I would encourage you to read it before you go any further.

<http://www.fortheloveofthefamily.com/articles/family/HowToHaveARealRelationshipWithGod.pdf>.

Proverbs 4:23, ***Keep thy heart with all diligence for out of it are the issues of life.***

Proverbs 14:14, *The **backslider in heart** shall be filled with his own ways....* So, this is a heart issue. Without this understanding, **THIS IS A HEART ISSUE**, everything else will fail!

2. The parents must turn their heart toward their children. *Luke 1:17, And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah, **to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children**, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.*

Malachi 4:6, *And he shall **turn the heart of the fathers to the children**, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.*

This means the father must grasp the fact that the heart of the child is a serious matter and the father's heart in this is a serious matter. The father must have his heart in the right place to have spiritual results in the lives of his children. They have to be disciplined enough to understand their children are not a burden to them, but a huge **spiritual responsibility before God**. The spiritual life of their children must be the priority of their life. Their heart has to be turned toward God and toward their children's spiritual life.

Deuteronomy 5:29, *O that there were **such a heart in them**, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children forever!*

Deuteronomy 30:2, *And shalt return unto the Lord thy God and shalt obey his voice according to all that I command thee this day, **thou and thy children, with all thine heart**, and with all thy soul.*

So, folks it is a heart issue! God is serious about this and wants us to understand it. Awhile back

someone sent to me an article by Pastor Cary Schmidt that a college student sent to him concerning the issue of fathers and his comments. Please read it carefully.

Cary Schmidt said, "I received this letter from a young lady last week a Bible college student who grew up in a Christian home and Christian school. I believe it's the saddest letter I've ever read and right on the mark for so detailing the experiences of so many young Christians. I asked her permission to post it. Please read. Her words will greatly challenge you as a parent or pastor:"

Dear Pastor _____

A few years ago, I read your books. I found them to be extremely encouraging and instructive. These books showed me that not only do you have a real heart for young people, but you also understand us well. I am writing to ask you to consider writing a book to our parents and youth workers. Let me explain.

I am a junior at a well-known Christian college. I grew up in highly respected fundamental independent Baptist churches, and went to excellent Christian schools. My father has been a Christian worker since before I was born.

One would think that my testimony would go something like this: I was saved when I was about 5 and I had dedicated my life to God and I have been growing a lot and serving Him and now I am studying to serve Him full time. But that isn't my story. Actually, though I did make a profession of faith when I was very young, I didn't get saved until I was 17. Since I was 12 and now on into college I have struggled with some serious issues. And I found out when I went to college that I am not the only good kid who is or has struggled with or is still struggling with serious stuff. We struggle with issues like eating disorders, depression and suicide, cutting, pornography, gender identity, homosexuality, drugs, drinking, immorality, and the list could go on. We listen to wild music, we idolize pop culture's heroes, and we watch dirty sitcoms. We have no discrimination in our entertainment, dress, or any aspect of our lifestyle. Obviously, I'm generalizing our problems you would not find that every Christian young person from a conservative background struggles with all of these issues, and praise God; some of us do not struggle with any of these issues.

My point is that the problems that are supposed to be bad kid's problems belong to us too. Unfortunately, our parents and youth workers don't know that we struggle with these things and they don't know what to do with us when they find out. Quite frankly, I believe that if you grabbed the average Christian school teacher or youth worker and asked them, What would you do if you found out that one of the kids you work with was a homosexual? They wouldn't know what to say.

My point is not simply that they don't know what we struggle with or how to deal with it. I think there is a pretty simple reason why good kids struggle with such serious stuff. And that there is a solution. At the risk of being blunt, I am going to be blunt.

Our parents did not spend time teaching us to love God. *Our parents put us in Sunday Schools since K4. Our parents took us to church every time the doors opened, and sent us to every youth activity. They made sure we went to good Christian colleges. They had us sing in the choir, help in the nursery, be ushers, go soul winning. We did teen devotionals, and prayed over every meal. We did everything right. And they made sure that we did.*

But they forgot about our hearts. *They forgot that the Bible never commanded the church to teach children about God and His ways. **That responsibility was laid at the feet of our fathers.** **Unfortunately, our fathers don't have time for us.** They put us where we are surrounded by the Bible. But they didn't take time to show us that God was important enough to them to tell us personally about Him. So to us, **Christianity has become a religion of externals.** Do all the right stuff, and you're a good Christian. So, some of us walk away from church. Some of us stay in church and fill a pew. Many of us struggle with stuff that our parents have no idea about because they hardly know us.*

