

Derek and Michelle Brookes

When you were a child, chances are you thought you knew what a parent should be like and do. Now that you're a parent, you understand that it's not that simple. Learning to be a good parent takes time, determination, understanding, experience, laughter and tears, prayer and patience, and above all love.

How do you teach a child right and wrong? What is the balance between giving freedom and setting limits? When do children need praise and encouragement, and when do they need loving correction? *Keys to Kids* gives practical advice to help you tackle these tough issues, and will draw you and your family closer to the One who has all the answers.



# Keys to Kids

A Keys to Parenting BOOK



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Derek and Michelle Brookes

*Train up a child in the way he should go, and  
when he is old he will not depart from it.*

—Proverbs 22:6

*A Keys to Parenting Book*

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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# LEARNING ABOUT PARENTING

What does it mean to be a parent? And how can you be a *good* parent? Becoming a parent is something that happens the instant you have a child, but how and when do you learn parenting skills? Although good parenting plays a vital role in society, it is a skill that is seldom emphasized or required as part of the schooling of our young people. It is sadly also not emphasized in many homes, as both parents often need to work, and thus spend little time with their children. How then are young people who look forward to raising children going to learn how to be parents? How will they know how to best guide their little ones?

Despite so many of life's traditional standards and guidelines being removed in today's fast-paced society, the most important keys to parenting today are the same as they have been for millennia:

- love
- your own good example
- discipline and training (a clear standard of right and wrong)
- acceptance of each child for who he or she is
- faith in each child for what he or she can become
- prayer
- a lot of help from God
- more love

From beginning to end, the most important key is LOVE. Learning to be a good parent is a process that takes time and involves a lot of understanding, experience, fun, tears, prayer, patience, and a great deal of love. Children need to know that you love

them, that you will *always* love them and be there for them. And they need to know that God loves them and is always ready to forgive their mistakes and sins. With this foundation of love—confidence in God’s love and your love—your kids can be strong enough to handle the many things that come across their paths.

If you remember only one thing from this booklet, remember that love is the key. Love is the only thing that will never fail. Love comes directly from God, because God *is* love. Even if you feel like a failure as a parent, and no matter how difficult things may get, keep showing your children unconditional love and trust that God will see you through. (See “Bible Study on Child Care and Training” in *Power for Parenthood*—another title in this series.)

## Children Thrive on Praise and Encouragement

Sometimes children misbehave because they want attention. That’s how they test their parents’ love—and they need to be sure of their parents’ love because it is one of the main ways they determine their own self-worth. If they doubt your love, they may doubt their own worth as an individual. So even when your child has done wrong and you need to correct him, also find something to sincerely praise him for. “I know you’re sorry and want to do better, and I know you can. I believe in you!” He needs to know how much you love him, and that you’re on his side.

That doesn’t mean, of course, that you should gloss over wrongdoing. It’s still your duty as a parent to set your children straight; that’s also an expression of the love and security they seek. But if you feel frustrated because you see one of your children falling short in this area or that, or you find yourself correcting your children more than you are encouraging and praising them, it’s time to rethink. Instead

of letting your disappointment or frustration show (or worse yet, belittling the children!), ask Jesus to show you areas that they are doing well in, and comment on those. You'll be surprised at what a positive effect that has! Every child has some strong points. There's always some good to be praised and appreciated. For example, if your son made a failing grade on his schoolwork, you can still find something to commend him for—his neat handwriting perhaps, or his cheerful attitude and the help he is to you at home.

Be sincere in your praise. Children are usually very sincere, and they can tell when you're not. Older children, especially, feel patronized by shallow, insincere praise. Your encouragement must also relate to your child. For example, you may consider your preteen daughter to be beautiful, but if she doesn't feel she compares favorably to many others her age, she could think that you are being insincere or falsely flattering if you are constantly telling her how beautiful she is. It would be better to encourage her by highlighting specific areas that are particularly outstanding. Perhaps she is not what would be considered a classic beauty, but maybe she has deep, beautiful eyes. Perhaps she has long, thick hair. Or maybe she has a terrific smile. By focusing on specifics, you take her mind off other things that she may consider flaws or imperfections and focus on the wonderful traits that she no doubt possesses. Or you can commend her in some other area in which she excels, such as her speaking ability or her good grades or her loving, sweet character—which the Bible says is *true* beauty. "The incorruptible beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God."<sup>1</sup>

Of course you love your kids, but it's extremely important that they *know* this. They need to hear

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<sup>1</sup> 1 Peter 3:4



you say it, and they need to see you show it. Be outspoken in your praise for your children!

It has been my experience that children who know in their hearts that they are admired and appreciated find it easy, in turn, to be genuinely appreciative of others. And this, I think, is one of the most important lessons we can teach our children: to be continually and truly thankful. This is not only because appreciative people make others happy; it's because appreciative people are themselves happy people.

I think this is one reason why the Bible tells us so often to give thanks, to praise God, and to acknowledge all His benefits. He knows that when we learn to give thanks, we are learning to concentrate not on the bad things, but on the good things in our lives.

—Amy Vanderbilt



When Sir Walter Scott was a boy he was considered a dull student, and was often made to sit in the ignominious dunce corner and wear the high-pointed paper cap of shame. When about twelve or fourteen, he happened to be in a house where Robert Burns, the Scottish poet, and some others were being entertained. Burns was standing admiring a picture under which was written a couple of lines of poetry. He inquired concerning the author, but no one seemed to know. Timidly a boy crept up to his side, named the author, and quoted the rest of the poem. Burns was surprised and delighted. Laying his hand on the boy's head, he exclaimed, "Ah, bairnie, you will be a great man in Scotland some day." From that day Walter Scott was changed. One word of encouragement set him on the road to greatness.

—Unknown

Many years ago, a boy of ten was working in a factory in Naples. He longed to be a singer, but his first teacher discouraged him. "You can't sing," he said. "You haven't any voice at all. It sounds like the wind in the shutters."

But his mother, a poor peasant woman, put her arms around the boy and praised him. She knew he could sing, she told him, she could already see an improvement. Then she went barefoot in order to save money to pay for his music lessons. That peasant mother's praise and encouragement changed that boy's life. His name was Enrico Caruso, and he became the most famous opera singer of his time.

—Dale Carnegie

## Your Best Investment: Time

The best inheritance a parent can give to his children is a few minutes of his time each day.

—Orlando A. Battista

Your children will never forget the special times they spend with you. Aren't those some of the memories *you* treasure most from your childhood—when your parents invested their love in the form of personal time and attention with you?

Children thrive on love and attention and concern and consideration, and if they don't have it—or if they think they don't—then just like the rest of us, they feel bad, they feel unimportant, and after a while they feel rejected. You don't always have to spend a great deal of time with children to make them know you love and appreciate them, but you do have to spend some time. And the *quality* of the time you spend with them is just as important as the *quantity*.

The greatest investment you can make in your children is your time. That's also the greatest gift you can give them, because nothing else will make a more lasting difference in their lives. As someone once wisely said, "Your children need your *presence* more than your *presents*." Play with your children, read with them, hold them, encourage them, enjoy them. Go for walks or just sit around together and talk. Ask questions and listen to their answers—really listen.

If you're like most parents, you have more demands on your time than you can possibly meet, and time with your children gets crowded out when emergencies come up. You rationalize that there's always tomorrow for that. But your children need you *today*.

Lost! A boy! Not kidnapped and held for ransom while a nation conducted a frenzied search. No, his father lost him. He was too busy to answer the boy's trivial questions, or scarcely acknowledge him. During the years when Dad is the greatest hero a boy has, his father let go. His mother lost him too. Engrossed in her own career and community projects, she let the babysitter hear his prayers and abdicated her place of influence.

Take time to treasure your children. They are well worth the investment.

—Unknown

Determine how much time you need to spend with each of your children each week, and schedule it. Consider it a top priority, an appointment that must be kept. If a genuine emergency comes up, you may need to reschedule your time with your children, but don't cancel out completely. If you find that you frequently have to postpone your time with your children, rethink your priorities and plan, and come up with one that will work.

A successful young attorney said, "The greatest gift I've ever received came in a very small package that was light as a feather. My dad gave it to me one Christmas. Inside the box was a note that read as follows: 'Son, this year I will give you 365 hours. An hour every day after dinner is yours. We'll talk about what you want to talk about, we'll go where you want to go, play what you want to play. It will be *your* hour!' My dad not only kept that promise, but every year he renewed it. That was the greatest gift anyone ever gave me. I am the result of his time."

—Cited in *Moody Monthly*

When older children are having problems, they need even more of your time, and you need to be even more attentive to listen. Don't be too quick to offer solutions or advice, and try not to sermonize. Hear them out completely before you say anything, and help them reach their own right conclusions, if possible. Then pray and take time to hear God's still small voice in your heart and mind. He's always ready to answer your questions, and you'll be amazed at the solutions He will give. (See *Keys to Toddlers and Preschoolers*, in the *Keys to Parenting* series, the sections entitled "A Parent's Best Friend" and "Listening to Jesus Time." See also *Hearing from Heaven*, from the *Get Activated!* series.)

