

# What Does the Bible Teach About Living with Unsaved Family Members?

*(Compiled by Paul R. Blake from multiple sources including articles by Thomas Rainwater)*

## Introduction:

- A. We love our extended families; it is part of our design in the image of God.
  - 1. God's love for all of His children is perfect, and He does everything within His plan for their salvation - 1John 4:9
  - 2. However, our love for our families is occasionally manifested in ways that work against their salvation.
  - 3. Some do nothing, hoping for the best, afraid of risking a loss of relationship by pressing the matter - 1Kings 1:6
  - 4. Some do too much, pressing them to the point that they lose contact or opportunities - Col. 3:21
- B. We want our parents and children to be saved, but how do we reach them?
  - 1. By the same means you will reach persons not related to you.
  - 2. Conventional wisdom suggests that we will be more successful because we know family better than strangers.
  - 3. The reality is that the emotional investment of the family relationship from the perspectives of both teacher and student has the potential to undermine our efforts.
  - 4. How can we enhance our efforts to baptize our parents and children?

## I. HOW DO I INFLUENCE MY PARENTS FOR CHRIST?

- A. Be patient
  - 1. You can't make your parents change their minds. They will have to do that for themselves at their own pace.
  - 2. Most people do not like being pushed to change - 1Thes. 5:14
- B. Be a good example
  - 1. How you represent the Christian life to them will likely be the best teaching tool you have.
  - 2. Unbelieving family members (parents, children, spouses) and believers are in an endless struggle to define the relationship. The Christian must constantly resolve not to engage in behaviors that can undermine his influence. If he gives in, he sets himself on a downward spiraling of his ability to influence his family for Christ.
  - 3. Junior is sick, Sis has a tummy ache, spouse insists once a week is enough; you give in and you have reduced the power of your influence
  - 4. Matt. 5:16; 1Peter 2:12
  - 5. The power of your influence on your relatives is only as strong as the example you set for them.
- C. Be studious
  - 1. You must be prepared with an answer; opportunities are often rare and fleeting - 2Tim. 2:15; 1Peter 3:15
- D. Be prayerful
  - 1. That's how we fill the time between opportunities; that's how we manifest our faith in the power of the Gospel.

2. Pray to God that your parents might someday believe the truth, and that many opportunities may come for them to be persuaded to obey.
  3. James 5:16; 1John 3:22
- E. Involve other Christians
1. Ask other Christians to pray for them and become involved in influencing them for Christ.
  2. You will be encouraged by their efforts on your parents behalf, and they will be encouraged to see you interest in the souls of your parents.
  3. Your parents will be further impressed with your unselfish interest in their salvation - Heb. 10:24; 1Thes. 5:11
- F. These methods will work with our adult children as well.

## II. HOW DO I INFLUENCE MY CHILDREN FOR CHRIST?

- A. As parents, the greatest blessing we will ever give our children is to give them back to God - Gen. 18:19; 1Sam. 1:22
- B. Insist that your children obey your instructions - Eph. 6:1-3
1. "The thing that impresses me the most about America is the way parents obey their children." (King Edward VIII, 1894 - 1972)
  2. "There was a time when we expected nothing of our children but obedience, as opposed to the present, when we expect everything of them but obedience." (Anatole Broyard)
    - a. Prov. 30:1, 29:15
  3. Jesus and His parents - Luke 2:51
  4. Eli and his sons - 1Sam. 2:12, 22-24, 3:13
- C. Praise; don't just punish.
1. If you must punish, make the punishment fit the offense.
  2. Punishment without praise will break a child's spirit - Col. 3:21
  3. Be fair-minded and just, by God's standards and the examples of successful parents, not by your own opinion.
- D. Give them what they need, not necessarily what they want - Matt. 7:8-11
1. "It is not giving children more that spoils them; it is giving them more to avoid confrontation. (John Gray, "Children Are From Heaven")
  2. Say "yes" every time when you can and "no" every time when you must.
- E. Be consistent.
1. In teaching and correction; follow through and stay in control.
  2. Practice what you preach - 2Tim. 1:5
- F. Do not show favoritism – Gen. 26:28; 37:3.
1. Favoritism caused suffering and sorrow in every Bible family that practiced it.
    - a. Abraham - Isaac over Ishmael
    - b. Isaac - Esau over Jacob
    - c. Jacob - Joseph over his brothers
    - d. David - Absalom and Adonijah
  2. Recognize and respect individuality among your children while remaining impartial in your treatment of them.
- G. Work together - Gen. 27:6
1. Children sense conflict between parents and are adept at exploiting it.
    - a. Matt. 12:25