*I think these problems stem from first, our detachment from our parents, and second from our misunderstandings about the essence of Christianity, **a relationship, not a list of rules**. I worry that many young people like me are not even saved because of their misunderstandings about Christianity.*

I know that this has not been a well-articulated treatise, but it comes from my heart. If you are able to help us and our families, we would be so grateful. I realize that probably, there is no way to fix the fact that kids my age are detached from our parents or to straighten out the crazy stuff that we struggle with. The alienation is fixed, the scars are permanent. I know our situation is not hopeless. God is at work in my life and my generation, among those of us who have struggled and are struggling. But maybe our younger siblings can have some help that we never had. Maybe you can write a book for our parents that will grab their attention and help them see that this is serious issue that their kids need them, desperately.

*I guess I've run out of things to say. I must say I am a little hesitant to share my name with you because that attaches me with my parents, who are, by the way, good people. Thanks for everything you have already done to help Christian teens and their families. I am eager to see what else God will do through you.
Sincerely,*

(Name Removed to Protect Anonymity)

Cary Schmidt said, "All I could say when I read this letter was, WOW! She nailed it! This is the battle I've been fighting for years. Let this insightful young lady's words sink in, and let God help you evaluate your own parenting and influence. Are we teaching kids to simply appear and act right? Or are we teaching them to LOVE God and KNOW Him personally? What are your thoughts?"

I agree she nailed it. It is a heart issue, and most parents or their children do not understand it.

3. The parents must understand that their thinking cannot be evil. In Independent Baptist churches, we talk about the externals, but seriously do not understand this issue. Before you go further, I would encourage you to read the article on our web site called, *The Thought Life Of the Christian*, <http://www.fortheloveofthefamily.com/articles/family/TheThoughtLifeoftheChristian.pdf>.

Proverbs 23:7, *for as he **thinketh in his heart**, so is he....*" The parents thinking will be their destiny and the destiny of their children.

II Corinthians 10:5, ***Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ:***

The word imaginations in this verse means fantasies. Many Christians spend hours thinking on impure things. God is not deceived about you or your thoughts. Your thought life will not only affect you, but also your children. This is a matter of controlling our thought life by the power of the Holy Spirit. If we do not have a real, intimate, personal and passionate relationship with God, we do not know how to control evil or impure thoughts that come into our mind. We have serious problems with the imagination which causes us to be out of fellowship with God. We are to **"bring into captivity every thought"**. We cannot stop a thought from coming into our mind, but we sure can stop it from staying there! At the point of impact we are to turn this thought (submit ourselves to God, James 4:7). Folks, if we do not understand how to do that, we surely will not teach Junior how to do so. We have to learn how to deal with our lusts, and show Junior how to do so.

James 1:14, *But every man is tempted, when he is **drawn away of his own lust**, and enticed.*

The article *The Thought Life Of The Christian* explains how to deal with our lusts.

4. The parents must get the heart of the child.

1. Pray for God to give you their heart every day. 2. There must be spiritual heart communication. The parent needs to learn to ask of their children heart questions. We need to ask, who, what, when, where, how, why questions. What do you think about that? Do not use their answer as a blasting them time. They have to be trained to let God speak to their heart. If they say something you do not agree with don't get angry and blow them away. **Dealing with a child in ungodly anger is wrong.** Proverbs 22:8, *He that soweth iniquity shall reap vanity: and **the rod of his anger shall fail.*** Ephesians 4:29-32 explains this very well vs. 31, *Let all bitterness, and **wrath, and anger,** and clamor, and evil speaking, **be put away from you,** with all malice.*

When we ask heart questions, we draw out what is in the heart of the child. This is an opportunity to discuss what is in their heart in a spiritual, calm way. Look at the Bible with them on the subject. In essence we can say, "Let's see what God says about it." You may ask them to look up some verses and come back to you. Also, you can look up verses on the subject. The child has to learn to think and allow God to speak to their heart. (Remember this is a heart issue). Explain to them to ask God to show them what he wants for them in this area. Ask them to tell you what God says about this to them.

In having a real relationship with God the person, your child and you, need to understand the essence of the Christian life is to ask God questions. "Lord, what do you want me to do, be, and have?" Before I ever do anything I want to ask God what He wants. Listen to what they say after they have asked God about it and what he shows them. The more you can spiritually communicate and ask God to help your child learn how to communicate with Him, the more spiritual results you will see in their life. I know someone will say what about discipline of the child? Let me say we should never discipline a child in anger. We never hit children with a belt, or strike them with the hand, pull their hair, or slap them around. Bible discipline is firm and kind. I would encourage you to read the articles on our web site, The Proper Discipline of The Child, Part 1 and 2.