In addition to the time you spend with your children, you also should set aside some time to pray for them. This is another thing that won't happen unless you treat it as a priority. You have to *make* time. Praying for your children is a wonderful way to gain a better understanding of them. God is able to show you things about them that you could never learn any other way. You'll also discover how great His love is for them, and that will cause you to love them all the more. He will fill you with His love, which can carry you and them through *anything*.

Many parents of grown children will tell you that their greatest regret is that they didn't spend more time with their children when they were small. You'll have to sacrifice other things to do it, and in the beginning you may feel it isn't the best use of your time, but keep it up and you won't be sorry. Every minute you give your children is an investment in the future. The rewards will last for eternity.

Being there for your children makes a great difference in their lives, even when you do not think you are doing a lot for them or accomplishing much.

## Independence Through Dependency

One of the common myths of modern parenting is that giving children whatever they want and letting them do whatever they want will make them happy in the present, and in the long run teach them to make the right choices. According to this school of thought, children who are indulged in this manner will grow into happy and productive, free-spirited, independent adults.

Nearly the opposite is true. Children need boundaries. They need clearly defined limits of behavior. They need to be taught moral standards of right and wrong. A spoiled and demanding child becomes a spoiled and demanding adult.

Yes, children should be given the freedom to choose for themselves in many matters, but they must also be taught to take responsibility for their choices. When parents are able to make freedom and limitations work together in proper balance, their children learn to make the right choices; they learn independence through guided dependency.

The basis of independence through dependency is this: First teach children foundation lessons of obedience, the difference between right and wrong, and

## **When you thought I wasn't looking**

When you thought I wasn't looking,  
I saw you hang my first painting on the refrigerator,  
and I wanted to paint another one.

When you thought I wasn't looking,  
I saw you feed a stray cat, and I thought it was good  
to be kind to animals.

When you thought I wasn't looking,  
I saw you make my favorite cake just for me, and I  
knew that little things are special.

When you thought I wasn't looking,  
I heard you say a prayer, and I believed there is a God  
I could always talk to.

When you thought I wasn't looking,  
I felt you kiss me goodnight, and I felt loved.

When you thought I wasn't looking,  
I saw tears come to your eyes, and I learned that  
sometimes things hurt, but it's okay to cry.

When you thought I wasn't looking,  
I saw that you cared, and I wanted to be everything  
that I could be.

When you thought I wasn't looking,  
I looked—and wanted to say thanks for all the things  
I saw when you thought I wasn't looking.

—Mary Rita Schilke Korazan

the fact that their choices affect others and have good or bad consequences. Then little by little, as they prove themselves responsible in relatively small matters, give them more independence and allow them to make more important choices, all the while monitoring their progress and helping them understand and deal with the consequences of their decisions. This way they gain the independence they want and need, but not before they are prepared to handle it wisely.

Once they've proven that they can carry a certain responsibility on their own, you need to show your faith in them by not checking up on them constantly, or repeating instructions to them, or quickly taking back the controls even when you feel you would have personally done something a different way.

A guided and gradual transition from dependency to independence results in more well-rounded, competent adults who are neither overly dependent upon others, nor so independent that they cannot get along or work well with others. If children are taught from an early age to be responsible for their actions, and lovingly helped to handle the consequences, they will mature quickly and have a strong foundation that will support them through the turbulence of adolescence and a lifetime full of choices, some of which will be very difficult to make wisely.

## Raising Good Kids in a World Gone Wrong

Our world is full of confusing messages and troubling images for children. As your children get older, you may wonder how you're supposed to train them to be loving, obedient, respectful and positive when so much of what they are surrounded with is completely the opposite. Movies, TV, video and com-

puter games, advertising, music, the Internet, and troubled peers all contribute to a growing moral pandemonium that can have a negative effect on your children. Many of the influences your children are exposed to not only fail to teach godly values, but actively encourage *wrong* attitudes and behavior.

No wonder the news is increasingly filled with reports that children have committed terrible crimes, often without any apparent sense of conscience or remorse. And their parents are increasingly being blamed—and in some cases being held legally responsible—for their children's wrong behavior. Ironically, at the same time that parents are being held more accountable, they are also being stripped of their traditional rights and powers as parents to correct and exercise authority over their children. After the tragic and shocking incident in a Littleton, Colorado high school in April 1999, when two students shot and killed 12 other students, a teacher, and then themselves, syndicated columnist Don Feder wrote:

Except for the National Rifle Association, no one has taken more hits over the Littleton, Colorado killings than families. "Where were the parents?" critics cry. Liberal child-rearing advice is a mishmash of contradictions: Monitor your child, but don't invade his privacy. Raise him to behave decently and respect the rights of others, but don't discipline him. While they're lecturing us about our responsibilities, the elite has created a cultural sewer for adolescents to swim (or sink) in. ... When concerned parents try to protect youth from the more invidious aspects of the same, they're called censors and control freaks, and told their repression is apt to provoke an adolescent backlash. ... Parents can't win. The impossible is expected of them—direction without discipline, monitoring and control while respecting the "rights" of 12-year-olds, all in the context of a culture that



undermines their authority and seduces their children by playing to their darkest instincts.<sup>1</sup>

What can we as parents do to lead our children to moral high ground? The Bible gives us many guidelines for doing this. God promises that if you instill godly values in your children from an early age, as they grow older and take charge of their own lives they will continue in the right way. Where do you start? Teach them to love God and others, so they will learn to make the right decisions and grow into children you can be proud of!

Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.<sup>2</sup>

The Bible also tells us that a child left without correction and instruction will bring his parent to shame.<sup>3</sup> God has given parents the responsibility to actively participate in their child's learning, by correcting him along the way. Sometimes *how* to correct and instruct your child is a question—if so, keep reading.

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<sup>1</sup> "Expecting the Impossible of Parents," *Jewish World Review*, (April 1999).

<sup>2</sup> Proverbs 22:6 KJV

<sup>3</sup> Proverbs 29:15

# POINTERS FOR ENCOURAGING GOOD BEHAVIOR

Children need—and appreciate—a clearly defined standard of behavior. Often misbehavior is just a child crying out, “Show me the way!” Here are some tried and proven parenting basics:

## 1. Set clear boundaries.

Set clear boundaries as to what your children are allowed to do at home, and set reasonable punishments for crossing them.

You may not have much control over what goes on *outside* your home, but you can set the standard for acceptable behavior and attitudes *inside* your own house.

## 2. Create a link of honest, open communication with your children.

If your children are honest with you, you have a much better chance of knowing what goes on when they are away from home. They should feel that they can tell you anything. You may not always agree or allow them to do everything they want to, but they shouldn't be afraid to confide in you.

The secret of establishing such communication is to learn to *listen*. As a parent, one of the greatest gifts you can give your children is your sincere interest in them and their problems, as evidenced by your undivided attention whenever it's needed. By simply listening—*really* listening—you are telling your child:

“I want to understand and help you. I think you are worth listening to, and I want you to know that I have faith in you. You can always talk to me because I love you.”

Ask questions. When communicating with children—or with anyone, for that matter—asking questions helps to draw them out and shows your concern and interest in them. Get *them* to talk. And when they are asking you questions, be careful not to overly philosophize, pontificate, or pretend to be something you’re not. Just stay simple! Show love and understanding. And avoid offering any advice that you wouldn’t want to apply to yourself. Learn to present your advice or answers in ways that are as easy as possible for them to accept.

Of course, before you encourage your children to “tell all,” you’d better be prepared to hear them out without jumping to conclusions or flying into a frenzy, otherwise they’ll probably be sorry they even tried to be honest and open with you. An admonishment or punishment may be in order, but try not to give it on the spot. Take time to think it through. (After all, if they hadn’t confided in you, they wouldn’t be getting a lecture or correction right then.) You can tell them that you’re taking a little time to think and pray about it, but be sure to also commend them for being upfront with you. It is good to approach the situation in question as a problem you need to fix together, or learn from together. Whatever the problem, it will be easier to overcome—and easier on both of you—if you can preserve the bond of trust between you and your child.

If you expect your children to be honest with you, you must also be honest with them. It greatly encourages children to know that their parents aren’t perfect. (Besides, you can be sure they’ve noticed!) By your own honest admission of your mistakes and

weaknesses, you are setting a good example for them of what honesty and humility are all about, and your children will love you the more for it.

### **3. Find a balance in what to allow and disallow.**

Pray for God's guidance as to what activities are harmless, which ones you need to monitor and limit, and which ones you need to forbid.

You will need to find a good balance in the things you allow your children to do, especially when they are away from home. Completely forbidding your older children and teenagers to do certain things might not work and could cause them to rebel and do it anyway behind your back. It may be better to agree on reasonable limits together, and then hold your children to them.

### **4. Don't be overly alarmed by outward appearances.**

Don't be overly alarmed by behavior that's different but not bad or harmful. If you show yourself tolerant of things that are perhaps not to your own liking but are basically harmless, then your children will be more apt to comply when you put your foot down about other things that are definitely wrong.

