

CHAPTER 8: FAMILY GOVERNMENT

As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord. – Josh. 24:15

1. What is a further condition of the successful training of children?

A wise and godly family government.

2. Is family government an important matter?

Yes, most important. If the good government of a nation is essential to the welfare of the people-if their happiness physically, socially, and politically, and-we were going to say-religiously, to some extent, rises and falls with the character of its government (which it most certainly does), how much more intimately must every interest of children, earthly and heavenly, depend upon the good government of the home in which they live?

3. Will you name some of the characteristics of a wise and godly family government?

(1.) Firmness is essential to a good family government. Indeed, government of any sort without it is an impossibility; and children, as well as everybody in the home, if things are to go with any degree of smoothness, regularity, and order, must be made to feel that there is a strong directing will at the head of affairs.

Children are usually full of life, vigour, and spirit, and must in their first years be made to do things, not only because they are right, or because they ought to do them, but because they **MUST**. Children, during the early part of their lives, are little better than mere animals; influenced by their instincts and feelings, rather than by their reason. So to manage them easily-indeed to manage them at all, they must thoroughly know and understand that they are "under authority."

A good family government must mean, therefore, that there is a head to whom all look up. Nominally that head is the father, but between father and mother there

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should be such union of spirit, aim, and will, that both shall be felt to be as one. The expressed will of the one will then be taken as that of the other, and the children will know no difference in power and authority between the one and the other. This is the order of God, who puts both parents conjointly over their children.

Honour thy father and thy mother. – Deut. 5:16.

Ye shall fear every man his mother, and his father. – Lev. 19:3

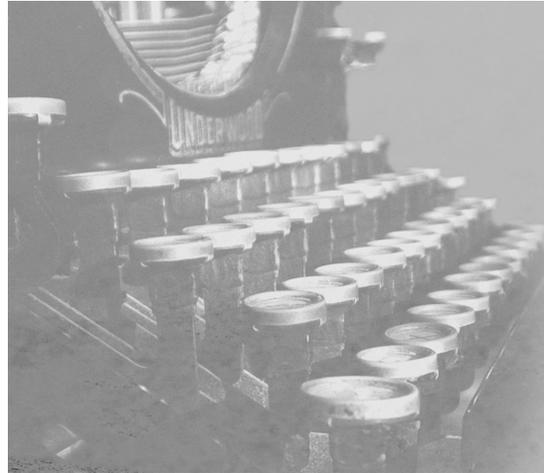
If a man have a stubborn and rebellious son, which will not obey the voice of his father, or the voice of his mother, and that, when they have chastened him, will not hearken unto them; Then shall his father and his mother lay hold on him and bring him out unto the elders of his city. – Deut. 21:18-19

Children, obey your parents in the Lord. – Eph. 6:1.

We would say to parents, ponder this well over. How much depends on the presentation of this unity of front to the children, it is not very easy to describe. Let the mother and father agree between themselves what they want to accomplish, decide upon the methods by which to attain their end, and then act as one soul and one flesh before the children in the carrying of them out.

It is to be lamented that there is so little of this thorough union between parents. What more common than to hear a parent excusing the pettish and spoiled manners or the direct disobedience of little ones, hardly big enough to sit in their high chair at the table, by saying, "His father spoils him," or, "Her mother lets her do as she likes," or, "I am always correcting him, but when his father comes home, he only laughs at these things"? That is to say, one parent chastises the child for doing the same thing that earns some complimentary remark or foolish excuse from the other. Let there be a head in, the family. In name that head must be the father, but in government let children know no difference between mother and father.

(2.) This government should be fashioned and carried out on the principles of righteousness, and be all in the interest and or the glory of the King of kings.



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A great writer has said, "Every Christian family ought to be, as it were, a little Christian church, consecrated to Christ and wholly influenced and governed by His rules." We endorse this sentiment, only making it a little plainer to the bulk of those into whose hands this book will fall, by saying that every Salvation Soldier's family ought to be a little Corps, trained up and governed by the laws of Jesus Christ, as understood and represented by The Salvation Army.

