

Keep the Way of the Lord
By Trey Sullins

Occasionally at a store or a restaurant there might be a young child screaming at the top of their lungs. Usually everyone around will try to get away and ignore the noise. The reactions of the child's parents are often very telling. Sometimes they will ignore the child, scream back at them, or even laugh. Other times the parent will put in motion proper discipline to control the child. There is a growing movement today which teaches the idea that a child should be able to learn nearly everything by themselves. Essentially this ideology reduces the role of a parent down to only providing the necessities for survival. Children are burdened with learning and choosing right and wrong, social standards, religion, and even what gender they are. Is this truly how the Bible teaches God's creation to be as parents? In Genesis 18:19, the life of Abraham reveals a great example of how parents should raise their children: "For I have known him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him, that they keep the way of the LORD, to do righteousness and justice, that the LORD may bring to Abraham what He has spoken to him."

Abraham was going to command his children. God was praising Abraham here because He knew that Abraham was going to command his children and not allow them to do whatever they wanted to do! The Bible teaches that children must be told what they can and cannot do and told what is right and wrong. In the world today there is a growing movement of people who claim that children should never be instructed on just about anything in life, but rather they should be allowed to decide for themselves what is right and wrong. Some go so far as to claim that kids and teenagers should be allowed to make great mistakes in order to learn from them. This is a foreign concept to what the scriptures teach us. Another powerful passage is in Proverbs 22:6 which says, "Train up a child in the way he should go, And when he is old he will not depart from it." Once more the same behavior of Abraham is reinforced by this passage. A few verses down in Proverbs 22:15 the Bible says, "Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child; The rod of correction will drive it far from him." This passage lays it plainly. Children are considered foolish because they have not learned what is right and good yet. Therefore, when putting this all together, a Christian should command their children in what is right and correct them when they are in the wrong.

Abraham was going to command his children in the ways of the Lord. God's reasoning (which is always right) for praising Abraham was also due to the fact that Abraham was going to train his children in the right ways of God. Sadly, there have been Christians before who have said that they did not want to push their children into serving God because they wanted them to develop their own faith. While certainly it is the case that every person needs their own individual faith, there is simply no biblical principle which shows us that a parent should never tell their children to do what is right. In Joshua 24:15, Joshua declares that he and his house would serve the Lord. Only a short while later in Judges 2:10 the Bible says, "When all that generation had been gathered to their fathers, another generation arose after them who did not know the LORD nor the work which He had done for Israel." How does this happen? Because the righteous parents stopped commanding their children in the ways of the Lord. Proverbs 29:15 shows that proper discipline brings about wisdom in a growing person. The encouragement of Paul in 2 Timothy 3:15 was indicates that it was a very good thing for Timothy to have been brought up in the "Holy Scriptures." Paul also gives the reason why this is good: "which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." The Bible gives no such liberty for children to

decide to serve God while living at home and the righteous parents under God are expected to command, train, teach, and discipline their children in the ways of the Lord.

Abraham is a great example of what it looks like to be a righteous follower of God. One of the most interesting parts about Genesis 18:19 is Abraham did not have any children yet. Even though he had no children, he was still able to know exactly how to be a good, godly parent. God knowing this about him, sent him a child and every step of the way Abraham proved himself to put God first in the life he lived. The truth of the matter is that these simple principles apply to any age. God is the father of all creation and has adopted as sons those who have chosen him (Ephesians 1:5). Just like the child is to be commanded in the ways of the Lord, every single person has been commanded by God Almighty to live the ways of righteousness. No matter whether young, old, with children, or without children everyone must live according to the commands of God!