You might not like the way your preteen daughter dresses, for example, but that's not the issue in her eyes. Fitting in with her peers is. Ask God to help you see beyond surface appearances and to give you patience and self-restraint to let relatively trivial matters pass.

## **5. Expect and allow a certain amount of experimentation.**

Not all experimentation is bad; it plays a big part in the growing-up process. Try not to overreact when your older children say or do what to you is the unthinkable. Quite often children like to be shocking just for the sake of it, hoping to get a rise out of you. If you show yourself able to take things in stride, many issues will resolve themselves on their own.

## **6. Let your children know you love them unconditionally.**

Children who get their needs for love and attention filled at home have far fewer problems. Assure your children that you will continue to love them no matter what they do, and that you will be there for them. Part of that love is not allowing them to do things that you know to be harmful, but at the same time reassuring them that you will never stop loving them. When your children put you to the test and find that your love holds even when they displease you, this helps them feel secure. They will then be more likely to stand up against negative peer pressure and make the right decision next time.

## **7. Get to know and accept your children's friends.**

Win the respect and friendship of your children's friends, and they may find your home a welcome retreat. The noise level and food bill may go up, but at least you'll have peace of mind in knowing where your children are and what they're up to. If you are generally accepting of your children's friends, then

if on occasion you have to limit their association with a particular boy or girl who is affecting them negatively, they'll be more likely to comply with your wishes.

## **8. Minimize ungodly influences.**

Select worthwhile movies, TV shows, music, and computer games for your children when they are young and you still hold the remote control. They may rebel or be drawn to less godly amusements later, but you will have given them a good foundation.

Discuss such recreational activities with your older children and make choices together, as much as possible. If your children understand and respect your reasons for not allowing a certain thing, they will be much more apt to comply when you're not watching. Of course, it is also important to help provide alternative activities that are both fun and worthwhile.

## **9. Teach your children to have conviction.**

In order to stand up against negative influences and peer pressure, your children need to know how to explain and defend what they believe—what they consider right or acceptable, and why. They may not always see eye to eye with you, but if they understand your position on the issues and see you have conviction, they will be more likely to buck negative peer pressure. It will also help them know how to explain you to their friends.

You can't expect your children to always do the right thing in difficult situations, but praise them when they do have the conviction to do so. Let them know you understand how difficult that is, and that you're proud of them.

## 10. Teach your children consideration.

Everyone likes polite, courteous, and considerate children, but people often do not realize the amount of personal time parents must give their children to get those results. Your own sample of being kind and considerate is very important. How you treat others, and especially your children, greatly influences how *they* will treat others. Here are some questions to ask yourself when you are talking to your children: “How would I feel if someone were treating me or talking to me the way I am to my child now? Am I thoughtful about how I talk about other people in front of, or within earshot of my children? Do I tease my children or make fun of them or make jokes about them that could make them feel bad?”

Children often argue among themselves—contradicting, belittling, or criticizing what the other has said. Sometimes they are just arguing to be arguing or trying to show their superiority by putting the other one down. Children need to learn that it is not good to put themselves up as being better than someone else.

Older children often put down their younger brothers and sisters. Sometimes children need help in realizing how their words make others feel. They have to be taught what sort of things hurt or embarrass people. Point out to them how they would feel if the tables were turned and they were being treated that way; or try to give them a little example to get the point across so they understand what you mean. Explain the problem to them: “Your little brother already thinks he is not as good as you and that you know more. Of course you know more and are able to do things better, so your job is to encourage him to do better, to teach him and help him improve.” Older children should not mimic the mistakes of their

younger siblings, as it may embarrass them or reinforce the problem rather than correct it.

Unless instructed and corrected, children can be especially unkind toward people who have handicaps or obvious physical differences, particularly other children. Learning what not to say and when to ignore something is a very important lesson that children need to learn early in life.

Teach your children to treat others as they would like others to treat them should they have that same problem or be in that same embarrassing situation. Often when children realize in some personal way how their actions hurt others, they are more careful about what they say and do, and are generally more thoughtful of others.

## **When You Don't Know What to Do . . .**

When children seriously misbehave there is usually an underlying cause. Maybe they're feeling insecure, so they act up to get more of your time and attention, reassurance, and love. Maybe they're upset about something that happened at school. Maybe they're testing the boundaries you've set, to see if you mean what you said. Maybe it is time to change some rules in order to give them more room to grow. Whatever the case, it's important to find out *why* they're misbehaving, and how you can help them get back on track. Most problems don't just go away by themselves, nor are children usually equipped to handle them on their own. Many times the children themselves don't even know what's wrong. They need a parent's love and guidance.

It's part of your responsibility as a parent to give your children the training they need. Parenting is more than comforting your children when they fall down, or making sure they get the proper nutrition



and brush their teeth. You are responsible for their *spiritual training* as well, and the foundation stone of that is loving and consistent discipline—by which they learn a fear of the Lord, respect for His Word and His instructions, and how to live lovingly.

The best way to know what your children need and how to help them—the *only* way, really—is to ask the Lord about it. Next to having the Lord's love, the most important key to successful parenting is learning to ask the Lord for the answers. Jesus *always* has just the answer you need. Having Jesus as a parenting partner lifts a great deal of the load off of you. You know you can always go to Him in prayer, and He will speak to your heart and mind with the guidance you need.

If your child is in a difficult phase that's been going on for weeks or months or even years, and you're losing patience—or even if you're losing patience after two minutes!—ask Jesus for help. Share your burden with Him; He has *lots* of patience. He has great patience with your faults and failings, so He will help you be patient with your children's. When you feel at the end of your rope, ask Him for His patience, and His love. Hold on to Him, and His Spirit will calm your own, bring solutions to your mind and help you to ride out the storm of difficulties that may arise. He can fill your heart and mind with His love, which enables you to have patience beyond your own abilities.

## **The Steps of a Child**

If a child lives with criticism

He learns to condemn.

If a child lives with hostility

He learns to fight.

If a child lives with ridicule

He learns to be shy.

If a child lives with shame

He learns to feel guilty.

If a child lives with tolerance

He learns to be patient.

If a child lives with encouragement

He learns confidence.

If a child lives with praise

He learns to appreciate.

If a child lives with fairness

He learns justice.

If a child lives with approval

He learns to like himself.

If a child lives with acceptance and friendship

He learns to find love in the world.

—*Dorothy Law Nolte*



## SOME DISCIPLINARY GUIDELINES

Discipline has been defined as “training expected to produce a specific character or pattern of behavior, especially training that produces moral or mental improvement.”<sup>1</sup> So the best discipline is something that will *teach* the child and help him to learn the lesson and avoid making the same mistake again. This does not suggest heavy corporal punishment. There are many ways to correct a child without being abusive or harmful, such as assigning extra chores, grounding, missing certain activities, or having them do something good to make up for the bad. Wise, loving correction gets the point across without harming the child physically or emotionally.

Still, correction is often difficult on both child and parent at the time it is administered. It takes conviction on the part of the parent, but in the long run if wisely administered, both child and parent will be happier, and both will benefit from a more stable and rewarding relationship.<sup>2</sup> Parents should try to keep situations that call for discipline to a minimum by making it as easy as possible for their children to keep the rules.

The Bible says that foolishness is bound in the heart of a child, but when you correct your children, it helps them to gain control over their behavior and to avoid falling into other foolish activities that could be more serious or dangerous.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *The American Heritage Dictionary*

<sup>2</sup> “Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it” (Hebrews 12:11).

<sup>3</sup> Proverbs 22:15

To correct a child properly, you need to be firmly convinced yourself of what is correct. God's Word is a reliable standard to go by, as it has stood the test of time better than modern so-called expert opinions and personal feelings. The standard of obedience that we expect of our children should be one that we ourselves respect, a goal that we also strive for, one that leads us to a happier, more fruitful, harmonious life. (Familiarize yourself with Scriptures on childcare by reading "Bible Study on Child Care and Training" in *Power for Parenthood*, another booklet in this *Keys to Parenting* series.)

Here are a few general guidelines to keep in mind when you feel you need to discipline your child.

## 1. Don't rush to judgment.

"He who answers a matter before he hears it, it is folly and shame to him."<sup>1</sup> When something goes wrong, it's important to hear all sides from those involved before meting out correction or punishment. There are always at least two sides to every story, and things are not always as they first seem. Taking time to hear your children out not only helps you get the facts, but it increases your children's respect for you and gives you time to cool down and pray to see the situation through the Lord's eyes.

## 2. Discipline must be appropriate to the offense and to the age of the child.

Rules that are too lenient are seldom obeyed, and rules that are too severe are seldom enforced. Don't make rules so hard that your child can't keep them.

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<sup>1</sup> Proverbs 18:13

If you do, your children will be more likely to get rebellious and throw them all to the wind.

It's also not fair to expect as much from a younger child as you would from an older child. For example, you shouldn't make a family rule that says, "Everyone must sit quietly at the dinner table until everyone else is done," and then expect two-year-old Tommy to sit as still as ten-year-old Mary. Or if Mary were to misbehave while out in public with you, she would probably respect you and the correction more if you wait to correct her in private. But if you waited until you got home to correct Tommy, he would probably have forgotten the incident by then, miss the point, and feel unjustly punished.