Where this is carried out, the family will be governed for God,-as much for Him in the parlour, kitchen, or nursery, or anywhere else, as in the Barracks or Church. The house where the family dwells will be as much the house of God as the place where the family meet their comrades for religious meetings on Sabbath or the week-night.

It follows also in families where this view is entertained and carried out, that everything will be done in the power and Spirit of God; not two spirits, one a spirit of self-sacrifice and solemnity in what is called a "sacred edifice," and another consisting of the service of self in its various forms of mammon-worship, pleasure-seeking, vanity, and self-indulgence, constituting the worship of the flesh. There will be one spirit, the spirit of benevolence, and truth, and worship, and self sacrificing good-will. In short, there will be the spirit of the Lord Jesus Christ, and whether the members of that family eat or drink, rise up or sit down, all will be done to the glory of God.

(3.) A godly family government will also be characterized by justice.

That is, the spirit of rightness and justice will influence the dealings of the parents with (the children and with everybody else, and they will see and feel this. If the children know that their father deals unjustly in his business, if they hear things that are tricky and contrary to strict uprightness talked over at the table and approved in any degree, no matter what zeal that father may display in teaching his children to be good, it will all be in vain. Just so, if they know that their mother acts unreasonably, dishonourably, and meanly towards servants, or tradespeople, or anyone else, no matter how she may talk and pray with the children and try to impress upon their minds the precepts of religion, it will be of little avail, if any.

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(4.) A good family government will be conducted in a spirit of mercy. A hard, cruel, unrelenting, unforgiving spirit will prevent the good influence of all government whatsoever. There must be a merciful spirit in the demands made upon children. Duties and tasks must be graduated carefully to the ability of the child, all due consideration being made for the weak and the backward. Never ask that from your child which he is not able to perform, and watch the tasks imposed by others, whether teachers or employers, and protect, as far as you have the ability; your children from being made to learn lessons or perform duties beyond their natural powers. How can they make bricks without straw? A merciful spirit must be displayed in dealing with the neglect of duty. With disobedience-indeed with offences of every kind, more will often be gained by the exercise of forgiveness than the infliction of punishment. Anyway, the spirit of forgiveness-of tender, gentle, and merciful dealing - should pervade the house at all times and under all circumstances.

(5.) A good family government will be based on love. Note the difference between love and affection. The latter is the exercise of a blind instinct, the same as in animals; the former, guided and influenced by reason, answers to the moral qualities of the object beloved. Love is the foundation of the Divine government, and, while it reigns supreme over every other virtue, includes them all within itself.

4. Are there not practices and customs in some houses which are greatly opposed to the good training of children?

Yes, some that are quite foreign to the principles named in the last chapter, and which we refer to here' in order to be quite assured of being understood.

5. Will you name some of these things which you consider hindrances to good training?

Yes. The first we refer to is FAVOURITISM. Where one child is more beloved and receives more attention and kindness than the others, not because it is more deserving, but because the parents simply prefer it, we say the child is a favourite.

6. On what grounds is favouritism exercised towards children?

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Sometimes because the appearance of a child is more pleasing in the eyes of the parents than another, or because it happens to have more flashy or attractive talents; sometimes it is because it has qualities that are more likely to minister to the selfish gratification of the parents, and sometimes for no other reason than because it happens to strike their fancy.

7. Are not these preferences injurious and disastrous?

Yes; none more so. Only, let it enter the thoughts of a child that because of some defect in body or in mind which it cannot help, and for which therefore it is not responsible, it is not dealt justly by, but is regarded with less favour than some of its brothers and sisters, and this bitter feeling will rankle in its heart, destroy its happiness, weaken its sense of duty, and open the door for the horrid spirits of envy and revenge to enter and dwell there.

8. Why should this principle of favouritism or partiality act thus on the hearts of children?

Because it, directly violates the innate sense of justice which God has placed in every child's nature. While the child feels that it is perfectly just for the parent to show more favour and affection for any of his brothers and sisters who may be more self-denying, industrious, and obedient than himself, he will rebel against this preference of others before him, because they happen to have a physical form, or some mental qualities and gifts more to the liking of the parents, for the lack of which he is in nowise responsible.