<http://www.fortheloveofthefamily.com/articles/family/ProperDisciplineOfTheChild1.pdf>.

<http://www.fortheloveofthefamily.com/articles/family/ProperDisciplineOfTheChild2.pdf>.

5. The parent must learn to guard the child's heart. Every child who wanders, wanders because their heart wanders. Ephesians 6:6-7, *Not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ, **doing the will of God from the heart.** With good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men:*

The explanation of what happens with a heart is: The parents lose the heart of the child; the heart wanders, and then gets hardened. Then the child's heart can then be stolen. This is the process by which every (person or child) goes through to have a stolen heart.

The heart can be stolen by friends, sports and activities, by relatives, by boyfriends and girlfriends, etc. The devil will use whoever and whatever is available to steal their heart. The parent has to get the heart of the child and keep it. The parents must be the most important person in the child's life. The parent must be looking to guard the heart and to teach Junior to guard his heart. We don't need a robot just spouting off the company line, we need the children to learn to think and allow God to speak to their heart. They must develop their relationship with God.

James 4: 6-8, *But he giveth more grace (divine help). Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble. **Submit yourselves therefore to God.** Resist the devil, and he will flee from*

you. **Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you.** Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts ye double-minded.

Again, let them see and hear what God says about it. Remember Ephesians 4:32, says, **And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ sake hath forgiven you.** We must understand that all the issues of life are spiritual issues and heart issues. Showing kindness to your children in instruction is an important issue of getting and keeping the heart. The father must understand that this is a very important spiritual heart issue.

Joshua 24:14-15, *Now therefore fear the Lord, and serve him in sincerity and in truth: and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt; and serve ye the Lord. And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom you will serve: whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.*

Joshua 1:7-9, *Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded thee: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest. This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then shalt thou have good success. Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the Lord thy God is with thee whatsoever thou goest.*

Deuteronomy 6:5-7, *And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down and when thou risest up.*

Folks, this is a heart issue!

6. After you have the child's heart, turn the child's heart to others. Matthew 22:37-39, *Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.*

A person's heart wanders when they do not put these verses in to practice. You will have to see others as Christ sees them, lost without hope, and see them with compassion. When your heart or the child's heart is not focused in that manner, they will live a selfish, non-Christ centered life. They will live for themselves and they will destroy themselves and others around them.

Proverbs 13:13, *Whoso despiseth (does not give proper attention to) the word shall be destroyed: but he that feareth the commandment shall be rewarded.*

1. Take your children on visitation with you.
2. Let them see you pass out tracts. Let them do so.
3. Talk with them about the lost. Explain the great need of the lost person. They are in darkness with no hope.

As our girls were growing up, Kim and I took them with us on visitation. I want you to understand,

we talked with them about the need of lost people. We told them we were to have compassion on them for Christ's sake. We turned their heart toward the lost. Many people have compassion toward abused animals or people or the mentally slow, but what about the lost person? The gospel is the most important thing in our life and we are to share the love and compassion of Christ with a lost world. Our children will never see this if we do not. We will not see it if we do not have a real, intimate, personal, and passionate relationship with God. We have to actively get involved in having compassion for others driven by a love for the Saviour.

If our children's hearts are not turned to others they will live a selfish life focused on only themselves and what they want, not what Christ wants for them. **This is a heart issue!**

Most Christian parents do not see the issue or the need of their children. This happens mainly because the parents do not have a real relationship with God, but a mechanical one. Our prayer is the parents will grasp the great spiritual need they have in their life and the responsibility to get the heart of their child and keep it.

Dr. Terry L. Coomer is the Pastor of Hope Baptist Church, and the Director of For the Love of the Family Ministries. He has also served as the Publisher of the nation's fastest growing daily newspaper. Pastor Coomer holds Family Conferences in the local church. To have a meeting at your church or other needs he may be contacted at (501) 819-0446, tlcoomer@juno.com. There are many helpful articles and material on our web site to help you change your life at www.fortheloveofthefamily.com. We serve the God of answers. If you need help finding those answers you may contact us at tlcoomer@juno.com. To be removed from our mailing list send an e-mail to tlcoomer@juno.com.