For a third example, a chart on the wall with stars for good behavior and sad faces for misbehavior might work well with Tommy, but your infant wouldn't understand, and Mary would probably think it too childish.

### **3. Establish rules and punishments.**

Establish rules and corresponding punishments so your children know what to expect and so you are less likely to overreact when they misbehave.

Children need boundaries, and they need to know what the consequences will be if they cross those boundaries. Having these clearly defined also makes it easier for you to react in a calm, even-handed manner, and that's to everyone's advantage.

For example, you may not allow your children to run wild in the house, and if they do, they know you'll make them sit on a chair for three minutes. Two-year-old Tommy gets carried away, runs through the living room, trips, and knocks over your favorite house plant. You're upset and feel like giving him a punishment he'll never forget—but does

Son, I am saying this as you lie asleep, one little hand crumpled under your cheek.

Just a few minutes ago, as I sat reading my paper, a wave of remorse swept over me and drove me to your bedside.

These are the things I was thinking, son: I had spoken crossly to you. I scolded you as you were getting ready for school because you gave your face merely a dab with a towel. I took you to task for not cleaning your shoes. I called out angrily when you threw some of your things on the floor.

At breakfast I found fault, too. You spilled things. You gulped down your food. You put your elbows on the table.

As you started off to play and I left for work, you turned and waved a hand and called, "Goodbye, Daddy!"

"Stand up straight!" was my goodbye.

Then it began all over again in the late afternoon. As I came up the road, I spied you down on your knees, playing marbles. There were holes in the knees of your pants. I humiliated you in front of your friends by making you come in the house. Pants are expensive, and if you had to pay for them yourself you wouldn't wear them out by crawling around on the ground. Imagine that, son, from a father!

Do you remember later, when I was reading and you came in timidly, with a hurt look in your eyes? When I glanced up over my paper, impatient at the interruption, you hesitated at the door. "What is it you want?" I snapped.

You said nothing, but ran across the room and in one tempestuous plunge, threw your arms around my neck and kissed me. Your small arms tightened with an affection that God had set blooming in your

heart and which even my neglect could not wither. And then you were gone, pattering up the stairs.

Well, son, it was shortly afterwards that my paper slipped from my hands and a terrible sickening feeling came over me. I realized I'd fallen into a horrible habit—the habit of finding fault, of reprimanding. This was my reward to you for being a boy. It wasn't that I didn't love you; it was that I expected too much of you at your age. I was measuring you by the yardstick of my own years.

Meanwhile, your love for me was as big and bright and unstoppable as the dawn. Your spontaneous goodnight kiss showed me that.

And so I have come to your bedside and I knelt here in the darkness, ashamed. It's a feeble atonement.

Tomorrow I will be a real daddy! I will play with you and share your ups and downs. I will bite my tongue when impatient words come. I will remember that you are a little boy, and won't ask too much.

—Adapted from W. Livingston Larned



Tommy really deserve that? If you know the punishment is three minutes of “time out,” you’ll be less likely to react in a way you’ll later regret.

The best time to set boundaries with your children is when none of them are in trouble and you’re relaxed. Choose a comfortable place, perhaps serve a snack to lighten the atmosphere, and sit down together to discuss the rules of the house. If you have both younger and older children, you’ll probably want to talk with the younger and older ones separately.

It’s best, of course, if your children understand why each rule is necessary, and are in agreement with the punishment for breaking it. First make a list of all the rules, and then decide on the corresponding punishments. This will help keep things in perspective and reserve serious punishment for truly serious offenses.

Try to let your children come up with the list themselves, or at least get it started. You might be surprised to find that when you appoint your children to be their own judges, they will often set higher standards and be stricter with themselves than you would be. However, it is good to moderate their standards if you see they are too strict.

#### **4. Keep the list of rules as short, simple, and clear as possible.**

The fewer strict rules you have, the better. That’s what the Lord has done with us: He made it *real* simple when He said, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments

hang all the Law and the Prophets.”<sup>1</sup> Just *one* rule, really—“You shall love!” Teach your children to be ruled by love and you’ll hardly need any other rules!

Pray for wisdom to know which rules are necessary and which ones aren’t.<sup>2</sup> It’s far better to have a few important rules and adhere to them than to have many little rules that neither you nor your children can keep.

## 5. Follow through.

You have to teach your children that you mean what you say. Better never to have promised that punishment than to have promised it and not given it. If you warn your children not to do a certain thing, and explain to them that they’ll be punished if they do, they may go ahead anyway just to test you. Then if you don’t carry out the punishment, they’ll try it again. And if you repeatedly allow them to get away with things, they will lose confidence in your role as a figure of authority.

Of course, that’s not to say that they *won’t* try it again if the agreed-upon consequence is enforced. Some children seem to need to “learn” a lesson repeatedly before it finally sinks in for good. But by providing consistent boundaries, you as a parent can ensure that even these testings become times of growth and progress, rather than the child simply seeing how much he can get away with and how often. Once your child realizes that he truly will be held responsible for his actions, chances are he’ll change his behavior.

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<sup>1</sup> Matthew 22:37–40

<sup>2</sup> “If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him” (James 1:5).

### **Are you a Parent or a “Sparent”?**

“Sparents” are those who spare correction  
When offspring need attention,  
And they find their troubles multiplied  
In ways too sad to mention.

## **6. Be consistent.**

Inconsistent discipline is the worst kind of discipline. It’s no discipline at all! Consistent discipline means being true to your word and following through lovingly, patiently, and prayerfully. Be frank, be fair, be honest, be loving, be firm, and be consistent.

Whether you’re in a good mood or a bad mood shouldn’t have any bearing on the correction you give your children. Otherwise, your children won’t learn the lessons they need to; they’ll just learn to be careful around you. They’ll take advantage of you when you’re in a good mood, and they’ll make themselves scarce when you’re in a bad mood.

Under special circumstances, the Lord may show you *not* to carry out a certain punishment that you had previously agreed upon with your children. Such cases will probably be rare, but they may happen occasionally, so be sure to ask the Lord for wisdom in every case.

## **7. Be fair.**

Few things undermine a parent-child relationship more than resentment and distrust on the part of a child who feels unfairly punished. What makes this such a dangerous pitfall is that your child’s idea of fairness may be very different than your own, depending on his level of maturity—but it’s just as

strong, and to his way of thinking, just as valid. What's a parent to do?

Don't jump to conclusions. Let your children explain themselves, and try to see things from their point of view. If you take time to hear their version of the problem situation, you put yourself in a better position to judge the matter fairly. And when they see that you're trying to be understanding and fair, they will respect you and your judgment more.

One way that you can help your child understand your side of things is to always take time—either before or after the discipline—to explain what went wrong. Sometimes children get so caught up in the moment that they don't realize what they're doing. A child with his mind fully set upon something else may not realize that he's running over the new living room carpet with his muddy boots. Taking a few moments to explain what he did wrong, and the reason why you're having to give him the agreed-upon punishment, and making sure that he understands all that has taken place, will help greatly in him feeling justly treated by you.

One human failing that parents and those who care for kids are sometimes guilty of is showing favoritism for different children. It's quite easy to let a cute little girl get away with more than the "naughty" boy. This is where the rules can help you check whether you are being fair. How do you respond in dealing out the correction to different children? Of course, you also need to consider that children are individuals and have different temperaments. Some are harder and resist correction; others are soft. Some take a light hand, but others a very firm hand. Try to step back from the situation and take a few deep breaths, a few moments of quiet time, and ask the Lord to help you see things fairly.

## 8. Avoid disciplining in anger.

One of the worst things you can do is to give punishment that is too severe, too harsh, more than the crime or disobedience really justifies.

Although it is natural to be upset or angry with your child for something he or she has done wrong, give yourself some time to cool down before administering the discipline. If the child is very young and needs immediate correction but you don't feel capable of handling the situation patiently and objectively, ask your spouse to be the one to follow through with the discipline, if possible. If there is no one else nearby to follow through, give your child a few minutes of "time out" to sit quietly and think about her actions. Use that time to calm down and seek the Lord about what you should do.

Disciplining in anger is usually not fair to the child, and can negate the positive effects that the discipline could bring; the child feels he is being punished because the parent is angry rather than because of something done wrong. The parent's reaction becomes the issue in the child's mind; the lesson related to the mistake is not understood, and the child is likely to become resentful at the correction.

## 9. Reaffirm your love for your children and your faith in them.

Children need love, *especially* when they don't seem to deserve it. They need to know you love them unconditionally, and that even if they've been bad, you're still their parents and you won't give up on them.

Always remember to show your children special love and encouragement after you've had to correct

them or administer discipline. Take them in your arms and hug them, do something special with them, or tell them how much you appreciate them, and how proud you are of them when they try to do the right thing. Tell them you know they'll do better next time. That will make the difference between your children going away discouraged and resentful, or happy, encouraged, and desiring to please.