9. But do not some children possess qualities both of mind and person which render them naturally more loveable than others?

Unquestionably; and therefore parents must be on their guard not to be carried away by these gifts, and as a consequence bestow affection and favour and labour on those children who possess them, more than they do on others who may not have them.

10. Name another evil spirit which haunts many homes, greatly hindering the good

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effect of teaching, otherwise most commendable.

The SPIRIT OF SANCTIMONIOUSNESS, or HYPOCRISY.

11. What is that?

Sanctimoniousness is pretending to be religious, that is, looking, and talking, and acting as though you were very pious, when in reality you are nothing of the kind.

12. Are children able to distinguish between that religion which is only an outward form, and that which is a genuine principle in the heart?

Yes; none are quicker to find out shams and "make-believes" than children. They can soon see what is behind the mask; and perhaps no spirit in a home is more calculated to make children hate and turn away from religion in disgust, and grow up in hatred and unbelief, than the spirit which whines and cants and professes to be what it really knows it is not. Children live too close to father and mother to be deceived by any whitewashed appearances. The theatrical performances in religion may deceive the gallery and those at a distance, outside the house, but by the fireside and in the daylight the paint and spangles avail not. The father may talk in public, or at the tea-table when there is company, or he may enlarge in his prayers on love and uprightness, and self-sacrifice, and benevolence, but if the grand spirit of love, uprightness, sacrifice, and benevolence be wanting in that father's daily doings and sayings - if it be not the spirit of the house, controlling and fashioning the work, the pleasure, and the play, the children will find it out. They will pronounce all the talk and the preachments and the enforcement of it on themselves to be a deception, and reject the whole-good and bad together.

13. Is there any other spirit which makes against the good effect and right success of the training of children?

(5.) Yes, CENSORIOUSNESS. If parents are sour and hard to please, if they enjoy finding fault, looking for the mistakes and failures and infirmities of their children, rather than for the good that is in them, and for the good they have done or tried to

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do, they will be very likely to spoil and curtail much of what would otherwise be very effective teaching.

The mother or the father who begins the day carefully looking for the faults, the mistakes, and shortcomings in general of little children, will be very likely to go through the day in the same spirit, and be kept busily employed also. This spirit of fault-finding and condemnation will create a temper in the child which will go far towards making any number of faults to condemn. This tendency in parents should be fought against, prayed against, believed against, and conquered at all costs.

If children get a sort of feeling that mother or father is sure to find fault with them whether they have tried to do their lessons well or not, whether they have tried to be good or not, they will be very likely to end in despair, and give up trying altogether.

If you don't want your children to grow up in this spirit and finally go off from you in disgust, learn to be patient; look out for something to bless rather than to blame. Never condemn unless faithfulness to your child's highest interests demands it, and even then comply with the command of the Apostle, to be "easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy." – James 3:17.

14. Can you name any other usage or disposition which spoils the atmosphere of home for the training of children?

Yes; BAD TEMPER. There are different kinds of tempers: the quiet temper, the sullen temper, the irritable temper, and various modifications of the same. But any disposition displayed before the children which causes the parent to act otherwise than faithfully and justly, and forbearingly - even in the very spirit of Jesus Christ-is sadly to be deplored.

If parents have a passionate temper, or a queer temper, or a bad temper of any kind, very nearly the first business of their lives is to go to Jesus Christ, and let him take it away. Children are often very trying; and to be able to exhibit always before them a calm and self-composed temper may be very difficult, but it is most needful, not only for the sake of the children, but on account of that peace of mind which is essential to

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the happiness of the parent.

15. Is there any other spirit in the home which hinders the successful training of children?

Yes. **WORLDLY PRIDE**. There is nothing much more injurious to the training of children in the spirit of Jesus Christ, than that worldly pride which fills so many houses and curses thousands of little hearts.

