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God's Word tells us the whole duty of man is to love God and do His Word.

Ecclesiastes 12:13:

Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear [Reverence, or love] God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man.

This is true for children also. And it is much easier for children to learn how to love God and keep His commandments if they have learned to lovingly obey their parents. The following verses are essential in raising and training them to live and act according to the will of God.

Ephesians 6:1-3:

Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right.

Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise;)

That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth.

These verses are addressed to children, but we parents are the ones who teach our children what is right—that is, to obey their parents. We can help our children learn to obey by setting reasonable expectations for our children's behavior, by thinking through the steps to implement our expectations, and by staying consistent in our instruction.

Parents have the God-given responsibility to teach their children how to live and act according to God's Word, and the parents are the ones to set reasonable expectations based on God's Word. Taking time to get clear on these expectations is beneficial to us and to our children. This preparation for success is a principle found in God's Word.

Proverbs 4:26:

Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established.

To help us get clear, we can ask ourselves what godly qualities do we want our children to manifest, e.g., love, kindness, peacefulness, being given to hospitality, being a cheerful giver, etc. As a simple example, one couple decided that they wanted their young sons to learn to eat graciously at mealtimes. They wanted their times of breaking bread together and fellowshiping as a family to be times of gladness and singleness of heart. This was an expectation based on God's Word, and they believed it was a reasonable expectation in their home.

Acts 2:46:

And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart.

So they made a commitment to train their children to obey them in this regard by teaching them how to eat graciously.

As parents, we need to get clear on reasonable expectations for our children. An important consideration when thinking through reasonable expectations is to make sure the goals we set are attainable according to their developmental abilities and understanding. We obviously don't expect as much from a six-month-old as we do from a two-year-old, five-year-old, or ten-year-old. There are different expectations depending on the child's age.

Once we get clear on our expectations, we think through steps to help implement the learning.

Luke 14:28:

For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it?

Breaking down expectations into daily activities helps parents get a clear perspective as to how much effort is needed to properly train their children. In the case of the parents' expectation for the sons to eat graciously at mealtimes, the parents began working with them early. As babies, they were taught not to throw food on the floor. That was a reasonable expectation for that age. When they became toddlers, the parents taught them how to hold a fork and not wave it around in the air. Later, they were expected to learn not to talk with their mouths full of food, and so on. None of

the lessons were learned in a day, but over time with consistent instruction and occasional reminders, mealtimes became times of gladness for all.

Another important element in helping our children obey and attain our godly expectations is for us to be consistent in our instruction. We want our word to be our will. It's important that we mean what we say. When we make a decision about how we want our children to act, we need to commit to doing all it takes to teach them that we mean what we say every time it comes up. It is loving to be consistent so that our children are not confused. Teaching and training them is an all-day, every-day investment in our children.

Deuteronomy 6:7:

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.

Setting reasonable expectations, thinking through the steps to implement, and being consistent in our instruction is work, but it is well worth the love, time, and energy we put into it! Our children are young only once, so let's set them up, one day at a time, to have successful, abundant lives full of God's love and blessings. We are protecting them from the devices of the adversary by teaching them to think according to God's Word. We are helping them to do what is right—to obey us and thus God and His Word—and that can only bring great rewards!

Psalms 19:8,11:

*The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes.
...and in keeping of them there is great reward.*

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