Showing faith and encouragement is an important part of discipline, because that's an important part of *love*. Your children will be happier and follow the rules more closely if they're motivated by love more than by fear of the consequences. That should be the goal. Otherwise, if they are only doing the right thing because they're afraid of punishment, they may simply wait until they're out of your sight or reach, and then continue to do as they please.

Love and faith in them will help them want to be good and do the right things because they have a sense of right and wrong, and because they want to return your love—and God's love. That's really the best motivation they could find in life: a desire to please the Lord.

## 10. End discipline with a prayer.

Encourage your children to say "I'm sorry," both to you and Jesus for a wrong they've done. Always say a simple prayer together afterwards. Let your children know that you've forgiven them, and remind them that Jesus has forgiven them as well. "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits: Who forgives all your iniquities, who heals all your diseases."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Psalm 103:2-3

## **We Love Our Children**

We love our children when they're good,  
But when they're bad, in trouble,  
For reasons barely understood  
We love them almost double.

We love our children when they want  
Affection and expect it,  
And even more those times they taunt  
Our loving and reject it.

We love them when they make us cry,  
And when you'd think we daren't,  
And no one knows the reason why,  
Except another parent.

—Richard Armour

## A Parent's Prayer

O heavenly Father, make me a better parent. Teach me to understand my children, to listen patiently to what they have to say, and to answer all their questions kindly. Keep me from interrupting them or contradicting them. Make me as courteous to them as I would have them be to me. Forbid that I should ever laugh at their mistakes, or resort to shame or ridicule when they displease me. May I never punish them for my own selfish satisfaction or to show my power.

Let me not tempt my child to lie or steal. And guide me hour by hour that I may demonstrate by all I say and do that honesty produces happiness.

Reduce, I pray, the meanness in me. And when I am out of sorts, help me, O Lord, to hold my tongue.

May I ever be mindful that my children are children, and I should not expect of them the judgment of adults.

Let me not rob them of the opportunity to make decisions.

Bless me with the bigness to grant them all their reasonable requests, and the courage to deny them privileges I know will do them harm.

Make me fair and just and kind. And fit me, O Lord, to be loved and respected and imitated by my children. Amen.

—Abigail Van Buren





# BUILDING A SOLID FOUNDATION

## Lead Your Children to Jesus

One of the most important things you can do to give your children a good foundation in life is to help them establish a personal relationship with God, through Jesus. When your children are very young, it is very easy to lead them to Jesus. Here is an excerpt from *Keys to Toddlers and Preschoolers* (also in this series), which may be helpful for you with any of your younger children:

Children can pray and receive God's gift of eternal salvation, through asking Jesus to come into their hearts, at an early age. Receiving Jesus into their hearts is so simple that even a two-year-old can do it! You can hardly find anybody more sincere or believing than a small child. That's why Jesus said we must become as little children to go to Heaven.<sup>1</sup> As soon as they are old enough to pray the simplest of prayers—as young as two years old—they are old enough to receive Jesus.

As soon as you have taught your child who Jesus is (children's picture Bibles are great for this), you can explain: "Jesus wants to come and live in your heart. He loves you very much, and He wants to be your best friend and stay with you always. If you ask Him to, He will come and live in your heart. Then He will never ever leave you! Do you want Jesus to come into your heart?"

You can then pray a simple prayer that your child can repeat after you, as well as he or she can. Even if your child can only manage to say the last word

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<sup>1</sup> Matthew 18:3

or two from each phrase, that's enough for Jesus, because it's the heart that counts. Simply pray: "Jesus, come into my heart. Forgive me for being bad sometimes. Help me to love You, and help me to be good."—And Jesus *will* come in; your child will be eternally saved. That is God's promise.<sup>1</sup> It's as simple as that!

Your older children may need a fuller explanation of salvation. Perhaps you could share the following, or parts of it, with them:

We all have weaknesses and are not perfect, and sometimes we do wrong things. God loves us so much that He wants to forgive us and help us change, so He has worked a great miracle: a plan to save us. He made it so simple that anyone can be saved! All you need to do is to simply believe and receive Jesus in your heart. When Jesus comes into your life, He will help you right now, and He will also give you eternal life forever in Heaven. Salvation is a great gift from God to all those who love and believe in Jesus.

God wants everyone to be saved, but He gives each of us the freedom of choice. We each must decide personally if we will accept Jesus and His free gift of eternal life.

▪ Jesus promised, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him."<sup>2</sup>

▪ "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."<sup>3</sup>

▪ "If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart

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<sup>1</sup> Revelation 3:20; Romans 10:13

<sup>3</sup> John 3:16

<sup>2</sup> Revelation 3:20

one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. ... Whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved."<sup>1</sup>

▪“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”<sup>2</sup>

▪“And this is the promise that He has promised us—eternal life.”<sup>3</sup>

Salvation is as simple as that! Once your child receives Jesus into his life, he has it. It’s a wonderful experience for parents to be able to share in their child’s discovery of Jesus and His salvation.

## Giving Your Children the Word of God

“The Word of God is living and powerful.”<sup>4</sup> It lives in us, speaks to us and fills our lives with light and understanding. As we drink in the living water of God’s Word, it begins to transform our hearts, minds, and lives. We begin to see things from God’s point of view, which often is entirely different from our own way of thinking. We discover things about ourselves and others that we cannot learn any other way.

We wouldn’t say to a child lost in a forest, “Find your own way.” We would never think of not feeding our children, or not clothing them, or not letting them go out and play and get fresh air and exercise. Neither should we withhold from them the Words of life—the power, light, and life of God. Jesus said, “The Words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life.”<sup>5</sup>

It is through God’s Word that your children will learn what is right and what is wrong, and it is God’s Word that will give them a solid foundation to hang

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<sup>1</sup> Romans 10:9–10,13

<sup>4</sup> Hebrews 4:12

<sup>2</sup> Romans 6:23

<sup>5</sup> John 6:63

<sup>3</sup> 1 John 2:25

onto through all the tests and trials they will face. And as they grow up, they will indeed face many, because life is a proving ground where we must learn to make choices on the side of what is right and good, rather than what is wrong and hurtful. Young as they are, your children soon find themselves engaged in this spiritual struggle and begin making choices that can greatly affect their lives and the lives of others. As parents, you can better prepare your children for these tough choices by giving them Jesus, a foundation of faith, and a knowledge of God's Word.

▪ "How can a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed according to Your Word."<sup>1</sup>

▪ "Your Word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You."<sup>2</sup>

▪ "Your Word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path."<sup>3</sup>

▪ "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the Devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places."<sup>4</sup>

▪ "Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God."<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Psalm 119:9

<sup>4</sup> Ephesians 6:10–12 KJV

<sup>2</sup> Psalm 119:11

<sup>5</sup> Ephesians 6:13–17 KJV

<sup>3</sup> Psalm 119:105

## Bible Stories for Kids

Teach your children Bible stories starting at a young age—the younger the better. Even as babies, they can drink in stories about Jesus and men and women of faith. This will lay a good foundation for deeper discoveries from God's Word as your children get older. (See *Keys to Baby* and *Keys to Toddlers and Preschoolers* for Bible lesson ideas for little children.)

In the "Word Study Activities Guide" at the end of this booklet you'll find a Bible story checklist of some basic Bible stories that you could start reading with your children. Having daily Bible stories *with* your kids will bring you all closer together, and help you grow in your faith and understanding of God's Word. As you read and discuss these stories, you will be surprised at how many lessons you'll find that apply to your everyday life. Take time to talk about the details and the meaning of each story and help your children apply the lessons to their own lives.

Some well-known Old Testament stories are not appropriate for *younger* children, as they include violence and immorality; e.g., Lot in Sodom and Gomorrah, Jael's assassination of Sisera, and others. Of course, there are Old Testament stories that are appropriate for younger kids, such as the Creation, Noah's ark, God calling the little boy Samuel, etc.

Exploring God's Word is a spiritual adventure your whole family can share, and you don't have to know all the answers to begin. If your children ask you questions that you don't know the answer to, simply tell them, "That is something I don't know yet, but as we keep reading I'm sure we'll find out!" Ask the Lord to help you see the answer as you read the Word. You might find it helpful to discuss their questions with your husband or wife, or a Bible-reading friend. The Bible is a big book, and even after

a lifetime of study you will not have learned all of the wonderful things it has to say.

## Keeping the Word in Your Heart

One important aspect of studying God's Word as a family is committing to memory some of the most important, inspiring and comforting verses. Memorizing His faith-building promises helps us grow in faith and find comfort for ourselves and others in difficult times. In Psalm 119:11 (quoted earlier), the Bible tells us that we should hide the Word in our heart so that we will please God and avoid doing things that will hurt others. Thinking about and memorizing God's Word actually helps clean up our thoughts and our hearts; the godly quotes and lines that we memorize become a light to our path and an anchor to our soul. Knowing God's Word helps us to grow spiritually, and gives us a better understanding of the Lord, others, and ourselves. Knowing the Word by heart makes it easy to share what it has to say with others, even when we do not have a printed copy of the Bible with us. Realizing how very helpful and important it is to know God's Word should encourage us to want to learn all we can, and to continue to read, study, and memorize it with our children.