2. Support and help each other with the children, the home, etc.
- H. Find and develop each child's "way" – Prov. 22:6.
  1. Don't try to make him/her into what you wanted to be, but did not become. Parents living vicariously through their children exploit them.
  2. Encourage individuality without abandoning what is right.
    - a. Encouraging a child's interest in music and art is good; arranging for them to learn dance is sin.
    - b. Encouraging energy and ambition is good; allowing them to run rampant is sin.
  3. Give direction and discipline fit for each – Ecc. 2:3, 5:18-19, 12:1
    - a. Each child may need different kinds of discipline, depending on his response - Jude 22-23
  4. "The art of mothering is to teach the art of living to children." (Elaine Heffner)
- I. Set godly examples - Isa. 39:4; Prov. 4:1-4; 2Tim. 1:5
  1. Love God - Matt. 22:37 - Obey, worship, put Him first, etc.
  2. Love man - Matt. 22:39 - Honesty, fairness, kindness, mercy, etc.
  3. Your children will notice and imitate your behaviors.
- J. Pray for God's help - Judges 13:8-9; James 1:5-8; Phil. 4:6-7
  1. Rely on God's truth to direct you - Prov. 3:5-6
- K. Be patient.
  1. Start early in life – 2Tim. 3:15 (Hannah & Samuel; Jochebed & Moses).
  2. Stay the course – Prov. 19:18, 23:13-14, 29:15
- L. Repent and confess when you sin against your children - James 5:16
  1. Parents can sin against their children - Col. 3:21
- M. Remember that the responsibility and accountability are yours.
  1. Seek counsel - Titus 2:4; Prov. 11:14, 15:22
  2. Filter the well-meaning advice, suggestions, recommendations of others through the sieve of truth and wisdom.
  3. Beware of intrusive meddlers and meddling - 1Peter 4:15
  4. Everyone is an expert: "Before I got married I had six theories bringing up children; now I have six children and no theories." (John Wilmot)

### **III. SHOULD I ASK MY CHILDREN TO BE BAPTIZED?**

- A. Again, we face a conflict in reasoning.
  1. On the one hand, we know that this is a personal decision that impacts one's entire life.
    - a. We are not certain they are ready (translated: we don't know their level of commitment).
    - b. We are afraid of misusing our influence as parents
  2. At the same time, we want our children to be with us in heaven.
    - a. Without reservation, every Christian parent of adult children is more concerned for their spiritual wellbeing than any other matter in their lives.
    - b. We are aware of the passing of time and the loss of influence over our children as they go from childhood to adulthood.
  3. When are they ready?

- a. Human development is individual; the Bible does not reveal an age limit.
  - b. The Jewish practice of considering the age of 12 as the beginning of manhood suggests that by that age a young man has developed enough to be considered accountable for his social interactions; girls mature faster than boys.
  - c. If a child is able to state that he is not ready for the commitment or that he doesn't think he is accountable, he probably is ready.
  - d. The Bible tells us when one is ready to obey the Gospel.
- B. Does the child believe?
- 1. Jesus is God's Son; God has spoken; in accountability for sins; in the Judgment? - Mark 16:16; Acts 8:36-38; Rom. 10:17
- C. Is the child prepared to repent?
- 1. Repentance (reversal of moral purpose; turning from sin to Christ) is a necessary prerequisite to baptism - Acts 2:38, 3:19
- D. Will the child confess the name of Christ? - Rom. 10:9-10
- E. Does the child understand the purpose of baptism?
- 1. It is obedience in baptism that removes sin from our record.
    - a. Eph. 1:7; Acts 22:16; 1Peter 3:21
  - 2. It puts us into the family of God - Gal. 3:26-27; Acts 2:47
  - 3. Infants and young children are sinless and therefore safe from

condemnation; they have no sins from which they need to be saved. Because of their innocence, Jesus says about them: "for of such is the kingdom of heaven." (Matt. 19:14). If a baby or young child dies, he will be given a home in Heaven. Baptism is not for children since they are born free of sin. In addition, they have not matured enough to comprehend truth to the point that they understand what is required of those who have sinned and need to be baptized. When a child matures to the point of understanding the moral consequences of right and wrong and still does wrong, he has committed sin and needs salvation through Christ.

4. Because maturity varies with each child, and the decision to obey God must be his own, it is essential that we teach our children at an early age to prepare them for that decision. Teach them your expectation that they become Christians someday. If you are unwilling to do that, you are unqualified to parent your children.

5. We teach them our expectation that they do well in school, that they help out with chores, that they become responsible working adults, that they leave home and begin families of their own. Why are some parents afraid to express and expectation that they become responsible for their own eternal lives?

#### **IV. WHO SHOULD BAPTIZE MY PARENTS AND CHILDREN?**

- A. It doesn't matter who baptizes, as long as it is done according to God's word.
- 1. There are no qualifications for baptizers in the Bible. All the requirements are on the one being baptized.
  - 2. It has never been important to me which disciple performs the baptism. I am not notching my Bible the way gunslingers did their Colt 45s.
  - 3. And if a preacher insists on it, he's got a problem - 1Cor. 1:13-17
- B. Do what the Bible says to encourage your parent and children to obey the Gospel, and when they want to be baptized, rejoice.