

For the last eight weeks, I have been writing about spiritual training. What I have to say this week is the most important aspect of the spiritual training of your children. **Let them observe you doing what you want them to do!**

If you doubt the importance of teaching by example, just step back and observe your children. I have had some amusing situations in my counseling office over the years. Parents would make an appointment to see me about their child. After a brief visit, I would send for the child so that we could discuss the problem together. Almost always, the bad behavior or habit that was being berated by the parent surfaced in his or her own behavior—perhaps manifest differently, but there, nonetheless. Children are very observant!

If we want our children to use God's Word as a source of guidance for their lives, they must see us doing the same thing. What most people do is wait until the children are asleep or busy to have their own private quiet time. That is great except that the children are unable to observe Mom or Dad doing what they are teaching.

I suggest that you allow your children to observe you searching the Bible for answers to circumstances in your lives individually or as a couple—when appropriate. For example, suppose your grandmother has just been placed in a nursing home. That is difficult for the persons making the decision (Grandmother's children), but it is also painful for you (the grandchild in this case). This would be an appropriate time to let your children observe you searching God's Word for comfort and peace about the situation.

Even if the child does not ask, "Mom, what are you reading?" you can say something like, "It is really hard for me to accept that Grandmother Nanny has to be in a nursing home. I am just trying to find some comfort and peace by reading God's Word about old age and about how we are to treat our parents." What a loving way to teach your children that God's Word really does have answers to life's questions.

A casual remark made to a spouse in the presence of the children such as “We need to search God’s Word before we decide if we will build onto our house,” is a great example that children will certainly notice. It is just one more brick in the foundation of faith that you are building.