Some suggested verses to help you and your children get started on a Word memorization project are included in the "Word Study Activities Guide" at the end of this booklet under "Family-Time Memory Verses." These verses are also presented in the colorfully illustrated *Feed My Lambs* series of booklets, also available from Aurora Production.

If memory work is new to you and your children, start by trying to memorize one verse every two days. Read the memory verse while the kids are

having breakfast. It is a good idea to discuss it briefly with them to be sure they understand what it means and how to apply it to their lives. If possible, give them a copy of the verse to have in their pockets or schoolbags so they can refer to it throughout the day. At the end of the first day, say the verse together over dinner, and review it again before the children go to bed. Do the same the second day, and at the end of the day, you could award a small prize to those who can say the verse from memory. Rewards don't have to be big—just a fun acknowledgment of the progress they've made.

The *Feed My Lambs* series includes a checklist for each child. Another way to record progress when working on a series of memory verses with more than one child is to put a chart on the refrigerator or elsewhere. List the children's names and the Bible references to the verses they are learning, and put a sticker, or check mark by each child's name when he or she has learned each verse. Don't forget to put *your* name on the memory chart too, and give yourself a sticker, or a check mark—or let the kids give you one—when you successfully quote the verse! Make your memory work a family affair. To keep everyone inspired and making progress, you'll probably want to vary your approach and your incentive from time to time. For example, you might try putting a check mark by each verse learned, awarding a sticker after five verses are learned, and then having a special outing or other reward when everyone has four stickers (20 verses completed).

Once you become accustomed to doing memory work, you will probably be able to memorize a verse a day. Don't be surprised if it's easier for your children to memorize verses than it is for you. Let this be an encouragement to them. Memorizing verses *can* be a little difficult at first, but as you do it, it will become easier and more natural. Like learning to type



or drive or play a musical instrument or operate a computer, it's a skill that comes with practice.

For memory projects to last, it is best to have some handy way to collect and review the verses. One idea is to write out each verse on an index card, or photocopy the checklist at the end of this booklet and cut it up into individual verses and glue them onto small cards. Or you could photocopy the checklist to make a small memory booklet for each child. If you put verses on one side of index cards and write the Bible references or key reminder words or phrases on the other, they can be used for memory review games.

Memorizing (and reviewing) a whole psalm or other chapter from the Bible is sometimes easier than memorizing a handful of individual verses, because in a chapter the verses are usually cohesive; they tell a story or build on a theme. On the other hand, you may find a few select verses to be more useful, as well as a less daunting memory project than a whole chapter or psalm, especially when you're just beginning. While some long sections in the Bible can be very encouraging and helpful to learn, one of the benefits of learning individual verses is that you can cover more topics in a shorter time: salvation, the Holy Spirit, healing, prayer, faith, witnessing, God's care and protection, comfort, etc. Try to learn verses that contain God's special promises to you, or that teach basic spiritual truths, or that speak to you individually.

(For more ideas on how to keep from forgetting the verses that you learn, see "Tips on Bible Memory Verse Review" in the "Word Study Activities Guide" at the end of this booklet.)

## Sharing Jesus with Others

Once you and your children have received Jesus and begin to feed on His Word, your lives will change. You will begin to see a difference in yourselves and your attitudes and your approach to different situations. God has given you the great gift of His salvation, the treasure of His Word, and the peace and assurance of His love. You have found a priceless treasure which God wants you to share with others, so they too can be saved and enjoy the riches of God that you have discovered.

God's love is never-ending; there's plenty for all, so don't hesitate to open the treasure chest to others. A friendly look, a smile, a touch, or a word of encouragement and sympathy can open the door to sharing the message of God's love and salvation with others. All that you have learned in this booklet about receiving Jesus, His salvation and His Word can be shared with your family, friends, co-workers, schoolmates, and people you meet. Read and learn the verses under the topics of salvation and witnessing in the "Family-Time Memory Verses" at the end of this booklet, and let the Lord work through you and your children to help others find salvation and a happy life with Jesus, now and forever.

If your children (or you) are shy about talking to others about Jesus, pray together and ask Him to fill you with His Holy Spirit—the marvelous gift He has promised, which will give you the power to witness. (For more on the Holy Spirit and how it can help you and your children, read *God's Gifts* in the *Get Activated!* series.)

You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Acts 1:8

The message your children can give their friends can be as simple as this: "Jesus is my best friend. He is in my heart. He loves you and wants to be in your heart too. He will be your best friend, and then we'll all be together in Heaven one day. Just pray with me and Jesus will come into your heart."

# WORD STUDY ACTIVITIES GUIDE

## Tips on Bible Memory Verse Review

Once you and your children have begun to memorize Bible verses, you'll need to review them to keep from forgetting them. Here are a few pointers to help make your review time fun.

Some hints for reviewing:

- Put your children's memory verses on an audio cassette that can be played at naptime, bedtime, etc. (Older children and teens can help make these review tapes for themselves and their younger brothers and sisters. Their new verses can be added daily or weekly.)

- Make verse flash cards. Put the verse on one side, and the reference on the other. Or include the first few words, or one or two key words from each verse on the reference side. Devise games and quizzes using the cards.

- One of the keys to successful Bible memory work is having the verses easily available for quick review and memorizing when you find yourself with a few spare moments. When you're riding on a bus, sitting in the dentist's office, waiting to meet a friend or parked waiting to pick up the kids at school, take a few minutes to review or commit another verse to memory. Teach your children to do the same.

- Make a chart to keep track of review work. List the verse and chapters you have memorized, then daily work your way down the list with your children. When your children have successfully reviewed a verse or passage, put a sticker or checkmark on the

chart. When they memorize something new, add it to the list so it will be reviewed regularly.

Ideas from other parents and teachers:

- We made a shield in bright red and blue for each child with a banner across them bearing their names. The shields were put in the living room so everyone would see them. Each time the children learn a verse, they get to put a “medal” bearing the verse reference on their shield. (The medals are cut from colored paper.)

- Try a Memory Bee—like an old-fashioned Spelling Bee, with a few variations. Say the reference and see who can quote the verse; or ask each contestant in turn to quote a verse on a certain topic, such as salvation, healing, trusting God in time of trouble, etc.; or pose situational questions such as, “A poor family needs money for food. What verse could they claim?” We have a little box of situational questions written on cards, which can be pulled out at any time for a quick review activity.

- All three versions of the Memory Bee can also be played with a single child when you have time alone with him or her. Sometimes we take turns quizzing each other; sometimes we keep score.

- Memory buddies: Everyone has a memory buddy, and they each check on and help the other every day with memory and review.

- Memory Review: The first three weeks of the month we learn new verses, and the fourth week is review of that month’s and previous memory work.

- Review games of our memory verses are always fun to play on our daily walks. I’d play the role of a person needing an answer to his question or problem, and ask the kids questions that they were only allowed to answer with a Bible verse, such as, “Who made the world?” (Genesis 1:1), “Who made man?” (Genesis 1:27), “What do I have to do to be

saved?" (Acts 16:31), "Am I a sinner?" (Romans 3:23), "What is truth?" (John 17:17).

- While the children eat, I read aloud their memory work for the day. We enjoy acting out the message of a verse with motions, which helps the children review and retain their memory work better. They review their memory work before naptime and bedtime every day

## Bible Story Checklist

*The following passages from the Bible will provide many hours of worthwhile input and interaction as you read them with your children. This list contains more stories than the list presented for use with little children in Keys to Toddlers and Preschoolers.*

### Jesus' life

- Birth: Matthew 1:18–2:23; Luke 1:5–2:52
- Death: Matthew 26:17–27:66; Mark 15; Luke 23; John 18–19
- Resurrection: Matthew 28; Mark 16; Luke 24; John 20

### Miracles of Jesus

#### Miracles of raising the dead

- The son of a widow: Luke 7:11–16
- The daughter of Jairus: Matthew 9:18–26; Mark 5:22–43; Luke 8:41–56
- Lazarus: John 11:32–44

#### Miracles of healing

- Nobleman's son, of a fever: John 4:46–54
- Man with leprosy: Matthew 8:2–4; Mark 1:40–45; Luke 5:12–14
- Man with palsy[paralysis]: Matthew 9:1–8; Mark 2:3–12; Luke 5:17–26

- Man who had been ill 38 years: John 5:1–16
- Man with withered hand: Matthew 12:10–15; Mark 3:1–5; Luke 6:6–10
- Centurion's servant, of palsy: Matthew 8:5–13; Luke 7:2–10
- Woman sick 12 years with issue of blood: Matthew 9:20–22; Mark 5:25–34; Luke 8:43–48
- Two blind men: Matthew 9:27–31
- Hearing and speech restored to a man: Mark 7:32–37
- Sight restored to a man: Mark 8:22–26
- Sight given to man born blind: John 9:1–11
- Woman who had been afflicted 18 years cured: Luke 13:10–17
- A man, of dropsy: Luke 14:1–6
- Ten men, of leprosy: Luke 17:11–19
- Sight restored to a beggar: Matthew 20:30–34; Mark 10:46–52; Luke 18:35–43
- The ear of Malchus healed: Luke 22:50–51
- Peter's mother-in-law healed: Matthew 8:14–17; Mark 1:29–31; Luke 4:38–39

