

TEACHING OUR CHILDREN TO BE THANKFUL

“These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.” (Deut 6:6-7)

The new born infant needs to be trained. They cannot walk, talk, or perform any useful task. As parents we have the responsibility to **“bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord” (Eph. 6:4)**. In Prov. 22:6 we are told **“Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it.”** Paul wrote to Timothy how: **“from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.” (2 Tim 3:15)**

At a very early age our children start speaking and understanding the English language. I am told this is one of the most difficult languages on earth to learn. Take, for example, the letters “ough”. Notice how these four letters are pronounced differently . “You ought to be careful when climbing on the ough of a tree, for you may be ough with your days work before you get started”. Our children, however, become fluent in English long before they enter school and take a formal class. How did they learn to speak English? They learned it from their parents.

Moses wanted parents to talk about the commands of God during the course of every day life. He wanted them to discuss the commandments of God whether they were sitting at home, walking along the road, lying down, or getting up. If parents would do this, their children would learn about God as naturally as they learn to speak their native language.

This concept is particularly relevant when dealing with thanksgiving. The first time the word “thanksgiving” is found in the Bible is in Lev. 7:12 (KJV). It is indeed remarkable that there is not one reference to thanksgiving in the Bible from Adam unto Moses. In the days of Moses it was mentioned only because God commanded His people to make “thank offering”. The idea of being thankful is apparently not something that comes automatically, it has to be commanded and taught.

Paul wrote that he had **“learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do everything through him who gives me strength.” (Phil 4:11-13)** We are not told how, when, and where Paul “learned” contentment, but it is logical to assume that at least a part of this important training came from his parents.

There is an old joke about the child who got in trouble at school for cussing. The teacher demanded: “Where did you learn to talk like that?” The boy said to his father: “Don’t worry dad, I didn’t give you away, I blamed it on the parrot.”

It is noteworthy that Moses didn’t tell parents to send their children away in order to learn the commandments of God. It was not someone else’s job to teach their children, it is a job that God gave them. The same is true today! The school and church may help your children to learn gratitude, but the primary responsibility falls to the mother and father whose passion brought that child into the world. Please prayerfully ponder this anonymous poem.

I took a piece of plastic clay,
and idly molded it one day.
And as my fingers pressed it still,
It moved and yielded to my will.
I came again, when days were past,
The piece of clay was hard at last.
The shape I gave it still it bore,
And I could change it nevermore.

I took a piece of living clay,
And gently formed it, day by day,
I molded it with power and art,
A young child’s soft and yielding heart.
I came again when years were gone.
It was a man I looked upon.
He still that early impress bore
But I could change him, nevermore.