In some homes it appears to be the great business of father and mother from week's end to week's end, the year round, to foster and feed and strengthen a spirit of empty, haughty pride, because of some superiority the family is supposed to possess in the way of wealth, or station, or learning, or beauty. To make their servants and neighbours and visitors and friends sensible of this superiority, is just the burden of their existence. They dress, and scheme, and contrive, in order worthily to support these inflated notions all their time. Only think of children being brought up in such an atmosphere as this! What hope can there possibly be of any good coming from lessons given at Church or Chapel, in the nursery or Barracks, or anywhere else, in favour of humility, meekness, gentleness of spirit, and the following of the Lord Jesus Christ generally?

One of the first notions about the Saviour of men taught in every professedly Christian home is that He, their example-although the King of Heaven-was "meek and lowly in heart." And at family prayer, and in Church and Chapel, children have read to them from their Bibles such exhortations as the following:

Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. – Phil. 2:5-8.

And the first line of poetry generally taught the little ones is,

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Gentle Jesus, meek and mild.

What a farce it is for parents to teach such sentiments, and to be asking God to make their children Christians, which really means to be like Jesus Christ, when all the time the whole spirit and bearing of the home is just as far from it as Hell is from Heaven! Yet this sort of thing is as common as can be very well imagined.

16. Can you name any other prevalent home hindrance to the successful training of children?

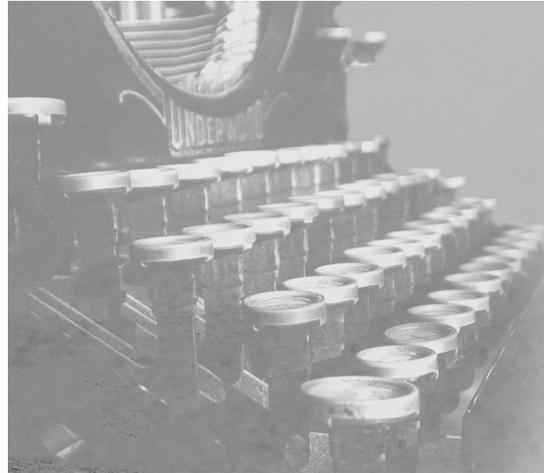
Yes, SELFISHNESS. Perhaps there is nothing more certain to counteract all and every form of what may be really good and well-adapted religious teaching than this spirit, which regards self-gratification as the first and great end of life. True religion is love. Christianity is love in action. It will be seen at a glance therefore, that no matter how wisely parents or other teachers of children may endeavour to impress the minds and hearts of children with Christian notions and feelings, or how persistently they may endeavour to lead them into the practice of a Christ-like life, their labour will be very largely thrown away, if mother and father and everybody around them are living to please themselves,

When the supreme concern of the entire family is to seek their own profit or pleasure or honour or something else that seems essential to their interests, how can the children be trained to a life-long supreme seeking of the things that are Jesus Christ's? In such a case they will soon find it out, and either be led to form an utterly false idea as to the real nature of religion or count the whole thing to be a mockery and a cheat.

17. Is there not another spirit, very nearly related to the last-named, which specially hinders the training of children to be Soldiers?

Yes, the SELFISH HOME SPIRIT. In most homes, the idea of comfort reigns supreme, and all arrangements are made so as to lead everyone to stay at home as much as possible.

The Salvation Soldier's home ought to be the most comfortable in the world, and



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every contrivance for resting and strengthening the body should be used; but always with this idea uppermost, that each one in the house is to be kept always ready for service; that the most is to be made of, each quarter of an hour there, and that all the system of the home is to be made to enable everyone to do the most work for God, to be out in all weathers without injury, and to be refreshed after extreme fatigue for God and souls. This will prevent the feeling ever creeping in of its being a cross to go and do duty for God.

18. Is there any other spirit which would interfere with the successful training of children?

Yes. We will only mention one more, but a most important one – UNWILLINGNESS TO BE AT TROUBLE.

Children cannot be trained, as we have already shown, and are going to set forth in the following pages, without a great deal of hard work; but a great many parents are too indolent, too lazy, to put forth the necessary effort to save their children from becoming worldly and bad, and going at last to Hell. But in substance we have said this before. Nevertheless, it is so important that we may have to say it again, and even then with what benefit remains to be seen.