#### Various other miracles Jesus performed

- Water converted into wine: John 2:1–11
- Peter's net filled with fish: Luke 5:1–11
- Feeding 5,000 plus: Matthew 14:15–21; Mark 6:35–44; Luke 9:12–17; John 6:5–14
- Feeding 4,000 plus: Matthew 15:32–39; Mark 8:1–10
- A fish furnishes tribute money: Matthew 17:27
- A great haul of fish: John 21:6–14
- Fig tree withered: Matthew 21:18–21; Mark 11:12–14; 20–21
- Wind and sea obey His word: Matthew 8:23–27; Mark 4:37–41; Luke 8:22–25
- Jesus walks on the sea: Matthew 14:25–31; Mark 6:45–52; John 6:19

- ❑ Those sent to apprehend Him fall backwards: John 18:4–6
- ❑ Jesus passes through crowd unseen: Luke 4:28–30

### Miracles connected with Jesus' life

- ❑ Guidance of the Magi by a star to Bethlehem: Matthew 2:1–9
- ❑ The signs at His baptism: Matthew 3:16–17; Mark 1:9–12; Luke 3:21–22
- ❑ The signs at His transfiguration: Matthew 17:1–9; Mark 9:1–9; Luke 9:28–36
- ❑ The answer to His prayer: John 12:28–30
- ❑ The signs at His death: Matthew 27:45–53
- ❑ The signs at His resurrection: Matthew 28:2; Mark 16:4–6
- ❑ The signs at His ascension: Luke 24:50–51; Acts 1:6–12

### **Parables Jesus told**

- ❑ The mote and the beam: Matthew 7:3–5
- ❑ Houses on rock and sand: Matthew 7:24–27; Luke 6:47–49
- ❑ The sower: Matthew 13:3–8, 18–23; Mark 4:3–8, 14–20; Luke 8:5–15
- ❑ Tares (weeds) among the wheat: Matthew 13:24–30
- ❑ The leaven: Matthew 13:33; Luke 13:20–21
- ❑ The hidden treasure: Matthew 13:44
- ❑ The pearl of great price: Matthew 13:45–46
- ❑ Treasures old and new: Matthew 13:52
- ❑ The unmerciful servant: Matthew 18:23–34
- ❑ The father and two sons: Matthew 21:28–31
- ❑ The wise and foolish virgins: Matthew 25:1–13
- ❑ The talents: Matthew 25:14–30
- ❑ The sheep and the goats: Matthew 25:31–46



- New cloth on an old garment; new wine in old wineskins: Matthew 9:16–17; Mark 2:21–22; Luke 5:36–37
- The lamp under a bushel: Matthew 5:15; Mark 4:21–23; Luke 8:16
- The wedding guests: Matthew 9:14–15; Mark 2:18–20; Luke 5:33–35
- The two debtors: Luke 7:41–50
- The good Samaritan: Luke 10:25–37
- The friend at midnight: Luke 11:5–8
- The rich fool: Luke 12:16–21
- The waiting servants: Luke 12:35–40
- Faithful and wise steward: Luke 12:42–48
- The mustard seed: Matthew 13:31–32; Mark 4:31–32; Luke 13:18–19
- The shut door: Luke 13:24–30
- Ox fallen into a pit: Luke 14:3–6
- Places of honor: Luke 14:7–11
- Poor, maimed, lame and blind: Luke 14:12–14
- The foolish virgins: Matthew 25:1–13
- The great supper: Luke 14:16–24
- The lost sheep: Matthew 18:12–14; Luke 15:4–7
- The lost coin: Luke 15:8–10
- The prodigal son: Luke 15:11–32
- The farmer and his servant: Luke 17:7–10
- The unrighteous judge: Luke 18:1–8
- The Pharisee and the publican: Luke 18:9–14
- The nobleman and the ten pounds: Luke 19:12–27
- The bread of life: John 6:25–59
- The good shepherd: John 10:1–29
- The vine: John 15:1–27

### **Some Answered Prayers of the Bible**

- Abraham, for a son: Genesis 15:2–4
- Abraham's servant, for successful mission: Genesis 24:12–27
- Isaac, for children: Genesis 25:21,24–26

- ❑ Jacob; for deliverance: Genesis 32:9–12;  
33:4–10
- ❑ Jacob wrestles for God's blessing: Genesis  
32:24–30
- ❑ Israel, for deliverance from Egypt: Exodus  
2:23–25
- ❑ Moses, for Pharaoh: Exodus 8:12–13
- ❑ Moses, for water: Exodus 15:23–25
- ❑ Moses, for God to forgive the people: Exodus  
32:11–14
- ❑ Moses, for divine presence: Exodus 33:12–14
- ❑ Moses, for divine help: Numbers 11:11–17
- ❑ Moses, to see Canaan: Deuteronomy 3:24–25;  
34:1–5
- ❑ Moses, for Israel: Deuteronomy 9:18–19
- ❑ Israel, for deliverance from Egypt: Deuteron-  
omy 26:7–9
- ❑ Israel, for power to overcome the king of  
Canaan: Judges 4:3–23
- ❑ Gideon, for proof of his calling: Judges 6:36–40
- ❑ Samson, for water: Judges 15:18,19
- ❑ Hannah, for a son: 1 Samuel 1:11,17,20
- ❑ Samuel, for Israel: 1 Samuel 7:8–12
- ❑ Solomon, for wisdom: 1 Kings 3:6–14
- ❑ Solomon, at the dedication: 1 Kings 8:23–9:9
- ❑ Elijah, for the widow's son: 1 Kings 17:20–22
- ❑ Elijah, for triumph over Baal: 1 Kings 18:36–38
- ❑ Elisha, for his servant to see the army of angels:  
2 Kings 6:17
- ❑ Elisha, blinding the enemy army: 2 Kings 6:18
- ❑ Jehoahaz, for deliverance from the Syrians: 2  
Kings 13:4–5
- ❑ Hezekiah; for protection: 2 Kings 19:15–19,35
- ❑ Hezekiah, when ill: 2 Kings 20:3–11
- ❑ Reubenites, for victory in battle: 1 Chronicles  
5:18–22
- ❑ David, on deathbed, for Solomon: 1 Chronicles  
29:10–19,25

- Abijah's army, for victory: 2 Chronicles 13:14–16
- Asa, on going to battle: 2 Chronicles 14:11–12
- Jehoshaphat, for protection: 2 Chronicles 20:6–22
- Manassah, for victory: 2 Chronicles 33:12–13
- Nehemiah, for the remnant of Israel: Nehemiah 1:5–2:8
- Jonah, for deliverance: Jonah 2:2–10
- Peter, asking that Tabitha be restored from the dead: Acts 9:40
- The disciples, for Peter's deliverance: Acts 12:5–17
- Cornelius' prayer for guidance: Acts 10:1–6, 30–33

## Family-Time Memory Verses

Following is a set of selected memory verses for you and your children taken from the *Feed My Lambs* series. For children younger than five years old, a simpler collection of Bible verses can be found in the booklet *Keys to Toddlers and Preschoolers*, in this series. The following verses are simplified and adapted for children from the King James Version (KJV) of the Bible. For more memory verses for older children, we recommend the *Key Bible Verses* booklet.

### Love

- Matthew 22:37 Love the Lord with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.
- Matthew 22:39 Love your neighbor as yourself.
- 1 Peter 4:8 Love covers a multitude of sins.
- John 13:35 By this everyone will know that you are My disciples, if you love one another.

## **Salvation**

- ❑ John 1:12 To all who received Him, He gave power to become children of God.
- ❑ John 3:16 God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.
- ❑ Romans 3:23 All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.
- ❑ Acts 4:12 Salvation is found in no one else; there is no other name under Heaven by which we must be saved.
- ❑ Romans 10:9 If you say that Jesus is the Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.
- ❑ 2 Corinthians 5:17 If anyone is in Christ, he is a new person; old things have passed away; all things have become new.

## **Faith vs. Fear**

- ❑ Matthew 9:29 According to your faith it will be done for you.
- ❑ Isaiah 26:3 You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is fixed on You, because he trusts in You.
- ❑ 2 Timothy 1:7 God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.
- ❑ Isaiah 41:10 Fear not, for I am with you. I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you.

## **God's Promises**

- ❑ Romans 8:28 All things work together for good for those who love God.
- ❑ James 1:5 If you lack wisdom, ask God, and He will give it to you.
- ❑ Psalm 37:4 Delight yourself in the Lord and He will give you the desires of your heart.

- ❑ Proverbs 3:5 Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding.
- ❑ Proverbs 3:6 In all your ways acknowledge the Lord, and He will direct your paths.
- ❑ 2 Corinthians 12:9 My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.

### **Prayer**

- ❑ Matthew 18:20 Where two or three come together in My name, I am there with them.
- ❑ Psalm 19:14 May the words of my mouth and the thoughts of my heart be pleasing in Your sight, O Lord, my strength and my Redeemer.
- ❑ Jeremiah 29:13 You will seek Me and find Me when you search for Me with all your heart.

### **The Word**

- ❑ John 6:63 The Words that I speak to you are spirit and life.
- ❑ James 1:22 Be doers of the Word, and not hearers only.
- ❑ 1 Peter 2:2 Desire the pure milk of the Word, that you may grow by it.
- ❑ Psalm 119:11 I have hidden Your Word in my heart that I might not sin against You.
- ❑ Psalm 119:18 Open my eyes so that I may see wonderful things from Your law.
- ❑ Psalm 119:105 Your Word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.
- ❑ John 8:31 If you continue in My Word, you are My disciples indeed.

### **Christian Living**

- ❑ Galatians 6:7 A man reaps what he sows.
- ❑ Ephesians 5:16 Redeem the time.

- ❑ Psalm 133:1 How good and how pleasant it is to live together in unity.
- ❑ 1 Corinthians 14:33 God is not the author of confusion, but of peace.
- ❑ Matthew 5:9 Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called the children of God.
- ❑ Matthew 5:44 Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who hurt you and persecute you.
- ❑ Luke 16:10 He who is faithful in what is least is faithful also in much.
- ❑ Galatians 6:2 Carry each other's burdens.
- ❑ Philippians 2:14 Do everything without complaining or arguing.
- ❑ Proverbs 15:1 A gentle answer turns away wrath.
- ❑ Proverbs 15:3 The eyes of the Lord are everywhere, keeping watch on the evil and the good.

### **Following Jesus**

- ❑ John 15:5 I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit.
- ❑ Hebrews 12:1–2 We are surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses. Let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus.
- ❑ Colossians 3:2 Set your heart and mind on things above, not on earthly things.

### **Forgiveness**

- ❑ Matthew 6:14 If you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.
- ❑ 1 John 1:9 If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us and to make our hearts clean.

### **Holy Spirit**

- ❑ 1 Corinthians 3:16 You are the temple of God, and God's Spirit lives in you.
- ❑ Galatians 5:22,23 The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, moderation.

### **Witnessing**

- ❑ Matthew 5:16 Let your light shine, that others may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in Heaven.

### **Healing**

- ❑ Matthew 4:23 Jesus went about healing people from all kinds of sickness and disease.
- ❑ Mark 10:52 Your faith has healed you.
- ❑ Mark 16:17–18 They that believe will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover.
- ❑ Psalm 34:19 Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers him from them all.

### **Fight the Good Fight**

- ❑ James 4:7 Resist the Devil, and he will flee from you.
- ❑ Ephesians 6:11 Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the attacks of the Devil.
- ❑ 1 John 4:4 Greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world.

## **More Bible memory and Bible study helps**

One very easy way for you and your children to “hide the Word in your heart” is to learn it through song. Most of the “Family-Time Memory Verses” (plus many more!) have been put to music

and are included in the *Songs of Life* audiocassette/CD series. *Songs of Life* tapes/CDs are great to listen to as you clean house, drive to work, or get your daily exercise, as your children play or when they go to bed. To vary your usual verse memory activities, you can just put on the appropriate tape and sing along with the songs.

As its name indicates, *Key Bible Verses* is a collection of key verses that will enable you to quickly and easily find God's answers and thoughts on 35 important topics. The *Key Bible Verses* booklet can also be used as a source of more advanced verses to commit to memory. Its compact size makes it easy to tuck into your Bible, pocket, or purse, so it can always be readily available.

For your Bible studies on a variety of topics, comprehensive collections of Bible verses, topically arranged, can be found in *Discovering Truth: Bible Basics* and *Discovering Truth: Keys to Happier Living*. *Bible Basics* covers the fundamentals of Christian faith; *Keys to Happier Living* covers nearly 100 character-building and problem-tackling topics.

*Key Bible Verses*, *Bible Basics*, and *Keys to Happier Living* are all available from Aurora Production.





## AFTERWORD: THE SOURCE OF STRENGTH

Kids! Precious kids, wonderful kids, naughty kids, happy kids! If you have kids, they have changed your life. One reason for this is that they need you so much. In the beginning they are helpless and depend totally on you. Little by little they start to grow up, but they still need you a lot and look to you for help and answers—at least until they start getting older and become more independent.

God's Word says that we must be like little children to enter the kingdom of God. Seeing how very dependent children are on their parents when they are small helps us understand a bit better what God means, and how He wants us to be with Him. Your little children are so believing, so accepting, so trusting, so dependent upon you for help and guidance. They look to you for everything. As they get a little older, they become more independent and not as willing to accept your help, but instead try to find answers for themselves. They often want to see what they can do without you, even before they are able. At times like that, you wish that they would just come to you for help and counsel, that they would realize that it is okay to need and ask for someone's help, that it is okay not to know it all or be able to do it all themselves.

Our heavenly Father desires the same of us—that we'll realize our limitations and our need for His help and counsel. That is why He sent us His Son, Jesus. Rather than struggling on, trying to figure it all out or do everything on our own without help from anyone, He wants us to look to Jesus, to be like little children who turn to their parents for the help and answers they need. And Jesus can do even more for us than we can for our children. He can give

us light and love and salvation, and the promise of Heaven, His eternal kingdom of joy and happiness, where we'll become part of His heavenly family forever.

The greatest help you can be to your child is to become as a trusting little child yourself, and to learn to let Jesus take you by the hand and lead you into eternal life. As you learn to trust the Lord, to follow Him, to open your heart and life to Him, and to receive and follow His counsel and Word, your life will be transformed. Jesus will not only give you eternal life, but He will look after you and help provide the things you need—including what you need to properly care for and guide your children.

If you have not yet received Jesus into your life, it is very easy to do. All you need to do is look up to Him right now, and like a little child ask Him to help you, to come into your heart and help you make it through life. Here is a simple prayer to receive Jesus as your Savior, which you can pray on your own or with your children:

*Jesus, please forgive me for sometimes not being as kind or loving to others as I should be. Please forgive me for the wrongs I've done, and give me Your free gift of eternal life. Come and share my life, and be in my heart so I can be more like You in all that I think and say and do. Please help me to be the best parent that I can be in the care of the children You have given me. Amen.*

## **ABOUT THE AUTHORS**

Derek and Michelle Brookes are professional educators and writers, who have been happily married and working together for 28 years. After several years as successful teachers, they have spent the last two decades as Christian educators and educational consultants. Their lifelong ambition to provide quality care and education to all children has taken them to nearly every continent, and brought practical help and encouragement to many who face the great responsibility of caring for children.

## RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

Available from Aurora Production AG.

**Start Early:** A set of 40 brightly colored posters for young children, with simple quotes emphasizing basic Christian principles.

**Stories to Grow By:** A lively, colorful, fully illustrated series of storybooks for children ages 2–10, presenting godly morals in a fun and entertaining way.

**Jesus and Me:** A series of three books with short, lively devotionals, as coming from Jesus personally, that teach young children about Jesus and His love and care for them.

**Praisin' U:** A series of three books for children of various ages containing highly illustrated expressions of thankfulness to God.

**Feed My Lambs:** A series of six books with 90 illustrated and simplified Bible verses for children to memorize.

**Great Adventures:** Two sixty-minute CDs of favorite Bible stories—engaging narrative and lively songs.

**Kiddie Viddie:** A series of five half-hour MTV-style behavior-enhancing videos for children ages 6 months to 4 years.

**Treasure Attic®:** An educational entertainment video series for children ages 2–7. Lively songs and stories make learning fun!

**Interactive Attic Fun:** An activity-filled multimedia CD-Rom based on the Treasure Attic® video series. For children up to 8 years old.

Visit our Web site at: [www.auroraproduction.com](http://www.auroraproduction.com).

## KEYS TO PARENTING SERIES

Raising kids right in a rough world isn't easy, but it can be done! From tiny tots to teens, the *Keys to Parenting* series unlocks the secrets of successful parenting. These booklets are packed with scores of fun, enriching, skill-building activities for children, plus plenty of practical and spiritual guidance for parents. Learn to encourage, inspire, counsel, correct, and enjoy your children, and help them to become all they can be!

Get the entire *Keys to Parenting* series for yourself or your friends!

***Keys to Baby*** is packed with practical and spiritual tips to help assure a joyful beginning for mother, baby, and your whole family.

***Keys to Toddlers and Preschoolers:*** Learn how to harness the energy of your pint-size hurricane to make the most of these crucial early years of rapid learning and development.

***Keys to Kids:*** Good parenting isn't always easy, but the rewards are both immediate and eternal. As you help your child discover the right road in life, your own path will become easier and brighter.

***Parenteening:*** "Heaven help us!" is no longer just a parent's plea—it's a reality. This booklet provides simple answers received straight from Heaven—answers to specific questions about how to raise teenagers.

***Power for Parenthood:*** Learn how to raise your child in love, well anchored on a firm foundation of faith that will see him and you through life's storms.

The *Keys to Parenting* series unlocks the doors to understanding children and the mysteries of childcare. Anyone and everyone who has anything to do with children or young people should avail themselves of this counsel.